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THE COVENANT

# reporter

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COVCHURCH.ORG



## A COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND JOY

**Thanks to Covenanters in North America, HIV/AIDS victims in southern Thailand are finding community and hope.**

Just three years ago, a man we will call “W” was suffering from full-blown AIDS. He bought his coffin and waited for death. Dying mattered little to him because he believed there was no reason for living—no livelihood, no community, and no family.

Then Christians connected with the Sustainable Development Research Foundation (SDRF) in Ongkhla, Thailand, directed by Evangelical Covenant Church missionary Jim Gustafson, befriended and shared the gospel with him. “Today, W not only has physical health, but a spiritual joy that many would envy,” says Covenant missionary Bob Shim.

The joy was evident when W was one of more than 200 people from seven provinces who gathered to worship for two days and witness the baptism of 84 new believers. (The accompanying photo was taken during the baptismal service with Gustafson officiating.)

Many of the people at the worship service were there because of W’s ministry. He and his wife, S, have provided leadership to nearly 500 HIV-positive people in eight regions.

The worship service and baptism took place at the Center for HIV/AIDS-affected Communities (CHAC). At one of several previous services, 105 new believers were baptized.

“Whenever I am with this group, I am most

struck by how much joy, hope, and even health are exhibited on everyone’s faces and attitudes,” says Shim. “You would think that being a part of one of the most poor, marginalized, and outcast people groups in Thailand would make you angry and feel hopeless.”

Instead, Shim adds, “This is a community full of life and full of joy.”

AIDS victims such as W have become some of the strongest evangelists. One is Srinuan, who despite being sick and covered with sores, was caring for a dying friend.

### THE POWER OF TOUCH

Nujon Singpila, SDRF president, met Srinuan and literally touched her—something HIV/AIDS sufferers never experience. Singpila sat down next to Srinuan in her home and held her hand. Startled, Srinuan asked, “How can you do that?”

Singpila replied, “Because I love you.” That simple act as well as continuing compassion offered to Srinuan led the woman to open her heart to God’s love.

Following the death of her friend, Srinuan (who is now healthy) decided to continue a ministry of compassion to HIV/AIDS sufferers in the region. As she met with people in one community, she would be invited to other

communities as well.

That ministry grew to become CHAC, now touching the lives of people throughout southern Thailand. The Department of World Mission is working with SDRF to expand the ministry.

### MORE THAN PHYSICAL

The Thai Public Health Department says the southern region has one of the highest incidences of HIV/AIDS infection in the country.

Those infected with the disease suffer more than physically—they often are ostracized by family and friends. Thanks to Covenanters in North America, they are being remembered and CHAC is growing a network of support and worship communities through seven provinces.

“As you walk into the communities, you see that they have AIDS, but they want to be embraced, they want to be hugged, they want to be encountered,” says Singpila. “As we encounter them, it gets to the point of weeping, because it gets so heavy in terms of its meaning. That’s why I don’t see them as AIDS people. I see them as people in need.”

And they are being welcomed into a much larger, worldwide, family.



Participants at The Generosity Summit in the North Pacific Conference were not allowed to attend the workshop alone—they were required to bring one or two members of their staff along with a number of lay leaders.

## A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY

**New summit reaches beyond good stewardship to view ministry through the lens of God’s generosity.**

Imagine what it would be like if a congregation embraced “generosity” as a core value, giving freely of time, talent, and treasure to pursue opportunities to serve God, each other, and the local community. And imagine individuals and families learning to be good managers of what God has entrusted to them—and the joy that would flow as a result.

That is the vision driving The Generosity Summit, presented last October to North Pacific Conference churches as part of a pilot project co-sponsored by the conference, represented by Superintendent Mark Novak, and the Covenant Commission on Stewardship, represented by Donn Engebretson, executive-vice president.

The Generosity Summit was developed by Converge International, formerly known as the General Baptist Conference. Some 150 individuals representing about 20 conference churches participated in the two-day workshop held at Highland Covenant Church in Bellevue, Washington.

Pastors were not allowed to attend the workshop alone—they were required to bring one or two members of their staff along with a number of lay leaders. They sat together at tables to process the experience as a group.

The first half of the summit is strongly video-driven, involving speakers Bob Coy, Randy Pope, and Andy Stanley, and includes significant roundtable interaction by participants. The second half looks more like a strategic planning session in which participants take the principles they have learned and apply them to their churches.

“The goal is not simply good stewardship training for individuals and families, as important as that is,” Engebretson says of the summit. “The goal is for churches to create cultures of generosity where every decision, every ministry opportunity is viewed through the lens of God’s generosity in Christ.”

He describes the event as “an immersion experience to motivate and encourage churches to become engaged.” Plans call for development of a coaching model that will be used once a local church has participated in a summit and has made a commitment to pursue development of a culture of generosity within

the congregation.

“A number of churches have embraced the concept following the October summit,” Engebretson observes. Scott Ridout, director of Generosity Converge who facilitated the summit presentation, and Novak are going to coach each of the congregations. “It is hoped they can serve as models to inspire other congregations to become involved.”

Engebretson says he is hopeful that additional summits can be scheduled in other Covenant conferences in the months to come.

For more information email Kerry Staurseth at [kerry.staurseth@covchurch.org](mailto:kerry.staurseth@covchurch.org).

## NEW STEWARDSHIP KIT AVAILABLE

A new stewardship kit is now available to assist local churches as they design and implement stewardship activities throughout the year.

The centerpiece is a colorful, uniquely designed planning calendar that includes helpful information, from the lectionary texts and church year markers to stewardship starter ideas.

There are tips on fostering a community of prayer that connects faith with generosity, and preparing a budget that effectively tells the story of local church ministry, going beyond just the numbers. Ideas include service opportunities for people from every generation, including different ways to reach out to poor and suffering people in the community.

A lot of practical information is included, from the importance of wills and living trusts to ways in which a congregation can explore and nurture the ways in which the Holy Spirit has gifted members of the congregation.

“Our churches have been asking for stewardship help,” notes Kerry Staurseth, who serves as strategic giving and stewardship coordinator. “It is important that we share the good news that all that we have and are—the earth, our talents, time, possessions, and gifts—belong to God and that he has asked us to be managers of it all, not owners.”

For more information on stewardship, visit the stewardship area of the Covenant website at [CovChurch.org/stewardship](http://CovChurch.org/stewardship).

# 125 YEARS OF HEALING AND HELPING...AND COUNTING

Covenant Ministries of Benevolence celebrates its 125th anniversary this year, commemorating the founding of the Home of Mercy in Chicago and the “Home of Mercy spirit” that over the years has spawned a multitude of ministries.

