

DON MEYER, *Editor*
STEVEN VÉLEZ LUCE, *Designer*
EVY LENNARD, *Editorial Assistant*
JAN GRAY, *Production Manager*

THE COVENANT

reporter

SPRING 2012

COVCHURCH.ORG



DEEPER IN CHRIST, FURTHER IN MISSION

“Deeper in Christ... Further in Mission” is more than a slogan—it captures the heart of Covenant mission and ministry as together we long to be found faithful to God’s call to make a difference in the lives of real people in real places.

“As a Covenant family, we seek to join God in God’s mission to see more disciples, among more populations, in a more caring and just world,” says President Gary Walter.

Five mission priorities help guide the Covenant’s response to that challenge, Walter adds, focusing on starting and strengthening churches, making and deepening disciples, developing leaders, loving mercy and doing justice, and serving globally.

The theme of this year’s Annual Meeting is “Found Faithful: Serving Globally,” with each of the remaining mission priorities to be highlighted in succeeding annual meetings. The Annual Meeting will take place June 21-24 in Irvine, California.

Reflecting on the “Found Faithful” theme, Walter recalls the influence of one individual who through a simple encounter proved instrumental in introducing him to faith. He stresses the importance of being faithful to God’s leading in every aspect of life, especially in the small acts of obedience that often escape attention. “You never know what God

is setting in motion by any single act of simple faithfulness,” he observes.

NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVES

It is that sensitivity to God’s movement in people’s lives and commitment to radical obedience that underpins three significant ministry initiatives that will unfold this year.

The first is the Matthew-Micah project, rooted in Matthew 25 and Micah 6:8 and grounded in Jesus’s admonition to feed the hungry, give a cup of cold water, clothe the hungry, heal the sick, and visit those in prison. The prophet Micah exhorts the Hebrews to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. An early part of this emphasis will focus on the U.S. prison system in general and the growing challenge of mass incarceration in particular.

The second emphasis is on evangelism and the new “72” resources being developed. The “72” initiative is inspired by Luke 10 in which Jesus sends out 72 disciples to announce his coming. The material responds to an oft-stated uncertainty on the part of individuals when it comes to sharing faith, providing practical suggestions for sharing the gospel.

The third major project is the Covenant Kids Congo initiative, a partnership of the Congo Covenant Church, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and World Vision. This effort seeks to

Above: Gary Walter (right) introduces partners in the Covenant Congo Kids project with World Vision during the 2012 Midwinter Conference.

broaden and accelerate the level of response to desperate needs of people in Congo, an area ravaged by years of war and poverty. More information will be made available as the year progresses, with a major fall emphasis planned.

MARKS OF A FAITHFUL CHURCH

In reflecting on the mission momentum the Covenant has enjoyed in recent years, Walter identifies what he terms “marks” of having been found faithful as a denomination:

- The Covenant last year grew by three percent—20th consecutive year of growth
- In Covenant churches today, there is an average attendance of 184,050 on a given weekend—given absences, the true constituency more likely is 250,000
- One-half of all new church plants today are ethnic, multiethnic, or multicultural
- A number of new leaders are coming on the scene
- The upcoming CHIC youth gathering (July 15-20) with some 4,000 already registered

FOUND FAITHFUL

After a year in which the Covenant announced an unprecedented partnership with World Vision to address an unprecedented need in Congo, President Gary Walter reflects on the importance of being faithful to God's call.

When Nancy and I were newly married we had little time and little money. One Saturday afternoon in the fall she was going to be gone for a few hours and made a very reasonable request of things for me to get done while she was gone. We'd then top the day off with an inexpensive date night.

The problem was there was a college football game I really wanted to watch. I devised a strategy whereby I would watch the game, scramble some at halftime, and then scurry around some more after it was over. I knew going in I could not possibly finish the chores with this approach, but I figured if I made it look like I had been hard at work the whole time that would be enough to stay in her good graces.

It was a good game. It was a bad strategy. Nancy came home shortly after the final whistle while I was still getting out the tools. There was no date night.

Here's the problem. I was willing to be satisfied with creating an impression of faithfulness rather than actually being faithful; merely being thought of as faithful was a fully acceptable outcome. The illusion became as good as the standard. But half-step faithfulness will always and ultimately be exposed.

I think of Saul, the first king of Israel. His reign started well. He led Israel to victory after key victory to secure the land. In approaching a major battle with the dreaded Amalekites, God explicitly instructed that the entire spoils of victory be destroyed—every bit of the gold, silver, precious stones, and livestock. When the

victory was won, a big public display was made of destroying the treasure. Except Saul had secreted some of it away for himself. He had let his title create a sense of entitlement. God exposed his feigned faithfulness. From that point on, his reign was disgraced, eventually to be replaced by David.

By contrast, there is the poor widow who hoards nothing, but instead in her poverty drops two copper coins into the temple offering. Unknown to her, Jesus is watching. She receives the commendation of the Son of

God. She is found faithful.

I have served with three generations of Covenant pastors: the generation ahead of me that modeled so much, my own generation, and the gifted and godly younger leaders now making their mark.

No pastor is perfect. But every pastor I have ever known has wanted only one thing beneath it all: to be found faithful.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Aren't those the very words, and ultimately the only words, you want to hear?



Gary Walter surveys damage from Japan earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. Covenant World Relief funds were at work within hours.

If the narrow road is the faithful road, I want us to take the narrow road.

As your president, that is my deepest longing for us as a movement. In the hard decisions, in the challenging moments, in the earnest pleas for God's mercy and guidance, I can in all sincerity say that my hope for us is irreducibly captured in these two words: found faithful.

If the hard road is the faithful road, I want us to take the hard road. If the narrow road is the faithful road, I want us to take the narrow road. And if there is no road yet to the faithful place, I want us to make a new road.

That's why we are introducing a new extended theme of the same wording: found faithful. We are tying it to our clarified priorities, which I have previewed in an earlier column. In following the heart of God into the world, our five priorities are to start and strengthen churches; make and deepen disciples; develop leaders; love mercy—do justice; and serve globally.

Over the next five years, we will bring a spotlight to what we are doing in each of those areas. We will kick things off this year at the Annual Meeting with "Found Faithful: Serving Globally." Join us June 21-23 in Irvine, California.

Superintendent Garth Bolinder of the Midsouth Conference shared this insight with me: we make our commitments, and then our commitments make us. In other words, overtly naming our commitments (say, as in marriage and ordination vows) helps us keep our commitments. Keeping our commitments in turn shapes even deeper levels of identity and conviction around those same priorities.

We make this commitment: to be found faithful. Now may that commitment make us increasingly so.

Originally appeared as a Compass Bearings column in *The Covenant Companion*, March 2012. Reprinted by permission.

OUR FIVE MISSION PRIORITIES

The Covenant seeks to join God in God's mission to see more disciples, among more populations, in a more caring and just world.



