

## **Delegate Summary**



### **Introduction**.....

Gather '15 was a wonderful time for the Covenant family to come together to celebrate God's goodness and reflect on how he's calling us to join him in service to the world. The Annual Meeting portion of the week allowed us to participate in the important business of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

For those who were unable to be present with us in Kansas City, this delegate summary provides an overview of the updates given and decisions made during the meeting. As a delegate, you have the privilege of sharing this information with your congregation. Links in the document will direct you to related online news stories.

Delegates can use these highlights to deliver an official report to their congregation's board, council, or leadership team. Others have published this information as part of their church newsletter or e-letter. You're invited to use this summary in whatever way it will best serve you and your congregation.

### **Key Facts**.....

#### **Membership in the Mission**

1. There were 404 credentialed delegates representing 177 churches. Total registered conference attendance, including general conferees, was 571, representing 209 churches.
2. 9 churches were received into membership, representing combined average attendance of 820.
3. 20 churches were removed from the membership roster.
4. The Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska was formally recognized as a full member conference of the ECC.

#### **State of the Mission**

5. The Report of the President and the video recording of the presentation will be found at [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org). All Annual Meeting videos will be found at [CovChurch.tv](http://CovChurch.tv).
6. An article covering the Annual Meeting and Gather '15 highlights will appear in the September/October issue of *The Covenant Companion*.
7. Written reports by mission and ministry leadership will be found at [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org).
8. The ECC finished the 2014 fiscal year with an operating budget surplus of approximately \$38,000. Expenses were held to 6.7% below budget. Church giving, though relatively flat for the year, remained the largest source of funding at approximately 53% of

the core operating budget, while donor contributions increased notably.

9. Growth statistics:
    - Average weekend worship attendance in 2014 increased to 217,017 – a 2.98% increase (or 6,287 people) over the 2013 figure.
    - 28% of all ECC congregations are now among populations of color or intentionally multi-ethnic, making the ECC one of the most diverse denominations.
  10. The Covenant Pension Plan, which provides retirement benefits to almost 2,229 active and retired pastors, missionaries, and their surviving spouses, continues to reflect strong investment performance. Total assets available for benefits of approximately \$221.8 million representing a solid funding level relative to the \$214.6 million actuarial liability for future benefits. Significantly, in 2014 the plan "discount rate" was reduced to 5.5% (from 6.0%), more accurately reflecting its true long-term liability.
  11. Bethany Benefit Service provides medical, dental, prescription drug, vision, life, and long-term disability benefits to pastors, missionaries, office staff, surviving spouses, and families (a total of more than 3,400 covered lives). A 3.9% rate increase was announced for 2015, but a subsequent June premium holiday was enacted, in effect resulting in about a 4% reduction in 2015 total medical rates. Bethany Benefits claims activity and reserves remain in solid position.
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## *Make and Deepen Disciples*

12. Covenant Ministries of Benevolence president David Dwight introduced Terri S. Cunliffe, the new president/chief executive officer of Covenant Retirement Communities (CRC) who officially began her role on June 1. CRC serves more than 5,000 residents on 14 campuses in eight states. Covenant Place of Tulsa (Oklahoma) opens this summer.
13. Enrollment at North Park University last fall totaled a record 3,200 students in undergraduate, graduate, and seminary programs. The opening of the Johnson Center for Science and Community Life was a highlight of the 2014-15 academic year.
14. North Park Theological Seminary (NPTS) graduated 28 students this past spring, including 15 from the MDiv program, which will roll out a major revisioning in the fall. NPTS has partnered with the Covenant Trust Company to raise the financial awareness of pastoral students—each student was given access to a financial advisor throughout training.
15. The sale of the Turlock, California-based Emanuel Medical Center to Tenet Healthcare was completed in August 2014.
16. The Covenant Companion underwent an extensive redesign and was relaunched in early 2015. The magazine also was presented with nine top awards during this year's Associated Church Press conference, including three first-place awards.
17. Work began on a major redesign and reimaging of the Covenant Newswire and the online version of the Companion..