One of the newest initiatives is Covenant Initiatives for Care. Founded in 2010, it provides an overarching structure to help administer numerous affiliated and start-up ministries.

One of those newer ministries is Faith House in Grand Rapids, Michigan, an enabling residence located on the campus of Covenant Village of the Great Lakes, a Covenant retirement community. Thornapple and First Evangelical Covenant churches raised funds for the new residence, working closely with Covenant Initiatives for Care. The residence joins eight other enabling residences with others in the development stage.

## COVENANT RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Covenant Retirement Communities continues to partner with local Covenant churches and other community organizations to help families learn how to talk with aging relatives about difficult subjects, such as when it is time to stop driving. Speakers from each of the fifteen Covenant retirement communities are available to provide programs, with online resources available at [www.HavingTheConversation.com](http://www.HavingTheConversation.com). The website includes articles and a video on how to get started; expert counsel on a variety of conversations; what to do when conversation stalls; contacts for helpful agencies and resources; and spiritual insight on aging.

## BJORKLUND HOUSE

Bjorklund House in Oak Forest, Illinois, worked with community groups, including a local motorcycle club and its ride for charity, along with various sponsors to raise \$50,000 for two handicapped vans.

## COVENANT CHILDREN MINISTRIES

Covenant Children Ministries (formerly Covenant Children’s Home) in Princeton, Illinois, is working with individuals, churches, and the denomination to restructure ministries to reach

children at their points of need, especially young people at risk.

## THE CHILDREN’S HOME

Outreach initiatives are being expanded at the Children’s Home of Cromwell, Connecticut, to provide services and resources for New England families with disabled children and young adults. Services include a Christian treatment center for struggling children and their families, as well as special education and outpatient therapy.

## COVENANTCARE AT HOME

Another non-profit ministry initiative, CovenantCare at Home, serves as a resource for local churches and conferences, providing Medicare-certified home health and private

The hospital also developed a “Mind and Memory” program that was presented at Covenant Home of Chicago in January, and collaborated with North Park University, Northeastern Illinois University, and community organizations and churches to offer a conference with panel discussions on ethics and ethnicity, health care challenges and opportunities, and religion in a health care environment.

Emanuel Medical Center in Turlock, California, extended its ministry reach to more than 30,000 people last year by forming a Community Health Education Team and hosting two major community events. The team invested nearly 2,000 volunteer hours in helping people find a physician of choice, providing complimentary health screenings, and educating thousands about heart-healthy living disciplines.

The first of two free community events featured Dave Dravecky, a former San Francisco



**The anatomically correct walk-through heart at Emanuel Medial Center attracted nearly 20,000 visitors in 2010. Volunteers use the heart to educate guests on a heart-healthy lifestyle.**

duty/personal assistance in California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota.

## OUR HOSPITALS

One of two hospitals operated by Covenant Ministries of Benevolence, Swedish Covenant Hospital in Chicago provides a variety of educational programs that are available to local Covenant churches upon request. Topics range from stroke prevention awareness to heart health and cancer prevention for women.

Giants pitcher and cancer survivor who shared his inspiring message with more than 400 individuals.

The second women’s cancer awareness event attracted more than 800 guests with bestselling author and motivational speaker Nicole Johnson the featured speaker. Capping the event was a volunteer gospel choir singing “God Will Take Care of You” as more than 100 cancer survivors marched through the audience.

# BUILDING CHURCHES IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

## A changing culture poses new challenges for churches in North America.

Navigate is the newest tool in a suite of Congregational Vitality resources designed to engage, empower, and equip every established church in the denomination to become a healthy missional church.

“By healthy, we mean pursuing Christ—by missional we mean pursuing Christ’s priorities in the world,” explains John Wenrich, director of Congregational Vitality.

Congregational Vitality training began with the Veritas workshop that focuses on the marks of a healthy missional church. The EPIC workshop explores elements of spirituality,

chemistry, and strategy in leading healthy missional change, equipping leaders with the necessary tools.

From CO-OP (Coaching of Pastors) and the strategic and organizational leadership development of pastors to the PULSE assessment tool that identifies 10 healthy missional markers for Covenant churches, the guiding principle remains the same: assist congregations to live and minister in ways that are civil, compassionate, and Christ-honoring.

Navigate is designed to help established churches find their way to becoming healthy



## THE SECRET OF OUR SUCCESS

Peter Sung, director of church planting in the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, conducted a church planting training event in Southern California in early March—participants represented 35 church plants.

An interdenominational church planting organization called Vision360 came to observe and learn. One of the group’s directors, a man named Guy, later told Sung he had never experienced anything quite like this training center.

“Other groups consist of the same kinds of people that come together to speak their common language,” Guy observed. “But this training is different. Everyone is here. They are so different from each other. But they are finding a common mission that’s centered around the same gospel for their one God. It’s been amazing and I am inspired. I am truly blown away.”

“I look around the room and I, too, am blown away,” Sung recalls. “The room holds 35 future Covenant churches—black, white, yellow, and brown; female and male; rural, suburban, and urban; American, Canadian, and even Russian; young (21) and not as young (54).

“One of our conference directors of church planting, Kurt Carlson, stopped me in the hallway, put his hand on my shoulder, and asked: ‘Do you feel it? The momentum with church planting in the Covenant?’” Sung adds.

“I do feel it. It feels like the kingdom of God here on earth.”

and missional congregations in a post-modern, post-Christian world. Its “one-two-three” strategy includes one national gathering, two regional retreats, and three local church follow-up visits.

Navigate’s 2010 national gathering included 25 pastors, 70 lay leaders, two superintendents, seven conference vitality/revitalization staff members, two denominational staff members, four guest speakers/presenters, two prayer team members, and countless volunteers who provided logistical support.

“I saw ‘in it together’ in action at the Navigate launch,” says one pastor of the training. Another added, “Pastors and laity alike were treated with respect usually reserved for ‘successful churches.’ We felt like the heroes of a new adventure.”

A third pastor noted that besides getting tools and ideas, “we were refreshed spiritually. The talks were not only content-filled, but inspirational. The worship times were spirit-filled and deeply impactful.” Added another, “We have been greatly encouraged that our conference (and denomination) have been willing to invest resources in helping established churches like ours retool for ministry in our current world. I believe it bodes well for our future together!”

For more information and downloadable resources, visit the Congregational Vitality area of the website at [CovChurch.org/vitality](http://CovChurch.org/vitality).

## NEW EVANGELISM TEAM LEADER

John Teter has assumed the position as evangelism team leader with the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, a role that represents a new direction for the denomination’s focus on evangelism.

Teter will work half-time leading evangelism for the Covenant while remaining pastor of Fountain of Life Covenant Church in Long Beach, California.