Together, we are making a real difference in real people in real places with the good news of Jesus Christ as we pursue five mission priorities:

MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES

The Covenant is committed to reach people with the good news of new life in Christ, and then help them grow deeper in Christ. It is a lifelong journey of faith.

START AND STRENGTHEN CHURCHES

The Covenant is committed to start and strengthen healthy, missional churches, much like the Apostle Paul started and nurtured churches in the New Testament.

DEVELOP LEADERS

The Covenant is committed to invest in the personal and professional growth of clergy and expand training for laity, developing all leaders of the church.

LOVE MERCY, DO JUSTICE

The Covenant is committed to pursue compassion and justice throughout the world, providing tangible ways of extending the love of Jesus in deed and word.

SERVE GLOBALLY

The Covenant is committed to extend the whole gospel to the whole world, making and deepening disciples, starting and strengthening churches, developing leaders, and loving mercy and doing justice.



Baptism plays an important role in the life of the Covenant throughout the world, giving witness to the life-changing impact of Covenant ministry.

MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.—Matthew 28:19-20

How goes your walk with Christ? Are you yet alive in Christ? These questions, routinely asked by Covenant for bears, focus intently on beginning a relationship with Christ as well as growing and deepening that relationship.

The questions were most often asked in the context of community—the founders understood that companions for the journey can help guide and nurture our faith.

Spiritual direction is a ministry of listening, discernment, and prayer that takes place in a confidential setting of encouragement and compassion. A spiritual companion helps the individual discern the presence and work of God’s spirit in that person’s life. The goal is that one will grow closer to God and become more the person God created them to be.

There are more than 200 trained spiritual directors—each regional conference has a contact person available. To locate a contact person, visit CovChurch.org and search for “spiritual companionship.”

ONLINE RESOURCES ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE FORMATION

Followers of Christ are to be engaged in making disciples—the mission embodied in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). To pursue that mandate, one must define what it means to be a disciple and identify pathways to follow to become Christlike.

The online resource Intentional Discipleship will help churches create and implement a plan to encourage disciple formation.

“Becoming Christlike disciples does not

happen by osmosis,” one Christian Formation specialist observes. “It requires intentionality, where individuals seek God’s direction as they identify areas where their spiritual life needs to grow... and then act on that desire by setting personal goals for spiritual growth.”

Intentional Discipleship is designed to assist churches in helping people define spiritual growth goals and ways to accomplish those goals.

CONFIRMATION MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE IN AUDIOBOOK

The Journey, a relational and transformational discipleship and confirmation curriculum of the Evangelical Covenant Church, is now available in audiobook format.

The audio resource is automatically included with the purchase of student journals and the parent/mentor guides, both available through the online Covenant Bookstore (CovBooks.com) at a cost of \$12.95 each.

The audio edition can be used to support students with learning disabilities or visual impairments, as well as students who are auditory learners, as well as reinforcing the content by allowing students to listen while they read the text. The audio format also allows parents and mentors a convenient and portable method to keep pace with what their student is studying, and it can be used as a

daily devotional for students or other members of the congregation.

The Journey is currently in its second edition and presents an overview of the Bible and church beliefs, while offering participants the opportunity to make or strengthen their personal commitment to follow Christ.

CAMPING MINISTRIES CHANGE LIVES

Over the years, Covenant campers have donated nearly \$1 million to support development of camping ministries worldwide, through a multi-year partnership with Covenant World Mission.

Funds have supported land acquisition, facility development, leadership training, and programs at camps in eight global mission regions.



Youth in Covenant camping ministries are challenged spiritually and physically—this camper climbs the wall at Covenant Point Bible Camp.

This partnership not only raises much-needed funds, it also raises awareness of other countries and their cultures and the way God is working through their respective ministries.

Covenant camps serve more than 18,000 campers during summer months, as well as 25,000 campers through rental of facilities.

A 2011 survey of nine camps found one out of nine campers accepted Christ at camp, one out of three rededicated their life to Christ, and one out of two campers was a professing Christian before attending camp.

ALASKA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE WINS ACCREDITATION

Alaska Christian College (ACC) has received accreditation from the Association for Biblical Higher Education, which means the school can now offer associate degrees and students can transfer credits more easily as well as have access to additional financial aid.

"ACC's transition into the world of higher education has been validated here today," President Keith Hamilton said when the decision was announced in February.

The Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska operates the school, founded in 2001.

The school has 49 students enrolled—the largest in its history—serving predominantly low-income Alaska Native students from villages throughout the bush area of the state.

The ability for students to apply for more forms of financial aid is critical. Unemployment exceeds 40 percent in some villages, requiring students to help families with farming and fishing during school breaks.

The school helps students make the difficult transition from village life to their first year of college. Fewer than five percent of Alaska Native high-school graduates complete their first college semester, statistics show.

The college received accreditation more quickly than is normally the case because of its work to continually enhance its program.

During a celebration of the college's five-year anniversary in 2006, Lt. Governor Loren Lemman told the gathering, "Alaska Christian College is one of the best things happening in education in Alaska."

Alaska Christian College leaders are considering offering an associate's degree in paraprofessional education that would enable graduates to teach in village schools, as well as a general degree emphasizing biblical studies.

A NEW GENERATION TO BATTLE INJUSTICE

In 2012, students at CHIC, the triennial Covenant youth conference, will explore injustices that occur on a daily basis.

It's all the buzz these days—exactly what is the significance of the name "Five" assigned to the 2012 edition of CHIC?

The answer will be revealed as thousands of high-school students gather July 15-20 at the University of Tennessee. The event is open to students who will complete grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 during the current school year, and are at least fifteen years of age as of September 1 this year.

Students may attend CHIC a second time if they are completing grade 12 this year. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate students with physical, mental, or emotional impairments who are able to function in a public school setting. Each special needs student must provide an adult companion who is at least nineteen years old.

Justice is this year's overarching theme with the Long Road to Justice Team (LR2J) leading participants into a deeper exploration of injustices that occur on a daily basis.

