



Annual Celebration

Camp Mission Meadows
5201 E. Lake Rd., Dewittville, NY 14728

*Trust in the Lord with all
your heart and lean not on
your own understanding;
in all ways submit to him,
and he will make your
paths straight.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

GLC Documents 2024-2025

▶ Delegate
Documents

▶ Ministry
Reports

▶ Church
Plants

▶ Camps

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Delegate Orientation

Standing Rules

2025 Great Lakes Conference Annual Meeting

WELCOME to the Annual Meeting of the *Great Lakes Conference*. It is the hope of the Great Lakes Conference Board that these pages will acquaint delegates with the procedures and information for this meeting, described in the **Constitution of the Conference** as the **Annual Meeting**. After the appropriate vote, this document will serve as the "Standing Rules" for the Annual Meeting.

The **purpose** of this Annual Meeting is the same as the purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ - at all times and in all situations - to discern and to do the will of God. Depending on the circumstances, there are several ways this may be done; the circumstances of the Annual Meeting - the size of the delegation, the complexity of the issues that will come before us - require that we proceed more formally than is usually necessary in smaller Christian gatherings. We proceed according to the **Conference Constitution and Bylaws** as well as **Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised**. At first, some of the language used on the floor of the Annual Meeting may seem strange to you, but you will soon understand it as a kind of oral "*shorthand*" that keeps the business moving along. A brief glossary of some common parliamentary terms is at the end of these pages. The reason for a rather strict adherence to these rules may be stated as follows:

- It protects the right of the majority to decide.
- It protects the right of the minority to be heard.
- It protects the rights of individual members, both those present and those absent.
- It prevents a "railroad" of the Annual Meeting by manipulation.
- It prevents an emotional "stampede" of the Annual Meeting.

Though other elements are factors, three elements basically determine the direction of each Annual Meeting:

- the delegates
- the GLC Executive Board
- the Chair

I. THE DELEGATES

The individual delegate is the principal "*building block*" of the Annual Meeting. This person must act to receive the reports, to approve recommendations, and to question and debate the issues. Every delegate has the right to speak in the Annual Meeting, but those who do not speak are just as vital to the process as those who do - the power of decision rests with all the delegates.

Discussion, debate, the exchange of ideas and information are, however, at the heart of the process, so these are encouraged. Here are some **guidelines** if you wish to speak on the floor of the meeting:

1. Approach a microphone (real or virtual) and wait for the Chair to call on you.
2. Seek the floor only when the subject you want to talk about is under discussion.
3. When you have been recognized, speak to the Chair and tell him/her what is on your mind. *You do not have to make a speech to the Annual Meeting; you are speaking to just one person, and the others are listening in.*
4. If you have a question about procedure, ask the Chair; if you have a question about the subject under discussion, the Chair will call on the person who is most likely to have the answer.
5. You may speak once to an issue, and not again on the same issue as long as someone else, who has not yet had a turn, is seeking the floor.

If you have an item that does not relate to the proposed Agenda and you wish to present it to the meeting, it is preferred that you present this, in writing, to the Chair prior to the Annual Meeting. Opportunity for changes and/or additions is given at the time of adopting the Agenda.

Delegate Orientation

Con't

II. THE GLC EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Members of the Executive Board, and others so designated, are the chief “*resource persons*” on the floor of the Annual Meeting. The Executive Board is the mover of almost all the recommendations that arise from the Agenda, which it also prepares. All recommendations are subject to the amendment, referral, or rejection of the Annual Meeting.

As the mover of most of the recommendations on the Agenda, a spokesperson for the Board is usually granted what the Rules call “*preference in recognition*.” This is the privilege of a mover to speak first to his own motion. (*Please note that motions arising from a Board, Commission, or Committee do not require a second; they already have more than one supporter.*)

III. THE CHAIR

The Chair of the Annual Meeting is the Chair of the Executive Board. The Chair’s responsibilities are:

- to interpret and apply the rules of the Meeting
- to expedite the business of the Meeting
- to see that all persons involved in the Meeting are treated fairly
- to clarify what is happening
- to advise delegates in the procedures of the Meeting
- to maintain the discipline and joy of Christian fellowship

A final word about “**decorum**” in the Meeting. There are rare times when spontaneous applause expresses affirmation and unanimity in the Meeting. However, applause during a debate, when there is an obvious difference of opinion, is not fair to the opposing side.

Motives of other persons may never be impugned during a debate. The merits of the motion, and not the motives of the mover, are the issue under debate.

When the Meeting is in session, move to and from your seat quickly and quietly.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF COMMON PARLIAMENTARY TERMS

AMEND, MOVE TO - Most motions may be amended on the floor of the Meeting, particularly when they deal with the business rather than the procedures of the Meeting. When an amendment has been seconded, it must be debated and decided, or otherwise dealt with, before the motion it seeks to amend may be further considered.

APPEAL, FROM THE RULING OF THE CHAIR - A delegate is testing the Chair’s ruling against the opinion of the Meeting. The motion to appeal requires a second. An affirmative vote by the Meeting sustains the Chair’s ruling.

BALLOT, TO ORDER THE VOTE ON A PENDING QUESTION TO BE TAKEN BY - The Bylaws and Rules specify that certain questions be decided by ballot. Questions other than these may also be decided by ballot if a majority of the Meeting concurs with a request from a delegate for it.

DIVISION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING - This is a vote by rising. It may be demanded by any delegate to verify a vote taken by a voice or by show of hands or may be ordered by the Chair when a vote by show of hands or by voice has been “*too close to call*”. If it is still not possible to discern the outcome visually, the Chair may order a count by the *Sergeants-at-Arms*. A majority of the Meeting may also order a count.

INFORMATION, POINT OF - Asking a question about the business at hand.

MR. or MADAM CHAIR - The traditional form for addressing the Chair from the floor of the Meeting.

ORDER, POINT OF - A delegate calls the Chair’s attention to a possible breach of the Rules. If the delegate is not satisfied with the Chair’s subsequent explanation, he may appeal if the point has been raised concerning an actual ruling of the Chair.

Delegate Orientation

Con't

PARLIAMENTARIAN - An advisor to the Chair on Parliamentary Law.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY, POINT OF - Asking a question about the application of the Rules in the business at hand.

PERSONAL PRIVILEGE, POINT OF - A delegate believes that his rights or the rights of another are being infringed upon.

POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME - A delegate may move to postpone the item under discussion until a later point in the Meeting. The motion requires a second and is debatable.

PREVIOUS QUESTION, MOVE THE - A motion to cut off debate on an issue which requires a second, and a two-thirds majority. An affirmative vote merely cuts off debate and is not a vote on the motion under debate.

PUTTING THE QUESTION - Taking a vote

RECONSIDER, MOVE TO - A motion to reconsider an item previously voted upon may be made at any time, though it may have to wait until other business has been dealt with before it can be taken up. If a majority decides that the item previously voted upon will be reconsidered, debate on it re-opens, and another vote is taken (or it is otherwise disposed of, by referral, etc.). The motion to reconsider has unique characteristics: It may be made only by a delegate who originally voted with the prevailing side on the item; it may be made no later than the day following the original vote; it cannot apply to an item when provisions of it have already begun to be carried out (such as the signing of a contract); and it cannot be itself reconsidered.

REFER, MOVE TO - Not to be confused with a motion to table. A referred motion goes to a Board or Committee as designated by the *Motion to Refer*. It requires a second and is debatable.

SECOND - A seconder need not agree with the motion or vote for it. He need only agree that the motion deserves the attention of the Meeting.

SUSPEND THE RULES - It is possible to suspend a rule that is standing in the way of accomplishing what the Meeting clearly wants to do either by motion or by unanimous consent. Bylaws may not be suspended unless they are in the nature of "*rules of order*." This is a complex issue, with each instance subject to the interpretation and ruling of the Chair.

TABLE, MOVE TO - (Or "**LAY ON THE TABLE**") Unlike a referred motion, a tabled motion goes nowhere. No one considers it, or studies it, or does anything with it, until a motion passes to "*take it from the table*". If this never happens, the tabled motion is never again considered.

Agenda

45th Annual Meeting
May 3, 2025

Mission Meadows, LLC

I. Organization of the Meeting

- A. Call to Order.....Sara Charlton
- B. Approval of AgendaSara Charlton
- C. Welcome.....Sara Charlton
- D. Approval of Standing Rules.....Sara Charlton
- E. Approval of Committees.....Sara Charlton
 - i. CredentialsJody Eidnes
 - ii. Tellers.....Art Tucker, Jody Eidnes, Peg Wolter
 - iii. Sergeants-at-Arms.....Debra Abbott, Steve Abbott, Mark Nelson, Brian Rudy
 - iv. Parliamentarian.....Dan Soderberg

II. Greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church.....Cyndi Hoffman

III. Report of the Credentials Committee.....Jody Eidnes

IV. Report of the Nominating Committee.....Debra Abbott

- A. Report on Camp Board Elections
- B. Report on Appointments to the Board
- C. Conference Board Nominees

V. Election of Officers and Board Members.....Sara Charlton

VI. Good News Report.....Mission Meadows, LLC

VII. Superintendent ReportGarth McGrath

- A. Church Planting Update.....Alan Tumpkin
- B. Church Vitality Update.....Peg Kohring Cichon
- C. Conference Ministry Initiatives.....Jody Eidnes

VIII. Closed/Disaffiliating Churches.....Garth McGrath

- A. Cityview Covenant, Pittsburgh, PA

IX. Good News Report.....LifeChurch Riverside, Detroit, MI

Delegate Connection Break

X. Joining Churches.....Garth McGrath

- A. City Church Cleveland, Cleveland, OH
- B. LifeChurch Riverside, Detroit, MI
- C. Lighthouse Church, Richmond, KY

XI. Treasurer's Report (2024 Financials).....Brian Rudy

Agenda

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- XII. Good News Report.....Grace Evangelical Covenant Church, Clay, NY
- XIII. New Business:
 - A. 2025 BudgetBrian Rudy
 - B. Interim Budget for 2026.....Brian Rudy
 - C. Approval of 45th Annual Meeting Minutes.....Sara Charlton
 - D. Affirmation of Ordination CandidatesKen White
- XIV. Good News Report.....Evangelical Covenant Church, Cheboygan, MI
- XV. Old Business:
 - A. Ministry Planning Cycle Update.....Jody Eidnes, Garth McGrath
 - B. Strengthening Communication with Conference ChurchesGarth McGrath
- XVI. GLC Staff & Board Chair Q & AGLC Staff & Board Chair
- XVII. Election Results for Officers & Board MembersSara Charlton
- XVIII. Installation of Officers & Board Members.....Garth McGrath
- XIX. Expression of Thanks to Retiring Board Members.....Garth McGrath
- XX. 2026 Annual Meeting Celebration Location.....Jody Eidnes
- XXI. Adjournment.....Sara Charlton

Sample Ballot

GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING - May 3, 2025

GLC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Officers elected annually for 1 year term

Chair –

- ☐ Sara Charlton
☐ _____

Vice Chair –

- ☐ Steve Ormond
☐ _____

Secretary –

- ☐ *John Goss
☐ _____

Treasurer –

- ☐ Mickey Tresh
☐ _____

Trustees - (Vote for 4)

Elected for a 3-year term

- ☐ Amanda Ratcliff
☐ Karen Yeversky
☐ *Harvey Cozart
☐ *Ardena Duren
☐ _____

*Denotes incumbent

Joining Church



REPORT ON CHURCHES JOINING

The Evangelical Covenant Church
8303 W. Higgins Rd. Chicago, IL 60631
www.covchurch.org

Church: Lighthouse Church: An Evangelical Covenant Church, Richmond, KY

Street: PO Box 1561

City: Richmond State/Prov: KY Zip: 40476

Conference: Great Lakes Conference

Name of pastor: Harvey Cozart

Number of charter members: 10

Estimated Average Sunday attendance: 50

A brief history of Lighthouse Church: An Evangelical Covenant Church

Lighthouse Church is a multi-ethnic community that is committed to letting our light shine through the darkness by showing, sharing, and growing in the Good News and love of Jesus Christ! Our church originally started as a church plant through the partnership of the ECC and the GLC. We did a soft launch for Hope City Covenant Church in 2017 and fully launched in 2018 after signing the Covenant Agreement. In 2019, I was approached by another church and their leadership who were friends of mine. Their church was experiencing some very challenging and difficult issues and they asked for my counsel and leadership. After some time, their leadership asked if I would consider merging both of our churches to form one new church. Through much prayer, discernment, and the guidance of my GLC superintendent, our leadership, and their leadership decided to merge both churches making one new church called Lighthouse Church: An Evangelical Covenant Church. Lighthouse Church emerged as a deeply committed multi-ethnic community with a desire to make disciples through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our church has faced a lot of challenges as a multi-ethnic community in the deep south, but has maintained a shared conviction, that real unity comes by the cross and blood of Jesus. Through our experiences as a church, God has raised up a beautifully wounded bride that is committed to His mosaic kingdom and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our place of gathering is a building that can hold around two hundred people maximum. We also have two other buildings that we use for rental space, storage, gym, and children's ministry. We own all of our buildings which sit on about four acres of land.

