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# THE COVENANT REPORTER

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## "THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH"



"There are few places like the Annual Meeting to fully comprehend the scope of who we are and what we do."

THE 124TH ANNUAL MEETING KICKS OFF JUNE 25-27, IN PORTLAND, OREGON, AS WE LIVE OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "IN IT TOGETHER."

You will often hear Gary Walter, president of the Evangelical Covenant Church, say that the name "Covenant" really means "in it together." But what is the "it"? "It" is the first word of our name, the "evangel"—the entirety of the good news.

The Annual Meeting at its core is about shaping our mission together. Every congregation is entitled to representation as we worship God, select leaders, consecrate missionaries, credential and ordain clergy, celebrate what God has done, make commitments to funding the mission, and hear about the challenges and opportunities in front of us. In it all, we get to meet new friends and strengthen old relationships.

This year our theme is the second of our six affirmations, "The Necessity of the New Birth." We will be reminded of God's seeking love for us that brings the new and ever-deepening life in Christ. It is that life in Christ that gives us our common identity and gives impulse to our mission.

There are few places like the Annual Meeting to fully comprehend the scope of who we are and what we do. We will gather from around the world. We will represent large, medium, and small churches; rural, metropolitan, and town and country settings; diverse stylistically, ethnically,

linguistically, and economically; led by women and led by men. We will see how all around the world the lost are being found, the hungry are being fed, the sick are being healed, those without access to education are learning to read, and people are gaining skills to provide for their families.

Yes, the Evangelical Covenant Church is touching thousands of real lives in real places...and the Annual Meeting, June 25-27, Portland, Oregon, is where it all begins.

### Worship: An Important Part of the Annual Meeting

An outstanding series of worship experiences with an array of challenging speakers is one of several highlights of the 124th Covenant Annual Meeting.

Well-known Covenant pastor and author Dave Gibbons will preach at the opening worship service, Thursday evening. He is founding pastor of Newsong Community Church, a multisite, international, third-culture church. Other speakers include Lisa Orris, director of evangelism, and Mark Novak, North Pacific Conference superintendent. The morning devotional leader is John Teter, senior pastor of Fountain

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## VERITAS ADDS NEW FOLLOW-UP TOOLS

Two new tools from the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism (CGE), Pulse and EPIC, are designed to help congregations chart a new course following their participation in a Veritas seminar.

Pulse is an online survey designed to determine the measure of a congregation's health and vitality. Responses are confidential and anonymous. Results are compiled by the Covenant Resource Center and reported only as grouped data by each congregation taking the survey. The Resource Center helped design the tool, which is being piloted by two churches. Respondents said they have a new vision for how they can serve and that the survey is easy to complete. "What I like best is that personal questions of our faith journey are mixed in with questions about the church as whole," said one participant. "It combines both the individual and the corporate body."

The prerequisite for using Pulse is attendance at a Veritas experience—either through the workshop or the DVD. Churches can sign up by contacting CGE.

EPIC (Empowering People, Inspiring Change) is a follow-up workshop to Veritas, designed to equip leaders with tools and a sequential process for leading healthy change. EPIC also explores the leader's inner life.

EPIC does not tell churches what to change, but how to change in a way that is civil, compassionate, and Christ-honoring. **CR**

## DAVID OLSON NOMINATED FOR CGE LEADERSHIP ROLE

DIRECTOR OF CHURCH PLANTING OFFERS "UNIQUE BREADTH" OF EXPERIENCE.

David Olson was nominated in January to be the next executive minister of the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism (CGE).

Olson has served nine years in CGE and currently is the department's director of church planting. Prior to accepting his current call, he served for six years as director of church planting for the Pacific Southwest Conference.

If elected at the 124th Covenant Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, Olson will assume his new responsibilities September 1. The position opened when Gary Walter was elected president of the denomination at the 123rd Annual Meeting. Retired Pacific Southwest Conference Superintendent John Notehelfer has served as the department's interim director.

"Dave is a person of genuine spirituality," said Walter in making the announcement. Walter also cited what he calls Olson's "unique breadth" of experience. "He grew up in small towns as the child of a pastor, has planted churches, has been instrumental in a number of our large churches, understands the challenges of established churches, and has been heavily involved in our multiethnic advances. He cares about the entirety of the ECC and all of our regional conferences."

Olson is a member of Sanctuary Covenant Church, a five-year-old multiethnic church plant in Minneapolis, pastored by Efrem Smith. **CR**



## PAUL CARLSON PARTNERSHIP SHIFTS FOCUS TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

FROM BEAN FARMING TO SOAP MAKING, PCP EXPANDS FOCUS ON LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF COMMUNITIES

When Byron Miller, executive director of the Paul Carlson Partnership (PCP), taught a seminar in small business development in Congo last September, he asked six groups to create plans for an income-producing venture. The four with the best plans would be given start-up loans of up to \$1,000.

The Congolese responded enthusiastically. The project of Mr. Ruffin, Engineer Dakolo, and their team in Loko is one example. When Miller visited Congo again in January, Ruffin (president of the group) and Dakolo (head of development at Loko) reported on the group's success: They bought beans from a farmer in Loko for 300 Congolese francs per cup and took them by bicycle to the town of Businga, where they sold them for 500 Congolese francs. Now they've bought more beans at 300 francs and are storing them till the end of

March, when they expect to be able to sell them for 800 francs.