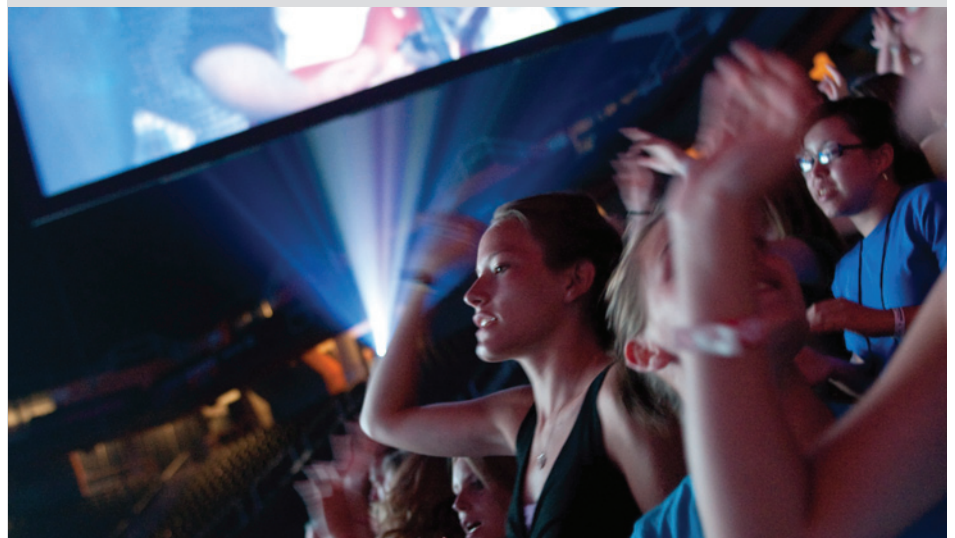
"Regardless of what community you live in... there are social ills present where you live," the CHIC website observes. "The LR2J team will help shed light on this reality."

Speakers will address justice issues inherent in global education, explore what it means to love one's neighbor, and challenge students to wrestle with preconceived notions of people and the world around them. "During CHIC you will have the chance to work through what it means to tangibly illustrate your love for both God and your neighbor."

Costs are \$590 for students and \$545 for adults, with a \$50 deposit due at time of registration and the balance due May 9. The late student registration fee is \$625, due June 15. No new student registrations will be accepted after June 15.

Those desiring to serve as counselors must be at least twenty-one years of age by September 1; staff must be at least nineteen years of age by September 1; and special needs companions must be at least nineteen years of age by September 1.

Many stories of lives that have been changed forever come out of past CHIC events, such as the story (edited for length) shared by this mother who writes: "I'd like my daughter to see that her faith is alive and well among her peers. I suspect she experiences apathy and maybe even some subtle hostility during her daily grind at high school. I'm hoping that CHIC will reassure her that faith in Christ is alive and well in her age group, and even... cool! I'd also like her to experience the energy and spirit of the Covenant."



CHIC provides opportunity for participants to be challenged in their faith and explore the possible call of God on their lives.



Members of Grace Hills Bible Church in Angels Camp, California, join in a service of consecration when the new church plant opened its doors.

START AND STRENGTHEN CHURCHES

Now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.
—Ephesians 3:10b-11

Churches desiring to infuse a new sense of vitality, purpose, and direction into their ministries must first understand the importance of preparing the congregation for a new strategic ministry planning process.

A workshop called “One: A Unifying Approach to Strategic Ministry Planning” is the tool of choice for a growing number of Covenant congregations who are on a journey toward healthy, missional vitality.

Workshop leaders believe that preparing for the planning process is as important as the strategic plan itself. Resources such as the Veritas workshop, building a vitality team, creating a behavioral/relational covenant, the EPIC workshop, and the Pulse assessment help congregations experience elements of strategic planning along the pathway to healthy and vital ministry.

There are seven objectives embodied in the “One” workshop:

- 1) To recognize how strategic ministry planning fits into the vitality pathway
- 2) To emphasize the need for excellent leadership in the ministry planning process
- 3) To understand the importance of congregational culture in effective planning
- 4) To establish a biblical foundation so that all can listen to and respond to the Holy Spirit
- 5) To introduce a strategic planning model

- (and terms) so that all use the same language
- 6) To offer ways of gathering information so that the process is dynamic and communal
- 7) To develop strategic ministry planning exercises

Workshop concepts provide a launching pad for a strategic process that usually takes a few months to complete. The process defines and focuses attention on the objectives God has given your church.



The Veritas training helps churches rekindle a sense of vitality and purpose as in this session at Trinity Covenant Church in Manchester, Connecticut.

The completed strategic ministry plan then communicates to the entire church and others the congregation’s goals and defines the steps the church will take to accomplish them. The outcome of a well-implemented strategic ministry plan is the alignment of people, resources, and processes toward accomplishing your church’s vision.

Visit the Covenant website for more information.

WORSHIP RESOURCES TO GO DIGITAL, MULTILINGUAL

A recent survey of worship practices in Covenant churches finds that 94 percent of responders use material from the *Covenant Book of Worship*, especially special ceremonies and services such as baptisms and weddings.

While findings show that 91 percent of respondents use the *Covenant Hymnal: A Worshipbook*, more than 20 percent say they use it rarely. Of those responding, 85 percent have a CCLI license covering legal requirements regarding copyrighted material, with 78 percent reporting projection as the primary means of providing lyrics and prayers.

In a digital age, an increasing number of churches are requesting content from the *Book of Worship* and certain hymnal resources in digital formats, especially prayers and services. Digital content allows customization of resources, such as inserting names into baptism and wedding services, as well as preparing printed bulletin content and slides for projection during worship services.

In response to growing demand, projects are under way to provide material in digital format, both in English and Spanish.

Given increasing attention to excellence in worship planning, worship leaders are seeking new ways to interact and share original worship material and best practices.

The “Better Together” Facebook group, which formed following last year’s Midwinter Conference, now includes more than 230 worship leaders engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of worship and music topics. As a moderated resource, the group is by invitation only, but is open to any Covenanter involved in any aspect of music or worship. For more information, email Geoff.twigg@covchurch.org.

FINANCE AS MINISTRY? ABSOLUTELY!

Just ask the folks at Riverwood Covenant Church in Rockford, Minnesota, a ten-year-old church plant located in the Northwest suburbs of Minneapolis. With the help of Plymouth Covenant Church, the Northwest Conference, and Church Growth and Evangelism, they began meeting in 2000 and became an official Covenant congregation two years later.

Things were progressing well in the leased space the congregation used while National Covenant Properties (NCP) helped the congregation search for land to construct permanent space. In 2004, NCP financed purchase of fifteen acres ideally located along the main road leading into town.

However, potential building costs and the 2007-2008 economic slowdown brought plans to a grinding halt, putting the building project out of reach for the 150 or so attenders.

Then in late 2008 and early 2009, things began to change. NCP noticed a positive trend in attendance over the previous year, suggesting a building project might be viable after all. NCP proposed a different plan: a scaled-down, multi-phased project that would utilize the fifteen acres purchased years earlier.

A new sense of excitement and ownership of the process began to take hold. The congregation launched a capital fund drive and hired an architect to create a master plan calling for an efficient 13,500-square-foot building during phase one. Construction began last year with NCP financial assistance.

More than 275 people attended the first unadvertised worship service. Two worship services are planned going forward so that

growth can continue and ministry can advance even further.

Finance as ministry? Absolutely!

NEW STEWARDSHIP STARTER KIT EMPHASIZES GOD’S GENEROSITY

The need for effective stewardship material is one of the most oft-heard requests from local church lay and clergy leaders in the Covenant.