Lighthouse Church was initially the result of a church plant that my wife and I started through the partnership and resources of the ECC and the GLC, it was formerly called Hope City Covenant Church. It was through their resources, church planting training, and mentorship that we were able to plant a church in Richmond, Kentucky.

We were able to impact our community through an effective ministry called 'Give N Go'. This ministry setup free basketball clinics for kids in the community with the collaboration of the Eastern Kentucky Basketball Team. As a result, we are able to share the gospel with kids and families. We also were able to develop a mentoring and tutoring outreach to kids in our community. We also have another exciting ministry to kids in our community, called the "Battlefield Dashers Running Club" for kids. This is a free outreach to kids and parents in the community, designed to train kids to run in marathons and various other running events while mentoring and discipling them in their faith. Another thriving ministry is our Immerse Community Bible Study that we do every fourth Sunday. This is a non-traditional gathering of our congregation where we worship, engage in an open discussion Bible study, and fellowship through a community meal. This ministry has made a tremendous impact among our members and the community. We also were able to participate in mission through other various community events in a collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department in the city of Richmond.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

(Conference Superintendent)

Joining Church



REPORT ON CHURCHES JOINING

The Evangelical Covenant Church
8303 W. Higgins Rd. Chicago, IL 60631
www.covchurch.org

Church: LifeChurch Riverside- An Evangelical Covenant Church

Street: PO Box 21274

City: Detroit State/Prov: MI Zip: 48221

Conference: Great Lakes Conference

Name of pastor: Georgia Hill

Number of charter members: 21

Estimated Average Sunday attendance: 75 in person; 40 online

LifeChurch Riverside- An Evangelical Covenant Church

1. Brief History

LifeChurch Riverside started as a vision for a church that would serve the Detroit area, an idea which I believe came from God more than 10 years before LCR began. After several years of praying in small groups I had the opportunity to meet Alan Tumpkin who recommended me for the ECC Assessment process. I previously served 19 years as an associate pastor in the UCC. The UCC offered very little in the way of church planting guidance and although I tried several times, my proposed new church start was not supported by the denomination.

Although our start was experiencing shut down due to COVID it was determined in conversation with Alan Tumpkin and Garth McGrath that we would proceed with the signing of the Covenant Agreement. We had already been having Bible studies on Thursday evenings and prayer at 7am on a conference call phone number several days a week. In October, as the pandemic dragged on, members of our launch team urged us to begin meeting on Zoom. Many people were in need of hope so we launched a trial service on the first Sunday of November on Zoom at 9:30am. We had over 50 people, so we felt this medium might be a good vehicle for our church services. We launched our online church on December 6, 2020. We had over 100 people and have continued weekly ever since.

We made the shift to weekly in-person services gradually. First we met once per month in person, then after several months we transitioned to twice per month, three times per month, and then we finally began meeting weekly in person at Marygrove College campus. We met first in the theater and then in the Madame Cadillac Building.

2. Parented by LifeChurch Southfield

LifeChurch Riverside is a church plant of LifeChurch Southfield. Pastor Alan Tumpkin and his staff have been active supporters of our ministry. Pastor Alan has offered wise counsel and advice as well as resources and musicians. When I was recovering from Covid, Pastor Alan preached. This connection between the two churches has been excellent.

3. Meeting Place

We currently meet at the Johnson Recreation Center, 8550 Chippewa in Detroit. The recreation center was recently rehabilitated by U of D Jesuit High School. The facility includes a gym, which we transform into our sanctuary, and several other rooms. We use the multipurpose room when serving meals and one of the classrooms for LifeKids during Sunday morning worship. The convenient parking lot and accessible handicap spaces are ideal.

Joining Church

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4. Help from Covenant and Conference

Garth McGrath and Jody Eidnes have provided guidance, encouragement, and much needed information about the processes and applications needed to move through the process. During the initial founding of LCR through my ordination last year, there has been a great deal of regular conversation with them that has been helpful. In addition, the GLC seminars and workshops have provided connection and information and has been good for our leadership team as well. One of the most beneficial meeting times has been the Church Planter sessions! These times provide practical advice that we can put into practice, lessons learned and warnings about pitfalls. Super helpful!

In terms of the Covenant, I have been encouraged and inspired by MidWinter and Gather. The sessions have been practical and helpful, and the camaraderie - especially among the pastors - has been invaluable. Each gathering has helped to reinforce ECC identity, build connections, and add fuel to the fire of ministry. I am encouraged by hearing the stories of other churches and pastors, and by the resources that the ECC offers to its leaders and congregations. I must also say that the courses I took for Covenant Orientation were special times to get to know others and learn about the ECC. These were very, very rich experiences.

5. Ministries Making an Impact

Prayer, Bible study, and our outreach ministries are making a powerful impact on the lives of others.

Prayer

Our morning prayer lines help people to make it through loss, chaos, disappointment, and illness. For both men and women, the prayer times are times of sharing and ministry to one another and really make a difference in their lives and I know this because people tell me. We have 2 once per week calls: 1) men & women 2) men only. We have one, twice per week call for women only.

Bible Study

The questions asked during Bible study demonstrate that people are growing in their knowledge of the Bible and Jesus. We are doing a Read the Bible in a Year project and many new faces have joined the Bible study! People report that they are learning, which is wonderful.

Outreach

*We have a team that does an outreach at Peggy's Place (a temporary residence for families who are houseless) every month to families and parents, which includes a make-and- take project. Our time together provides a bit of respite for moms and dads; we share prayer and Bible stories; and offer help and encouragement. We see families return to us but we also celebrate those families that receive a home!

*The very first ministry that LCR started is one that continues today. Every Tuesday, a team picks up food from Trader Joe's and takes it to a soup kitchen or youth program. The current recipient is Developing Kids, a youth development organization which offers the groceries to families that wait in line for the food. Not only do families receive food but we have also offered seminars to the youth.

*Another ministry that began December 2020 and continues to this day, is the donation of Christmas gifts to the Winthrop Street Bible Study - a group of children that face economic, academic, or familial challenges. The first year we did home-delivery of the gifts because of Covid and those visits were a blessing for the families and for our members who were reminded of the wide income gaps in our city. Last December, we presented the gifts at a brunch held at a banquet hall. The young people completed an art project, sang Christmas songs (and laughed), ate a good meal together with their parents, and walked off with big bags of toys and clothes.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____

(Conference Superintendent)

Joining Church



REPORT ON CHURCHES JOINING

The Evangelical Covenant Church
8303 W. Higgins Rd. Chicago, IL 60631
www.covchurch.org

Church: City Church Cleveland, an Evangelical Covenant Church

Street: 913 College Ave.

City: Cleveland State/Prov: OH Zip: 44113

Conference: Great Lakes Conference

Name of pastor: Eloy Gonzalez

Number of charter members: 52

Estimated Average Sunday attendance: 62

A brief history of City Church Cleveland, an Evangelical Covenant Church

City Church Near West Side began as a plant from City Church in Cleveland Heights, which is part of the Southern Baptist Convention. Nate Friedrichsen began planning in the fall of 2016, and the first service was held on September 17th, 2017, in the side chapel at Franklin Circle Church. At the end of 2019, the church purchased a building in the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland. Pastors, staff, and members spent two weeks cleaning, renovating, and preparing the space for guests. On January 5th, 2020, City Church held its first service at the new Tremont location. At that time the congregation had around 80 members, four or five weekly community groups, and enjoyed numerous social events, service opportunities, and times of community engagement.

Two months later, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, and the church went through a difficult period. Within the first year of the pandemic, Assistant Pastor Craig stepped down. Moving forward to the summer of 2021, Pastor Nate formed the Leadership Team, and within the first few months of the team forming requested a sabbatical. The leadership team approved the sabbatical request and scheduled it to begin in the spring of 2022. After a five-month sabbatical, and much prayer and consideration, Pastor Nate decided to retire from his time as a pastor. With no elders or pastors left on staff, the Leadership Team quickly began a search for a new shepherd for our community. In the Lord's kindness and generosity, a candidate presented himself within weeks of Pastor Nate stepping down, and after several months of interviews, conversations, prayer, and a unanimous "yes" vote from our congregation, Eloy Gonzalez III was installed as the new pastor of City Church Near West Side. After serving in ministry for a number of years at Scranton Road Bible Church, and on staff at Building Hope in the City, Pastor Eloy has brought a renewed sense of energy, commitment to our community, and the hope of Jesus to our little church body. We currently have 52 members and are grateful for the new season where God has us at this time.

We have adopted some of the global partners from our planting church - a Christian man in West Africa who is page by page translating the scriptures into his native language for the first time, despite great danger and hostility to the gospel in his land. Pete and Cara Bell and Pete and Lindsay Stewart, church planters with 20 Schemes Ministries, who were planting a church in Barlanark, a scheme (public housing) outside of Glasgow, Scotland. Jeremy and Tiffany McClain who were planting Mercy of Christ Fellowship in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood of Washington DC. We also began engaging in different service opportunities with Building Hope in the City, a Cleveland faith-based community organization. Several members signed on to volunteer to teach ESL and US citizenship classes as well as participate in a refugee mentorship program. We also became closely involved with Safe Families for Children, a global ministry that surrounds families in crisis with compassionate care and support. In August of 2019, many of us participated in RallyCLE for the first time, a day in which we partner with and empower local residents to find ways to beautify, celebrate, and improve their neighborhoods.

Joining Church

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Our church has been blessed to be in relationship with the now legacy Bethany Covenant Church, about 30 minutes east of us. This church's leadership team was instrumental in helping us learn more about the Covenant and making connections for us. We loved their generosity of spirit; since the church has closed its doors, we have welcomed three former members into membership at City Church, and have several others who are regular attenders. Each of these folks speak very highly of their experience with the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Our building is very old but much loved; it is situated in the City of Cleveland, about five minutes west of downtown. We have completed a lot of renovations, but more work still remains to allow access for disabled people, adequate bathrooms, bring the building up to code, and a functional kitchen for large church gatherings. The mortgage is currently through the lending arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, which was our planting denomination. As we establish our own 501c3 entity outside of our planting church, we will also be seeking out a new mortgage for the building. Our building could have a capacity for about 120 congregants if needed for a service. Our Sunday service also offers a nursery classroom every week for infants and toddlers, and we have recently launched a children's church once a month for elementary-aged children. The core way folks get involved in the community is through groups. The majority of our members and regular attenders are plugged into a small group that meets either weekly or bi-weekly. We also offer a few soul care groups. Our church also has a potluck lunch once a month after church as a way to further fellowship and connection.