“We have created a new model in the desire to create greater regional and local ownership for evangelism,” says Executive Minister Dave Olson. “As a working pastor, John will remain close to the challenges and opportunities of our local pastors and churches.”

The ultimate goal is to identify a team of five to 10 pastors in every conference to motivate and lead other pastors. Regionalizing the plan is designed to contextualize evangelism—taking into consideration the culture of each region.

# ONE GREAT LOCATION... TWO GREAT EVENTS

**This summer, Estes Park, Colorado, will host the 126th Covenant Annual Meeting and the Feast 2011.**



The stunning surroundings of YMCA Camp of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado, beckon Covenanters and their families for the Feast followed by the 126th Annual Meeting in June. Registration deadlines are fast approaching, and those planning on attending are reminded to lock in reservations for accommodations as soon as possible. Links for registration and housing for both events will be found by checking the “Events” tab on the home page of the Covenant website.

## FEAST 2011, JUNE 25-28

The early registration deadline is fast approaching for the Feast, which takes place June 25-28 in Estes Park, Colorado.

The Feast offers an opportunity like no other—an opportunity to share in the riches of God’s presence with Covenanters from across the country and around the world. Through rich times of worship, early morning prayers, or late-night campfires, participants will experience the wonder of life in God’s presence. Many participants come as families—the perfect family vacation they say.

The deadline to register early—and save nearly 23 percent—is May 4. Registration can be completed online at [CovChurch.org/feast](http://CovChurch.org/feast).

Each day begins with Awakenings—choose from quiet, contemplative activities or a morning jog or water aerobics. Following breakfast, choose from an array of spiritual learning experiences—explore prayer through the eyes of another, or learn how

music or photography can be a prayer language. Learn about classic Christian prayer practices, or discuss ideas for prayer in a fast-paced, technologically driven world. Choose an activity where your whole family can pray together, or let your children experience prayer activities created just for them.

Time then for worship, lunch, and afternoon recreation options—hiking, horseback riding, swimming, basketball, volleyball, miniature golf, the ropes course, the zip line, rafting. Or, head to quaint Estes Park for some shopping.

An evening of worship and great speakers follows dinner, with the evening concluding with Afterglow—gathering around a campfire to share stories of God’s faithfulness.

## 126TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COVENANT CHURCH, JUNE 28-30

Delegates will gather in Estes Park, Colorado, June 28-30 for the 126th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Highlights include the welcoming of new churches into membership, along with the commissioning and ordination of 58 individuals. Recipients of the T. W. Anderson and C. Irving Lambert awards will be recognized, as will a number of individuals joining Covenant offices in leadership roles.

A centerpiece of this year’s meeting will be a Covenant Life Roundtable discussion to



provide input for the Organizing for Mission initiative currently under way.

A 20-member project team is assessing the organizational capabilities, at both denominational and conference levels.

In the fall, the team will propose recommendations for future configuration of the structure, enhancement of processes, and resource distribution to most effectively move the mission and ministry forward in years to come.

As in years past, all morning and evening worship services will be broadcast live over the Covenant website. President Gary Walter’s report to delegates will be broadcast live as well, as will the welcoming of new churches into membership. Check the website for times and instructions for logging into the broadcasts.



**Mission trips, like this one from Merge Ministries to the Dominican Republic, provide opportunities for groups to build relationships and get involved in ministry.**

# GLOBAL MISSION, LOCAL VISION

**Covenant missionaries demonstrate the whole gospel by seeking to address the spiritual, social, emotional, mental, physical, and justice needs of people.**

There are numerous ways in which individuals can participate in mission and ministry through the Department of World Mission, from inviting itinerating missionaries to visit local churches to becoming a missionary or joining in mission and vision trips around the world.

More than 120 Covenant missionaries currently serve in 23 countries, accomplishing a variety of ministry tasks as diverse as church planting, medical mission, animal husbandry, agriculture, community development, education, business as mission, micro-industry, sports, theological education, accounting, visual arts, and music, to name a few.

Roy and Aleta Danforth, who serve in the Central African Republic (CAR), provide one example of the ways in which dedicated individuals can make a difference. They assist subsistence farmers and their families to achieve food and nutritional security and ultimately have healthier families.

A nurse, Aleta focuses on ministries of compassion and friendships among the Fulani people while Roy, an agriculturalist, works with a variety of groups in the area of agricultural development. Their ministry, Community Health Evangelism, integrates evangelism with community based development work, experimenting with new varieties of staple crops—vegetables, beans, fruits—as well as animal husbandry and fish in order to determine their suitability to local conditions.

Since beginning their work twelve years ago, they have reached out to more than 100 villages. “More importantly, families are being

fed and the love of Christ is being modeled through their ministry,” says Curt Peterson, executive minister of world mission.

## MISSION VISITS

Missionaries on home assignment travel throughout the United States and Canada to visit ministry partners in local Covenant churches. They share insights gleaned from working in urban and rural settings and serving cross-culturally in business as mission, church planting, community development, evangelism, and youth and children’s ministries. Contact Covenant World Mission to arrange visits.

## MISSION SERVICE

The Covenant has a historic commitment to mission, offering four paths for individuals interested in mission service. The Covenant commissions, sends, and cares for long-term, project, and short-term missionaries serving around the world, as well as assisting local Covenant churches desiring to send mission teams to serve alongside international ministry partners. To learn more, visit [CovChurch.org/mission](http://CovChurch.org/mission). Those interested in serving should contact Covenant World Mission.

## MISSION TRIPS

Many mission trip opportunities are available through the de-

partment as well as Covenant Merge Ministries. Mission trips provide opportunities for groups to build relationships and get involved in ministry alongside national partners around the world. One example is a two-week program in Taiwan teaching conversational English. Teams will build friendships with Chinese students, fellow team members, and church workers, and will experience Chinese culture and hospitality as the local churches provide housing and food, also providing an opportunity for team members to share their faith in a variety of settings.

## VISION TRIPS

These experiences provide additional opportunities to learn more about how Jesus Christ is transforming communities and cultures through the ministries of Covenant missionaries and international ministry



**Children at a VBS program in Thailand learn to play traditional Thai musical instruments.**

partners. For example, the Covenant has been partnering with ministries in Ecuador since 1947. Participants on vision trips have opportunities to encourage local pastors, learn about their ministries, and visit community projects connected to the Covenant Church of Ecuador including schools, public health initiatives, eco-theology, and farming.

## MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

World Mission partners with a variety of international ministries and missionaries in numerous project areas. One way of drawing attention to these initiatives is the annual vacation Bible school (VBS) project, which offers children in the United States and Canada the opportunity to learn about international mission, other cultures, and the children in other parts of the world that the VBS gifts will assist. The 2011 VBS mission project, "Football and Flutes for Thailand," will focus on outreach to children in two locations in Thailand, near two Covenant camps. Children in Thailand will receive Bibles and Christian resources and will learn about Christ through music (using traditional Thai and Western instruments), sports ministry, and English lessons.