The Stewardship Starter Kit for 2012 provides a timely response to that request, offering a wide range of resources from content suitable for bulletin inserts and sermon “starters” to statistical insights on giving and effective methods for teaching stewardship.

“God is a God of abundance, and we are called to live abundant lives of service, giving, and sharing that reflect his generosity and abundance,” begins the introduction to the material. “This is not a prosperity gospel; it is a message of responsibility in a culture that often fails to understand its responsibility to

care for others and the world through careful stewardship of all that God has given.”

Other resources complement the need for effective teaching tools:

- **Stewardship Calendar (Year B)**—includes lectionary text, church year markers, and stewardship starter ideas.
- **Generosity Summits**—offers training on stewardship principles. Summits have been held in Washington, Oklahoma, and Illinois, with more than 100 participants from nineteen churches, led by Scott Rideout of the Generous Churches Summit team.
- **Resolution on Stewardship and Generosity**—to be presented during the June Annual Meeting, it provides a teaching tool for churches to consider what it means to be faithful to God in our generosity.

To learn more, visit CovChurch.org/stewardship. Starter kits may be ordered at CovBooks.com.

CHURCH PLANTING IN THE COVENANT IS MORE THAN A NUMBERS GAME

At first glance, the numbers might appear to be the “big news” in the saga of continued growth the Covenant has experienced over the past two decades.

The numbers are impressive: for example, during the past thirty-six months alone, fifty-seven new church plants have entered the start-up phase. Eleven new congregations were welcomed during last year’s Covenant Annual Meeting, with twenty new church planting agreements executed during the year.

But, what drives this growth is the real story—a commitment built on the scriptural foundation of Christ and community.

“We plant churches because we truly believe that people need Christ, and that planting new churches is the best way to introduce new people to the good news of Christ,” begins the introduction to the church planting website. “God’s most effective tool at displaying the gospel in our local communities is churches that are filled with people whose lives have been transformed by a relationship with Jesus.”

Each church plant goes through an extensive three-step assessment process.

The increase in ethnic and multiethnic churches bears witness to the Covenant’s desire to reflect the kingdom of God: of the fifty-seven new church plants, 53 percent are ethnic or multi-ethnic, 44 percent are Anglo, and three percent are classified as international.

The ethnic and cultural mix of pastors leading these new churches also reflects the importance the Covenant places on diversity: of the seventeen new multiethnic church plants, 6 percent of the pastors are Hispanic, 24 percent are Asian American, 35 percent are African American, and 35 percent are Anglo.

So, while numbers are not the essence of the story, they help evaluate the effectiveness of church planting efforts. As one Covenant pastor puts it, “I guess if you do something well enough and long enough, you’re probably going to grow as people are attracted to that depth of commitment.”

DEVELOP LEADERS

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

—2 Timothy 2:2

Across the world, Covenant lay and vocational leaders have been stepping out in faith to areas that are new to them.

Amy Muia, a lay member of Bethany Covenant Church in Mount Vernon, Washington, served as a chaplain to women prisoners at the county jail, but felt frustrated because of the endless cycle of being jailed, released, jailed, and released again.

She attended the first-ever Covenant Prison Ministry Roundtable, offered by **Compassion**,

Mercy, and Justice in cooperation with the North Pacific Conference. The roundtable encouraged those ministering to inmates, drew upon their collective knowledge, and explored how the Covenant can expand its ministry.

Muia left the gathering feeling God had called her and her husband, Alan, to start Faith House, a halfway home for drug-addicted women. She also left surprised.

"I'm a very unlikely candidate for this kind of thing," she says. "It's not my background. No

one in my family history has been an addict."

She has received assistance from her own church, Crossroads Covenant Church in Yelm, Washington, and others. Started last year, the home has become a place where women experience dramatic transformations.

Other ministries also have experienced turning-point moments. **Family Development Foundation** in Monterrey, Mexico, installed two national directors, the first time Mexicans have filled an executive post at the nonprofit started by Covenant missionaries in 1999.

The ministry offers parenting, marriage enrichment, and conflict resolution courses. It also provides a holistic ministry for families who have members with Down syndrome.

Through **Sustaining Pastoral Excellence** (SPE), the Covenant has helped ministers around the world consider their current service, deepen their relationship with God, and consider where God might be leading them.

SPE also has been guiding a series of cohorts in leadership formation.

Ten pastors participated in a five-day contemplative retreat at Bowen Island, British Columbia, this past fall to reignite their pastoral ministry and more deeply explore their call.

Opportunities for receiving SPE grants have increased. Information is posted on the Covenant website.

NOMINEE FOR NEW DEAN OF SEMINARY ANNOUNCED

David W. Kersten has been nominated by the North Park University Board of Trustees to serve as dean of North Park Theological Seminary. Kersten currently serves as executive minister of the ordered ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC).

His nomination has been approved by the Covenant Executive Board and will come for action during the June Covenant Annual Meeting in Irvine, California.

"I am thrilled that we have someone who can effectively connect with the seminary and the university community, the church and its ministerium and lay leadership," said search committee chair Paul Hawkinson.

"This is an especially important and opportune moment for even greater alignment between the church and seminary," adds ECC President Gary Walter. "Dave is uniquely qualified to maximize that partnership."

If approved in June, Kersten will assume his new duties on August 1.



NORTH PARK BREAKS NEW GROUND AGAIN

The anticipated construction of a new academic and community life building this year is one of many highlights on the campus of North Park University.

Undergraduate enrollment for the fall semester reached a record 1,929 students, an increase of seventy-nine students over 2010. Combined with graduate enrollment, the university's total student population for the fall semester exceeded 3,200.

The campus reflects a strong presence internationally. For the 2012 spring semester, 187 international students are enrolled, including students from Bolivia, China, Finland, India, Ireland, Korea, Norway, Portugal, Russia, and Sweden.

North Park students are studying abroad this year in at least seventeen countries in Asia, Europe, South America, and the Middle East.

The university opened its state-of-the-art nursing simulation laboratory, enabling students in nursing and other disciplines to practice skills in a simulated environment. The 3,000-square-foot laboratory includes four simulation rooms, two control rooms, and a conference room where students debrief their class experiences.

The new Science and Community Life building to be built this year is the centerpiece of a \$57 million fundraising campaign, with construction expected to begin once funding is secured. "This is the most ambitious fundraising campaign ever for North Park University," said David L. Parkyn, president.

David Kersten leads a session as part of the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program. Below: CHET students attentively follow a classroom lecture.



CHET PREPARES NEXT GENERATION OF HISPANIC LEADERS

The number of students taking classes through Centro Hispano de Estudios Teologicos (CHET) has continued to expand as the school develops its campus in Compton, California, as well as satellite locations around the country.

Six hundred people now are learning how to become leaders—nearly 100 students were new last fall. The most recent satellite sites are in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and La Villa, Texas.

To address the growth, the school hired Covenant pastor Manuel Valencia to serve part-time as the new dean/faculty leader.

