

GREAT
LAKES
CONFERENCE



OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

Annual Celebration

Thornapple Covenant Church
6595 Cascade Rd. SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Great Lakes Conference 2023 Awards



HOW GOES YOUR WALK?

Walking in a manner worthy of our calling

Arv Anderson & Larry Sherman Award in Church Planting

Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids

Pastor Noah Filipiak and his wife Jen, felt that God was leading them to plant a multi-ethnic, actively anti-racist church in the city of Grand Rapids, MI. They feel that many people are looking to find a church that is actively trying to repair the damage done (vast economic inequities among other things) to the urban community by systemic racism. These same people are looking to worship and be in community in a multi-ethnic congregation, which the Bible directs us toward. Mosaic aims to be a church that points people to Jesus and His teachings and helps with reconciliation and justice. Noah spent time looking for a denomination that feels as strongly about racial justice as he does and is thankful to have found that the Evangelical Covenant Church is very committed to this necessary endeavor, while holding true to the scriptures and the gospel.

The church not only meets in The Boys and Girls club in the city of Grand Rapids, but they are very active with the club during the week. Knowing that summer can be a great time to connect with the community, they created the Summer Lights program. Approximately 150 youth participated in the program. They met for eight weeks at a local park (Garfield Park) and the kids got involved in small groups and Bible studies, along with games, sports, pizza, and prizes. In January, Mosaic hired the husband-and-wife team, Pastors Travis and Whitney Washington, to be their youth pastors. Travis and Whitney are focusing on creating a relational pathway from the park into the church and providing a steady discipleship environment for teens at Sunday morning youth group.

The church has also spearheaded several programs to assist the community and those in the church. They have a housing fund that has prevented several households in their congregation from becoming homeless. They have several educational initiatives to help the congregation understand why inequities exist and what should be done to help combat these inequities. They have an anti-racism director, Victoria Gibbs, who oversees these educational initiatives. Noah has started a non-profit, New Humanity, which provides funding for interest-free start-up and vitality loans to black business owners within Mosaic.

Mosaic is a growing church with roughly 50-60 people and they have seen an incredible number of people coming to Christ in the last year. 18 people have made decisions to accept Jesus as their Savior. The church wants to live out Jesus' command to pray in Matthew 6:10 that God's kingdom come and His will is done here in Grand Rapids the way it is done in heaven.



*Grand Rapids,
Michigan*

Dave & Beth Chilcoat Award in Church Outreach

Christ Community Church, Allegan, MI

On December 7, 1993, a group of 70 friends met with founding Pastor G. Patrick White to discuss the possibility of establishing a new congregation in the Allegan area. Their goal was to develop a non-traditional, and culturally relevant, Christian fellowship for those in the community and surrounding area seeking to focus energy and resources on ministry, missions, and sharing the story of Jesus Christ with family and friends.

In November of 1994, the congregation purchased 20 acres of prime land on the southwest outskirts of Allegan for a future building site. Groundbreaking took place in March of 1996 and then on Christmas Eve that same year, the congregation celebrated their first worship service in their new facility. After much prayerful research and study, the congregation entered into fellowship with the Evangelical Covenant Church in May of 1996, where they remain today.

A few years ago, Christ Community Church was involved in the Experiencing God Bible study series. One of the participants in that study felt a nudge from the Holy Spirit to get involved with Him in His work. She realized that due to the recent closure of the local laundromat, the community could really use a place for people to wash their clothes without having to drive a great distance - particularly families with limited resources. Plans were discussed with the church congregation and leaders, and it was decided that an already existing building on the grounds could be used.

Adapting the building took place during COVID and through countless hours from volunteers, the building was adapted to accommodate washers and dryers along with a shower facility. Through a partnership with LOVE INC ("INC" - In the Name of Christ), two industrial sized washers and dryers were donated. And so **The Branches** was "born". Guests are referred by LOVE INC and are enrolled in their L.I.F.E (Learning in Faith and Everyday) Skills Program, which provides support, learning opportunities, and accountability that help people heal, cope, achieve goals, and improve their life circumstances. Through the partnership with LOVE INC., church members participate in this larger ministry of care that offers dignity and hope in the name of Jesus.

The church has a food pantry called **The Vine** and felt the name of the new facility should be **The Branches**. The greatly appreciated laundry and shower facilities were dedicated on October 16, 2022. What an incredible example of how, if we are listening and paying attention, God can show us ways to get involved in His work.



Richard Lucco Award in Church Leadership

First Covenant Church, Youngstown, OH

In early 2020, *First Covenant Church* invited *Faith Community Covenant Church* to join with them in worship. This invitation has led to the successful union of two churches who started out four miles apart but now worship together as one.