As this group continues their bean business, they will gradually repay the loan they received—and that money will then be available for someone else to launch a project.

In a country as poor as Congo, where people live on less than \$200 a year, the fundamental need is to get money into the hands of families. When parents have a little money to pay for medical care and school fees, the children are healthier and better educated. The hospitals, clinics, and schools are strengthened.

PCP is intensifying this focus on development. Projects from pig farming to soap making to a freight-hauling boat are receiving start-up loans. Meanwhile, the PCP continues operating support of four hospi-





The Sankofa journey in February marked the tenth anniversary of the first trip held in 1999.

## A NEW DAY FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION, BUT THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPASSION, MERCY, AND JUSTICE HELPS COVENANTERS WORK TOWARD RACIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THEIR CHURCHES AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Despite what some people may think, the election of Barack Obama did not magically usher us into a colorblind world. Issues of race and injustice still exist. The Department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice offers tools and resources to assist local congregations and individuals in taking next steps in the journey toward racial righteousness. The Invitation to Racial Righteousness (I2RR) may be the place to begin that journey.

It offers an opportunity for a multiethnic or two mono-ethnic congregations to gather in one community for the purpose of deepening personal awareness, responsibility and action. In the first quarter of

2009, four I2RR events took place across the country. The ethnicity of congregations participating include Native Alaskan, Anglo, Latino, and multiethnic. BOSS (Bayside of South Sacramento), living out their core value to be cross-cultural and cross-class, will host their third experience this spring.

Sankofa Journey and the Journey to Mosaic (J2M) continue to roll on as both Covenanters and non-Covenanters “get on the bus.” The most recent Sankofa journey in February marked the 10-year anniversary of the first trip held in February 1999. More than 600 people have experienced this journey of healing and transformation.

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tals and 93 clinics, with a special emphasis on placing basic diagnostic equipment in every clinic.

Funds are being gathered to supply textbooks as needed to teachers in 423 schools. Work continues on power and water projects, as well as road repair.

The Paul Carlson Partnership depends on contributions from churches and individuals. To learn more about its work and how to give, see [www.paulcarlson.org](http://www.paulcarlson.org) or send an email to [info@paulcarlson.org](mailto:info@paulcarlson.org). **CR**

## COVENANT WORLD RELIEF WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

COVENANT WORLD RELIEF BRINGS HOPE TO THE POOREST OF THE POOR.



David Husby will start serving as director of Covenant World Relief (CWR) on May 11, replacing long-time director Jim Sundholm. He will work under the Department of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice led by Debbie Blue, executive minister.

David and Ronna Husby served as Covenant short-term missionaries in Japan from 1983-85 and were commissioned as long-term missionaries for Japan in 1987. They began serving as Asia regional coordinators for the Department of World Mission in 1999. Ronna will continue to handle the regional coordinator responsibilities on a limited basis for the coming year.

In his various mission roles, Husby has developed the ministry of others and furthered the mission of the Covenant through strategic partnerships, also a major contribution of his CWR predecessor.

“Jim Sundholm has worked hard to develop Covenant World Relief into a strong and effective organization that serves the poorest of the poor and the marginalized around the world,” Husby says. “I look forward to learning from him and to seek ways to continue to build on what Jim has accomplished.”

The Husbys are members of Newport Covenant Church in Bellevue, Washington. **CR**



The Chicago Children's Choir recently teamed up with the university to launch its eighth after-school neighborhood choir.

## NORTH PARK MARKS ANOTHER YEAR OF SIGNIFICANCE AND SERVICE

### NEW EMPHASIS WEIGHS BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

North Park University faculty, staff, and alumni have shown what it means to live lives of significance in ways that include publishing books, serving the neighborhood, and riding bikes across the country to raise awareness of justice issues.

Among those North Park faculty who recently published books were Mary Adams Trujillo, Scot McKnight, Paul De Neui, Dennis Bricault, R. J. Snell, Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, and Klyne Snodgrass. Linda Olson also authored a chapter in *Guide to the Code of Ethics for Nurses*, which received a 2008 Publications Award of Merit from the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

*Christianity Today* named Snodgrass'

*Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables* as its biblical studies "Book of the Year." Prolific writer Scot McKnight published several books, including *Finding Faith*, *Losing Faith* (with university alumna and current seminary student Hauna Ondrey) and *The Blue Parakeet*.

Even as faculty delved into weighty subjects, students were regularly challenged to contemplate "life's big questions" through the university's Campus Theme program, which highlights a different theme each year. The program encourages campus and community involvement through a public lecture series, chapel services, artistic events, and other opportunities.

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## RACIAL RECONCILIATION

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(Read more at [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org).) The Pacific Southwest Conference and the North Pacific Conference each sponsor a contextualized version of Sankofa. Exciting plans are shaping up in both the Central Conference and the East Coast Conference to add their versions of J2M.

David Dethmers, a leader in the Reformed Church of America, participated in a Sankofa journey and offered his reflections: The Sankofa journey was exhausting, but exhilarating. It demands something of you, but you will get far more in return. Anyone who is seriously interested in breaking down the walls of racism—both within themselves and within our society—will find Sankofa to be an indispensable part of the journey.

