



Gather 2026

141ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

DELEGATE SUMMARY

Gather 2026 was held in a hybrid format with delegates attending online and in-person in Scottsdale, Arizona. A total of 362 delegates were registered and certified, with 290 attending in person and 72 virtually. This summary provides an overview for delegates to share with their congregations. Related news releases are also available at covchurch.org/gather.

STATE OF THE MISSION

President Tammy Swanson-Draheim shared a continued vision for renewal in the Covenant: “Living into the kingdom of God through the prayerful, intergenerational, multiethnic, growing movement of churches served by women and men striving to follow in the way of Jesus by loving others as Jesus loves us.” Delivered shortly after delegates reelected Swanson-Draheim for a second term, her report focused on three themes.

First, drawing on this year’s Gather theme, “One Another,” she described renewal as the work of God rather than something the church can manufacture, and called the assembly to keep prayer at the center of its shared life. She pointed to signs of renewal already underway, including congregations and conferences choosing generosity, presence, and care for one another. “Renewal is the work of God, from beginning to end,” she said.

Second, she marked the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination of women in the Covenant, noting the presence of 508 active credentialed clergywomen. Ac-

knowledging recent decisions in another denomination to further restrict women in ministry, she articulated the Covenant’s own conviction: “We ordain women because we believe our position is deeply rooted in Scripture and reflects God’s intention for women and men to serve together in the life and leadership of his church.”

Third, she highlighted the Covenant’s investment in the next generation and in leadership across the church. She announced Unite 2027, the denomination’s youth gathering (formerly CHIC), with the theme “Take Heart,” and pointed to new initiatives, including One Covenant Community and Covenant Servant Leadership for lay leaders.. She also noted that the Executive Board has commissioned a resource paper, “Living into the Kingdom of God: A Response to Christian Nationalism.”

The full president’s report can be viewed [here](#).

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR THE MISSION

- Tammy Swanson-Draheim was reelected as president of the Evangelical Covenant Church for a second term.
- Herb Frost was reelected as executive minister of Serve Clergy for a second term.
- Grace Shim was reelected as executive minister of Serve Globally for a second term.
- Carlos Ortiz was installed as president of Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos (CHET).
- Fifteen people were elected to denominational boards.
- Delegates voted to ordain forty-one individuals to word and sacrament, eight to word and service, com-



mission one, and finalize the transfer of three. The service of ordination, commissioning, and consecration of new Covenant ministers was the culmination of Gather 2026.

HONORING FAITHFUL SERVICE IN MISSION

- The 2026 Irving C. Lambert Award, recognizing outstanding urban ministry, was presented to [Russell Jeung](#) for his life of commitment to the most vulnerable and the Asian American Pacific Islander community.
- The 2026 T.W. Anderson Award, recognizing outstanding lay ministry, was presented to [Christine Cikanek](#) of the Evangelical Covenant Church of Princeton, Illinois.
- The Covenant honored forty-seven individuals with Clergy Vocational Service recognition.
- Nine global personnel were recognized for their service: Barbara and Steven Swanson, Catherine Campobello, Ruthie and Peter Dutton, Jennifer and Christopher Hoskins, and MaryLou and Gary Sander.
- 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 twenty-one pastors, two global personnel, and eleven pastors' spouses.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE MISSION

- The Covenant received six new churches into membership.
- Delegates commissioned seven new church planters.
- Thirteen churches were voluntarily removed from the membership roster: nine closed and four withdrew.

FUNDING THE MISSION

- Gayle Gilreath, executive director of Mission Advancement, reported on the generosity of Covenant churches and its impact on shared mission. Church

giving is up 1.9% through the first eight months of the fiscal year, and more than 3,900 individuals gave in 2025—a 5% increase—with the average gift growing 9% to \$1,855. She highlighted the Three Strands Strong invitation, encouraging churches to share 3.5% of income with their conference and 6.5% with the denomination.

- Delegates approved a Fiscal Year 2027 budget of \$19,996,991 as presented by Cyndi Hoffman, chief financial officer and treasurer.

DIMENSIONS OF THE MISSION

- After a delegate made a motion to amend Article 1 of the Covenant bylaws to recognize the Covenant Affirmations, add longer and shorter explanatory documents, and update them periodically, the assembly voted to refer the matter back to the Covenant Executive Board for further review. The board will report back to delegates at next year's Annual Meeting.
- National Covenant Properties reported that over 3,400 mission-minded investors funded 236 loans to Covenant churches, camps, and affiliated organizations totaling \$225 million in loan commitments. In the past year, they approved 32 real estate projects totaling \$12 million.
- Covenant Trust reported that in 2025, total assets under care were \$2.214 billion, with assets under management at \$1.32 billion and assets under custody at \$.885 billion. Total giving to Covenant entities through Covenant Trust, including legacy and current gifts, was more than \$9.5 million. CTC made a dividend distribution to its owners, distributing a total of \$762,634 to the Evangelical Covenant Church, Covenant Ministries of Benevolence, and North Park University.

THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

The 142nd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church will take place June 24–26, 2027, in Birmingham, Alabama.

For more details on any of these items or to watch video of the 141st Annual Meeting, visit covchurch.org/gather.