First Covenant knew that Faith Community Covenant was struggling and at a point of major transition, so they reached out a hand to the congregation to attend a worship service at their church. Over time it became clear that both churches would benefit from joining together. Neither church had a full-time pastor during the pandemic, but First Covenant was blessed with the interim pastor, Rev. Dr. George Lee, who oversaw the joining of the two churches. Pastor George did a masterful job in helping navigate transitions with his wisdom and calming pastoral care that significantly helped prepare everyone for this new beginning. This complete joining of two groups required considerable effort on the part of four people: the late Jerry Ricketts (Chair of First Covenant who initiated the process), Greg Anstrom (Chair at the time of the transition), Mike Burkett (Chair of Faith Community who became Vice Chair at First Covenant and then Chair), and Kendall Churchill (the current pastor). In the fall of 2020, over 50 members of Faith Community Covenant of Youngstown, OH became members of First Covenant Church of Youngstown, OH. All involved felt God's hand was in *everything*, from finding an effective interim pastor, to Habitat for Humanity purchasing the Faith Community Covenant Church building, to the search and successful hiring of a new lead pastor.

When a pastoral search committee was formed, members from both churches worked together using CovConnect to find Kendall Churchill who became their pastor in January 2021. Everything was still in lockdown, so it was extra challenging finding ways to forge new bonds of fellowship. Thankfully, people were boldly open and vulnerable in the weekly "Prayers of the People", and this led the way for people to really connect. Pastor Kendall has been a great addition and fits in wonderfully as part of the family.

For the first year, the councils acted together with a representative from each congregation on each commission, allowing for trust to be built and in time, the councils were combined. The new members are no longer guests, but full participants and leaders. First Covenant is now thriving and has been energized with new, but experienced leadership. The best news is that now anyone new entering First Covenant Church of Youngstown has no idea that there were ever two churches or congregations. It is now *ONE* church welcoming all who seek Jesus and community.



Members of Faith Covenant joining First Covenant as a unified group.

David Dahlberg Award in Church Vitality

Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church, Muskegon, MI

For over 30 years, Arthur and Ardena Duren have felt like faithfulness and serving others is in their DNA. So they of course, looked for those with the same kind of spirit when it came time to start a church. They are thankful that people with servant hearts make up the congregation of Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church in Muskegon.

Kingdom Embassy was planted roughly seven years ago and is now a thriving part of the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination. They are a wonderful example of a thriving, mature Covenant church within our conference. Kingdom Embassy fully participates in all that the ECC offers, from denominational and regional conferences, to retreats, and other denominational and regional events. They have been faithful stewards to all that God has given them and have made giving to the conference a priority along with giving back to the community. They feel that it is a blessing, not only to those that receive the gifts, but also to those that are doing the giving. They are involved in giving back to their community in many ways.

They have recently partnered with another local church in giving away frozen entrees to those that have been negatively impacted by the current increase in food prices. They befriended the pastor of this church and he has been happy to have them serve beside him. They have given away over 200 pounds of food to those that need it.

Kingdom Embassy also leads a ministry called "Go Serve" which is a part of "City Serve". Through this mission the faithful buy brand new household items which are then given to people who need them. Also, through this ministry they witness to and invite the participants to church. It's a great way to show the community how God can, and is, meeting the community's needs.

The church offers an after school program for grades 1-8, Monday-Thursday. This program serves 50 kids daily. It is truly an extension of the school day. Besides completing school work, students do STEM activities, and enjoy fun, cooperative team building activities. There is also a Play-n-Learn group where parents can bring their 0-5 year old children to storytime and educational play. Families receive a book each month. Activities are geared for getting little ones ready for school. Another great program is the ABC's of Cooking Class- the church is the host for READ Muskegon which provides this class for parents of young children. Simple recipes are done with the parent and child.

Another very worthy program they have spearheaded, is the Hand 2 Hand ministry. They have partnered with a local middle school and asked the principal to reach out to families that might be struggling with food insecurities. They donate bags of food to the middle schoolers who sign up. It is growing (started with 5, now 13), but as we all know, adolescents aren't always quick to reach out for help. Hopefully, over time, those that would benefit will reach out.

We, as a part of the GLC, are so thankful for all those at Kingdom Embassy with their servant hearts that so generously give to our denomination, conference, and to their community.