Recently, our church was blessed to go through the ECC's "Finding Your Why" training. We are excited to take what we have learned and further explore how we may grow in our impact on our surrounding community, while still cultivating the culture of care we have within the walls of our church.

Signed by: _____ Date: _____
(Conference Superintendent)

Closed/Withdrawn Church

REPORT ON CHURCHES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE ROSTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

Name of the Church: Cityview Covenant Church

Location (City, State): Pittsburgh, PA

Reason for removal from roster: ☐ Closed ☒ Withdrawn
 ☐ Dismissed ☐ Merger

Number of members (when church closed): 40

Year joined the Covenant: 2013

Peak membership (approximately): 80

Reason leading to removal from the roster and comments:

In the words of the Pastor of the church, on September 22, 2024, the members of Cityview Covenant Church voted to “part ways with the ECC and find a home where they can follow the Spirit’s invitation to fully embrace their LGBTQ siblings, just as they are, in the life of the church.” The church felt that they were “no longer able to reconcile ‘remaining silent in dissent’ with the ‘faithful action that love calls us to in the way of Jesus.’”

Signed by _____
(Conference Superintendent)

Date _____

GLC Minutes of the 44th Annual Meeting

Faith Covenant Church - Farmington Hills, MI

April 20, 2024

I. Organization of the Meeting

They began with a video from Portage Lake Bible Camp.

A. Call to Order

Doug McCann

The meeting was called to order at 8:32a.m.

B. Approval of Agenda

Doug McCann

Motion was made by the Executive Board and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion was approved.

C. Welcome

Doug McCann

Doug McCann (GLC Exec. Board Chair) welcomed all the participants (both those attending in person and online). He also acknowledged that the land we are meeting on was once stewarded by indigenous tribes.

Garth McGrath (Conference Superintendent) offered a welcome to those attending from ECC offices. He also extended thanks to the pastor and members of Faith Covenant Church, Farmington Hills, MI for hosting this year's Annual Celebration. Mike Rice (Pastor, Faith Covenant Church) offered greetings on behalf of the church.

D. Approval of Standing Rules

Doug McCann

A motion was made by the Executive Board to approve the standing rules. This was seconded and approved.

E. Approval of Committees

Doug McCann

i. Credentials

Jody Eidnes

ii. Tellers

Jody Eidnes, Peg Wolter

iii. Sergeants-at-Arms

John Butsky, Tim Swafford, Suzy Grecu, Marc Dissosway

iv. Parliamentarian

Steve Ormond

Motion was made by the Executive Board to approve all the above committees. Motion was seconded and approved.

II. Greetings from the Evangelical Covenant Church

Paul Robinson

Paul expressed thanks for the Conference and Garth. Greetings were extended from the ECC President (Tammy Swanson-Draheim) and the whole ECC team. He shared that their desire is to work together to support the ministry of the church. Paul serves as the Interim Director of Serve Locally. He shared that Serve Locally is hyper-focused on the local church. It is a new initiative which calls for equipping leaders to give tools to lay leaders in local churches.

III. Report of the Credentials Committee

Jody Eidnes

Jody reported that 91 church delegates (79 in person, 12 virtually) representing 42 churches, as well as one institution delegate, and nine Board members, are present at this year's Annual Meeting; for a total of 101 delegates.

Motion was made to accept the report. This was seconded and approved.

IV. Report of the Nominating Committee

Sara Charlton

Sara reported that nominations were as presented on the written ballot. Ballots were distributed to delegates. Doug gave instructions for voting and advised that there is a process for nominations from the floor. No nominations from the floor were moved forward so voting was held according to the written ballot.

GLC Minutes of the 44th Annual Meeting

Con't

A. GLC Executive Board Members.....Doug McCann

i. Election of Officers and Trustees

1. Trustees:

- a. Debbie Abbott
- b. Steve Ormond
- c. Art Tucker
- d. Mark Nelson (elected to a second three-year term)

2. Officers:

- a. Chair - Doug McCann
- b. Vice Chair - Sara Charlton
- c. Secretary - John Goss
- d. Treasurer - Brian Rudy

B. Election of GLC Superintendent.....Doug McCann

Motion was made from the Exec. Board to nominate Garth McGrath to another term serving as GLC Superintendent. Garth was dismissed for a time of discussion. Voting was done by paper ballot.

V. Award - Church Planting.....Rick and Terri McGarry

Alan Tumpkin presented this award. He commented on Rick and Terri's work in the community in Mason, MI, as well as their desire to make a difference in people's lives. Rick and Terri are church planters who planted New Wine Covenant Church, in Mason, MI. Alan prayed for them.

VI. Superintendent Report.....Garth McGrath

Garth expressed thanks for those serving as delegates. He thanked churches for engaging in the Ministry Planning Cycle. The Conference works primarily behind the scenes but wants to know how to help churches. Garth is seeing new signs of life in our churches. He encouraged churches to embrace the Great Commandment and Great Commission which we can do, regardless of the size of our churches.

In post-Christian culture there is deeper distrust of institutions, and ministry is getting harder in our contexts. We need to constantly evaluate and change, and our GLC staff is here to help.

The GLC video was shown.

Garth highlighted our four mission priorities and explained that we rely on the contributions of local churches.

COVID and social dynamics took a toll on pastors and some of these things remain to be true. Many churches are gaining missional traction.

He asked churches to support pastors by sending them to Midwinter and giving them the Sunday off afterward.

Equipping lay leaders is a priority. And unity is of importance in a polarized political cycle.

Ministries to children and youth is the most strategically significant ministry to church growth and vitality. Highlighted: Lunch Box and Unite, Crescendo Ministry, and a video from Crescendo.

Garth invited Jody Eidnes to the stage to recognize her 20 years of service. He presented a letter of appreciation from the Conference. Garth read another letter from the ECC President.

10 minute break called at 10:14a.m., meeting was reconvened at 10:28a.m.

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VII. Closed/Disaffiliating Churches.....Garth McGrath

A. The Movement Church, Nashville, TN

The Movement Church has discerned the need to close after losing their facility. No action is required because they never completed the process of becoming a Covenant Church.

B. Bethany Covenant Church, Lyndhurst, OH

The following motion was put forward by the Executive Board. Whereas the congregation of Bethany Covenant Church of Lyndhurst, Ohio (Bethany) has requested to be removed from the membership of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) and from the membership of the Great Lakes Conference (GLC); and Whereas Bethany has disbanded; and, Whereas the GLC Executive Board recommends approval of Bethany's request to the GLC Annual Meeting; Be it resolved, that the GLC Annual Meeting recommends approval of Bethany's request to the ECC Executive Board and the ECC Annual Meeting.

Motion was seconded and approved.

VIII. Award - Church Leadership.....Bethany Covenant Church, Lyndhurst, OH

Garth called Debbie Montzingo and the leadership of Bethany Covenant Church forward to receive the award. He commented that they were faithful in their leadership and led the church to become a legacy church. Debbie shared about the love and faithfulness of the church and its leaders and the ways they reached out to the community. Garth led in prayer for the church and leaders.

IX. Joining Churches.....Garth McGrath

A. Life Church Auburn Hills, an Evangelical Covenant Church, Auburn Hills, MI

The Associate Pastor came to represent pastor Donearl Johnson. He expressed appreciation for his pastor and the ministry of the GLC. A motion came from the Exec. Board to approve Life Church Auburn Hills for membership in the GLC, no second needed. The motion passed. Garth led in prayer for Life Church Auburn Hills.

B. Healing Covenant Church, Paducah, KY

Dawn Choate and members of the church were called forward. A motion came from the Exec. Board to approve Healing Covenant Church for membership in the GLC, no second needed. The motion passed. Garth led in prayer for Healing Covenant Church.

X. Treasurer's Report (2023 GLC Financials).....Brian Rudy

Greetings were extended to those in person and online. Brian offered thanks to Kim Carlson for his work as Financial Officer. Brian shared a chart about our sources of funding. Our primary source of funding is from member churches. Portions of the funding also come from legacy churches, ECC bequests, and donors. The primary use of funds is for staff.

We budgeted for a \$146,000 loss but ended the year with only an \$88,000 loss. The main reasons for the difference was churches giving \$20,000 more than expected, the Employee Retention Credit of \$20,000, and the release of restricted funds. We saw an increase in giving for the first time since 2017. Higher interest rates have benefited our cash reserves as well.

We have \$1.1 million. We hold 3 months cash on hand. The GLC also operates as a loan guarantor with risk equaling \$1.36 million. Because of this, we set aside \$325,000 to cover these loans. \$364,000 is set aside for church planting. And an additional \$124,000 is set aside as restricted funds.

Showed video from National Covenant Properties.

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XI. Award - Church Vitality.....Saranac Community Church, Saranac, MI

This church is seeing fruit from its use of Vitality materials through times of transition in COVID and a pastoral transition. The Church Chair received the award on behalf of the church. Garth led in prayer for the church.

XII. New Business

A. Ministry Planning Cycle.....Garth McGrath, Peg Cichon and Missional Vitality

- i. Doug explained the process and our desire to come alongside local churches in their ministries. We will be coming back at a future date to report on the information shared yesterday evening. He asked delegates to go back and ask pastors and church leaders to engage with the questions previously mailed to each church's leadership.
- ii. Peg Cichon encouraged churches to take advantage of Vitality resources and to answer the questions. Peg gave an overview of the Vitality materials.

B. 2024 Budget

Motion was made by the Exec. Board to approve the 2024 budget. This doesn't require a second. Motion passed.

C. Interim Budget for 2025.....Brian Rudy

- i. Motion was made by the Exec. Board to authorize the Exec. Board to implement an interim 2025 budget until a final budget is approved at the 2025 Annual Meeting. This happens because the next meeting is not scheduled until April 2025. The motion passed.
 1. Discussion:
 - a. Question: Will the provisional budget be an extension of the approved 2024 budget? Answer: Yes within 5% so we can accommodate for inflation.
 - b. Comment from Jody: The GLC meeting must wait until April so that it falls between church annual meetings and the ECC Annual Meeting.
 - c. Question: When Legacy Funds are received, what is the process of allocating those resources? Answer: The funds are divided between planting and vitality per the ECC guidelines. Garth added that 80% of proceeds go to new church planting projects, and 20% to vitality with some flexibility given so the new guidelines are 70/30.
 - d. Question: Could we move to a fiscal year budget (April to March) instead of a calendar year budget? Answer: This has been considered but it creates difficulty with reporting that creates complexity and a short window of time.
 - e. Question: Doesn't some of the legacy funds go to the ECC? Answer: ECC holds 50% in reserve for the Conference.

D. Approval of 44th Annual Meeting Minutes.....Doug McCann

A motion was made from the Exec. Board to empower the Exec. Board to approve the minutes of this meeting. This motion passed.

E. Approval of Ordination Candidates.....Ken White

Georgia Hill was approved by the Ministerium, advancing her to ordination. Garth prayed for her.

Video on Covenant Benefits.

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XIII. Award - Church Outreach.....Faith Covenant Church, Farmington Hills, MI

Garth presented the award to those present from FCC Farmington Hills, MI. Church Chair Mike Neal received the award on behalf of the church. Garth prayed for the church.

XIV. Old Business:

A. Proposed Constitution and Bylaws Amendments.....Sara Charlton

Sara Charlton led this discussion. A resolution was distributed from the Exec. Board. No second needed.

Discussion

Question: On item three: It appears there is no longer a requirement for lay members on nominating committee.

Answer: This was unintentional and we could not adjust it because of timing. We can come with needed changes next year at the Annual Meeting.