Will you be on the next bus? Mark your calendars for August 6-9, 2009. Look for information coming to your church soon. For more information, please contact Chrissy Palmerlee, [chrissy.palmerlee@covchurch.org](mailto:chrissy.palmerlee@covchurch.org) or call 773-784-3000. **CR**

## CAMPS PLAY VITAL ROLE IN LIFE OF COVENANTERS

### COVENANT CAMPS IMPACT MORE PEOPLE EVERY YEAR THAN MOST OTHER COVENANT EVENTS

Numbers never tell the whole story, but the ones connected with Covenant camping proclaim the denomination's commitment to ministry for more than 80 years.

The Covenant operates 22 camps on more than \$100 million of prime real estate in places like Santa Cruz, California; Estes Park, Colorado; Swanzey, New Hampshire; Lake Arrowhead, California; Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; Yelm, Washington; Pigeon Lake, Alberta; Long Prairie, Minnesota; and Onekama, Michigan.

More than \$3 million of renovations and upgrades are made to these properties each year.

More importantly, Covenant camps



have impacted the lives of millions of people. More than 150,000 people attend a camp or retreat at a Covenant camp each year.

Each summer, more than 5,000 people commit or recommit their lives to following Jesus. More than 1,000 people develop leadership skills while serving as camp counselors.

Covenant camps can work closely with you to create programs that align with your theology. You can take part in choosing the speaker, the music, and the ministry focus. Or you may choose to simply show up and allow the camp to prepare the ministry program for you. **CR**

# COVENANT WORLD MISSION COMBINES GLOBAL MISSION AND LOCAL VISION

MISSIONARIES PARTNER TO SHARE THE GOSPEL  
AROUND THE WORLD IN NEW AND CREATIVE WAYS



## Africa

**BURKINA FASO.** On January 13, the first chronological Bible lesson was broadcast in the Fulani town of Djibo, and again mid-March in the capital. Ten Fulani women's groups learned to make soap at the Good Shepherd Bible Center to provide income. Pastor Eli and Fati Bande direct the center.

**CAMEROON.** Rainforest International School is seeking short-term missionaries to fill teacher and staff roles for the 2009-10 school year.

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.** Covenant missionaries Roy and Aleta Danforth lead weekly sessions teaching health, development, farming and the Bible. Karen Benson, who has served as a Covenant missionary to Africa for more than 22 years, will retire from missionary service later this year, having served the Fulani people since 1998. She will be honored at the 124th Covenant Annual Meeting.

**CONGO.** More than 2,000 pastors and spouses attended a national pastors conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church of Congo (CEUM) in January. Many participants traveled two to four day—some more than a week. Workshop leaders

included Ruth Hill, executive minister of the Department of Women Ministries, and her husband, Brad; Keith Hamilton, president of Alaska Christian College; Byron Miller, executive director of the Paul Carlson Partnership; and Covenant missionary Keith Gustafson. The Congo Church has requested one or two doctors, a nurse, an educator, a pastor, and someone to work with development projects. If interested, email Keith Gustafson at CovenantCongo@yahoo.fr.

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA.** World Mission has partnered with Buenas Noticias (Good News), a group of evangelical churches in Madrid, since 1999. The work has grown to 21 churches. A young man who came to know Christ through the ministry of Covenant missionaries Tim and Helen Smith established one of the churches. The Smiths are currently on home assignment.

**KENYA.** The Kenya Covenant Church celebrated its tenth anniversary last August with a three-day event. An eight-member delegation representing the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) participated in the celebrations, including Executive Minister Curt Peterson. A Friends of World Mission project raised \$59,000 to assist the Kenya

church with micro-enterprise development, construction of facilities, and securing land to build permanent church facilities.

**SUDAN.** In February 2009, there was unrest in Malakal, home of the Evangelical Covenant Church of South Sudan. Several people were killed, including church members. Short-term missionary James Tang is in touch with the group, which has 216 churches and 40,000 members.

## Asia

**BANGLADESH.** Despite continued opposition from some traditional church leaders, a Muslim friendly translation of the Bible is in progress. The current available translation contains terms that could be perceived as offensive to Muslims.

**CENTRAL ASIA.** The ECC workers who served in Central Asia have completed their project and now serve in Thailand. They plan to continue maintaining relationships with local leaders in Central Asia.

**CHINA.** The Computer/English Training Center in North Central China hosted an English and Culture Connection event from January 8-22 this year. Eighteen church representatives participated in activities with 40 first-year training center students. Students and participants engaged in one-on-one English conversation, boosting their confidence in their language abilities.

**GUAM/MICRONESIA.** Project missionaries Brad and Cheryl Boydston and Eric and Karyn Sorenson serve Pacific Islands Bible College (PIBC) to develop leaders for ministry in the Pacific Islands and along the Asian Pacific Rim. Students come from Bangladesh, China, Chuuk, Guam, Japan, Korea, Marshall Islands, Palau, the Philippines, Pohnpei, and Yap. The Boydstons conclude service later this year.

**INDIA.** Two leaders from the Hindustani Covenant Church (HCC), Rev. Steven David and Rev. Shekhar Singh, were present-



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## COVENANT WORLD MISSION

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ers at the World Mission Conference that preceded the Midwinter Conference. President Gary Walter, Executive Minister Curt Peterson, Regional Coordinator David Dolan, and Regional Coordinator David Husby visited HCC in late February.

**JAPAN.** Covenant missionaries in Japan work with the NSKK (Japan Covenant Church) in church planting and revitalization, evangelism, theological education and holistic ministries. Ministries include the Odawara Christian Center and the Akagi Bible Camp.