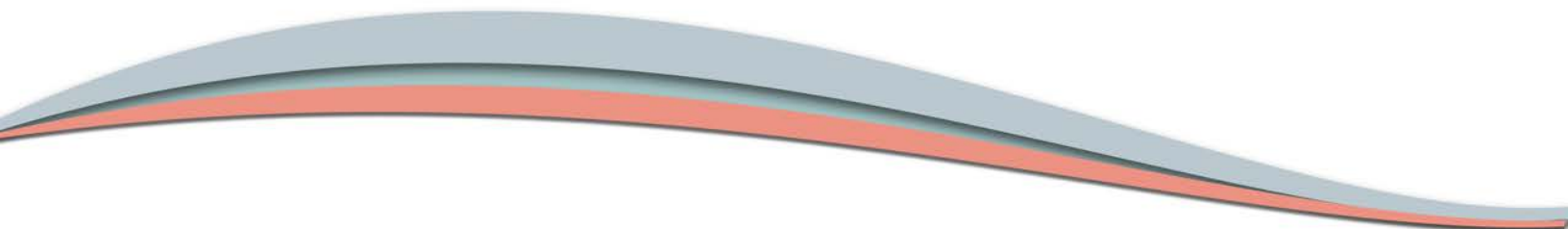
Past Awards

Dave Dahlberg Award in Church Vitality

2022	Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church	2014	Keith Cheli
2021	Lighthouse Church	2013	Bill Anthes
2020	The GLC Churches	2012	Russ Carlson
2019	Stanley Hagemeyer	2011	Sarah Gordon
2018	Forest Park Covenant Church	2010	Josh and Alycia Merriweather
2017	John Wenrich	2009	Bob and Joanne Gielow
2016	Federated Covenant Church	2008	David Dahlberg
2015	Kelly Casey		

Richard Lucco Award in Church Leadership

2022	First Covenant Church - Youngstown, OH Kendall Churchill, Mike Burkett & Greg Anstrom	2016	Greg Applequist & Steve Armfield
2021	Jackie Haines	2015	City Covenant "Mothers of the Ministry"
2020	Leadership Team of Redeemer Covenant Church	2014	Shaun Marshall
2019	Gina Roberts	2013	Dan Wolter
2018	Laura Garvey & Tamra Soderberg	2012	Richard Lucco
2017	Ja'mel Armstrong & Matt Ness		



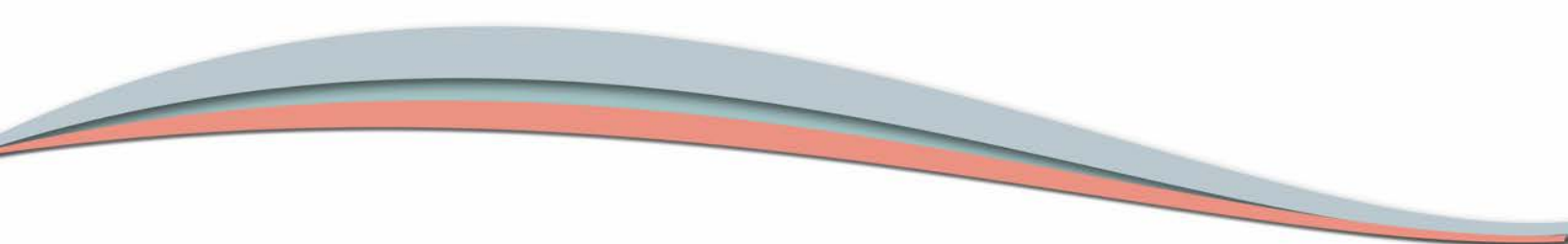
Past Awards

Arv Anderson & Larry Sherman Award in Church Planting

2022	Mosaic Covenant Church	2014	Alex Rahill
2021	LifeChurch Southfield	2013	Jerry Ricks
2020	Georgia Hill	2012	Herb Kolbe
2019	Donearl Johnson & Cameron Underdown	2011	Father Paul Chateau
2018	New Community Covenant Church	2010	Scott & Tracy Austin, Jason & Lisa Condon Mike & Mel Muscarella
2017	LifeChurch Livonia Leadership	2009	Caleb Skinner
2016	Harlan and Wendy Henderson	2008	Lois Johnson
2015	Brittany Barlow & Abbie Golden	2007	Dan & Lisa Johanon

Dave & Beth Chilcoat Award in Church Outreach

2022	Christ Community Church	2014	Bruce & Barbara Baehr
2021	Harbert Community Church	2013	Rick Miller, Dave Trosper & Sharon Hamilton
2020	Journey Covenant Church	2012	Marge Palmerlee
2019	LifeChurch Canton	2011	Judd Hamilton
2018	Maria Koliantz	2010	Don Schiewer
2017	GLC Evangelism Cohort Leaders	2009	Alan & Debbie Asp
2016	Shunichi & Masako Miyamoto	2008	Stoneridge Covenant Church & Keystone Church
2015	Melissa Williams	2007	Monique Holliday



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Congratulations to all the award recipients!

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