Valencia brings pastoral, academic, and managerial experience to the school. He planted Iglesia de la Gracia Covenant Church in Rialto, California, served a Presbyterian church, did missionary work in Nicaragua and has served as a professor at the Mexico Teachers College and at San Pablo Seminary in Mexico City. He also taught at CHET.

YOUTH MINISTRIES FOCUS ON LEADER DEVELOPMENT

A number of youth leadership development opportunities are available through various Covenant ministries.

Student leadership retreats—A senior-high student leadership retreat is being developed by Christian Formation, suitable for camp or conference center settings and hosted at the conference level or by a group of churches. The retreat format will focus on leadership aspects of Christian discipleship.

International mission trips—Students can participate in mission trips focusing on leadership skills. Students will help build up local ministries, observing how partnerships form between volunteers and local residents.

Adventures in leadership—The goal is to equip participants with a Christian leadership framework to assist them in discovering and developing their leadership style, consistent with their abilities and gifts. A summer pilot program will introduce participants to leadership styles and skills, examine Christian leadership characteristics, better understand “servanthood” as the beginning and end of Christian leadership, and create a vision of who they can become as a leader.

Young adult ministry—A team of North Park University students will serve as young adult leaders at CHIC, July 15-20 in Tennessee. They will lead participants in activities, serve as university ambassadors, minister through music, and counsel participants in discerning possible calls to ministry and service.

NEW SEMINARS AVAILABLE FOR HISPANIC CHURCHES

A number of seminars designed for Hispanic churches are available through Christian Formation. To schedule a free seminar, contact Wilson Herrera by email at wilson.herrera@covchurch.org or by telephone at 773-442-6571.

Nueva Vida en Cristo—Seminar participants address two important themes: how to disciple a new believer, and how to strengthen a new believer’s daily walk with God through study of the word. Participants also explore two discipleship resources—“Nueva Vida en Cristo” and “Crecer.”

CRECER en la extensión del reino de Dios—This seminar teaches participants how to prepare their personal testimony. Participants also learn how to continue the discipleship journey with a new believer.

Amigos de la mision—This seminar for lay leaders, pastors and church staff helps prepare them to teach about church membership and what it means to be a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church, using the new membership material, “Amigos de la misión.”

El Pacto con Dios—This seminar, designed for volunteers who minister with children, teaches volunteers how to effectively use the children’s curriculum “El Pacto con Dios.” The curriculum was written for Hispanic churches and teaches biblical truths using Bible stories in creative and interactive ways.

LOVE MERCY, DO JUSTICE

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?—Isaiah 58:6

Criminal justice, racial righteousness and outreach ministries are among Compassion, Mercy, and Justice focus areas this year in pursuit of the mission to “join God in making things right in our broken world.”

Several activities completed last year and scheduled for 2012 serve to focus the attention of the Covenant family on the importance of loving mercy and doing justice, including:

- Living out the **Resolution on Criminal Justice** through efforts to heighten awareness and create safe places to talk with civility about difficult issues
- **Think Tank on Criminal Justice**, a partnership between the Covenant, the Christian Community Development Association, and the Perkins Center in Jackson, Mississippi
- **Continuing educational opportunities** with “subject matter experts” participating in the Think Tank, a Peer Mentoring Summit, a 2012 Midwinter Conference discussion group and opportunities during CHIC in July
- Established and/or **recommended reading groups** of *The New Jim Crow* by Michele Alexander, including Covenant leadership

- A **special issue** of *The Covenant Companion* with a special criminal justice focus
- A **racial righteousness breakfast** at Midwinter for reconnecting and sharing stories
- A **Sankofa** journey took place in February with another scheduled in August this year.
- **Journey to Mosaic** events in the Pacific Southwest, North Pacific, and Central conferences with others considering similar contextualized experiences.
- **Invitation to Racial Righteousness (I2RR)** continues to encourage dialogue about racial righteousness. Several churches conducted events last year, with 2012 events including churches in Colorado and Chicago as well as Covenant Offices staff and missionaries. Trained facilitators are available to come to local churches to lead the experience. For more information, visit CovChurch.org.

NEW BENEVOLENCE MINISTRIES PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED SERVICES

Several new initiatives are under way at Covenant Ministries of Benevolence.

Covenant Retirement Communities (CRC) broke ground in March for a new neighborhood-style retirement community based on a rental rather than a buy-in model, located in Lenexa, Kansas. To be known as Covenant Place of Lenexa, it offers a flexible and affordable senior housing option.

Lenexa will offer a continuum of services, from residential living to assisted living, rehabilitation and skilled nursing. Opening is anticipated in 2013. Visit CovenantPlaceLenexa.org for more information.

Through its chaplains and leadership teams, CRC also has introduced the national BeFriends ministry at each retirement community. BeFriends provides pastoral care for people in difficult or transitional situations, using trained lay volunteers who “listen with compassion, accept people as they are, respect another’s spiritual journey, and embody the caring presence of God.”

Are you an adult child with aging parents? Do you struggle with how to have conversations about aging issues? CRC has a resource that can help.

HavingTheConversation.com, a free ministry for adult children, offers suggestions on how to have heart-to-heart conversations with aging parents. It also provides tools within a context of respect and preservation of dignity to assist families in dealing with aging concerns.

Covenant Ministries of Benevolence also administers two hospitals, with each of the healing ministries providing trendsetting and state-of-art medical services.

Last fall, **Swedish Covenant Hospital** in Chicago presented its third annual healing art show, sponsored by the hospital’s Pastoral Care Department. The three-week exhibit featured the work of local artists, hospital employees, patients, and their loved ones. Last spring, Pastoral Care also began offering patient support through the Artist-in-Residence program, which encourages patients to work one-on-one with the artist to talk about their experiences. The activity is designed to help patients visualize and communicate emotions and feeling throughout the healing process.

Swedish also offers a comprehensive breast health program that provides education, screening and diagnostics to uninsured and low-income women in Chicago and surrounding areas. The hospital’s multilingual team worked with local homeless shelters and other organizations to host more than thirty



Participants in a Sankofa journey retrace key events and places that played significant roles in the civil rights movement.



Emanuel Medical Center and Swedish Covenant Hospital offer more than physical care and healing—they minister to the soul as well.

awareness events in just ten months, with more than 1,100 uninsured women receiving the full spectrum of breast cancer detection services without charge.

Emanuel Medical Center in Turlock, California, achieved another milestone in its health care ministry, becoming an officially designated receiving center for heart attack patients on January 1 this year.

For the first time, someone suffering a heart attack in Turlock can be treated in Turlock, where care is just minutes away and not miles down the highway.

And during 2011—its first full year of operation—the hospital’s Cardiac Catheter and Interventional Lab performed more than a thousand procedures. Prior to the lab’s opening, local residents had to leave town to receive similar treatments. The lab performs diagnostic heart catheterizations, peripheral vascular procedures, image-guided surgical procedures, interventional radiology, pacemaker implantation, and coronary arterial angioplasties and stent placements.