Comment: A bit uncomfortable with a few points but feel we need to pass the resolution and then return to fix these issues.

The motion passed.

B. Church Planting Initiative.....Alan Tumpkin

Alan shared that Church Planting is doing well. We need to plant more churches. We have a donor who will match donations made to church planting in the GLC. We are planting a new church, New Evangel Covenant Church by Phil Carr on April 28th. We can help any church develop a church planter residency program.

C. Response for Request for Financial Pie-Chart.....Brian Rudy

This was distributed.

D. Strengthening Communications with Conference Churches.....Garth McGrath

Garth encouraged churches to show the GLC video and sign up for the newsletter.

XV. GLC Staff Q & A.....GLC Staff

Expressions of thanks were extended to all the staff.

XVI. Recognition of Retiring GLC Staff.....Garth McGrath

Garth recognized Jack Nichols for his years of service to the GLC.

XVII. Election Results for Officers and Trustees.....Doug McCann

The delegates voted 84 to 1 to elect Garth McGrath as the GLC Superintendent for another term.

The delegates voted 76 to 1 to elect all the Trustees and Officers of the Executive Board.

XVIII. Installation of Officers & Trustees.....Garth McGrath

XIX. Expression of Thanks to Retiring GLC Executive Board Members.....Garth McGrath

Garth extended thanks to Connie Berry for her years of service on the Executive Board.

XX. 2025 Annual Celebration Location.....Jody Eidnes

Next Year's Annual Meeting will be held at Mission Meadows on May 2-3, 2025.

XXI. Adjournment.....Doug McCann

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed.

ECC President's Letter - Tammy Swanson-Draheim

MARCH 2025



Greetings Covenant Family,

Thank you for taking the time to be present together, to pray, to worship, to fellowship, and to collectively discern how God is moving within your conference and where you are being called to partner with God more deeply in this coming season of ministry. I love that these annual gatherings are often referred to as a “celebration” as there is so much to celebrate in the Covenant Church.

I am excited about the upcoming gathering of our local churches for Gather 2025 in Orlando, Florida! We will be joined by many of the presidents of our sister Covenant denominations around the world as we come together to celebrate 140 years of shared mission and ministry. Our global ministry and partnerships have been transformational to both our local churches here in North America and to communities around the world. What an amazing grace we participate in when we work together in service to Jesus and follow him where he leads us. The theme of this year's gathering is “Follow Me.” Throughout the week, we will hear Jesus's timeless call to “Follow Me”—the invitation that has transformed countless lives across the centuries. Come connect with sisters and brothers, joining guests from around the world, as we celebrate, discern, and dream together—following Christ into the next chapter of the Covenant story. Please plan to attend in person or online as a delegate or a general conferee. This will be a time that you will not want to miss out on. Details, including how to register, are available online: covchurch.org/gather.

As we prepare to gather both locally and nationally, I feel a deep burden to call our churches to pray. Pray for our churches seeking to faithfully respond to the many places in need of the love of Jesus expressed through words and through acts of compassion, mercy, justice, and peace-making. This will look different in each of your communities, but as a nation, we are facing a time where the love of Christ and his call to care for the lost and the least of these has never felt more pressing. Sharing God's love in word and deed is embedded in the DNA of the Covenant Church. May we, as God's people who experience the love of the Father, continue to seek the good of our brothers and sisters in need. May we act boldly as we are led by the Holy Spirit, through the resurrection power of Christ Jesus, to bring the good news of God's kingdom to a lost and hurting world.

For God's glory and neighbor's good,

Tammy Swanson-Draheim, PRESIDENT, EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH



*Celebrating 140 years of
shared mission and ministry.*

GLC Executive Board Interim Chair Report

Greetings, Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This past year brought some unexpected changes when the former Chair of the Executive Board, Doug McCann, resigned for health reasons. The Executive Board and GLC staff have kept Doug in their prayers as he has received treatment for his illness, and we are grateful for his nearly six years of service to the Great Lakes Conference. We also extend our greatest appreciation to Kim Carlson who completed seventeen years of service to the Conference at the end of January 2025, and is moving on to continue serving other non-profit organizations. I accepted the interim role as the Chair of the GLC Executive Board in December 2024, and I extend my thanks to the GLC staff and Board for their gracious acceptance and profound support as I've stepped into this role. It has been particularly eye-opening to see the immense amount of work our GLC staff puts into supporting the pastors, lay leaders, church planters, and congregations in our Conference. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Jody Eidnes, Peg Wolter, Jani Gustafson, Alan Tumpkin, Peg Kohring Cichon, and Garth McGrath for their hard work and dedication to the Conference.

One of the many ways in which our GLC staff served the Conference was in the work they did to organize over eight hundred pieces of information gathered during last year's Friday evening workshop where delegates met to discuss the needs of their churches. Jody, Jani, and Peg worked to compile a database of information from that workshop. Then, a dedicated Ministry Planning Cycle Advisory Team made up of pastors, GLC staff, and delegates from GLC churches used the information to produce insights, comments, and recommendations in five areas of ministry focus. The areas of focus include strengthening churches; training for pastors, staff, lay leaders, and volunteers; connecting churches with one another to share resources; resourcing churches to serve their communities; and planting thriving churches.

These five focus areas give the GLC Executive Board and GLC staff ideas on how to best serve our Conference churches. With continued input from delegates, GLC pastors, and lay leaders, we will work to create a timeline and a system for discerning what areas of focus should be prioritized and what areas will be implemented in future years. Your input has been invaluable, and we anticipate further opportunities for your voice to be heard. Thank you for your participation, thus far, in our Ministry Planning Cycle.

Finally, I want to thank you for faithfully giving to the Great Lakes Conference. The support we receive from our local churches and individuals helps us to serve our local churches and further the work of the Kingdom of God in our Conference.

Sincerely,

A fellow servant in Christ,

Rev. Sara Charlton

Interim Chair, GLC Executive Board

sara.m.charlton@gmail.com

Superintendent Report

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:3-6 (NIV)

At the close of 2024, I once again join the Apostle Paul in giving thanks to God for the faithful partnership in the gospel shared by the churches of the Great Lakes Conference. I am thankful for the local ministry of our churches and for the contributions they continue to make in order to sustain our shared ministry at both the conference and denominational levels. Because of our partnership in the past year, people throughout our region heard the gospel, witnessed churches embracing ethnic diversity, were prayed for, were invited to follow Jesus, served in practical ways, were disciplined, and were encouraged to use their gifts for God's glory and neighbor's good. In the pages of this Annual Report, you will read about initiatives of the GLC directly tied to our mission priorities of Church Planting, Missional Vitality, Leadership Development, and Outreach. Here are some introductory comments and highlights:

CHURCH PLANTING: Thanks to a generous matching grant (provided in 2019) to plant four churches, and thanks to proceeds from the sale of closed church buildings (70% of which can be used for new church plants), the GLC has had the resources to start new churches in recent years. In 2024, we started New Evangel Covenant Church in the Detroit area under the leadership of Pastor Phil Carr. Alan Tumpkin (half-time Director of Church Planting) and Pastor Semmeal Thomas guided, coached, supported, and, provided pastoral care to Phil throughout the planting process. Meanwhile, Alan, Semmeal, Rich Johnson, and Justin Bowers have continued to coach recent church plants in Auburn Hills, MI (Life Church Auburn Hills); Detroit, MI (LifeChurch Riverside); Grand Rapids, MI (Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids); Elkins, WV (One Hope Covenant Church); and Columbus, OH (Life Transformation Church).

MISSIONAL VITALITY: We saw an increase in inquiries about – and use of – our Missional Vitality resources in 2024. Requests for coaches and vitality workshops went up in a range of contexts – from small churches in rural and urban areas to larger churches in metro-urban contexts, and we were able to deliver. Meanwhile, there was a surge in the use of the MissionInsite demographic analysis tool that many churches have found helpful in understanding their community. There continues to be no cost to local churches for any of the workshops, vitality tools or coaching/consulting. The GLC is able to underwrite the use of these resources thanks to our partnership with the ECC and thanks to funds generated by the sale of our Caledonia, MI church building (Redeemer Covenant Church) in 2021 (30% of which may be used for Missional Vitality purposes). Peg Cichon, our Missional Vitality Liaison with the ECC, does a tremendous job of guiding our churches in the use of the wide range of vitality resources available to our churches.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Our leadership development priorities in 2024, once again coalesced around equipping pastors and elected lay leaders for the opportunities and challenges of ministry. Some highlights in 2024: Training/Equipping Workshops were offered at our Conference Annual Meeting in April and the Fall Leadership Connection in September. **LEADERSHIP:** Church Chair Training; Discerning Purpose and Direction for your Church; 7-Systems; **EVANGELISM/OUTREACH:** Sharing Your Facility; Safe Sanctuaries; **DISCIPLESHIP:** Emotionally Healthy Spirituality; Maintaining Unity in an Election Year; Ministry in the Post-Church Church; Leadership Support: We resourced 7 churches to help them provide fair compensation packages for 19 GLC pastors; We coached 11 churches in various stages of pastoral transition: preparing for a transition, concluding a ministry, finding an interim pastor, conducting a search process, and installing a new pastor. Thankfully, 5 of the 11 positions were filled on a permanent basis. Kim Carlson and Dan Wolter gave invaluable coaching to our camps regarding financial recording, reporting and forecasting. Credentialing: Thanks in large measure to the work of Jody Eidnes, our Conference Administrator, we guided, coached, shepherded and coordinated

Superintendent Report

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licensing interviews for dozens of pastors who have renewable credentials with the ECC. Care: GLC staff members prayed regularly for our pastors, contacted pastors individually to check in, and urged participation in monthly "cluster" gatherings with peers. The Conference made it possible for multiple pastors to receive mental health therapy to deal with acute challenges, subsidized the Fall Pastor's Retreat to lower costs, and provided scholarships so that any pastor who wanted to attend it could do so. Pam Pangborn, Kevin Butcher, and William Mack, all former pastors of GLC churches, comprise our pastor care team, and they cared well for our Conference pastors.

CHURCH OUTREACH: GLC staff members consistently urge our churches to use the BLESS resources of the ECC to foster intentional evangelism and to utilize the Lego City discipleship resource in their ministry to children. Because our conference camps play a vital role in helping our churches reach people who don't yet know Jesus – particularly youth and children – the Conference once again gave financial support to Mission Meadows, LLC, Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp, and Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp to help them serve GLC churches and people in their respective regions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Ministry Planning Cycle Initiative

A major effort of the GLC over the past year was the Ministry Planning Cycle (MPC) initiative. Starting well over a year ago, we began requesting input from our churches to help us better understand the unique calling of each of our churches, the assets our churches have in place, and the needs our churches have in order for them to fulfill their missional calling. Our hope was – and is – to better serve the churches of the Conference as they strive to live into that calling. As of this writing, the data received has been reviewed by an MPC Advisory Team (comprised of church members and pastors across the Conference). The team is collaborating to surface significant common needs in churches across the GLC, and will be making recommendations to the GLC Board about possible goals and outcomes the Conference could establish for the next chapter of our ministry together.

All of our GLC ministry initiatives and services are designed and carried out with the intention of helping Conference churches become (or remain) - healthy, missional, fruitful, and multiplying churches, so that together as a Conference of churches we will continue to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world. May God bless us and empower us as we partner together with each other and our denominational team to reach that worthy goal.

Garth McGrath
Superintendent, GLC
gmcgrath1957@gmail.com



Missional Vitality Report

The Missional Vitality Program has focused on addressing the priorities identified by churches during the Great Lakes Conference's Ministry Planning Cycle. Below, you will find an outline of the Missional Vitality tools and how they were implemented across various congregations.

Why Did God Place Our Church Here at This Time?