## CAMP MINISTRY IN RUSSIA

In partnership with the Association of Covenant Camps and Conference Centers, this summer's campers will help support camp ministries in Russia, encouraging Russian children and youth to get involved in sports through sports teams and sports camps. This project will provide scholarships for campers in Russia, help purchase new equipment (sport and camping gear, tents), and train Russian staff. A key emphasis will be on training and developing the next generation of Christian camp ministry leaders there.

## WORKSHOPS

Covenant World Mission staff is available to lead workshops that can be tailored to address the global ministries in which a particular local church is involved. One workshop prepares teams traveling to another country for one or two-week mission experiences, exploring team building, cultural awareness, biblical foundations, and spiritual preparation.

To learn more about these and other world mission opportunities, visit [CovChurch.org/mission](http://CovChurch.org/mission), email the department at [world.mission@covchurch.org](mailto:world.mission@covchurch.org), or call the staff at (773) 907-3318.

# A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR WOMEN IN CONGO

**Paul Carlson Partnership is helping to develop a new role for women in Congo: economic leadership.**

After just one year of operation in northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Farmers to Markets program developed by Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP) is demonstrating significant progress in improving the position of women in their families and communities, which was one of the project's key objectives.

Formed in partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), this agricultural microfinance program has succeeded in attracting large numbers of individual subsistence farmers—1,400 to date—more than half of them women.

"Women are part of every program or project we undertake, from medical care to education to economic development," notes Byron Miller, PCP executive director.

Traditionally, women have done most of the work and the men have taken the money. "Now, through participating in accountability groups, we are hearing men say that they will share the work with the women, and share the financial decision-making with them too," Miller says. "Women are telling us, 'Now I can speak! I could never speak up before, but now I have a voice!'"

In addition to farming, women are well represented in the ranks of bicycle entrepreneurs who carry farm products to commercial shipping ports, and are increasingly represented in the group of wholesalers who purchase goods in the Ubangi region and transport them to Kinshasa (the capital) to sell at higher prices.

Medical support remains a core driver in PCP's work, helping five hospitals and 94 clinics operated by the Congo Covenant Church (CEUM) serving 563,000 people. Support includes crucial diagnostic equipment and medications. Support also is provided for a nursing school operated by CEUM.

Other special projects support CEUM elementary and secondary schools, including new metal roofs on buildings and new textbooks for teachers. Paul Carlson Partnership works closely with the Department of Women Ministries and its Educate the Girls program, raising money for scholarships for girls to attend secondary school. Women Ministries is in the process of building a school for older girls and young women who had to leave school earlier and would like to return, and the Paul Carlson Partnership has committed to build a dormitory for those students.



**Farmers groups in Congo receive training in agriculture and money management through Farmers to Markets.**

# NEW MEDIA MEANS MORE WAYS TO CONNECT

**The Department of Communication explores new ways of informing, connecting, and resourcing Covenanters.**

A redesigned Covenant website, new mobile applications for smart phones, and a new series of live webcasts from the Covenant Media Center in Chicago are among new resources developed for individuals, local churches, conferences, and affiliated ministries by the Department of Communication.

## COVCHURCH.ORG

The new Covenant website reflects a clean, crisp look incorporating user-friendly tools and a more robust navigation structure. On average, more than 70,000 unique visitors access some 225,000 page views of information and resources each month.

## COVLINK

A new mobile application—called CovLink—was released in February supporting iPhones and Android devices. It includes access to the daily online Covenant news report, a collection of key Covenant videos, a listing of major Covenant events, and links to Covenant Twitter and Facebook pages for easy access. A Covenant church locator tool is being developed and will be added soon.

## LIVE WEBCASTS

The first in a series of live webcasts from the Media Center, broadcast in December, focused on challenges and opportunities in urban ministry. A second webcast March 23 explored the growing area of spiritual direction, with additional topics to be presented throughout the year via the Covenant website. Individuals are not only able to watch and listen to the live discussions, but are able to join in side chats with other viewers—a moderator forwards interesting questions or comments from the chat to webcast panel participants.

## LIVE EVENT COVERAGE

Morning and evening worship services during June's Annual Meeting in Estes Park, Colorado, will be broadcast live over the Covenant website as in years past. President Gary Walter's report to delegates also will be broadcast live. The broadcasts, as well as videotaped portions of events including

T. W. Anderson and C. Irving Lambert Award recipients, will be posted on the Covenant website for later viewing.

Stories and photos will be published as events unfold during each day of the Annual Meeting—that collection of material will be found in the special Annual Meeting section of the Covenant website.

Those subscribing to Covenant Newswire—who found their daily news headline email service disrupted when the new website



**Participants prepare for live webcast on spiritual direction in the new Covenant Media Center.**

was introduced—are advised to revisit the Covenant website home page and re-subscribe using the new Covenant Newswire link.

## THE COVENANT COMPANION

While digital media for some seems all the rage these days, for thousands of others the many print publications produced by the department remain very much in demand.

The excellence of *The Covenant Companion* was once again recognized with seven top awards presented by Associated Church Press, which represents some 200 religious publications throughout North America. The association is the oldest religious press organization whose member publications collectively represent several million

subscribers.

A magazine feature article on immigration earned an Award of Excellence (first place) in the "In-Depth Coverage: Magazine" category—the first time the *Companion* has won this award. Another top award included an Award of Merit (2nd place) for a devotional/inspirational article. Five honorable mention awards were given in categories of interview, column, personally useful article, professional resource, and seasonal article.

Another popular new feature this year is the monthly "Compass Bearings" column by President Walter, which provides background and context for the direction of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

"Companion subscribers receive each

month an issue packed with high quality, thoughtful, inspiring, and challenging articles and columns—content that is recognized by our peers as simply excellent," notes Don Meyer, executive minister.

Those interested in subscribing to the *Covenant Companion* can do so online by visiting the Covenant website.

## THE COVENANT HOME ALTAR

Another popular resource is *The Covenant Home Altar*, a daily devotional guide written by Covenanters for Covenanters. Subscribers receive four quarterly issues delivered by mail.

Subscriptions to the *Home Altar* can be ordered online as well.





## PREPARING FOR GROWTH

**The Department of the Ordered Ministry puts focus on connecting churches with one another and with pastors available for call.**

A new initiative, “Connecting in the Covenant,” seeks to provide new ways for clergy and laity to connect with one another and explore numerous resources provided by the denomination, conferences, and affiliated ministries.

This new effort is particularly important as the Evangelical Covenant Church continues to grow numerically and becomes increasingly diverse in a number of dimensions.