**TAIWAN.** The Taiwan Covenant Church—40 congregations and more than 7,500 believers—will host the Sixth Asian Consultation April 29-May 1. Attendees will represent Japan, Thailand, India, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

**LAOS.** The government closed the business that had been run by ECC workers and Lao staff. Preparations are being made to start a new business located in Thailand.

**MONGOLIA.** Project missionaries Jim and Liz Sedore are in their first year of Mongolian language study in the capital city



A young girl takes an eye exam in Oaxaca, Mexico, sponsored by Juntos Por Salud (Together for Health).

of Ulaanbaatar. They are partnering with Joint Christian Services offering sustainable hope, skills, and relationships.

**PHILIPPINES.** The newest Jesus Covenant Church is on Mindoro Island and is constructing a new building that will include a community center.

**THAILAND.** Randy and Cheryl Bevis are serving in Chiang Mai with several ministries, including a fish farm and hatchery. Carl and Karen Groot serve the Abundant Life Center (ALC) in Bangkok. Joining the team are Covenant missionaries Jim Gustafson, Bob and Grace Shim, and Peter and Ruth Dutton.

## Europe

**BELGIUM.** Barbara Swanson is working with the Mosaics Project in Antwerp, serving immigrants and refugees seeking asylum. Johnna Hayward serves as a pastor of outreach and youth in a Congolese church in Waterloo. In February 2009, Covenant short-term missionaries Jared and Hannah Baker arrived in Belgium. Jared will serve youth and families at Antwerp International Protestant Church. Hannah will serve with Swanson as part of the Mosaics Project.

**CZECH REPUBLIC.** Fred Prudek, long-term missionary to the Czech Republic, travels to Benatky and Milovice to help build a new church. He also teaches practical theology classes at International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague and assists the Czech Evangelical Theological Seminary. Kelly teaches evangelistic English classes in Milovice and Benatky, reaches out to prostitutes in Prague, and regularly visits a women's prison.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHORT-TERM MISSIONARY NEEDS IN 2009, PLEASE CONTACT LANA HEINRICH AT 773-907-3350, OR BY EMAIL AT [LANA.HEINRICH@COVCHURCH.ORG](mailto:LANA.HEINRICH@COVCHURCH.ORG).**

**FRANCE.** Regional coordinators to Europe John and Letha Kerl minister in Lyon. Ken Satterberg is in Marseille and is involved with the Mosaics Project. Francisco and Stephanie Ramos continue in La Fonderie in Paris.

**RUSSIA.** Changes in Russian laws have made it more difficult for Covenant project missionaries Leonid and Leanna Ragheta to return to the country and minister. They currently are in the U.S. on home assignment.

**SPAIN.** Eugenio Restrepo serves in Málaga and represents 14 mission organizations working alongside FIEIDE (Federation of Free Evangelical Churches in Spain). The Vida Nueva (New Life) Church in La Coruña is planting churches in



Carl Groot, a Covenant missionary at Abundant Life Church in Bangkok, Thailand, participates in a baptism service.

Valencia and Santiago.

**SWEDEN.** Aaron Thompson serves Fisher's Creek International Church as pastor of student and university ministries. Aaron will be ordained this June.

## Latin America

**BRAZIL.** Project missionaries Wainer and Magui Guimaraes are planting a church, partnering with a local daycare, and reaching the youth in the slums through art.

**COLOMBIA.** More than 90 percent of pastors and spouses attended the bi-annual pastors and families retreat in Medellín.

**ECUADOR.** Cheryl A. Clark and husband, Moises, continue work in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador. In 2009, Cheryl marks 25 years of missionary service to Ecuador. Yonchu Song is the country

coordinator. Short-term missionaries Jenny and Chris Hoskins arrive this fall and Kim and Joel Delp in 2010.

**MEXICO.** The Foundation for Family Development in Monterrey has expanded Project Down, which serves families affected by Down Syndrome. Juntos Por Salud (Together for Health) was started in Tehuantepec, with cooperation from the Mexican government, public schools, the health system, a U.S. Covenant church and Semillas de Salud workers from Covenant churches in the isthmus region of Oaxaca. Covenant VBS offerings in 2008 funded the project. In April 2009, Covenant missionaries will host a second pastors' retreat to provide encouragement and training for leaders of Covenant churches in Mexico. **CR**

## SCRIPTURE AT ODDS WITH CULTURE ON ISSUE OF STEWARDSHIP

### A WIDE RANGE OF RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP COVENANTERS ADDRESS ISSUE OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

Scripture instructs Christ's followers to be "in the world, but not of the world" (2 Corinthians 10:3). Nowhere is this tension more obvious than in the handling of money and possessions, suggests the Commission on Stewardship.

"American culture tells us to accumulate more possessions and fulfill our selfish desires now, while Matthew 25 tells us to 'do unto the least of these.' Other passages tell us 'do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...' and 'where your treasure is, there will your heart will be also' (Matthew 6). As the people of the church grow in their understanding of scriptural financial principles, God's kingdom is enhanced and enlarged."

The commission has developed a

number of resources to help local churches address stewardship from a biblical perspective. Periodic updates to the Stewardship Starter Kit are mailed to churches and are available for download at the Covenant website.

