



Gather 2021

DELEGATE SUMMARY

Gather 2021 was the first Annual Meeting in the history of the Evangelical Covenant Church to be held virtually. Despite the challenges, delegates considered and acted upon many issues that will impact the denomination. This delegate summary provides an overview of Gather 2021 that delegates may share with their congregations. Related news releases are also available at gather.covchurch.org, where we will continue to make videos available throughout the coming week.

Feel free to use these highlights to deliver an official report to your congregation's board, council, or leadership team. Some Covenant churches publish this information in congregational newsletters or emails. We invite you to use this summary in whatever way it best serves you and your church.

And stay updated on all things Covenant all year long by subscribing to the weekly email *CovChurch*. Now, fueled by stories from the award-winning *Companion*, [here](#).

Key Facts

MEMBERSHIP IN THE MISSION

1. The Covenant received 16 churches into membership.
2. Delegates honored and prayed for 24 new church planters.
3. Seventeen churches were voluntarily removed from the membership roster: 11 closed, two merged, and four withdrew.

STATE OF THE MISSION

- President John Wenrich's report focused on the theme "Three Strands Stronger" reflecting partnerships in mission between local churches, 11 regional conferences, and the entire denomination. After weathering the storms of 2020, the Covenant is responding to God's call to chart a new course to reimagine, recreate, and adapt in order to strengthen our common mission for the future.
- Although the 2020 fiscal year ended with a \$1.7 million operating budget shortfall, the Covenant received a \$1.776 million CARES Act PPP loan, which is expected to be forgiven and will cover that deficit. The initial shortfall was better than expected in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic when concerns arose that the shortfall could reach between \$2 million and \$2.75 million. The "strong performance" was due to strong stock market performance, steady giving from generous donors, and measures taken to reduce expenses.
- The Covenant Pension Plan and Lay Pension Plan are fully funded.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MISSION

- The Strategic Alignment Team (SAT) presented its report to be spread on the minutes. Delegates will vote on its recommendations at the 136th Annual Meeting in 2022. The task of the SAT was to assess needs and opportunities to determine how the denominational team could be better structured to align with the body of the Covenant Church. Its proposal seeks to address goals to reduce hierarchy, eliminate bottlenecks, and contribute to the denomination's overall goal of financial sustainability.



- The Location Advisory Committee (LAC) reported on its work to recommend a new location, facility configuration, and next steps resulting from the sale of 8303 W. Higgins. Two potential leases and one buyer came forward, but none of those options worked out. Once the 2022 Annual Meeting votes on the SAT recommendation, the LAC will have more defined decision trees ahead.
- Delegates approved several bylaw changes, notably expanding ethnic representation on denominational boards. Constitutional Amendments were introduced to be voted on at the 136th Annual Meeting in 2022, specifically to refer to the Evangelical Covenant Church as “the Covenant” (rather than “the ECC”).

SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN THE MISSION

- Twenty-six individuals were elected to denominational boards, 17 of whom were elected on the 2020 ballot and nine elected on the 2021 ballot.
- In anticipation of the ordination service on Saturday night, delegates voted to ordain 78 individuals to Word and Sacrament and nine to Word and Service, consecrate two to missionary service, commission one, and finalize the transfer of ordination for nine ministers.

HONORING FAITHFUL SERVICE IN MISSION

- The Irving C. Lambert Award, recognizing outstanding urban and ethnic ministry, was presented to Greg Yee for 2020 and to Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom for 2021.
- The T.W. Anderson Award, recognizing outstanding laypeople, was presented to Nancy Karlson for 2020, and Romeo Gonzalez for 2021.
- The Covenant awarded 52 individuals with Clergy Lifetime Service recognitions.
- Nine missionaries were recognized upon their retirement: Cindy and Pete Ekstrand, Helen and Tim

Smith, Aleta and Roy Danforth, Nancy Jo Hoover, and Ronna and David Husby.

- 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 31 pastors, 10 missionaries, and 29 pastors' spouses.

FUNDING THE MISSION

- The Covenant Annual Meeting approved a 2022 Mission and Ministry budget of \$17.58 million. Steve Klimkowski, executive director of finance, noted that \$18.87 million is in base mission investment and \$9.37 million is in project ministry activity.
- National Covenant Properties reported that 4,400 mission-minded investors funded 287 loans to Covenant churches, camps, retirement facilities, and affiliated organizations totaling \$300 million in commitments.
- Covenant Trust Company reported that in 2020, assets under management grew by 6.5 percent to \$1.11 billion year over year. CTC distributed \$8.4 million to Covenant ministries from the estate plans of its clients.

DIMENSIONS OF THE MISSION

- The Executive Board reported on relational work and developments with Covenant governing bodies, following decisions at the 2019 Annual Meeting to remove one congregation from the roll of Covenant churches and two pastors from the roll of Covenant ministers. In response to delegate sentiments expressed, the Executive Board has encouraged several Covenant governing bodies to review their processes with an eye toward enhancement and clarity. The Executive Board intends to convene a combined gathering of these entities seeking more seamless processes and language more reflective of Covenant ethos where feasible.

- Delegates heard reports, updates on developments concerning affiliate institutions from:

- North Park University President Mary Surridge
- North Park Theological Seminary Dean
David Kersten
- Paul Carlson Partnership Executive Director
Renée Hale
- Board of Covenant Ministries of Benevolence
Chair Sue Poston
- National Covenant Properties President
Peter Hedstrom
- Covenant Trust Company President
Ann Wiesbrock
- Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos
President Juan Martínez

LIVING FAITHFULLY IN THE MISSION

Delegates voted overwhelmingly (84 percent in favor) to approve the Resolution to Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery brought forth by the Christian Action Commission.

THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

The 136th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church will take place June 23-25, 2022, in Kansas City, Missouri. Please visit covchurch.org for more details.

**For more details on any of these items or to watch video of
the 135th Annual Meeting, visit gather.covchurch.org**