A pilot presentation took place during a February gathering of lay leaders in Texas, sponsored by the Department of the Ordered Ministry and the Midsouth Conference. The two-day retreat included worship, an opportunity for leaders to become better acquainted, and presentations by representatives of several denominational departments that reviewed available resources and shared ministry ideas.

Tim Johnson and Paul DeNeui, representing North Park Theological Seminary, led sessions discussing God’s global mission, the specific mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church, and a brief lesson in Covenant history.

“Our mission together will only be enhanced by more individuals understanding what makes us distinctly the Evangelical Covenant Church,” says Christine Olfelt, Covenant Orientation manager. “We hope that this orientation model can be replicated in other areas of the country, and look forward to seeing how it will help us grow deeper in Christ and further in mission.”

Conferences interested in hosting a “Connecting in the Covenant” weekend

seminar should contact the Department of the Ordered Ministry.

### COVCONNECT

A new online tool—CovConnect—has been introduced to connect pastors who are available for call with churches that are seeking staff.

As part of this process, every individual credentialed for ministry by the Evangelical Covenant Church is required to complete an online profile that shares information in

areas of personal history, personality traits, preferences, areas of giftedness, and ministry practices. Even if a minister is not seeking a new call, the information helps the Covenant better understand the needs of its ministers.

Congregations and institutions with open ministry positions will be invited to fill out a similar profile, providing information about their corporate history, culture, personality preferences, perceived needs, and general approach to ministry. By comparing minister and congregational profiles, CovConnect assists conference superintendents as they help guide both churches and ministers in filling open positions.

While CovConnect is designed to enhance the probability that a minister “open to call” will be considered for a ministry position, it does not presume to make actual matches or predict compatibility. The reports it generates are considered as “conversation starters” for pastors and congregations.

The program, introduced last October, replaces the former CovLink system in place for ten years as well as the open to call procedure used since the sixties. It was developed by the Department of the Ordered Ministry and the Office of Information Technology in collaboration with the Covenant Ministerium and conference superintendents and is based on a program designed by Michael P. Green for use by the Evangelical Free Church.

## A SABBATH FOR PASTORS

A new retreat opportunity for Covenant pastors will be introduced in late spring as part of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program administered by the Department of the Ordered Ministry.

Designed to reinforce the practice of holy rest, the three-day contemplative retreat—the Sabbath Retreat—will provide participants with an opportunity to pause in the presence of God, moving through the rhythms of relinquishing, receiving, and resting.

Since the program’s inception six years ago, more than 1,000 Covenant pastors, missionaries, and chaplains have participated in SPE grants to pursue individual learning interests as well as Covenant-provided opportunities and scholarships for study at North Park Theological Seminary’s Center for Spiritual Direction.

Special grants are available to conferences to help establish and resource spiritual director networks. Revisioning retreats, learning seminars, and cohorts also continue—three new learning cohorts were created last year. A cohort is a small group of ministers from around the United States and Canada committed to study together for approximately nine months in areas of leadership, pastoral caring, and preaching.

Credentialed Covenant ministers interested in exploring grant opportunities should contact the Department of the Ordered Ministry.



# IN IT TOGETHER

**The Department of Christian Formation offers a variety of seminars and resources designed to enrich your walk with Christ and one another.**

Spiritual formation is a continuing journey of being transformed into the likeness of Christ, experiencing and expressing love for God and others. A variety of resources have been developed to help churches and individuals grow deeper in Christ and further in mission.

## SEMINARS AND SMALL GROUPS

Seminars are one of the many ways in which the Department of Christian Formation works with local churches to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with God, as reflected in the following examples that range from parenting workshops to seminars designed specifically for Hispanic congregations.

### *Understanding Our Children*

Faced with children who don't listen or behave badly? This seminar is designed for parents searching for ways to better communicate with children. Last year, Steve Burger served 42 churches with more than 650 participants in 20 locations. To schedule free parenting seminars, contact Burger by email at [steve.burger@cov-church.org](mailto:steve.burger@cov-church.org) or by telephone at (773) 442-6574. Christian Formation also offers several seminars especially designed for Hispanic churches.

### *Parents as Spiritual Mentors*

In a busy and hectic world, is it possible for parents to draw on the strength of God and find peace? Can one have a loving relationship with God? Can children do the same?

This seminar is designed to equip parents to

help children mature spiritually and draw the family closer to God.

### *Nueva Vida en Cristo*

Seminar participants deal with two important themes: how to disciple a new believer and how to strengthen their daily walk with God through the study of the word. Two helpful resources are used in the discipleship process (Nueva Vida en Cristo and CRECER).

### *CRECER en la extensión del reino de Dios*

Participants are encouraged to prepare their personal testimony as a simple, yet profound

way to share the gospel, as well as explore additional ways to share the discipleship journey with a new believer.

### *Amigos de la misión*

Designed for lay leaders, pastors, and church staff, this seminar prepares participants to teach about membership in the Evangelical Covenant Church, using the new membership material, *Amigos de la misión*.

### *El Pacto con Dios*

This seminar teaches children's ministry volunteers how to use the children's curriculum, *El Pacto con Dios*, written for Hispanic churches and teaching biblical truths using Bible stories in creative and interactive ways. To schedule any of these free seminars, contact Wilson Herrera by email at [wilson.herrera@covchurch.org](mailto:wilson.herrera@covchurch.org) or by telephone at (773) 442-6571.

## PRAYER RETREATS

There are three guided prayer retreats available to churches, designed to draw people into a deeper relationship with Christ and cultivate the practice of prayer.

A trained facilitator guides participants in a biblically based experiential prayer retreat. Supporting resources can be found on the Covenant website.

### *An Invitation to Prayer*

Under the leadership of a trained facilitator, this retreat encourages participants to hear God speak personally, to feel more deeply



**Wilson Herrera leads a CRECER seminar at El taller del Alfarero Centro Cristiano, Gardena, California. The Department of Christian Formation offers a variety of workshops and resources designed to help people of all ages grow in their relationship with God.**

connected to others, to discover (or rediscover) a longing to continue deeper levels of prayer, and to become more attentive to the Holy Spirit in order to live in the stream of God's will.

### ***Streams and Pathways: An Introduction to Spiritual Practices***

The focus is on allowing God to shape "streams of living water and pathways through the wilderness" in our lives. Time is provided to listen and notice movements of God, working through a variety of spiritual practices to help participants hear God's still, small voice. There is an opportunity to draft a rule of life—a pattern of spiritual practices that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness.

### ***A Time to Breathe***

This interactive retreat for youth provides guidance and experience in spiritual practices so that participants may grow in their journey with God. Youth workers and students explore what it means to be in the presence of God, examining techniques for looking at prayer in new ways as well as multi-sensory approaches to interact with God.