### ***Servant Leadership in the Mission***

18. On Thursday evening, 20 missionaries were commissioned and consecrated for service.
19. On Friday morning, Serve Globally executive minister Curt Peterson introduced Jules Mboka, president of the Covenant Church of Congo (CEUM), and his wife Charlotte as special international guests.
20. Delegates approved the call of Cecilia Williams to serve as executive minister of the Love Mercy and Do Justice mission priority. She was installed during the Friday evening worship service.
21. Delegates approved the call of Michelle Sanchez to serve as executive minister of the Make and Deepen Disciples mission priority. She was installed during the Friday evening worship service.
22. Delegates approved the call of Al Tizon to serve as executive minister of the Serve Globally mission priority. He was installed during the Friday evening worship service.

23. A number of individuals were elected to denominational boards.
24. During the opening service, two individuals were commissioned as full-time missionaries. Three individuals were commissioned for service as youth ministers.
25. During the ordination service, 40 individuals were ordained to Word and Sacrament; eight individuals were ordained to Word and Service; six individuals transferred their ordinations; and three individuals were commissioned for service as youth ministers. Another 451 individuals received licenses as they begin the journey to permanent credentials.

### ***Honoring Faithful Service in the Mission***

26. The Irving C. Lambert Award recognizing outstanding urban ministry was presented to Donald C. Davenport, a veteran Covenant minister and denominational leader living in Chicago.
27. The T. W. Anderson Award recognizing outstanding laypeople was presented to David L. Swanson, a member of Bethlehem Covenant Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
28. 44 individuals received Clergy Lifetime Service recognitions.
29. Retiring executive minister Debbie C. Blue (Love Mercy and Do Justice) was honored with the status of Executive Minister Emeritus.
30. Retiring interim executive minister Evelyn M.R. Johnson (Make and Deepen Disciples) was honored with the status of Executive Minister Emeritus.
31. Retiring executive minister Curtis D. Peterson (Serve Globally) was honored with the status of Executive Minister Emeritus.
32. Two departing members of the Covenant Executive Board were recognized, including Paul Ziemer and Jonathan Ro.
33. A Resolution of Sympathy was adopted praising God for the lives and ministries of dedicated Covenanters who have gone to be with the Lord, including 10 pastors, two missionaries, and 15 spouses.

### ***Funding the Mission***

34. The Covenant Annual Meeting approved a 2016 Mission and Ministry budget of \$24.7 million. Starting in 2016, there will be an effort to revise the budget schedule, with final Executive Board approval delivered in May, and materials completed in time for inclusion in the initial delegate notebooks, providing greater time for review.
  35. During 2014, National Covenant Properties disbursed nearly \$26 million to fund projects involving 50 local Covenant churches.
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GATHER'15 *Make and Deepen Disciples*

36. Covenant Trust Company (CTC) distributed in excess of \$6.7 million to Covenant causes at the local church, regional conference, and denominational levels. At the end of 2014, assets under the management of CTC totaled \$650 million, a 7.7% increase over the previous year.

### ***Living Faithfully in the Mission***

37. President Walter provided an update on how the ECC is navigating forward on the issue of human sexuality.
38. Delegates approved a Resolution on Clean Water from the Commission on Christian Action. A copy will be found on [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org).
39. Delegates approved amendments to the bylaws relating to the Board of Pensions, recognition of the recently created Association of Covenant Spiritual Directors, the establishment of EMC Health, Inc. in place of the recently sold Emanuel Medical Center, and the dissolution of the Covenant Development Corporation. Details can be found at [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org).

40. Approximately 9,000 Congo children have been sponsored by Covenanters representing more than 300 churches as part of Covenant Kids Congo powered by World Vision. The ultimate goal is 10,000 sponsored children. Churches are encouraged to sponsor a Hope Sunday event—details are on [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org).
41. Paul Carlson Partnership launched a project to support 108 clinics in Congo. So far, 74 clinics have been funded and delegates were challenged to meet the goal of 108 by the end of the 2015 fiscal year.

### ***Gather '16***

42. Gather '16, including the Annual Meeting 2016, will take place June 23-25 in Phoenix, Arizona. Covenant women also are encouraged to participate in the upcoming Triennial XV event July 28-31 in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Sheraton Hotel. Check [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org) for more details.

#### **Produced by the Department of Communication.**

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For more information, visit [CovChurch.org](http://CovChurch.org), or contact us at (773) 784-3000, or by email to [communication@covchurch.org](mailto:communication@covchurch.org).

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