



Churches Applying for Membership

Based upon the recommendation of the respective conferences, the Executive Board recommends to the 138th Annual Meeting that the following churches be accepted into membership in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

CHURCH	APPROXIMATE MEMBERSHIP	APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE
EAST COAST CONFERENCE		
Church of Hemlock Farms Lords Valley, PA	150	60
GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE		
Life Church Auburn Hills Auburn Hills, MI	43	68
Healing Covenant Church Paducah, KY	31	30
NORTHWEST CONFERENCE		
Epiphany Covenant Church Minneapolis, MN	36	120
PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE		
Whitewater Church DBA Garden City Covenant Church Tacoma, WA	40	320
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE		
Freedom Point Covenant Church Loomis, CA	N/A	520
Ocean Rock Covenant Church Marina, CA	N/A	100
SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE		
International Covenant Church Orlando, FL	50	85

SUMMARY

Number of new churches:	8
Cumulative approximate membership:	350
Cumulative approximate attendance:	1,303

REPORT ON CHURCHES JOINING THE COVENANT

The mission of the Covenant is stronger, richer, and more diverse because of the eight churches joining the denomination this year. Each one brings a ministry that will enrich our contribution to God’s kingdom, and we are confident each congregation will be enriched by its connection with the Covenant. Each story testifies to both the handiwork of God in raising up a ministry and the faithfulness of committed people in carrying out that ministry. What is less visible is the role every Covenanter plays in these stories. Through making possible the elements of a pastoral assessment process, financial support, training, and strategic services, every Covenanter has a place in these stories.

EAST COAST CONFERENCE

Church of Hemlock Farms
Lords Valley, PA
Pastor: Herbert Jacobson

Average Attendance: 60

The Church of Hemlock Farms is returning to the Covenant after voluntarily withdrawing several years ago as part of restructuring away from a federated church model (Covenant and Reformed Church in America) in order to be singularly affiliated with the Covenant. The congregation was founded in the late 1960s and adopted into the Covenant in 1971. They are the sole Protestant Christian church in a gated community of 3,100 homes of Hemlock Farms. The congregation was deeded land within the community, and the church was built in phases from 1980 to 2002. Originally sponsored by a consortium of mainline denominations, they formed a federation in 1992 to affiliate with the RCA and the Covenant, which continued until 2023. Rev. Dr. Herb Jacobson has been their pastor since 2004. The ministries of the church include children and youth, women’s ministries, prayer, Bible studies, community food pantry, and global personnel support (Joel and Kim Delp family in Ecuador).

GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE

Life Church Auburn Hills
Auburn Hills, MI
Pastor: Donearl Johnson

Average Attendance: 68

Life Church Auburn Hills launched in 2019 in pursuit of becoming a multiethnic community empowered and transformed by God’s grace, truth, and love. We experienced an amazing start with

a solid launch team and strong response from a beautifully diverse community. We were intentional about cultivating space to tear down walls that separate us and build bridges as we endeavor to see individuals come to know Jesus as Lord, grow in their relationship with God and with one another, and become engaged and equipped to go and serve together. We have hosted Sunday gatherings, community groups, outreach events, and international potlucks; and we have witnessed individuals connect, eat, develop relationships, and grow spiritually. Although our physical gatherings were disrupted by the pandemic in 2020, by God's grace, we were able to create virtual spaces to continue the great work that God started. We hosted virtual gatherings, game nights, and other outreach events, discussion groups, and book studies dealing with justice and reconciliation. Despite the significant challenge, we were able to faithfully navigate the pandemic as well as social, racial, and political tension by addressing issues head-on while keeping God's kingdom at the forefront. We seek transformational encounter with God through relationships with God and one another through community groups, connecting and engaging young men, support to our school district, strengthening and empowering families through workshops, and gathering together on Sundays to worship and celebrate Jesus, our risen Savior!

Healing Covenant Church
Paducah, KY
Pastor: Dawn Choate

Average Attendance: 30

In the summer of 2022, a group of six families began meeting informally once a month along the beautiful lakes of western Kentucky for prayer, fellowship, and Bible study. The group's specific intent was to walk through a season of forgiveness as they had all previously served in a difficult church environment that eventually became untenable. In the fall when the lake was no longer a viable meeting place, we began to have more serious conversations about whether we were becoming a church family. In January 2023, we began meeting more regularly as a church family. The core group of six families grew, and by the end of the summer, we were meeting weekly on Sunday mornings. We spent the fall working through the book *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture that Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*, by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer. Coming out of toxic church and leadership cultures, we wanted to be intentional about planting a church with a healthy view of leadership, the use (and abuse) of power, and service to others. By Christmas 2023, we opened our service to the public and have been meeting as a church family since that time.

We are passionate about missional and nonprofit service. Since opening our doors, we have served foster children, hungry and homeless people in our community, and tornado survivors, among other missional projects. We hosted a Merge ministry team and enjoyed a week of service together rebuilding homes from the tornado damage in Kentucky. Our church agrees wholeheartedly that the Covenant and the Great Lakes Conference are a body of Christ followers that is a beautiful complement to the work God wants to do in us.

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

Epiphany Covenant Church
Minneapolis, MN
Pastor: Kevin Farmer

Average Attendance: 120

Epiphany Covenant Church was launched as a church plant in the Northwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church in 2018. With Pastor Kevin Farmer serving as the planting and lead pastor, 40 family units serving as a launch team, and six Covenant and non-Covenant churches providing financial, capital, and personnel support, this multiethnic, Christ-centered movement was birthed. After signing the Church Planting Agreement in March 2018, Epiphany began hosting monthly preview services, and then began holding weekly worship services in August. Their public grand opening was on November 4, 2018. Since then, Epiphany continues to meet and engage in strategic ministry partnership with Hope Academy, a Christ-centered K-12 school located in South Minneapolis.