For more information, contact Millie Lungren by email at [millie.lungren@covchurch.org](mailto:millie.lungren@covchurch.org) or by telephone at (800) 338-IDEA (4332).

### **MINISTRY COACHES**

Children and family ministry coaching is a new initiative, designed to help children and families in Covenant churches grow as disciples of Christ. There are currently fourteen coaches—all were selected in collaboration with conference superintendents.

Coaches help churches more effectively network and help ministry workers find a mentor. They also provide encouragement and support through listening, consulting, and prayer. Plans call for regional gatherings, both in person and via technology.

Coaches also can serve as a conduit to bring the visions, ministry ideas, and concerns of local churches to the attention of conferences and denominational offices. To connect with a coach in a particular region, contact Katie Isaza by email at [katie.isaza@covchurch.org](mailto:katie.isaza@covchurch.org) or by telephone at (773) 442-6575.

### **DISCIPLESHIP/CONFIRMATION**

*The Journey*—the denomination's discipleship and confirmation curriculum—will be released this fall as an audiobook. It will be

automatically included with the purchase of student journals and parent/mentor guides—the price for both journals remains unchanged.

The audiobook can be used to support students with learning disabilities or visual impairments, as well as students who are auditory learners by allowing them to listen, or listen along while they read. It also allows parents and mentors a convenient way to keep pace with what students are studying, and can be used as a daily devotional.

*The Journey* is available online from [CovenantBookstore.com](http://CovenantBookstore.com).

### **MINISTRY IDEA EXCHANGE**

Connecting churches and pastors with good ministry ideas is the purpose of the Ministry Idea Exchange, part of the online resources area of the Covenant website.

This website area contains original resources developed by Covenanters, as well as suggestions for new ministry initiatives.

"We hope that the ideas and material shared in the Ministry Idea Exchange by people across the Covenant will strengthen and encourage the growth of ministries within our churches," says Millie Lungren, who gives leadership to this project.

To learn more, contact Lungren by email at [millie.lungren@covchurch.org](mailto:millie.lungren@covchurch.org) or by telephone at (800) 338-IDEA (4332).

### **MY GROW ADVENTURE WITH GOD**

Many children may be unsure how making a commitment to Christ affects their daily lives. A little booklet, *My Grow Adventure with God*, encourages children ages five to twelve to reflect on ways they can grow closer to God, allowing them to write or draw ways in which they plan on expressing their love to God throughout the year.

*My Grow Adventure with God* is available online from [CovenantBookstore.com](http://CovenantBookstore.com).



## **THE LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT OF CAMPING**

During Covenant camp experiences last summer, one out of nine campers made a first-time commitment to Christ, while nearly one of three rededicated their lives to Christ. It is estimated that nearly one out of three campers already had expressed faith in Christ by the time they arrived at camp.

More than 1,000 counselors and staff were trained and served last year, making the Covenant camping program one of the most effective leader development resources.

Through contributions received during summer sessions, Covenant campers last year supported the construction of two camps in Thailand and helped fund training for camping leaders in Russia.

It is expected that within the next one to two years, the level of contributions from campers over the past twenty years will top the \$1 million mark.

# MORE THAN DISASTER RELIEF

**Unlike other “first-responder” organizations, Covenant World Relief stays to rebuild communities following a disaster.**



Relief, recovery, and restoration describe well the challenges that Covenant World Relief (CWR) is addressing as residents of Haiti and volunteer agencies attempt to bring a sense of stability to this region that was devastated by an earthquake in 2010.

Within hours of that tragedy, CWR dollars were at work on the ground, funding the purchase of basic supplies like food and water, administered through World Relief International, one of CWR's key partners.

Another key CWR partner in administering medical relief is Medical Teams International, which is leading another group of volunteers—including Covenanters from the medical profession—to Haiti to do medical work April 28 through May 6.

Unlike “first-responder” organizations that specialize in immediate relief initiatives and then move fairly quickly to address other worldwide needs, Covenant World Relief remains on the ground for the longer haul, focusing on helping residents to rebuild their lives through various community development initiatives.

“We choose to work through partnerships,” says CWR director David Husby. “Most of our partners are Covenant or Covenant-connected organizations. These partnerships leverage resources, empower local ministries, increase local involvement, reduce overhead, and facilitate immediate responses to disaster and human suffering.”

Having been administering assistance for more than sixty years, Covenant World

Relief has a focused approach to its work that minimizes administrative overhead—currently, 90 percent of every donated dollar goes directly into serving those in need.

One story coming out of Kenya illustrates well the impact that just one CWR initiative can have in helping transform the lives of an entire community—and beyond.

Just outside Nairobi, the Kitengala Covenant Church needed a source of ongoing funds to help sustain its ministry. In partnership with CWR, a poultry microenterprise project was funded that would allow the church to purchase one-day-old chicks from local hatcheries and raise them to lay eggs and provide a source of protein-rich meat for market. Profits from the venture would be used to improve the church facilities and buy musical instruments.

The plan quickly changed as some 250 Congolese refugees escaping civil turmoil found their way to Kenya—people desperately in need of food and basic necessities. A large number were orphans whose parents had been killed in the fighting. The Kitengala leaders quickly recognized a new direction for their microenterprise efforts.

They purchased food and basic supplies, started English classes so the children could enter the school system, and

they helped adults find jobs. Inspired by this initiative, leaders of the Evangelical Covenant Church of Kenya decided to expand the efforts even further, focusing on funding for school fees, books, uniforms, and school supplies.

“I am thankful for the generous Covenant churches and individuals who give to Covenant World Relief so that these young Congolese refugees have a chance to break out of the cycle of poverty and start their new life with hope,” says Husby.

“When you give to Covenant World Relief, you are helping bring about real change in the lives of the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized around the world.”

For more information, visit the CWR area of the Covenant website at [CovChurch.org/relief](http://CovChurch.org/relief).



**Covenant World Relief is working to bring stability back to this region in Haiti devastated by earthquake in 2010.**

# HEALING A BROKEN WORLD

**The Covenant Church is committed to “putting things right” through ministries of compassion, mercy, and justice.**

“Joining God in making things right in our broken world” is more than a slogan for the Department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice—it defines the core of its purpose.

The department exists to equip, empower, network, and mobilize Covenant churches and Covenant ministries; develop and strengthen ministries of compassion, mercy, and justice; and collaborate with Covenant departments, affiliates, and conferences to create awareness, develop resources, and establish initiatives.

One major resource developed in collaboration with the executive vice president’s office is the resource paper, “The ECC and the Ministry of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice.” Another is the Resolution on Criminal Justice approved by the Annual Meeting. These documents and others are available on the Covenant website.

