



JUNE 23-25 / PHOENIX, ARIZONA

DELEGATE SUMMARY



Introduction

Gather '16 was a wonderful time for the Covenant family to come together to celebrate God's goodness and reflect on how he is 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 (ECC).

For those who were unable to be present in Phoenix, 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 traditionally 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 353 credentialed delegates representing 165 churches. Total registered conference attendance, including general conferees, was 571, representing 221 churches.
2. 12 churches were received into membership, representing a combined approximate attendance of 2,580.
3. 20 churches were removed from the membership roster—4 churches withdrew, 3 had merged with other Covenant churches, and 13 churches closed.

State of the Mission

4. The report of the president and the video recording of the presentation can be found at CovChurch.org. All Annual Meeting videos can be found at CovChurch.org/gather.
5. Newswire stories covering the Annual Meeting are posted at CovenantCompanion.com/news.
6. An article covering the Annual Meeting and Gather '16 highlights will appear in the September/October issue of the *Covenant Companion*.
7. Written reports by mission and ministry leadership can be found at CovChurch.org.

8. The ECC finished the 2015 fiscal year with an operating budget surplus of approximately \$48,000. Expenses were held to 7.9% below budget. Church giving to the base mission budget remained the largest source of funding at approximately 55% of the core operating budget, up approximately 2.4% from the previous year.
9. Growth statistics:
 - Average weekend worship attendance in 2015 increased to 231,173—a 6% increase (or 14,156 people) over the 2014 figure.
 - 30% of all ECC congregations are now among populations of color or intentionally multiethnic, making the ECC one of the most diverse denominations.
10. The Covenant Pension Plan, which provides retirement benefits to almost 2,269 active and retired pastors, missionaries, and their surviving spouses, continues to reflect strong investment performance. Total assets available for benefits of approximately \$211.8 million representing a 95% funding level against a \$222 million actuarial liability for future benefits.



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 2% rate increase was announced for 2016, which still keeps the three-year effective medical rate increase to near zero.
12. The *Covenant Companion* received a total of eighteen awards for its work in 2015 at the Evangelical Press Association and Associated Church Press conferences, including first place for denominational magazine (EPA) and second place for digital denominational magazine (EPA).

Servant Leadership in the Mission

13. On Thursday evening, 12 missionaries—5 long-term and 7 short-term—were commissioned for service.
14. Delegates approved the call of John Wenrich to serve as executive minister of the Start and Strengthen Churches mission priority. He was installed during the Friday-evening worship service.
15. Delegates reelected Mark Novak to serve as executive minister of the ordered ministry.
16. Delegates reelected Gary Walter to serve as president of the Evangelical Covenant Church.
17. A number of individuals were elected to denominational boards.
18. In anticipation of the ordination service on Saturday night, 61 individuals were set to be ordained to word and sacrament; seven individuals were set to be ordained to word and service; three individuals transferred their ordinations to the ECC; and two missionaries were consecrated for missionary service.

Honoring Faithful Service in the Mission

19. The Irving C. Lambert Award recognizing outstanding urban ministry was presented to Harvey Drake, pastor of Emerald City Bible Fellowship in Seattle, Washington.
20. The T. W. Anderson Award recognizing outstanding laypeople was presented to Ray Baloun, a member of Minnedosa Evangelical Covenant Church in Minnedosa, Manitoba.

21. 41 individuals received Clergy Lifetime Service recognitions.
22. Retiring ECC controller and assistant director for pensions Elliott Johnson was recognized for his 19 years of service at Covenant Offices.
23. Seven departing members of the Covenant Executive Board were recognized, including Art Greco, John Martz, Sue Poston, Josef Rasheed, Mark Seversen, Tom Sprague, and Annette Stuckey.
24. Retiring missionaries Tim and Andrea Johnson (27 years in Japan) and Fred and Kelly Prudek (22 years in the Czech Republic) were recognized for their faithful service.
25. 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 14 pastors, eight missionaries, and eight spouses.

Funding the Mission

26. The Covenant Annual Meeting approved a 2017 Mission and Ministry budget of \$25.2 million. Paul Hawkinson, executive director of finance, noted that 100% of all ECC mission support is funded by external revenue, which means 100% of church giving goes directly to the mission priorities.
27. During 2015, National Covenant Properties disbursed nearly \$45 million to fund projects involving 40 local Covenant churches.
28. Covenant Trust Company (CTC) distributed in excess of \$6.5 million to Covenant causes at the local church, regional conference, and denominational levels. At the end of 2015, assets under the management of CTC totaled \$690 million, a 5.8% increase over the previous year.

Living Faithfully in the Mission

29. During his annual report, President Walter reviewed the current strengths and challenges of the denomination and challenged the church to “practice the discipline of connection.”
30. Michelle Sanchez, executive minister of make and deepen disciples, announced that the Covenant would be joining together this fall as a denomination to read the Bible as part of the Covenant Community Bible Experience and that more than 1,000 Biblica New Testaments have been ordered by churches to date.



31. North Park University president David Parkyn observed that the 125th anniversary of the university is being celebrated this year and reaffirmed the essential connection between the church, university, and seminary.
32. Delegates approved amendments to the bylaws relating to the Commission on Pastoral Relations; name adjustments for various ECC associations; making the Bezalel community development organization an ECC corporation; and bringing Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos (CHET) under the direction of the ECC Executive Board. Details can be found at CovChurch.org.

33. The Commission on Christian Action recommended the adoption of a Resolution on Concern for People with Disabilities; after a motion that an amendment be added was rejected, the resolution was approved by delegates.

The Next Annual Meeting

34. The 2017 Annual Meeting will take place June 22–24 in Detroit, Michigan. Women also are encouraged to participate in the upcoming Triennial XV event this July 28-31 in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Sheraton Hotel. Check CovChurch.org for more details.

Produced by the Department of Communication.

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