Finding Your Why is a one-day resource designed to help churches discern the Holy Spirit's calling for their community. This resource is often followed by *Living Your Why*, a workshop that guides church leadership in developing a strategy to fulfill the mission identified in *Finding Your Why*.

Church and Location	Finding Your Why	Living Your Why
Stoneridge Cov. Church, Allison Park, PA.....	Led by Peg Chichon.....	Led by the Church
Scandia Ev. Cov. Church, Russell, PA.....	Led by Peg Chichon.....	Led by the Church
Life Church, Auburn Hills, MI.....	Led by Peg Chichon.....	Led by the Church
St. John's Ev. Cov. Church, Millersburg, OH.....	Led by Peg Chichon.....	Led by Peg Chichon
First Cov. Church, Jamestown, NY.....	Led by Peg Chichon	
Saranac Community Church, Saranac, MI.....		Led by Peg Chichon
City Church Cleveland, Cleveland, OH.....	Led by Peg Chichon	

How Do We Find New Leadership?

H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength. helps individuals identify their spiritual gifts, passions, strengths, and areas where they can best serve within and outside the church. At Life Covenant Church Canton, over 40 people volunteered to take on new responsibilities, with four individuals demonstrating pastoral and shepherding skills. Additionally, 93 individuals at Harbert Community Church expressed interest in serving.



Church and Location	H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength.
Life Covenant Church, Canton, MI.....	Led by Peg Chichon
Harbert Community Church, Harbert, MI.....	Led by Peg Chichon

Missional Vitality Report

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How Do We Strengthen Our Leadership Team and Appreciate Diverse Decision-Making Styles?

Leadership Math is a tool that helps leaders identify essential leadership skills within their team. This was paired with the Change Style Assessment to recognize the various decision-making styles of leaders and help teams appreciate the importance of each approach.

Church and Location

Leadership Math

Change Style Assessment

Evangelical Covenant Church, Northport, MI.....Led by Peg Cichon.....Led by Peg Cichon

Transition Resources: Processing Loss in Congregations

This self-led resource consists of two video sessions (10-15 minutes each) along with activities and handouts for leadership teams experiencing pastoral transitions. The resource has been sent to the chair or interim pastor of all congregations currently in transition. There is no reporting mechanism, so we estimate that it has been done by eight churches.

Responding to God's Call for Your Community

The Responding to God's Call for Your Community series, which began on January 30, is a direct response to the Ministry Planning Cycle, where churches expressed a need to reconnect with their communities.

In the first session, Jody Eidnes guided 13 churches through MissionInsite to take a comprehensive look at their community. In the second session, Pastor Alex Rahill II assisted churches in developing a strategy to connect with their community using the data gathered. Reverend Ieisha Hawley, ECC Director of Evangelism, focused on equipping churches to share the gospel with new relationships. The final session involved developing a Fall Kickoff Plan, with Rev. Carol Nordstrom offering follow-up assistance to churches needing help funding their community missions.

Looking Ahead: Congregations Requesting Vitality Resources in 2025

The following churches have requested Missional Vitality resources for the upcoming year:

- Austintown Comm. Ev. Covenant Church, Austintown, OH: H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength. (February 1)
- First Covenant Church, Jamestown, NY: Living Your Why
- Grace Covenant Church, Clay, NY: H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength. (March 8)
- Lighthouse Church, Richmond, KY: H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength.
- Evangelical Covenant Church, Northport, MI: Finding Your Why (June 28)
- One Church, Louisville, KY: Living Your Why (May 18)
- Saranac Community Church, Saranac, MI: H. M. S. - Heart. Mind. Strength. (February 22)

Peg Cichon

Missional Vitality Liaison, GLC

margaretkcichon@gmail.com

GLC Ministerial Association Chair Report

2024-2025 GLC Ministerial Association Chair Annual Report

Over the past year, I have served as the Chair of the GLC Ministerial Association along with Lynne McLaughlin (Vice Chair), Carl Franzon (Treasurer), Donearl Johnson (Secretary), Debbie Montzingo (Vice Secretary), and Garth McGrath, who are part of the GLC Ministerial Association Executive Committee. The GLC Conference is currently assigned to the states of Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia, the lower peninsula of Michigan, and western parts of New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. There are approximately 200 credentialed ministers in the GLC.

I would like to highlight two main tasks. The first is to lead our ministerial association in mutual connections. This is done, first of all, through the Annual Meetings of the GLC Ministerial Association. This year, we are meeting on May 2, 2025 at Mission Meadows, LLC in Dewittville, NY. All throughout the year, there are many clergy clusters that meet, and we encourage anyone in the GLC Ministerial Association to be a part of their cluster. Another connection point is our Fall Pastors Retreat held in October. This year, our main speaker was Sanetta Ponton, the Pastor of Justice, Advocacy, and Compassion at Metro Community Church in Englewood, NJ. During the Fall Pastors Retreat, attendees are encouraged to connect with each other and to spend time in a relaxed environment. After the event, through Donearl Johnson's leadership we put out a survey to see what we can do to improve the retreat in the future. The second task is to aid in the credentialing process for those seeking a minister's license or ordination. The Chair of the GLC Ministerial Association serves on the Committee on Ministerial Standing, along with 10-15 others throughout the Conference. This is a great privilege to hear how God is moving in many different contexts to lift up ministers.

In addition, the following were reflection questions and answers shared with the Executive Committee of the ECC that I serve on as the Chair of the GLC Ministerial Association. This was presented in November 2024, and I present this as another part of the annual report for this past year.

1. What are the most significant challenges currently facing those in your association? What resources are needed for responding to those challenges?

We face challenges of cohesiveness, connectivity, and engagement in the ministerium because of time and distance, and life in our own churches. Many face financial headwinds in the local church making it difficult to engage in the fall retreat, Midwinter, and the Gather. There are also cultural changes and socio-economic changes for people. "Middle-income people (and lower-income people) are stretched thin." (Jay Fast) Youth and children's activities outside of the church dominate family life. "Many jobs in our world, especially for lower-income earners, are on Sundays." People face income and housing challenges. Retirees are more mobile and transient, caring for aging parents, adult children, and grandchildren.

The local churches have the ability to connect and stay connected online and electronically in ways not possible before, though at least one church is shutting down live streaming in an effort to get people to return. One church is creating more flexibility for volunteers, utilizing technology, and caring for people even when they aren't regular attenders and loosening expectations at times. Vitality programs have helped.

GLC Ministerial Association Chair Report

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The political culture of our country creates challenges, and several churches have tried to engage in a non-partisan way, welcoming differences that don't divide. In Grand Rapids, MI, a number of clergy got together to talk about issues facing us in the movie *Leap of Faith*.

LGBTQ issues continue to challenge. "In a community with a large LGBTQ population and with people in my church having a range of beliefs, this continues to be an issue for growth and understanding - requiring leadership." (Jay Fast) The most challenging aspect for many ministers, myself included, is how to process this volatile political moment. I struggle to know how to voice things in a way that is constructive and builds people up. One way for me to manage this difficulty this winter, was to preach through the Gospel of Mark. Doing this has given moments where the text speaks, and therefore I feel I can speak about things like upholding the weak and powerless, critiquing ourselves and the world in leadership, and extending mercy and grace.

2. Where do you see the Spirit at work amongst your association members?

There's been a deeper reflection on calling in ministry, which can lead to angst ("what is my calling?") and as a result, pastors have seen an uptick in their need for spiritual direction. Families with young children are finding their way back to church. People are passionate with their own involvement/participation in ways of loving God and neighbor "outside" of church ministries. One church responded to an assisted living center asking for help. A church in Mason, MI, is seeking God, after seeing a person take their life very near their church. Churches are seeking to empower their people, instead of doing all the work. Another church had a *Heart. Mind. Strength.* workshop and had 90 new offerings of service. In two local churches in western Michigan, there were summer baptisms in which +30 people were baptized. In our church, seven young people decided to be baptized after Unite. It doesn't hurt to have a lake nearby to baptize them in!

3. What are ways that we can learn from you to connect with others in ministry, what are ways that we can pray for greater connection?

One church has experience with outsourced accounting and IT services and has engaged in a run to provide clean water around the world. Our church has engaged in a discipleship plan based on Dallas Willard's Golden Triangle image, called *Make a Plan*. Another church has started a google shareable file that serves as sermon illustrations and quotes sorted by topic. A church in Muskegon provides resources for elementary school kids facing food insecurity.

4. How is your Ministerial Association living into the Six Fold Test?"

We've made the effort to have representation on the GLC Ministerial Association Executive Committee. The past two Fall retreats we've had the privilege of Dennis Edwards and Sanetta Ponton speaking. One pastor said, "we have not talked about race as much as politics lately, but did engage in Jemar Tisby's video series in 2020/2021." Overall, the response to this questions is summarized by one pastor who said, "Not enough as I wish we were."

Ken White
Chair, GLC Ministerial Association
kwhite@forestparkcov.org

GLC Spiritual Directors Network

The Spiritual Directors Network of the Great Lakes Conference consists of those pastors and lay people who have received training to be spiritual listeners. Such training typically involves a certificate program focusing on prayer, spiritual disciplines, listening skills, the study of spiritual fathers and mothers of the Church, and a variety of other topics that help the director become and stay open to the Holy Spirit's leading. We usually meet in one-on-one sessions with "directees" to listen and help them hear where the Spirit might be speaking, nudging, or leading them.

Part of our annual work is to keep current with new directors; as more people train, we are challenged to make sure they know about us, especially those who are lay persons and may not be in the regular channels of Covenant clergy. At present, we are about fifteen directors who have some involvement with the Network. If you are a director, please reach out! (bije47@proton.me)

The lion's share of originally forming the Network, sustaining it over the years, and maintaining connection with the Association of Covenant Spiritual Directors, has been done by Jennifer Andersson. Huge thanks to her! She now has her own center, The Journey Center of Michigan, but remains a trusted presence and leader among us. We hope her work at JCMI will expand our opportunities for continuing education and growth. Jennifer remains the person people desiring direction should contact (jennifersandersson@gmail.com). Great thanks also to our outgoing treasurer, Patti Harrison, who has served with dedication for some years. Beth Ernest will be picking up some of the duties these two women are relinquishing, aided by Lynne McLaughlin.

A Conference-wide retreat "Wilderness Wanderings" focusing on "Finding and Trusting God in Wildernesses Times in Your Life" was held in April at PLCBC, led by directors Keith Foisy and Jennifer Andersson. About 17 people attended. Direction was also offered at the GLC Conference Women's retreat at PLCBC in September. Contact has been re-established with Mission Meadows to offer services for retreats and possibly family camp. Most of our directors live in the western part of the GLC, so providing direction at MM is more of a challenge.

Offering direction at retreats is an intense experience for the directors (with sometimes up to eight sessions per day) but is a wonderful opportunity for retreaters who may not be familiar with this practice, or who may come to the retreat with a burning spiritual issue they want to discuss.

Like people in any vocation, directors benefit from gathering with like-minded people to grow and learn. A weekend retreat was led in October by the Rev. Rob Peterson, erstwhile director of the C. John Weborg Spiritual Direction Center at North Park Theological School.

With gratitude for the support of the Great Lakes Conference, this report is respectfully submitted by,
Beth Ernest

Treasurer, GLC Spiritual Directors Network



GLC Women Ministries

In 2024, women in the Great Lakes Conference grew in their faith, served in a variety of opportunities, and shared the gospel in their respective communities.

Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp (PLCBC) and the new GLC Women Ministries retreat team planned and hosted a 2024 women's retreat. New this year was a 'formal' dinner on Friday night and a square dance on Saturday evening. Kelli Worrall, Professor of Communications at Moody Bible, was the speaker and she provided a good mix of lectures and small group discussion questions. Her theme was: "Loving God with Mind, Heart, Soul, and Strength" which coordinated beautifully with the overall retreat theme of "Abide". Kelli also facilitated a breakout session "How to Share Your Testimony". A panel discussion on "Seasons of a Woman's Life" was also offered. Women had the chance to participate in a high ropes course, dune rides, and several craft options were available. Beth Ernest provided spiritual direction sessions and presided over communion. There were 80 attendees from 35 churches. Two of the GLC Women Ministries leadership team have transitioned to the PLCBC retreat planning team (Bette Wagenmaker and Tammie George).

Mission Meadows, LLC (MM) had a wonderful women's retreat last September as Kaitlyn Holmgren, from Zion Covenant Church, talked about what it means to be "Beloved". There was wood burning, axe throwing, a trivia night, a pool party, worship, and fellowship. One of the favorite activities was the chocolate fountain, filled with all kinds of fruits, cookies, and chips to dip in the fountain. Approximately 50 women attended.

Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp's (CMMBC) Women's Retreat was wonderful! There were 30 attendees over the course of the weekend. Had there been more overnight folks we would have had to throw mattresses on the floor! Ten different churches were represented: three from the Covenant. Many were veteran retreaters, but there were at least eight for whom this was a first experience. Our speaker was Tamara Hutsell who is the pastor at Swedeburg Covenant Church in Wahoo, Nebraska. Many thanks to her and her husband Brice for making the long journey and doing such an amazing job as speaker, musicians, and faithful friends of CMMBC. A message from Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp - One of the best things about retreats is sharing the camp vision and mission. Some of the group expressed an interest in volunteering for 2025 summer camps and bringing their children. We pray as we plan for the 2025 season that our mission will continue to grow and be a sanctuary not just to the children we serve, but to entire families, to the community, and to the church.

Through networking with WM from the other ECC conferences across the US, we were able to have a mission team come to CMMBC during the summer of 2024. They fully enclosed the walls in the boys dorm. The team plans on coming back in the summer of 2025.

Our Chair, Phyllis Van, continues to work across conferences to expand the role of Women Ministries and to get it recognized as an association of the ECC. Tentative plans are to kick it off with a large group gathering of women (similar to Triennial) in 2026/27. If you are interested in serving on this team, contact Phyllis at phyllisavan@gmail.com.



GLC Executive Board and GLC Staff

2024

Chair.....Doug McCann
Stoneridge Covenant Church, Allison Park, PA

Vice Chair.....Sara Charlton
St. John's Ev. Cov. Church, Millersburg, OH

Secretary.....John Goss
Grace Evangelical Covenant Church, Clay, NY

Treasurer.....Brian Rudy
Thornapple Ev.Cov. Church, Grand Rapids, MI

Trustee.....Gina Roberts
City Covenant Church, Detroit, MI

Trustee.....Mark Nelson
Austintown Comm. Ev. Cov. Church, Austintown, OH

Trustee.....Ardena Duren
Kingdom Embassy Cov. Church, Muskegon, MI

Trustee.....Harvey Cozart
Lighthouse Church, Richmond, KY

Trustee.....Debra Abbott
Thornapple Ev. Cov. Church, Grand Rapids, MI

Trustee.....Steve Ormond
Faith Covenant Church, Farmington Hills, MI

Trustee.....Art Tucker
Covenant Community Church, Fairfield, OH

Superintendent.....Garth McGrath
email - gmcgrath1957@gmail.com

**Director of
Church Planting**.....Alan Tumpkin
email - alan@lifechurchsouthfield.org

**Conference
Administrator**.....Jody Eidnes
email - jody@greatlakes.cc

Finance Officer.....Kim Carlson
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Missional Vitality Liason.....Peg Cichon
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Finance Assistant..... Peg Wolter
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**Administrative
Assistant**.....Janelle Gustafson
email - jani@greatlakes.cc

Great Lakes Conference Churches

2024

Four Rivers Church	Calvert City	Kentucky
Grace Community Covenant Church	Louisville	Kentucky
One Church Louisville, Inc.	Louisville	Kentucky
Healing Covenant Church	Paducah	Kentucky
Lighthouse Church	Richmond	Kentucky
Christ Community Church	Allegan	Michigan
Life Church Auburn Hills	Auburn Hills	Michigan
Evergreen Evangelical Covenant Church	Branch	Michigan
Life Covenant Church	Canton	Michigan
Evangelical Covenant Church	Cheboygan	Michigan
Dearborn Evangelical Covenant Church	Dearborn	Michigan
Citadel of Faith Covenant Church	Detroit	Michigan
City Covenant Church	Detroit	Michigan
Detroit Bible Tabernacle	Detroit	Michigan
Hope Community Church	Detroit	Michigan
LifeChurch Riverside	Detroit	Michigan
Messiah Church	Detroit	Michigan
New Evangel Covenant Church	Detroit	Michigan
Federated Covenant Church	Dowagiac	Michigan
Faith Covenant Church	Farmington Hills	Michigan
Bachelor Evangelical Covenant Church	Fountain	Michigan
Esperanza Covenant Church	Grand Rapids	Michigan
First Evangelical Covenant Church	Grand Rapids	Michigan
Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids	Michigan
Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church	Grand Rapids	Michigan
Harbert Community Church	Harbert	Michigan
Covenant Church of Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	Michigan
Bretton Woods Covenant Church	Lansing	Michigan
Evangelical Covenant Church	LeRoy	Michigan
Christ Covenant Church	Livonia	Michigan
Life Church Livonia	Livonia	Michigan
Faith Covenant Church	Manistee	Michigan
New Wine Covenant Church	Mason	Michigan
Kingdom Embassy Covenant Church	Muskegon	Michigan
Miracle of Faith Ministries	New Baltimore	Michigan
Evangelical Covenant Church	Northport	Michigan
Forest Park Covenant Church	Norton Shores	Michigan
New Hope Church	Richland	Michigan
Saranac Community Church	Saranac	Michigan

Great Lakes Conference Churches

2024

Crossroads Community Church	South Lyon	Michigan
Life Church Southfield	Southfield	Michigan
West Bay Covenant Church	Traverse City	Michigan
Tustin Covenant Church	Tustin	Michigan
Evangelical Covenant Church	Whitehall	Michigan
Fruitland Evangelical Covenant Church	Whitehall	Michigan
Grace Evangelical Covenant Church	Clay	New York
First Covenant Church	Jamestown	New York
Zion Covenant Church	Jamestown	New York
Redeemer Evangelical Covenant Church	Liverpool	New York
First Covenant Church	Ashtabula	Ohio
Austintown Community Ev. Cov. Church	Austintown	Ohio
Life Transformation Church	Columbus	Ohio
Revival Covenant Church	Columbus	Ohio
Sanctuary Columbus Church	Columbus	Ohio
Journey Covenant Church	Cuyahoga Falls	Ohio
Covenant Community Church	Fairfield	Ohio
Redeemer Church	Hamilton	Ohio
St. John's Evangelical Covenant Church	Millersburg	Ohio
Faith Covenant Church	Westerville	Ohio
First Covenant Church	Willoughby Hills	Ohio
First Covenant Church	Youngstown	Ohio
Stoneridge Covenant Church	Allison Park	Pennsylvania
First Covenant Church	Bessemer	Pennsylvania
Bethany Covenant Church	DuBois	Pennsylvania
Emmanuel Mission Church	Kane	Pennsylvania
Cityview Covenant Church	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania
Keystone Church of Hazelwood	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania
Evangelical Covenant Church	Port Allegany	Pennsylvania
Scandia Evangelical Covenant Church	Russell	Pennsylvania
Mission Covenant Church	Sugar Grove	Pennsylvania
Pleasant Community Church	Warren	Pennsylvania
Wallens Creek Covenant Church	Duffield	Virginia
New Community Covenant Church	Buckhannon	West Virginia
One Hope Covenant Church	Elkins	West Virginia

Director of Church Planting Report

2024 CHURCH PLANTING

Due to the pandemic of 2020-2023, the landscape of the universal church has changed dramatically. The post-pandemic church of 2024, struggled to grow numerically, to become self-supporting, and to impact the community they serve. Due to these realities, church planting is more difficult than ever. However, I and our Great Lakes Conference coaches have worked tirelessly to support churches, both fledgling and flourishing.

In 2024, our new church plant, New Evangel Covenant Church, led by Phil and Cynthia Carr, began. New Evangel resides on the northwest side of Detroit. Since its inception, this new church has been effective in their surrounding community, supporting the school where they worship, offering inspirational services and leading small groups. As mentioned above, the post-pandemic church has unique challenges, but through prayer and hard work, New Evangel is attempting to meet the challenges.

We will continue to provide coaching support for churches in years three to six. New Wine Covenant Church, in Mason, MI, led by Rick and Terri McGarry; LifeChurch Riverside in Detroit, MI, led by Georgia Hill; Life Church Auburn Hills, in Auburn Hills, MI, led by Donearl Johnson; and Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids, in Grand Rapids, MI, led by Noah Filipiak are making a difference in their respective communities.

In 2025, we are also supporting three church planters, Young and Hannah Yi of Novi, MI; Jalen and Keyonna Seawright of Troy, MI; and Edwin and Rachel Youngblood of Columbia, TN. To date, the Evangelical Covenant Church's assessment center has recommended these three couples to plant a Covenant church. In May, they will attend our church plant training, as well as our six-month cohort. During the summer months, Jalen Seawright and Young Yi will also serve as residents for the Life Church network. This residency program will provide them with skills and resources to be fruitful and missional church planters. Our goal is to assist in planting two churches by the fall of 2025, and one in the summer of 2026.

As we move forward with church planting initiatives in the years ahead, we continue to envision that our preferred model for planting will be church plant residencies. This model will ensure Covenant compatibility and prepare prospects for the rigors of planting. There are three parts to this model, the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), the GLC, and an existing church which will become the place of residency for a church planter. They will all work together to give birth to a new church plant. Research and our own experience continue to show that this model tends to produce the strongest church plants. However, we will consider other models for planting. Other models include the "partnership" model in which multiple churches contribute to the birth of a new church, and the house-church model which is a group of believers gathering in homes for worship, typically led by a parent church or overseer. We are open to these models; however, studies prove that residencies produce more fruitful and self-supporting church plants.

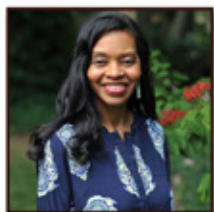
Please visit the GLC web site at www.greatlakes.cc to become a Mission Friend for Church Planting.

Alan Tumpkin

Director of Church Planting, GLC
alan@lifechurchsouthfield.org



LifeChurch Riverside



Pastor: Georgia Hill
Detroit, MI

Where did you see God at work in and through the church during 2024?

2024 was a year of change for us. We moved from the Marygrove campus on 6 Mile Rd. in Detroit to our current location at the Johnson Recreation Center also in Detroit. This effort was led by a young couple, and their nephew who had just graduated from college. It was wonderful to see members and friends of the church carrying boxes to their cars and driving caravan style the mile and a half to our new location on a Sunday after worship. When we arrived, items were placed in our new worship area -the gymnasium - and we blessed the space with prayer and singing. Churchgoers/movers left that space with joy in their hearts and a boxed lunch in their hands. Together with new members, our first New Year's Eve worship service, and a renewed sense of purpose and identity as a church on the go and on the grow, LCRiverside experienced God's great grace.

What was the church's biggest challenge for 2024?

Our biggest challenge was being informed that we would have to leave our current worship space at Marygrove due to a facility improvement program taking place in the Madame Cadillac Building. We had established a pretty good rhythm in that place and had no immediate plans to move. But God had other plans, and when given a date certain by which we had to move, we set out to find a new home. We thought we had found a new space but a bit of hesitancy led to the exploration of other connections with the building owners. Ultimately we found our current worship space in a recently refurbished recreation center with some of the nicest staff you'd ever want to work with.