Affinity gatherings were held last year in two conferences—the Central Conference,

led by Debbie Griffith-Samuels, and the North Pacific Conference, led by Krisann Jarvis-Foss. Guest speakers included individuals who were formerly incarcerated. Affinity gatherings offer opportunities for encouragement and support, peer learning, sharing stories and resources, and exploring ways to raise awareness.

Other activities included a Midwinter Conference off-site visit to Chicago’s Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. The group included senior and youth pastors, lay volunteers, conference staff, and representatives from WellSpring and the Center for Youth Ministries Studies.

## INVITATION TO RACIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Invitation to Racial Righteousness (I2RR) continues to be a meaningful way for churches to dialogue about racial righteousness and

move closer to becoming more rightly related to one another. Bayside of South Sacramento has hosted several of these events, using this encounter as a means for entering into deeper personal relationships. Other churches hosting an I2RR in 2011 include Irvington Covenant in Portland March 18-20, and Covenant Congregational in Boston April 1-3.

## SANKOFA

The Sankofa journey is another important pathway in pursuit of racial righteousness. Two events were held last year with another this past March.

Sankofa reunions continue to be powerful times of reconnecting and sharing stories. A Sankofa reconnect breakfast was held during this year’s Midwinter Conference, initiated by John Perkins, one of the evening worship service speakers.

To learn about these events contact the Department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice. More information also is available at [CovChurch.org/justice](http://CovChurch.org/justice).

## “JUST WOMEN” Women Ministries leads the fight against human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

“Advancing God’s kingdom through the ministries of women” is the focus of Project 2011: Just Women, launched by the Department of Women Ministries. The project is inspired by the story of Lydia in Acts 16, an inspiring model of the difference one woman can make.

“Project 2011: Just Women focuses on women—individuals and leaders of women—drawing out and encouraging the spirit of Lydia to strengthen the church and impact our world,” says Ruth Hill, executive minister of Women Ministries.

The project will create resources for individual engagement during the year, as well as launch a new healing component to the AVA ministry and begin a new effort in the

anti-human trafficking ministry.

### BREAK THE CHAINS

The Break the Chains ministry initiative developed by the Department of Women Ministries has been at the forefront of the anti-human trafficking fight for several years.

More than a half million dollars has been contributed by Covenanters and others to fund this initiative that has focused on rescuing girls and women from being trafficked, helping restore them to physical, emotional and spiritual health, and implementing training and resources focused on prevention.

A key tool in prevention is New Day for children, a faith-based organization started by

members of Oakland Covenant Church in California to rescue teens from prostitution. Currently the boarding school where rescued girls live has nine residents—it can handle up to twenty-five girls ages ten to eighteen.

The hope is that heightened awareness of the scourge of human trafficking will inspire support for efforts to confront and bring to a halt this worldwide injustice.

### ADVOCACY FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE

The new AVA online tutorial went public in March and already has drawn considerable interest. Purpose of the four-year Advocacy for Victims of Abuse project is to provide

information on issues of domestic violence and childhood sexual assault, says AVA director Yvonne DeV Vaughn. “Given the prevalence of abuse—nearly one in three women are victims—all faith leaders need basic knowledge about these two types of violence.”

The online tutorial includes ten lessons, allowing participants to exit and re-enter the lessons as desired for added convenience. There is a link that allows clergy members to record completion with the Board of the Ordered Ministry and for others to register completion with the Department of Women Ministries.

The tutorial can be found at [www.ava-online.org](http://www.ava-online.org).



North Park welcomed the second-highest number of new undergraduate students in its history for the spring semester.

# LIVES OF SIGNIFICANCE AND SERVICE

North Park University reaches new milestones as a Christian, urban, multicultural community of learning.

Offering an educational experience that is distinctively Christian, uniquely urban, and intentionally multicultural coupled with an expanding worldwide focus, it is little wonder that enrollment at North Park University continues its upward trend.

## NEW ENROLLMENT RECORD

A record number of students are taking spring classes at North Park University, continuing a trend that began in 2005.

"There are 3,084 students taking classes through the university, surpassing last year's record mark of 3,068," said Mark Olson, dean of enrollment and director of church relations.

The university also welcomed the second-highest number of new undergraduate students in its history for the spring semester, said Olson, noting that 102 new undergraduates began coursework in January.

"Looking ahead to the fall of 2011, we have a record number of applicants and admits at this point in time, and deposits are ahead of a year ago," Olson said.

Strong recruiting efforts tell part of the story, but the high priority North Park places on retaining existing students also has been key, Olson said. "Faculty and staff are making sure to give great service. They make themselves available to students."

The university's core values to be intentionally Christian, urban, and multicultural are decisive factors for many students, Olson said. North Park is one of just a few liberal arts colleges with its main campus located in an urban environment. The school continues

to be an anchor in one of the country's most diverse zip codes and takes full advantage of the world-class resources of Chicago, from the arts and culture to student internships and professional development opportunities.

## NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN CHINA

North Park University has reached agreement with five Chinese universities to establish cross-cultural learning and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.

The institutions agree to promote student and faculty exchanges, make available degree-completion opportunities for Chinese students seeking to study at North Park, and identify programs of mutual interest for all students.

The five institutions include Beijing Union University (College of Arts and Sciences) in Beijing, Jianwen University in Yantai, Anhui University of Finance and Economics in Bengbu, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in Guangzhou, and Leshan Normal University in Leshan.

"North Park University is delighted to expand its international higher education opportunities with China," said North Park University President David L. Parkyn. "With the resources available through our faculty and the City of Chicago, North Park will feature programs of study in collaboration with Chinese universities that will enhance the learning opportunities available to our students and prepare these graduates for a world in which dialogue and

exchange are valued ideals."

"North Park University and Chicago have strong relationships with China," said North Park University Provost Joseph Jones. "North Park has hosted numerous faculty exchanges and student exchange programs in the past, and we already have a large number of Asian faculty and students. With the signing of the agreements, the opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration will expand rapidly."

## NEW NAME FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CENTER

The Center for Spiritual Direction operated through North Park Theological Seminary will be renamed the C. John Weborg Center for Spiritual Direction during a dinner on July 30, location of the dinner to be announced later.

"We wanted to honor John for all the leadership he has given the Covenant in the



The seminary plays a crucial role in instructing students in the tradition of the Covenant Church.

area of spiritual direction," says Linda Cannell, academic dean at the seminary. The school operates the center in cooperation with the Department of the Ordered Ministry and the Department of Christian Formation.

Nicholas Wolterstorff will deliver the keynote address. He taught philosophy for 30 years at Calvin College and for 13 years at Yale Divinity School, where he was professor emeritus of philosophical theology.