COVENANT INITIATIVES FOR CARE EXPANDS FOCUS

Covenant Initiatives for Care is overseeing development of a second enabling residence as well as expanded initiatives addressing domestic violence and services focused on at-risk youth as well as individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Covenant Enabling Residences (CER) Michigan Board has started development of a second home on the campus of Covenant Village of the Great Lakes in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The original residence at the Grand Rapids site, known as Faith House, was the first enabling residence to be situated on the same campus as a Covenant retirement community.

A parcel of land adjacent to Faith House has been approved for this use. The new home will have six bedrooms and be for female residents.

WellSpring Center for Hope in Englewood, in partnership with Salem Baptist Church (one of the largest Chicago churches) is expanding efforts to address issues of domestic violence, reaching out to engage other faith communities as well.

Covenant Children’s Ministries (formerly Covenant Children’s Home and Family Services) in Princeton, Illinois, remains committed to helping at-risk children and is currently in the process of refining its granting process.

Building on its 110-year legacy of serving young people in need, the Children’s Home of Cromwell in Connecticut is expanding its programs into additional communities for people of all ages dealing with developmental disabilities and autism.

The name of the organization also has been changed from Cromwell Children’s Home to Ädelbrook. A blended word, it honors the institution’s Swedish heritage as “Ädel” means noble or precious, while “brook” represents the peaceful, but ever-changing momentum of life.

RESOURCES HELP CHURCHES LIVE AS THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST

The importance of the larger church family living into the “whole body of Christ” model of 1 Corinthians 12:18, 20-22 is reflected in a new graphic look for the Disability Ministries Committee of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

The new graphic articulates that all are welcome in the body of Christ, all are needed because all have something to bring, and all can learn from one another.

To access resources and ideas shared by Covenant churches, visit the online Ministry Idea Exchange (MIX) as well as the disability ministries website at CovChurch.org.

WOMEN MINISTRIES INTRODUCES NEW PROGRAMS, EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Two key initiatives highlight the work of Covenant Women Ministries this year as the organization also ramps up planning for Triennial in 2013. The ministry also welcomed its new executive minister, Meagan Gillan.

Mending the Soul is a new support group Bible study designed to help bring healing to those who have suffered abuse, part of the Advocacy for Victims of Abuse (AVA) program.

A second resource, **PROTECT**, is designed to help congregations confront human trafficking in their own communities. There are seven key elements in addressing trafficking: the Power of prosecution; Responsible consumerism; Orientation to healthy relationships; Training to identify and report trafficking; Education to protect the most vulnerable; Community response; and Training to support at-risk youth.

The “Just Women” fund provides support not only for these resources, but also for Mending the Soul training events, including one held in Phoenix in March and one scheduled for Chicago in May. The goal is to have twenty-five trained facilitators by the end of the year. Call Women Ministries at 773-907-3332 for more information.

Triennial 2013 will take place August 15-18 in San Diego, California. More information will be found on the Women Ministries website and will soon be mailed to local churches.

Women Ministries also is restructuring its financial base as it enters 2012 facing a deficit. “The small efforts of many women will get us on solid and secure financial footing, Gillan says, “and then we’ll be poised for exciting, life-changing ministry!”

SERVE GLOBALLY

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.—Acts 1:8

At just seven years of age, Eric has been forced to move from place to place as his family searched for a safe place to live. His family is one of thousands who have fled strife-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) over the years.

Eric along with his parents, five brothers and sisters, plus five orphaned children who live with them made their way to Kenya where they encountered the warm embrace of the Kitengela Covenant Church.

It is the way in which the dots in their journey have been connected that is as moving as the story itself, reflecting the amazing providence of God as he brought two congregations together—one in Kenya and one in the United States.

A Congolese attending an Evangelical Covenant Church in the States contacted missionaries Pete and Cindy Ekstrand, asking if the Evangelical Covenant Church of Kenya (ECCK) could help his extended family who recently arrived in Kenya as refugees. The Ekstrands contacted Pastor Simon Kamau of the Kitengela church, who in turn contacted the refugees.

“The church reached out to the refugees in many ways,” Ekstrand says, “and today about 300 Congolese refugees have been helped and also attend the church.”

But, the story doesn’t end there. Pastor Simon had been searching for ways to help his community become more economically self-sufficient. The church had developed a small chicken project, but instead of using

resources generated by the project to further expand it, they instead used the resources to provide clothing and food for the refugees. They also organized English classes to prepare the children to go to Kenyan schools.

The pastor worked with local businesses to help refugees needing jobs. He also noted the poultry market had diminished, so he refocused the project to grow tomatoes destined for supermarkets in Nairobi, an economically successful move.

“We serve an amazing God who loves and cares for his people,” Ekstrand says. And, a God who continues to connect the dots.

THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW

In December, 168 new believers from seven churches were baptized in Bokonzo, DR Congo. Candidates for baptism walked 1.3 miles along a dusty road from the church to a stream. Five pastors baptized the candidates, with everyone returning to the church where 1,069 congregants celebrated communion.

A similar story can be found in South Sudan where, over the past two years, the Evangelical Covenant Church of South Sudan has established twenty-three new churches and baptized 780 new believers.

And the story continues in Asia, where the Covenant Church of Taiwan celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this fall. There are currently forty-three Covenant churches in Taiwan with 9,500 members. The Covenant Church of Taiwan also sends missionaries to serve in a number of countries around the world, including South Africa and Japan.

In Thailand last December, five staff members at the Center for Church Enablement in Northern Thailand (CCENT) were baptized. The center runs a fish farm that makes it possible for residents to grow fish and maintain a livelihood. A significant challenge to acceptance of the gospel is a common belief that Christianity is a religion for Westerners. Fewer than one percent of the population is Christian. Covenant ministries in this country



Farmers to Markets provides ongoing training to participants in sessions like this.

are trying to break this barrier by using Thai cultural forms for worship and Bible teaching.

HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN GET INVOLVED

There are numerous ways that Covenant churches and individuals can engage in international mission.

Missionary visits—Missionaries on home assignment are available to visit local Covenant congregations in the United States and Canada. Email World Mission at world.mission@covchurch.org to arrange visits.

Serve as a missionary—Opportunities continue today for individuals interested in medical ministry, education, community development, and communications, among others. Visit CovChurch.org/mission to learn more.

Vision trips—Participants visit Covenant ministries to see first-hand what God is doing and learn ways in which local congregations in North America might serve globally.

VBS mission project—The 2012 vacation

Bible school mission project will focus on Covenant Kids, which offers hope to vulnerable children around the world. Participants will learn about the needs of children living in poverty in Colombia, DR Congo, India, and South Sudan.