Visit [www.covchurch.org/stewardship](http://www.covchurch.org/stewardship) for additional resources, including scripture references, stewardship stimulators, resources on Stewardship of the Earth, and personal financial management events, seminars, and classes. Information is also available from Emily Ross, assistant to the commission, at [stewardship@covchurch.org](mailto:stewardship@covchurch.org), by telephone at 773-907-3375, or by emailing Don Fensterman, interim director of stewardship, at [don.fensterman@covchurch.org](mailto:don.fensterman@covchurch.org). **CR**

## NEW DISCIPLE-FORMING RESOURCES AVAILABLE

### CHRISTIAN FORMATION INTRODUCES LAUNCHING A COMMITMENT TO GROW AND ROCK SOLID

The Department of Christian Formation introduced two new resources for developing disciples: *Launching a Commitment to GROW*, and *Rock Solid*.

The first resource, *Launching a Commitment to GROW* offers ideas for preparing and conducting a GROW commitment service, along with ideas for follow-up with the congregation and opportunities for sharing GROW faith stories.

"The beauty of the material is that you are not tied to one specific model or one specific time of the church calendar," says Dan Shelton, pastor of Kerman Covenant Church in Kerman, California. The material can be ordered through the Covenant Bookstore at [www.covenantbookstore.org](http://www.covenantbookstore.org)

The second resource, *Rock Solid*, can be used by youth and adults for small groups, mentors, and individual devotions. It is laid out as a daily journal, with seven days devoted to each catechism question (doctrinal exploration). Each day includes scripture dealing with the theme and an invitation to dig into that particular text.

John Notehelfer, interim executive minister for the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism, says he has used *Rock Solid* for his devotions and has given copies to his staff.

*Rock Solid* journals are available from the Covenant Bookstore for \$10.95. The leader's guide is available for free download from the Resources page of the Covenant website, [www.covchurch.org/resource](http://www.covchurch.org/resource). **CR**



## CHRISTIAN FORMATION EMPOWERS YOUR MINISTRY

A variety of resources are available from the Department of Christian Formation, including material in Spanish and Korean.

- WorshipConnect—serving worship leaders, musicians, and volunteers. Includes a blog with articles and links and networks for artists, staff, and volunteers.
- Children's ministry—offering connections for individuals and ideas and a resources blog.
- Inner healing seminar—providing support to Hispanic congregations in the journey to become like Christ.
- Spiritual direction—a ministry of listening, discernment, and prayer offered in a confidential setting of encouragement and compassion.
- Scripture resources—helpful material for study of God's word, including *Praying Scripture*, *Reading the Bible*, and *Exploring God's Word*.

Spanish resources include:

- *Mi compromiso de Crecer* (*My Commitment to Grow*)—Reflect on spiritual growth and steps to become more like Christ.
- *La oración que enfoca la vida* (*The Prayer that Focuses Life*)—Study of the Lord's Prayer, a daily guide for individual, small group use.
- *Crecer más profundamente en Cristo* (*Growing Deeper Tools*)—Series of spiritual growth tools incorporating regular spiritual practices.
- *Semana de Oración* (*Week of Prayer*)—A guide through seven days of prayer. Also available in Korean.

Resources are available for order through [www.covenantbookstore.com](http://www.covenantbookstore.com). Some available for free download at [www.covchurch.org/espanol/recursos](http://www.covchurch.org/espanol/recursos). For more information, visit the Christian Formation website. **CR**

## NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY

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The theme this year is, "Whose Life Is it Anyway?" It addresses the tension between individual freedom and community responsibility in everything from health care to the sciences to economic development in the third world. Speakers included ABC News chief medical editor Dr. Timothy Johnson (a university and seminary alumnus), and respected Duke University professor Arlie Petters.

North Park also hosts the Chicago Children's Choir (CCC), an internationally acclaimed multiracial, multicultural ensemble founded in 1956. The CCC recently teamed up with the university to launch its eighth after-school neighborhood choir. As many as 80 children ages 8-14 from Albany Park and the surrounding area participate. The choir practices on the campus, and its first scheduled performance will be in Anderson Chapel on May 28.

One of several North Park graduates making news this year was alumna Rebecca Miller (2007), who last year received the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship. Today the classical guitarist is combining her love for world music with her love for teaching English in Indonesia, where she has a 10-month teaching assistantship through the Fulbright program.

A group of North Park cyclists drew international interest with their cross-country bike trip last summer to raise money and awareness about social justice issues in Zambia. The riders, all recent alumni and current students, started their trek May 24 with the rear wheels of their bikes in the Pacific Ocean, and finished August 17, with their front wheels in the Atlantic.

Along the way, they stopped at Covenant churches to talk about the journey and the two non-profits for which they were raising funds—Spark Ventures and Acirfa Bikes. Spark offers a sponsorship program for children in Zambia, while Acirfa provides jobs at a bicycle assembly plant in Zambia as well as low-cost bicycles. Discussions with church members made the biggest impression on the group. **CR**

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION INTRODUCES THREE NEW PRAYER RETREATS

EACH RETREAT DESIGNED TO ENRICH INNER LIFE AND ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY, WHILE OFFERING A UNIQUE PRAYER EXPERIENCE

The Department of Christian Formation has developed three guided prayer retreats to enrich the Christian's interior life and develop community. Each retreat is unique in content and form.

The first retreat, *Invitation to Prayer*, offers extended time and space for interaction with God and takes participants through scripture to experience different forms of prayer, such as centering prayer, confession, lament, struggle, communion, and more.

The second retreat, *Streams and Pathways: An Invitation to Spiritual Practices*, is designed to allow time for noticing the movement of God in our lives. Working through a variety of spiritual practices, participants will be encouraged to listen for



God's still, small voice.