What are you grateful for on behalf of the church for 2024?

I am grateful that I see members and friends maturing in the faith, in their understanding of the Word and in their relationship with the Lord. I am grateful that our Zoom church has grown to an in-person faith community that meets in a nice space with parking! I am grateful that we continue to do our weekly food distribution ministry, support houseless families with fun and fellowship, and celebrate Christmases with a group of young people and their parents that have beat the considerable odds against them by staying in the Word of God. And I am grateful that people at Riverside continue to extend grace to one another and to the pastor. Amen!

What needs have resulted for the church from 2024?

We have met for worship and fellowship in two great locations - both of which are in our target neighborhood. This has solidified our interest in doing ministry in this area, and the need to further develop relationships with the people and the organizations of this area. We have need for upgraded technology to improve our live stream. Perhaps our biggest need is to better operationalize our vision for this ministry so that we can do better outreach and share Christian love to our neighbors outside of the house, and love and care for one another within the house.

What are your hopes, dreams, and/or goals for the church for 2025?

We plan to develop leaders and cultivate disciples so that we can reach more people who don't know Jesus.
We plan to establish an annual church ministry calendar.
We plan to improve our budget planning process.
We plan to revamp our website.
We plan to expand our outreach to the community.
We plan to improve our internal processes.
We plan to experience and share the joy of Jesus!



Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids



Pastor: Noah Filipiak
Grand Rapids, MI

Where did you see God at work in and through the church during 2024?

We saw God respond directly to a renewed commitment we made to dependent prayer. In late 2023, most of our direct outreach efforts weren't producing Sunday morning fruit and our numbers and momentum were discouraging. During the GLC Pastor's Retreat, God convicted me to pray dependently and lead our church to pray dependently. We started a sermon series called "Prayer: Dependence on God" and added several all-church prayer rhythms to our calendar. A year later, our numbers have doubled and we are seeing renewed traction with people from our surrounding neighborhood coming to Mosaic. Most of these new people are also new to church and Jesus, and are growing in their understanding of God's love for them, with some accepting Christ and preparing for baptism in 2025.

What was the church's biggest challenge for 2024?

As I mentioned in question #1, our biggest challenge was overcoming a season where we were losing momentum. We had lost "critical mass" on Sunday mornings, where the room was feeling pretty empty, and we didn't have enough volunteers to run all of our Sunday programming needs. The volunteers we did have were getting burned out, and we were scrambling on Sundays when key volunteers were out of town.



What are you grateful for on behalf of the church for 2024?

I'm grateful to be in a place where we are starting to experience stability. We still need more layers of volunteers in our rotation, but I feel like churches of all sizes and ages experience that too. I'm grateful for the influx of new people we have and the volunteering and financial support they have brought. We are almost 3-years-old and are similar to a human 3-year-old. We can do a lot on our own now, but are still wobbly and fall down here and there. We can be a mess, but are also fun, unique, and cute! (Okay so the metaphor might break down there...) I'm grateful for the people in my church, whom I love dearly. I'm grateful for how Mosaic is a safe place for me and them to grow in our faith and process the difficulties of this current cultural moment as we seek to stay true to Jesus and Scripture together, especially in God's call for justice and mercy for the oppressed.

Mosaic Covenant Church of Grand Rapids

Con't

What needs have resulted for the church from 2024?

We have a need for a second full-time pastor, but don't have the financial means to pull this off. I would like to share the load of ministry leadership with someone, where we both can work in our areas of gifting and strength more. We also have a need to launch a new kindergarten - 2nd grade classroom (we currently do K-5th together), but we don't quite have enough new volunteers to pull this off, though we are actively praying and casting vision to our congregation. We are also in a season of having to move Sunday morning worship locations. The Boys & Girls Club we meet in is undergoing a major renovation that will last 6-9 months. I'm grateful they have allowed us to use a nearby BGC campus, which will suit our needs well, but there is legwork and headaches in moving all of our stuff to a new location, learning new rhythms with parking, setup, and communication, and hoping no one gets lost in the shuffle. The good news is we will get to move into a brand new building that will have undergone a \$4-\$5 million renovation, but we have to persevere through this season first.

What are your hopes, dreams, and/or goals for the church for 2025?

One of my big hopes is to raise enough outside fundraising that we could hire a second full-time pastor. This will help me be healthier with my margin and will help the church be stronger in many areas to which I can't presently give enough energy and attention. I would like us to be able to focus on discipleship more, but I/we don't currently have the leadership margin to be highly intentional in the area of discipleship. Our small groups are great, but we have so many new believers who could use more 1-on-1 attention or focused groups geared for their specific growth needs.



Life Transformation Church



Pastor David Williams
Columbus, OH

Where did you see God at work in and through the church during 2024?

We baptized three people and of the three, two had never been baptized before. We started a Bible study at Trevitt Elementary School which started out with two students and grew to fourteen. We also were able to adopt another elementary school to provide Christmas toys to underprivileged children. After searching for over a year and a half to find a place to worship in the community, we felt God had called us to a church with different theological beliefs. They opened their doors and allowed us to worship in a space that they were not using which was equipped with a full service kitchen and we didn't have to set up and tear down each week! I forgot to mention it's free! Look at God!

What was the church's biggest challenge for 2024?

Our biggest challenge was transitioning to a new place, new service time, and a new neighborhood. It was also challenging having to find another worship leader because we changed our service day and time.

What are you grateful for on behalf of the church for 2024?

We are grateful that we were able to move from the suburbs to the inner city in April of last year. We are also grateful that we moved from Saturday morning worship to Sunday afternoon worship service. We were able to get more involved with our prison ministry and the incarcerated persons that are now restored citizens.

What needs have resulted for the church from 2024?

We need to recruit more people to serve in leadership positions. We have lost some leaders serving on the leadership team due to job transfers and people moving. We need to have more activities for the family in general; gospel karaoke, family game night, comedy shows, book club, and spoken word night.

What are your hopes, dreams, and/or goals for the church for 2025?

We hope to hit the streets with a full-fledged evangelistic effort in our community so that God's house will be full of seekers and those who have been hurt by the church. So that they can experience the love and healing of our wonderful Savior and Lord. We hope to have a Bible study program in every city school in our community (K-12). We hope that every member grows in their relationship with the Lord. We hope that more churches in our community collaborate with us to help make the community a better place to live for all people.



New Wine Covenant Church



Pastors: Rick and Terri McGarry
Mason, MI

Where did you see God at work in and through the church during 2024?

New Wine has been pleased to welcome many new people from our community. We hear from them that they feel welcomed and that they feel they are in a community of authentic relationships and care. We have seen families that have stepped away from the Church re-engage with our community of faith and feel that their relationship with the Church is beginning to heal. People who hadn't been to church for 15 years are now serving at New Wine and their children are learning about Jesus.

What was the church's biggest challenge for 2024?

New Wine has hosted over eight community events, some bringing in over a hundred families. We've hosted community Christmas and Easter events, as well as made our presence known in the community at musical festivals and artisan fairs. However, we feel that the principles of church planting are not as effective as we hoped they would be in our community. We are working on re-imagining new ways to engage our community. Our reputation is growing and we hope Mason, MI knows we are here to stay.

What are you grateful for on behalf of the church for 2024?

Our faithful leaders continue to grow in their individual areas of service. The Sunday morning experience is filled with people who serve with joy, whether it's with the children, greeting, creating interactive artistic experiences and responses for our service, or providing a beautiful worship experience.

What needs have resulted for the church from 2024?

We feel the need for a more permanent location in order to be perceived as an entity invested in our community. We have not been able to achieve our plan of making a common space for creative ventures. We have a very artistic/artisan community where we feel a common creative space would be highly beneficial.

What are your hopes, dreams, and/or goals for the church for 2025?

We need to grow. We truly want to find those in our community that are longing for a relationship with Jesus and looking for how to connect with Him.



New Evangel Covenant Church



INTRODUCING:

Planter: Phil Carr

Planted: April 2024

Detroit, MI

Planting Foundational Verse: *Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Romans 6:4 KJV

Vision Statement:

Equipped, disciple-making believers who live transformed lives and seek to transform their community and world!

Mission Statement:

- * They must KNOW Jesus
- * They must GROW in their faith and community
- * They must use their gifts and abilities to GO out to serve a Christless world

Core Values: (Our fundamental beliefs and high priorities)

N = BE NICE to people (Eph 4:32)

E = BE ENCOURAGED in Christ (Phil 2:1)

W = BE WINSOME (Prov 11:30)

N = BE NEAR to God (James 4:8)

E = BE EVANGELISTIC (Acts 1:8)

S = BE SCRIPTURAL (Mat 4:4)

S = BE SPIRIT-LED (Rom 8:14)

Outreach:

We desire to continuously GROW our local church and the kingdom of God.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 NIV

Worship:

Our prayer is that participants will have a life-giving encounter with Jesus through our worship services. That they would leave the worship experience more encouraged, enlightened, and empowered to engage life with greater faith, force, and fruitfulness.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:24 KJV

Connecting:

Helping guests/members feel greatly welcomed and acclimated to the life of our church.

The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Acts 28:2 NIV

New Evangel Covenant Church

Con't

Where did you see God at work in and through the church during 2024?

God was at work in so many ways. We had several incredible outreaches in 2024. We provided Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas gifts to the families of Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy. We provided Thanksgiving baskets for thirty families and Christmas gifts for twelve children. We also sponsored a Community Festival of food, fun, and fellowship that attracted over 100 participants.

What was the church's biggest challenge for 2024?

The biggest challenge was getting our members to be consistent with their in-person attendance. Some days the attendance was incredible and other days it was concerning. Some days we had as many as 80 on the high end and 25 on the low end. It was also challenging to get people to communicate when they were going to be absent.

What are you grateful for on behalf of the church for 2024?

We have really grown close as a leadership team and church family. There is a great sense of community and connectivity among the church body. We're also grateful for the financial and technical support provided by the Great Lakes Conference and Evangelical Covenant Church. It's so life giving to know and feel like we're a part of a bigger group and movement.

What needs have resulted for the church from 2024?

We thank God for the partnership we have with Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy. However, we would like to acquire a space that feels more like a church space. Several of our members have stated that they don't feel like they are at church. A more traditional church space would be attractive to certain populations of people.

What are your hopes, dreams, and/or goals for the church for 2025?

Our biggest hope for 2025, is to roll out an exciting and effective small group discipleship program for our membership. We will offer gender and age based discipleship programs. We will also introduce a stewardship initiative aimed at increasing consistent and greater giving. We want our people to become more steady and sacrificial in their giving.



Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp

Onkama, MI

We exist to help people experience the transforming power of God at camp by engaging in REAL fun, REAL faith, & REAL friendship

For 78 years, Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp has invited people out of their regular routines to experience the transforming power of God at camp through REAL fun, REAL faith, and REAL friendship. The same was true this year as families nurtured bonds, friendships were forged, young adult staff members were reignited to serve, and God changed the trajectory of hundreds of lives as students and adults left camp intent to follow Jesus on purpose.

Summer 2024

Our theme for the summer was PURSUIT – understanding that God is forever pursuing us (Ezek. 34:11) and that we are called to passionately pursue God (Matt. 6:33). We saw this in amazing Spirit-filled worship, meaningful small group gatherings, the servant hearts of summer staff, the laughter and hilarity, high ropes adventures, fun in the water, and simply sharing life together. This was also a summer of healing as students, particularly our high school and junior high aged youth, spent time in worship (in some cases over 2 hours!) sharing significant challenges – mental health, physical trials, social discords, lack of deep friendships, and the like. These vulnerable expressions were met with mutual tears, hugs, and support from peers and counselors as well as an understanding that God sees them and knows their pain. There has never been a more difficult time to be a teenager. These moments during a week of camp provide kids a safe place to unplug, ask deep questions of God, engage their faith, and feel a deep sense of belonging with peers.