PAUL CARLSON PARTNERSHIP SEEKS SELF-SUSTAINING RESULTS

Health care, economic development, and education are key priorities guiding the work of the Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP) as it seeks to encourage the growth of self-sustaining communities in one of the most poverty stricken areas in Central Africa.

PCP provides operating support for five hospitals and ninety-four medical clinics that handle more than 100,000 new cases each year, as well as funding to purchase pharmaceuticals.

A medical team will visit DR Congo in April to analyze pharmaceutical purchasing and transportation systems in an effort to identify less expensive alternatives and improve quality.

Repair work is nearing completion on

the Zulu hydroelectric plant that provides electricity for the Karawa hospital.

Clean and dependable water supplies are needed at Loko and Karawa hospitals. A broken water pump is being replaced in Loko's solar-powered system at Loko, with an evaluation of Karawa needs to be completed this spring.

To help families better afford medical care and meet other needs, PCP joined with Congo leaders to develop the Farmers to Markets program to help farmers access distant markets where farm produce commands better prices.

As of February this year, the program has engaged 2,700 farmers—51 percent of them women. The network now includes 11 wholesalers and 47 bicycle entrepreneurs.

Leadership development is a key focus. One Congo medical leader visited the United States to improve English language skills and observe medical practices.

Local Farmers to Markets leaders also have received specialized training through PCP.

Visit the PaulCarlson.org for additional information.

AN UNPRECEDENTED NEED...AN UNPRECEDENTED PARTNERSHIP

A new partnership with World Vision brings new hope to the people of DR Congo.

Plans are under way for a fall launch of the new Covenant Kids Congo initiative, a partnership of the Covenant, World Vision, and the Congo Covenant Church.

This historic mission endeavor, which will operate in the Equateur Province of DR Congo, is built on World Vision's established model of child sponsorship that raises funds in support of development work in critical areas of need.

Ministry partners will raise funds for development in five areas in DR Congo, where the Covenant has served for seventy-five years and World Vision for sixty-five years: clean water, health and hygiene, food and agriculture, education and literacy, and economic

development.

"Congo is the most desperate country in the world," says President Gary Walter, who points out that DR Congo is rated 187th out of 187 countries on the poverty scale.

The country has been ravaged by war with an estimated 5.4 million lives lost over the years. In northwest Congo, where the Covenant has centered its work, children are dying from preventable illnesses, especially malaria. Families walk miles to draw water from polluted streams. Families are fortunate if they secure one meager meal a day. The remote region takes two weeks to reach by boat from the capital city due to the lack of transportation infrastructure.

In one Congo church, twenty children died in just one month. With all that the Covenant has done, Walter says more than one organization is needed to address the needs. "Our friends in World Vision feel the same."

Covenant congregations and other individuals will be invited to join the effort by supporting child sponsorships, following a model of \$40 a month per child and continuing that pledge of support in ensuing years. The goal is to generate 15,000 sponsorships throughout the Covenant.

The real value on the ground in Congo is much more than the \$40 each month because other international aid organizations that have been watching this new partnership are prepared

to bring additional resources of their own. It is estimated that a \$40 investment will produce at least \$60 of benefit each month—and most likely, more.

Monthly sponsorships are aggregated into a dedicated fund that supports the numerous projects that will be developed in each of the five core areas of need, benefitting entire communities and the families that reside in them.

Covenant congregations are being asked to schedule one or more Hope Sundays this fall, when individuals, families, and congregations will be provided an opportunity to sign up to sponsor one, two, or more children.

More information will be found on CovChurch.org.



Prayer is an important part of every Covenant Annual Meeting, including business sessions as in 2011 when delegates prayed for missionaries preparing to begin their ministries.

ANNUAL MEETING GETS BACK TO BASICS

In 2012, the Annual Meeting begins a five-year emphasis on the core ministry priorities that shape the Covenant.

Plans are well under way for the 127th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church in sunny Irvine, California.

This year's event will begin with the evening worship service on Thursday, June 21, and will conclude Sunday morning, June 24, with the traditional ordination, commissioning, and consecration service.

As in years past, all worship services will be broadcast live through the Covenant website. Information on how to access the live



Those ordained and commissioned recess following last year's Annual Meeting worship service in Estes Park, Colorado.

broadcasts will be found on the website as the event draws near. Recordings of all the worship services plus key business session events (awards, special presentations, etc.) will be available on CovChurch.tv.

Interested individuals also can join or follow the conversation around the 127th Annual Meeting using the hashtag #ecc127 on Twitter. For more Annual Meeting information, follow

the Covenant at @cov_church for any updates and @eccnews for news.

This year's scheduled speakers include Linnea Carnes, Curt Peterson, Gary Gaddini, Bob and Grace Shim, and Labib Madanat. Friday and Saturday business sessions will celebrate a wide range of shared Covenant ministry, with interactive learning experiences on Saturday afternoon focused on the Covenant's five mission priorities: start and strengthen churches, make and deepen disciples, develop leaders, love mercy and do justice, and serve globally.

This year's theme—Found Faithful: Serving Globally—lifts up one of the five priorities, with

the remaining priorities to be featured in future annual meetings.

Saturday afternoon's activities also will include visits to Covenant ministry sites in the area. A host of special activities—workshops, themed luncheons, meetings and receptions—are listed in the events area of the Annual Meeting web pages.

Special equipment for the hearing impaired will be available, as will translators for Spanish-speaking participants.

More detailed information, including early registration rates (available through May 4) will be found on the Covenant website. Online registration is also available.

STAY UP-TO-DATE ON UPCOMING EVENTS

A new service provides regular email updates on the upcoming 2012 Annual Meeting as well as other Covenant events for those who register for the free service. Registration is easy: text message ECCEVENTS to 22828 and receive updates on all upcoming Covenant events, or scan the accompanying QR code and either choose all event updates or select specific events of interest.

Another new feature as part of this year's Annual Meeting are visits to two local Southern California ministry sites, scheduled to take place on that Saturday afternoon following the business session. Participants will board buses and visit Centro Hispano de Estudios Teologicos (CHET), the Covenant's Hispanic theological training center, as well as Fountain of Life Covenant Church. There is no additional cost for these interactive off-site learning experiences, but registration is required.

For those planning to enjoy the many attractions, including Disneyland, visit the Annual Meeting website area to obtain discount tickets. Annual Meeting registration may also be completed online.

Questions? Email events@covchurch.org or call 800-910-2442.



NEW TECHNOLOGY BRINGS NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The Covenant Church looks to put emerging tools to work for the gospel.

Technology continues to drive much of the Covenant's communications strategy as new tools emerge and new ways to adapt existing tools become evident.

A new Covenant video website—CovChurch.tv—made its debut last year and continues to gain momentum. It pulls together all Covenant-produced and Covenant-related videos into one convenient location. The videos also are accessible using smartphones, tablets, and other mobile devices. The website has recorded more than 30,000 video views with a 1,000 percent increase in interactivity since CovChurch.tv replaced the former Vimeo site.