Claire Kingma Wolterstorff, an Episcopal priest and former spiritual director at Yale Divinity School, will give the commencement address for center graduates the following day.

Weborg, professor emeritus of theology at the seminary, is considered to be one of the most influential people in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Although he officially retired from the seminary, he has continued to teach courses at the center.

The center was begun as part of a Lilly Endowment Sustaining Pastoral Excellence grant.

## NEW LOOK AT COVENANT AFFIRMATIONS

*Living Faith: Reflections on Covenant Affirmations* is a newly released book containing reflections by North Park Theological Seminary faculty on the central beliefs of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Edited by professors James Bruckner, Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, and Paul Koptak, the chapters provide a brief history and explore the meaning of each of the six affirmations of the Covenant: the Centrality of the Word of God; The Necessity of New Birth; A Commitment to the Whole Mission of the Church; The Church as a Fellowship of Believers; A Conscious Dependence on the Holy Spirit; and The Reality of Freedom in Christ.

Covenant President Gary Walter says the book's title can be understood in two ways: "When we understand 'living' as an adjective, we are called beyond an intellectual acknowledgment of a set of theological propositions into an actual engagement of living with God. When we understand 'living' as a verb, we are called to put what we believe into practice as we live for God."

A set of discussion questions in each chapter makes the book a useful resource for study groups as well as individuals.

*Living Faith* was commissioned by the Making Connections Initiative grant, funded by the Lilly Endowment.

# TRANSFORMING EVERY ALASKAN COMMUNITY

## Alaska Christian College celebrates ten years of preparing students for whole-life discipleship.

Alaska Christian College (ACC) alumni and staff will celebrate the school's tenth anniversary during a Reunion and Renewal Weekend May 12-15 on the campus in Soldotna, Alaska.

Interested individuals will find additional information on the school's website at [www.alaskachristiancollege.org](http://www.alaskachristiancollege.org), where online registration information is also available.

The "spirit-filled weekend" is designed to renew relationships with each other and with the Lord, says President Keith Hamilton. "We are desiring that as many as possible come to celebrate what God has done through Alaska Christian College in these last ten years."

Former students and their families, including spouses and children, as well as staff and volunteers are welcome to attend. "If you attended ACC at any time, for any length of time, we consider you part of our family and want you to join us for this exciting time of celebration and renewal," the website invitation reads. "We will have volunteers to be with children of participants during the worship times."

Participants will be housed primarily on campus, though some also may be housed in staff or alumni homes, depending on the number of participants. Those desiring to stay with friends in the area or arrange other options are free to do so. Meals will be served at the Peninsula Conference Center on campus, beginning with Thursday evening dinner and continuing through lunch on Sunday.

Activities will include worship, large and small group gatherings, class connect groups, seminars, a concert, Nikiski pool, and a beach bonfire on Sunday, among other things.

Alaska Christian College exists to empower Alaska Natives through biblically based education and Christian formation to pursue excellence in character, learning, and service as followers of Christ. It offers two certificate programs—a one-year certificate in biblical studies and a two-year certificate in biblical and general studies.

The school opened its doors on September 16, 2001, to 22 students from 13 different tribal and ethnic groups from seven different states, 18 of which were of Native Alaskan/American ethnic origin. To date, the college has served approximately 200 individuals who have completed at least one semester. Over the past 10 years, 90 percent of students have been Alaska Native.



Alaska Christian College has graduated more than 200 students since opening in 2001.

# PUTTING YOUR VALUES FIRST

**Covenant Trust Company helps Covenanters reach their financial goals and in the process enjoy peace of mind.**

In coming years, more than \$247 million will be distributed by Covenant Trust Company (CTC) to benefit local churches, Covenant camps, conference and denominational ministries, thanks to generous donors who have included legacy giving as part of their estate plans.

That is a substantial amount of money that can make a significant difference in the lives of real people in real places around the world, notes CTC President Ann Wiesbrock. That amount represents commitments made through the end of last year—the total will grow even larger over time as new plans are established, she adds.

Covenant ministries are not the only beneficiaries—individual donors benefit as well as they work with CTC specialists in developing their estate plans. “People want information and assistance as they think about the future,” Wiesbrock notes.

“They need help figuring out how to get where they want to be financially, how to make it to and through retirement, and how to leave a significant legacy to people and causes they love,” Wiesbrock says. “They want peace of mind—and we can help with all of that.”

“One of the questions I hear most often is, ‘Why should we work with Covenant Trust Company for these things?’” Wiesbrock continues. “My answer is always to think about the value that we add:

- We’re professional asset managers with a disciplined investment strategy
- We’re tuned in to the Covenant and its ministries, so we understand the causes people want to support
- We’ll help our clients get it done now, and be there to work with them in the future

- We want to help people be as generous as they wish they could be
- We’re dedicated to helping local ministries grow the resources they need
- Our costs are extremely competitive compared to other financial professionals

“We care about people, not just their money,” Wiesbrock says. “And, we want to provide our clients peace of mind.”

“While it is exciting to report that more than \$19 million in legacy gifts are already at work in local Covenant ministries, I want these ministries to understand the long-term

value they gain by partnering with Covenant Trust Company. We add value in many ways—managing ministry assets, establishing and managing endowment funds, and growing legacy gifts.

“Our goal this year is to spread the word—not only that CTC is a great resource for every Covenant ministry, but also that we can assist people to manage their funds to meet their financial goals and in the process enjoy peace of mind. They’ll know they have taken care of themselves, their loved ones, and all the ministries they care about.”

## GOOD NEWS ON PENSION PLAN

**An important part of developing leaders is providing them a competitive employee benefits package.**

Despite the two-fold challenge of a volatile stock market and a struggling U.S. economy, both the Covenant Pension Plan and Bethany Benefit Service turned in outstanding performances during 2010.

The Covenant Pension Plan is a defined benefit pension plan that provides retirement benefits to more than 2,000 Covenant pastors and missionaries. Bethany Benefit Service provides medical, dental, prescription drug, vision, life and long-term disability benefits to some 1,200 pastors, missionaries and office workers, covering more than 3,200 lives.

The Covenant Pension Plan has fully recovered from the dramatic 2008/2009 worldwide investment market decline. It is fully funded with assets at 101 percent of liabilities. Investment returns have exceeded target performance levels for each of the last reporting periods: month, quarter, one year, three years, five years, seven years, and ten years!

Bethany’s 2010 medical premium rate increase of 4 percent was well below the average industry double-digit medical rate increase. The combination of comprehensive coverage and attractive premium rates resulted in a 3.6 percent enrollment increase during the month of January this year.

The Covenant Pension Plan and Bethany Benefit Service are managed by the Department of Finance under the direction of the Covenant Board of Pensions and Benefits.