Since its inception, Epiphany has experienced God's faithfulness in its three missional priorities: make and deepen disciples, identify and develop servant leaders, and plant healthy, multiethnic, missional churches. Epiphany has been blessed to journey with individuals and families across the expanse of God's beautiful multiethnic mosaic and between all lines of socioeconomic status. This ministry movement has motivated people to be Holy Spirit-empowered kingdom citizens who are actively engaged in biblical efforts of compassion, mercy, and justice and who desire to see lost people found and hurting people helped.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

Whitewater Church
DBA Garden City Covenant Church
Tacoma, WA
Pastor: George Bedlion

Average Attendance: 320

We planted in 2016 out of the missional community and satellite campus work we had been doing with Bethany Church, a Converge church in Puyallup, Washington. We saw a high conversion rate of new Christians—people finding Christ from a diversity of backgrounds. We are grateful for all God did during that season of ministry. We began building a relationship with the Covenant before the pandemic. In 2022, we renamed and launched onto the pathway of being a Covenant church plant adoption with the help of Greg Yee, Peter Sung, and the Pacific Northwest Conference. This has been a great transition and fit for our church. The conference helped galvanize and resource our launch in Tacoma. The theological/cultural fit and leadership support with the Covenant has been amazing. We are seeing our ministries effectively reach skeptics, seekers, and deconstructors in the Pierce County area. Our discipleship/formation pathways have helped people center Jesus in their

lives and employ third way practices in their everyday life. Our investment in both digital and in-person resources has catalyzed our growth in both evangelism and discipleship. We are excited to see old and new local partnerships flourish with communities like Olive Crest foster care, Nourish, and the Chinese Reconciliation Park network.

PACIFIC SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

Freedom Point Covenant Church
Loomis, CA

Average Attendance: 520

Pastors: Heather and Justin Tomscak

Freedom Point Covenant Church was planted after Heather and Justin Tomscak received a prophetic word that they would be lead pastors together and would “help set captives free” (Isaiah 61:1-3). After years of praying, and seeking counsel from mentors, other pastors, and denominational leaders, Heather and Justin agreed to go through the church planting assessment process in 2020. While many churches were closing their doors and making alternative meeting plans, they discerned that the Lord would not relent on the planting plans. In September 2020, over Zoom, the Tomscaks received the “green light” to proceed with planting Freedom Point Covenant Church in partnership with the Pacific Southwest Conference, the Covenant, and their sending church, Rock Harbor Covenant Church. Freedom Point Covenant Church is grateful for those partnerships and the church planting processes, including cohorts and consistent coaching offering support, encouragement, ideas, and retreats to come alongside the church leadership.

Justin and Heather both have a strong youth ministry background, which led them to launch a youth group before they even launched regular Sunday morning worship services. That ministry continues to thrive with annual trips to Mexico to build houses with Baja Bound, youth camps, and retreats—but more important, the youth group has been a place for students to be seen and known while hearing the good news of Jesus Christ and being a safe place to land in the midst of several tragedies within the local community. The children’s ministry serves more than 120 young students (infants through fifth graders) every week.

Ocean Rock Covenant Church
Marina, CA

Average Attendance: 100

Pastor: Nehemiah Gallardo

Ocean Rock Church launched their first service in the small town of Marina, on the central coast of California in April 2019. Before they could celebrate their one-year anniversary, the pandemic forced them out of their rented school space, and they pivoted to online church. For the past three years they’ve been meeting in a leased storefront that has allowed the church to continue but limited growth due to space. Ocean Rock Church has discovered a fresh fire and renewed passion for the lost and recently relocated to a larger portable space for a church relaunch. The Covenant

has coached them through this three-month process and has been an source of guidance and strength during this time. Pat Stark, Anita Eyer, and Justin Noseworthy have all been true friends of Ocean Rock and kind examples from the Pacific Southwest Conference. Ocean Rock is currently impacting the region it serves by connecting people far from Christ to the knowledge of who he is. As a church in a city ranked one of the top ten most post-Christian cities in the US by the Barna research group, we are reaching those who are truly far from Christ and fulfilling our mission of “connecting people to Jesus.”

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE

International Covenant Church

Average Attendance: 85

Orlando, FL

Pastora: Darlyn Viera Tortorella

Mi esposo Leonardo y yo vinimos de Caracas, Venezuela luego de trabajar como lideres por varios años en la iglesia, visitamos la ciudad de Orlando en florida, donde conocimos personas y familias de diferentes nacionalidades, les compartimos testimonios y experiencias y de esta forma los animábamos a Conectarse con Dios a través de la oración y el estudio de la biblia. A medida que se sumaron más personas comenzamos un proceso de discipulado y luego de un tiempo buscamos un salón y nos reunimos los domingos. En este proceso conocimos a la gran familia Iglesia Evangélica del Pacto (Covenant) donde uniendo esfuerzos y recibir su apoyo nos ha permitido ser una Iglesia y un refugio para todas las personas y familias que necesitan conocer a Jesús y se sienten sin familia aquí en Orlando.

My husband, Leonardo, and I came from Caracas, Venezuela. After working as leaders for several years in the church, we visited the city of Orlando in Florida, where we met people and families of different nationalities and shared testimonies and experiences with them. In this way we encouraged them and connect with God through prayer and Bible study. As more people joined, we began a discipleship process. After a while, we found a room where we could meet on Sundays. In this process we met the great Evangelical Covenant Church family, where joining efforts and receiving their support has allowed us to be a church and a refuge for all people and families who need to know Jesus and feel without family here in Orlando.