Live broadcasting at a CHIC event will occur for the first time this year when students gather for CHIC 2012 on the campus of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville July 15-20. With the addition of CHIC to the live broadcasting lineup, all major Covenant events are now taking advantage of this technology.

The pace of live "Take One" webcasts produced in the Media Center at Covenant Offices also has increased, providing opportunity for viewers to interact with presenters through submission of questions and commentary. Recent webcasts have addressed topics like spiritual direction,

camping ministries, youth discipleship, congregational vitality, and the compassion, mercy, and the justice resource paper, among others.

The Covenant website on average attracts 70,000 unique visitors each month with 225,000 page views each month on average. In addition to the daily online news report as a major draw, the growing volume of Spanish-language resource materials reflects a growing audience. To receive Newswire, the free email-based daily Covenant news headline service, visit the Covenant website.

A new Covenant Bookstore website—and the new name CovBooks.com—were introduced earlier this year, offering a more intuitive and user-friendly shopping environment. A new shopping cart system was introduced, providing customers the ability to track orders, among other features.

Covenant Publications also entered the digital era with release of the first-ever Covenant ebook—*Living Faith: Reflections on Covenant Affirmations*. Plans call for eventual release of several older and much-requested titles that over the years have gone out of print.

The Covenant Companion also is slated to join the digital world this year—work on a prototype has been completed, with details on handling online subscriptions and distribution being worked out. Consideration also is being given to some form of a digital *Covenant Home Altar*.

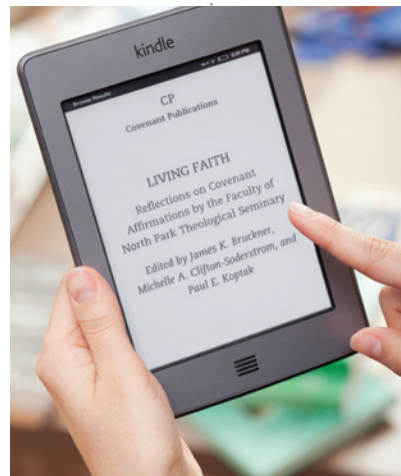
Work is progressing on development of a digital Covenant Book of Worship, a collaborative effort of Covenant Communications and Christian Formation.

Enhancement of CovLink, the Covenant's mobile application, continues with addition of a mapping feature and the ability to call a local church telephone from within the application. The

video content area of the application also has been expanded, as has the Covenant events feature. To obtain the free application for Apple and Android devices, visit those respective marketplaces and search for CovLink.

The Interactive Services area in Covenant Communications is working with conference offices to provide free website hosting and free training for conference staff on creating and maintaining website content.

Although technology tools may seem all the rage, they do not overshadow the role played by more traditional and familiar communications tools like *The Covenant Companion*, which once again garnered seven top awards for outstanding content in competition sponsored by Associated Church Press. The association is the oldest religious press association in North America representing a broad spectrum of Christian print and online publications. The magazine received one first-place honor, three second-place awards and three third-place awards in competition with much larger magazines like *U.S. Catholic*, *The Lutheran*, *Sojourners*, and *Christian Century*.



Living Faith is the first in a series of ebooks for release in coming months.



Live broadcasting allows Covenanters around the world to "participate" in major Covenant events, such as this 2011 Annual Meeting worship service.

WHEN MANAGING MONEY, VALUES COUNT

Covenant Trust Company lets faith-based values shape their approach to service and money management.

Managing one's own money and making investment decisions can prove a challenging task for many people.

That is especially so during volatile times, when watching the values of investments rise and fall can provoke impulsive, emotional decisions that are counter-intuitive to sound money management strategies. And many people simply may be unaware or confused by all of the opportunities available to them.

Covenant Trust Company (CTC) appreciates

that effective money management requires knowledge, experience and rigorous, dispassionate research and decision-making. Working with an experienced advisor and corporate fiduciary is the best way for individuals and institutions to manage money, they suggest.

"We understand that each person's situation is different, so we offer a variety of services and adapt investment strategies to each individual's needs," says President Ann Wiesbrock. CTC

can serve as trustee for revocable trusts, irrevocable trusts, and IRAs. "We also help our clients create plans to support their families and favorite ministries after death through wills, trusts, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and Charitable Gift Annuities. We also manage funds for individuals and institutions through Investment Management Accounts. We do this with financial expertise and knowledge . . . and with a total commitment to putting our clients' interest first."

For more than thirty years, Covenant Trust Company has managed money for thousands of clients with \$475 million currently under management. The money itself is not Covenant Trust's primary concern, however. "We know that people's investments represent security for themselves and their loved ones, and support for the ministries in which they have great faith," Wiesbrock adds. "Knowing that our decisions affect all of these things, we take the trust of our clients very seriously. And as a Christian organization, we let the faith-based values we all share shape our attitudes toward service and money management."

Visit www.covenanttrust.com for more information.

LEGACY GIFTS

What to do with one's estate may not be a topic some like to ponder; however, it is a question with eternal implications. Leaving a gift through a will or an estate plan can have a long-lasting—and life-changing—impact on ministries at local, conference and denominational levels.

Everyone has something to share. To learn more about creating your own legacy gift, visit Covenant Trust Company at covenanttrust.com or call 800-483-2177.

PENSIONS WEATHER DIFFICULT ECONOMY

The Covenant Pension Plan continues to fair better than most corporate and government plans, thanks to sound investment.

The Covenant Board of Pensions and Benefits administers health and retirement benefits for Covenant pastors, missionaries, families, and surviving spouses.

Bethany Benefit Service (BBS) provides medical, dental, orthodontia, prescription drug, life insurance, long-term disability, and vision benefits covering about 3,400 Covenant pastors, missionaries, their families and surviving spouses, and staff at Covenant Offices.

During 2011, enrollment grew by 7.6 percent. Based on good claims experience, Bethany was able to declare a premium holiday for the month of June last year, saving enrolled Covenant churches and organizations more than \$1 million in premiums.

Those interested in learning more about this program or desiring to enroll can email Bethany@covchurch.org, call 800-313-8955, or mail Bethany Benefit Service at P.O. Box 316560, Chicago, IL, 60631-6560. More information will be found on the Covenant website.

The Covenant Pension Plan covers more than 2,060 Covenant pastors, missionaries, and surviving spouses. In 2011, nearly \$7 million was distributed in retirement benefits. Last year, 111 eligible retirees received a supplement benefit payment of \$1,000.

The economic environment from September 2008 to now has made managing pension investments challenging—high market volatility, major declines in housing prices, extremely low interest rates, high unemployment, and sovereign debt crises.

Despite the challenges, as of the end of February 2012, the Covenant Pension Plan is 96 percent funded (assets/liabilities), which is significantly better than most corporate and state/local government defined benefits plans.