A third retreat, *Time to Breathe*, is designed for youth. It provides them an opportunity to engage in spiritual practices.

For each retreat, the Department of

## CHIC 2009 PARTNERS WITH COVENANT MINISTRIES TO HELP THAILAND

COVENANT WORLD RELIEF AND COVENANT MISSION CONNECTION JOIN FORCES TO HELP STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The CHIC 2009 World Relief offering will benefit the people of Thailand. CHIC will take place in Knoxville, Tennessee, July 12-17, 2009.

CHIC is also partnering with Covenant Mission Connection to set up mission trips to be taken after July. Students will travel to Thailand and Laos and see what God is doing with the resources raised by students.

Michelle Beilby, leader of the CHIC Council 2009 Long Road to Justice team, was impressed by the work of missionaries she observed during a recent trip.

"The stories of people finding respectable and sustainable work were abundant, and many have found new life in Christ as they have seen that life modeled by our missionaries," she said.

Most Thais consider themselves Bud-

dhist, but their religious practices and beliefs can be a mixture of Buddhism, Brahmanism, animism, and materialism. Such a complex worldview can make it difficult for Thais to believe in the uniqueness of Christ.

The Thailand Covenant Church, Covenant missionaries, and other partners are working to reach the Thai people through holistic ministries.

Covenant missionary work has been carried out in Thailand since 1971. The Abundant Life Center (ALC) in Bangkok, and the Mekong Valley Project (MVP) in Chiang Rai are two examples of the ministry.

At ALC, Carl and Karen Groot oversee two community centers in areas bordering slums. A focus for the ALC is to connect residents with productive work, each other, and Christ. The beautiful handbags and



Christian Formation will provide a trained facilitator to guide participants in a biblically-based retreat. The retreats are designed to be a day and a half, but the schedule is flexible and can be modified according to the needs of the host church or institution.

Speaking about his experience, Ted Nordlund, a Covenant pastor and trained facilitator, encourages individuals to participate in a prayer retreat by asking: "Have you ever had the opportunity to experience prayer that you have only heard or read about? *Invitation to Prayer* puts you in the driver's seat of praying your lament just like David prayed in the Psalms. *Invitation to Prayer* entreats you to wrestle with God much like Jacob did in Genesis 32. *Invitation to Prayer* will expand your understanding of the One to whom we pray."

For more information on these guided prayer retreats, please visit [www.covchurch.org/formation](http://www.covchurch.org/formation) or call 773-583-0220. **CR**



Students and leaders at CHIC 2006 packed more than 500,000 meals for people in need in Sudan.

handicrafts produced by the women in their programs are well known.

After serving 16 years in Laos, Peter and Ruth Dutton are starting a new business in Thailand. They will operate a food mill and factory, Mekong Valley Foods, which will be a support base for discipleship ministry and agricultural development reaching both Thailand and Laos.

For information, visit the CHIC website at [www.chic2009.org](http://www.chic2009.org). **CR**

## SUSTAINING PASTORAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEER LEARNING EXPERIENCES

### ORDERED MINISTRY HELPS PASTORS OVERCOME ISOLATION AND FRUSTRATION THROUGH CORPORATE LEARNING AND RENEWAL

The call to pastoral ministry always has been hard, but ministers today need a wider breadth of skills than at any time in the past. Yet, as one pastor has said, "I think the majority of pastors in the Covenant are out there 'doing it alone' and probably feeling frustrated and isolated."

The Department of the Ordered Ministry is working to change that reality through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program.

Last year Dan Pietrzyk, the director of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, led a group of 10 pastors from across the country through a nine-month curriculum designed to encourage peer learning and the development of deeper relationships while confronting pastoral leadership. Utilizing retreats, web-based learning tools, conference calls, group projects, and shared readings, these women and men addressed situations they were facing in their own congregations. They also were asked to view leadership through a variety of lenses.

Using the model set by the leadership cohort experience, David Kersten, executive minister of the Ordered Ministry, has started a cohort experience around the core pastoral art of preaching. The course is based on the premise that "preaching is the best-kept secret in the church," Kersten says. "People hear a lot of sermons, but don't know what they are or where they come from. If pastors can courageously give the secret away, great learning can occur for both the preacher and the listener."

Participants discuss the art of preaching, learn from scholars, and review each others' sermons. Kersten also has asked his students to invite their congregations into the process through the formation of "preaching project groups." The groups work together to evaluate sermons from the congregational perspective. Exploration includes the effects of spiritual temperament, learning styles, and how and what congregations hear from the pulpit.

Alongside these models for peer learn-

ing, the department has encouraged self-designed retreats for groups of pastors to engage in corporate learning and renewal. They are aided with funding available through the SPE initiative. One accountability group of young pastors who met while students at North Park Theological Seminary have continued to be intentional about community, accountability, and learning together as they have moved across the country to a variety of ministry calls.



The Center for Spiritual Direction at North Park Theological Seminary is yet another venue through which the Covenant's ministerial community continues to be enriched. As a result of the training, the denomination has a growing number of pastors, missionaries, and chaplains who can provide spiritual direction in their regional settings.

To support this development, the departments of Christian Formation and Ordered Ministry are working together to resource conference-based training retreats. These retreats are modeled after the format used in the Pacific Southwest Conference for the continuing development of their spiritual directors.

Community discernment has long been a core practice of the Covenant, and peer-learning experiences are "the natural way forward in vocational development for its pastors," Kersten says. **CR**



## LEGACY GIVING TO LOCAL MINISTRIES KEEPS GROWING

### COVENANT TRUST COMPANY CELEBRATES TWENTY YEARS AS FINANCIAL SERVICES RESOURCE FOR THE COVENANT

In 2008, local church ministries received more than \$17.6 million from trusts, wills, and other deferred gift agreements.

Covenant Trust Company (CTC) celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its charter in 2008. From an initial \$80 million, the total dollars under management have grown to more than \$364 million. Over that time, local ministries have received more than \$17.6 million from trusts, wills and other deferred gift agreements.

As part of the anniversary observance, Covenant Trust Company ‘rebranded’ itself to better describe the wide range of services it provides. You are already seeing references to “Covenant Trust Company... your financial services resource.”

The new Covenant Trust Company logo also focuses on our three major areas of service—trustee services, asset manage-

ment, and legacy planning.

Another key change during 2008 was a significant upgrading of national Financial Services Representatives (FSR). With a renewed commitment to continuing education and client service, we added several new full-time FSRs. All regional FSRs make partnering with conference and local ministries a key focus.

New charitable agreements written in 2008 carry a total of \$24,471,032 for Covenant ministries. Of that amount, \$6,478,218 in future dollars is designated for local ministries—a 13 percent increase over 2007.

Total future dollars expected for local

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## 124TH ANNUAL MEETING

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of Life Covenant Church in Long Beach, California.

A number of key decisions will come before delegates, including election of a new executive minister of Church Growth and Evangelism. David Olson, who currently serves as the director of church planting, is the nominee for the position, which was vacated when Gary Walter was elected president a year ago.

A proposed Resolution on Criminal Justice is scheduled for presentation, and the recipients of the Irving Lambert, T. W. Anderson and Paul Carlson Partnership awards, will be honored.

Another traditional highlight is the ordination and credentialing of pastors, which will take place during the Saturday evening service.

Numerous seminars are also available for attendees, with special activities planned for children attending the event.

Visit the Annual Meeting website at [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org) for information. **CR**

## BENEVOLENCE MINISTRIES FOCUS ON NEW HEALTH CARE SERVICES

### MEDICAL CENTERS, RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES EMPHASIZE SPIRITUAL SUPPORT AS IMPORTANT PART OF HOLISTIC CARE

The Covenant Ministries of Benevolence (CMB) continues to innovate as it extends care to communities.

In 2008, Covenant Retirement Communities (CRC), introduced CovenantCare at Home (CCH). The subsidiary provides both skilled and supportive personal care services. “Seniors want to stay in their homes,” says CCH President Joseph Haughney. “Our services can help them do that.”

The excellent reputation of CRC will help position the agencies so they can extend their outreach. The first of the organization’s agencies are opening in communities where Covenant Retirement Communities already exist.

CCH is breaking new ground in home care by adopting CRC’s commitment to whole-person wellness. In addition to

supporting physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs, CCH is developing a spiritual component to its services. “Not many home care agencies are owned by religious organizations,” says Haughney. “And even fewer offer an opportunity for spiritual support.”

The two full-service medical centers of the Evangelical Covenant Church are also expanding their outreach to the community.

Swedish Covenant Hospital (SCH) devoted the central courtyard of its Chicago campus to a healing garden where patients, families, visitors, and employees can meditate and reflect. Designed by world-renown landscape architect Maria Smithburg, the garden carves a peaceful natural refuge. A gift from the Bill Kurtis

## GIVING TO "BREAK THE CHAINS" SETS NEW RECORD, SAVES LIVES

### WOMEN MINISTRIES EMPOWERS WOMEN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Giving to "Break the Chains" has exceeded all projects since the first one in 1924. Covenanters contributed more than \$215,000 in 2008 to support anti-trafficking work in India through the Hindustani Covenant Church and the International Justice Mission. In collaboration with other Covenant ministries, a website was created to help develop awareness of and put a stop to human trafficking ([www.covchurch.org/humantrafficking](http://www.covchurch.org/humantrafficking)).

"Break the Chains Team" was launched in June 2008. In its first six months, 35 athletes in a variety of events, including the Chicago Marathon, added meaning to their race by raising awareness and funds to fight trafficking. People can become a team member by registering on the Covenant's trafficking website.

Women Ministries also introduced "The Leadership Connection," a new training and networking program for local women leaders. Women Ministries leaders and ministry coaches will lead the training at fall retreats. The department will provide a new resource for each annual event. In 2008, the resource was "3-2-1," a PowerPoint tool available as a free download that gives three reasons Women Ministries are needed in the local church, two essential mindsets for leaders, and the one foundational goal for all women ministries.

The response of women who participated was overwhelmingly positive, says ministry coach Ann Richards. One participant declared, "I never heard the need for Women Ministries explained so well before." **CR**



and Donna LaPietra Healing Garden Society and many donors made the garden possible.

In addition to launching several new research studies, SCH joined the nation's elite group of 25 hospitals with its extensive use of electronic medical records. The advancement increases patient safety and improves the quality of care. The hospital provided more than \$17.7 million to charity, unreimbursed, and Medicaid care, according to preliminary 2008 data. SCH served nearly 160,000 individuals with programs such as its Child Care Center, Family Practice Center, Physician Referral Services, health fairs, health screenings and lectures,

classes and support groups.

Emanuel Medical Center's commitment to the Turlock, California, community is equally profound. Early numbers indicated that the hospital provided more than \$39 million in charity and uncompensated care in 2008. It absorbed MediCal and Medicare shortfalls, conducted community education programs, paid physicians to provide care to the uninsured, provided emergency department physician call services and other free health care services.

The scope of the hospital's service now includes state-of-the-art cancer care, thanks to the hospital's collaboration with Stanford Hospital & Clinics and the Stanford Medical School. As a result of a partnership with Children's Hospital Central California, pediatric hospitalists at Emanuel now respond to complicated births, attend newborns, and treat patients in the pediatric and intensive care units.

A new Emanuel Physician Center brought a full array of family practice and preventive medical services to the local community. The hospital plans to add a second Turlock office. **CR**



## WOMEN MINISTRIES' TRIENNIAL XIII HEADS TO D.C.

Women Ministries will host Triennial XIII, July 22-25, 2010 in Washington, D.C. Women will gather at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, just three miles from the famous Reflecting Pool. The theme for TXIII is "Reflecting God's Glory" and will highlight a woman's high honor and call to reflect God's glory, says Ruth Hill, executive minister. Registration fees are as follows:

- *Early Registration* (August 1, 2009 - January 15, 2010): \$310
- *Regular Registration* (January 16 - May 31, 2010): \$360
- *Late Registration* (June 1 - July 18, 2010): \$390

Women Ministries is also offering several new registration options for women wanting to attend Triennial XIII:

- *Limited Special Registration* (June 1 - July 31, 2009 only): \$260
- *Group Registration* (10 or more): \$288 (20% off regular rate)
- *Special Installment Registration*: \$30/month for 12 months through Electronic Funds Transfers.

The schedule has been improved, an interactive experience on injustice is being created, and an additional day of tours has been added, in addition to other enhancements. **CR**



The service project at CHIC 2006 inspired members of Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton, Minnesota, to pack nearly 500,000 meals for people in need around the world.

## COVENANT NEWS REPORT SOWS NEW MINISTRY IDEAS IN FERTILE SOIL

A GROWING NUMBER OF COVENANTERS DISCOVER NEW IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STORIES OF OTHER MINISTRIES

The daily online Covenant news report is a bit like the farmer that sows seed over a field and watches it sprout and produce a bountiful harvest.

The news items regularly feature interesting ministries in local Covenant churches throughout North America and in mission settings worldwide. It is not unusual to hear reports of other churches reading about one of those ideas, and then planting that ministry idea "seed" in their own areas.

A few years ago, one concerned Detroit church founded a medical clinic to provide care to the under-served of the community. After reading an online news report about that effort, other churches began pursuing similar outreach efforts.

A casual scan of the more than 175 stories published online during the first 90 days of this year offer a sampling of the ways in which local congregations are creatively exploring new ways to connect with the communities they serve and create opportunities to share their faith.

*Compassion:* Gardens and food bank; Pack meals for needy; Hospitality for the homeless; Gifts for immigrant day laborers;

Rip n' roll bandages

*Outreach:* Tutoring for Hispanic children; Mobile pantry; Arts festivals; Classic car show; Parish nursing

*Inter-generational:* Church forms community youth orchestra; Rock n' Roll—path to gospel; New Year's for teenagers; An online-based "virtual" missions trip; Church counsels couples—successful marriages

*Justice:* Men's group raises money to stop domestic violence; Help poverty stricken women—recycle cell phones; Welcoming strangers

*Spiritual formation:* Route 66 spiritual journey; Walk to Jerusalem

These stories and more can be found daily on the Covenant website. Sign up today for Covenant Newswire, and receive one email each day containing the headlines for each Covenant news story published during the previous 24 hours. The Newswire sign-up link can be found on the Covenant home page.

To share your church's ministry ideas, email Covenant Newsdesk at [newsdesk@covchurch.org](mailto:newsdesk@covchurch.org). Together, we can expand the harvest. **CR**

## COVENANT TRUST COMPANY

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ministries from wills, trusts, and other tools equal \$55,180,466 at the end of 2008. In 2008, more than \$7.6 million was distributed to all Covenant ministries from estates and trusts.

Slightly more than one-third of all Covenant churches have hosted at least one CTC-sponsored workshop. However these churches will receive 77 percent of all known future dollars designated for Covenant churches. The CTC website [www.CovenantTrust.com](http://www.CovenantTrust.com) provides information about financial planning, retirement plan-

ning, charitable giving, asset management and more. Does your ministry's website have a link to this important resource?

CTC has a unique emphasis on stewardship, with a vision "...to awaken people to the significance of stewardship through estate planning and financial management... we show our commitment to this ministry by helping our clients find a way to honor God through their personal financial plan."

Call CTC at 800-483-2177 to schedule a workshop, or to receive financial or legacy planning information. There is a Financial Services Representative in each conference. Names and telephone numbers are posted on the CTC website. **CR**

## NEED HELP? CALL COVENANT 411



The Resource Center has served the Covenant for more than 30 years, providing free "high tech, high touch" consultation on

ministry resources, research, and customer service. Don't miss the new Instant Chat feature on the website. With no need to sign up or log in, users can usually expect an immediate reply during office hours. Need help? Email [resource.center@covchurch.org](mailto:resource.center@covchurch.org), call 1-800-338-IDEA (4332), or visit [www.covchurch.org/resource-center](http://www.covchurch.org/resource-center).