☀️ 1140 Campers (573 kids, 567 family) ☀️ 30 First-time decisions to follow Christ ☀️ 117 Recommitments
☀️ 285 Decisions to improve family relationships ☀️ 18 Baptisms!



Spiritual Transformation

A perfect image for this year of ministry is the burning bush, not only for its seasonal vibrance but also its namesake. In Exodus 3, Moses “turns aside” to meet with God speaking from a bush that is on fire but not burned up. The space is transformed into Holy Ground, the bush is transformed into a dramatic connection point with God, and Moses is transformed from a shepherd of sheep to that of people. This is the kind of experience that happens at camp – transformation away from the normal routines of life. As one camper put it, “It’s an indescribable joy being at camp. One of the most amazing experiences you’ll ever have – the connection with people and with God. There’s no place like it! Camp was a turning point in my life from bad to good ...no question about it.”

Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp

Con't

Physical Transformation

At the end of April, camp experienced an epic hailstorm which caused damage to every building on our property and all our vehicles. Thanks to good insurance, all our buildings had their roofs replaced, most had siding replaced, several others were repainted, plastic vents and lights were replaced along with gutters and downspouts, 9 different HVAC units were repaired or replaced, over 40 windows were replaced, and all three of our vehicles have new windshields. While this storm was not on anyone's camp Bingo card, we appreciate the great good it brought about including some deferred maintenance which was identified and repaired. While we still have to finish several projects not covered by insurance, the transformation is wonderful!

We also continue to make progress on getting our land-use permit to begin building a new Dining Hall starting in August 2025. Through the generosity of the Portage Lake family, we have raised approximately \$2.6 million including \$200,000 of investment income since fundraising efforts began in 2017. Combined with two incredibly generous \$1 million gifts, we are now within 20% of our new \$5.4 million goal!

Staff

This fall has been incredibly smooth due in part to the fact we have been fully staffed which has included three interns: Tobin Knezek, Camron Perry, and Mia Tepandi. We have depended heavily on them for programming, cleaning, maintenance, kitchen operations, and media. I am incredibly thankful for their work. This spring, we welcomed a new Program Director, Matt Schmidt. With 10 years of experience in camp ministry, Matt has done a wonderful job of engaging with both staff and campers. He brings particular expertise to our ropes programming as well as leadership development. While we were blessed to add new staff, we also had to say goodbye to our Food Service Director, Patti Church, who moved back downstate to be closer to her family. Patti brought a level of professionalism and food quality to the kitchen which we will be looking to match in a new candidate this spring. A huge thanks goes out to the rest of our staff who keep our mission moving forward: Randy Bennetts (Facilities), Eric Ek (Operations & Finance), Ruth Hendrick (Office Manager), Jada Samuels (Marketing), and Markus Tepandi (Media). I can't say thank you enough; you have kept camp flourishing through it all.



Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp

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Retreat Season/Adventure Learning

We began the year by hosting several retreats from the Hope College worship team to the large church groups from Community Bible Church in Brighton, MI, and Magnify Church in Rockford, MI. Each of these retreats provided space for churches and leaders to disciple students and to simply be present in a place where they meet God together. These non-Covenant groups help camp to fund our own mission while we provide space to help others fulfill theirs. Winter and spring weekends were also filled with our own programming including College-age, High School, Contemplative, and Fishing Retreats.

This fall, we hosted school groups from Manistee Middle School (6-8th grades) in Adventure Learning over several days providing small group and low ropes initiatives that allowed for learning opportunities outside the classroom. We also held GLC retreats for women, Jr. Highers, Trailblazers and two different quilting groups. This was in addition to other contract groups such as Emmaus and Women in Recovery. We closed out the year with the Old Christmas weekend. Combining time at camp with events happening in Manistee – including a downtown Victorian parade – a small group of families worshiped, played games, and ate together ushering in the Christmas season.



Finances

While 2023 ended with a significant financial loss, we rebounded this year ending with an approximately \$80K surplus. This is due in part to wise counsel, a commitment to robust fundraising, controlling expenses, and tightening up our cash flow management. In addition, we performed over \$1.5 million worth of needed repairs covered by insurance plus another \$80K not covered by insurance, made necessary by the hailstorm. We also added \$474K to our new Dining Hall fund as well. I am so incredibly grateful for the generosity of the Portage Lake family who faithfully give to the ministry of camp every year. With every donation comes a story of the way God has touched lives here.

Thank you SO MUCH for being such an essential part of year-round ministry at PLCBC! As you pray, give, and promote camp among your spheres of influence, you are not just supporting programs and good stewardship of our physical space, you are instigating life transformation in families, kids, and staff that has eternal impact!

Grace & Peace,

Marc Eix

Executive Director, Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp
marc@portagelake.org

Mission Meadows, LLC

Dewittville, NY

Mission Meadows, LLC Annual Report

Our Vision: A relational approach to a Christ-Centered experience

Our Mission: To RAISE up the next generation of Jesus followers through Relational-Accepting-Intentional-Safe and Encouraging summer camps, weekend retreats, and community programming.

Overall:

What an exciting year we have had at Mission Meadows! We had a wonderful summer season during which lives were changed! Parents, grandparents, children, and staff told us stories of how their lives have been impacted.

Despite all of these blessings, there were things that occurred which made us realize Mission Meadows needs to make some changes. We had groups that we had to turn away because we were not big enough, we had groups that didn't return because they grew and we didn't. Additionally, we had families tell us they struggled to come to camp because the accommodations were not very suitable. In addition, our grounds needed a "face-lift". Therefore, Mission Meadows decided to embark on an ambitious **"Making Room for Jesus"** campaign of \$2 million. This campaign will help us get interns, build our scholarship fund, replace roofs, and expand our housing capacity.

Summer:

As I reflect on this summer at Mission Meadows, I am reminded of God's word from Psalm 31:19, "How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you." (NIV) There were so many good things that happened this summer. We had children commit their lives to Christ, we had children rededicate themselves to the Lord, and we had families that were able to grow together in ways they have not been able to.

Next summer, our theme is **"Mission Possible"** based on Matthew 17:20, "...Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (NIV) Our hope is that youth and families leave camp believing that their faith and trust in the Lord can make a difference!



Staff:

In 2024, the year round staff of Mission Meadows grew from five people to eight people and from one intern to two interns. A huge impact for such a small team. I don't know if you have noticed, but businesses all across the country are struggling to get people to work, and so are many camps. However, Mission Meadows was able to fill all of our summer positions, something that hasn't happened in many years. Additionally, two of our summer staff are now year-round employees.

Mission Meadows, LLC

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Volunteers:

Throughout the year, Mission Meadows is in need of numerous volunteers. We had youth groups, community groups, church groups, and individuals volunteering their time. It is only through the volunteers that the camp can thrive. We are thankful for the many hours of hard work our volunteers have put into Mission Meadows. In 2025, we will have another work week from May 23rd to 30th. We look forward to many hands making the workload a little lighter.

Campaign:

As I stated earlier, Mission Meadows has embarked on an ambitious campaign, "**Making Room for Jesus**" campaign. To help us kick start the campaign, we have a donor who said he will match any gifts we receive over the next three years up to half a million dollars! Also, he will count pledges made over the next three years as part of the matching gifts. So far we have raised \$912,000!

Capital Projects:

Due to the generous donations we have received, we have been able to start building two new lodges to expand our capacity. Each of these buildings will be able to accommodate youth and families and increase capacity giving us a total of 48 more beds. As we are doing the work internally, we welcome help from any individuals, church groups, or youth groups.



Retreats:

Mission Meadows continues to be an excellent location for retreat groups. We currently serve church groups from many denominations, as well as school, community, and home school groups. Additionally, we have held Women's, Men's, Trailblazer (grades 3-6), Junior High, and Senior High retreats throughout the year. Over 2000 people have been a part of a retreat at Mission Meadows in 2024!

Finances:

Mission Meadows is in the best financial strength that we have been in numerous years! As the economy around us struggles, and camps across the country close, Mission Meadows is thriving. We were able to provide over \$14,000 in scholarships, and we are committed to never turning away a child due to financial reasons.

In Summary:

We are grateful for all our campers and supporters who have engaged with Mission Meadows over the years. THANK YOU for making Mission Meadows a priority in your giving, and for helping us raise up the next generation of Christian followers.

Blessings,

Jackie Haines

Director, Mission Meadows, LLC
camping@missionmeadows.org

Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp

Jonesville, VA

Spring of 2024, saw CMMBC hit the ground running, trusting the Lord to supply ALL our needs. We had no groups commit to helping us. There was no grounds keeper on site and we were not sure of when they would get here. "Be still and know" was one of my main verses that started me off for the year. By taking time each day to be still... listening for the Lord's encouragement.. then taking Him at His word... helped me to continually put one foot in front of the other. One of the board members and I shared mowing and trimming responsibilities early on. Then my sister told me about a marvelous Christian hiking couple who needed a place to stay since their plans didn't work out for the summer. They were going to hike the Appalachian Trail but God put gallstones in the way. The invitation brought them to camp and they pitched in and helped every conceivable way they could. Even through gallbladder surgery and other health issues.

GVSU brought a work group in early March. They were joined by men from First Ev. Covenant Church, Grand Rapids, MI. What a hard-working group. They started enclosing one of the girls' cabins in metal, putting in windows and a new door, enclosed one of the boys' cabins, finished a lighting project and other wiring needs, did a lot of general cleaning, some painting, and a lot of gravel moving.

One of the local churches couldn't use the campground that they had used for years because it was shutdown due to road conditions. The invitation was given for them to use ours and what a blessing God provided! Every building and cabin was full. There was a lot of great Christian fellowship, new friends made, and several lives given to the Lord. One of their staff members heard about our not having help for the summer and they volunteered to help us all summer.

Arts camp saw 12 campers and 11 staff members each day. This was the Lord's way of easing us slowly into the fast pace for the rest of the summer. The campers made some great art projects and then in the afternoon, singing, music, skits, and laughter filled the chapel.

Two of our dear friends (newly made in 2023) and two friends from a few years before, heard we needed help and returned to help at our other three camps. Caroline cooked, Peter filled in wherever there was a need. Gary sang, played guitar, and gave wonderful messages. Steve gave messages, helped with overseeing camper activities, and always had an ear to listen to campers. He and Peter rode the bus that brought the campers to camp. We hear they shared lots of stories with the kids during the ride. Our trail people, Winston and Marcia, took the campers hiking, sharing their expertise and love of God and His world with them. Parents told us later that their camper wanted them to go hiking with them. Several of our locals helped fill in the gaps. Two of our volunteers could only help three days that week. God provided by bringing the Hendrik family from Belgium on Wednesday. They jumped right in, jetlag and all. Marty played guitar and sang with Gary. Carrie helped wrangle campers and helped in the kitchen. Lucy and J.J. became campers who were instantly involved in every activity. Everybody helped clean and prepare for the next day when the buses pulled out. We saw an average of 74 campers per day.



Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp

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Before Trailblazers camp, Steve mentioned that he knew someone who could cook for us. Caroline and Peter had agreed to come back but her father wasn't doing well. Turns out we knew who Steve was talking about as she had been at camp before. So we all sent texts asking her to come. She prayed about it. And stopping at a redlight in her hometown, put her behind a Trailblazer. Her answer from God. So, Cindy came and brought Jackie with her. They cooked, hosted, and played games with the 29 overnight campers that came. A new GaGa pit was a big hit. Hiking got everybody on the trail. A local pastor spoke. All our local volunteers pitched in. Five souls were saved while several others recommitted their lives. What a Christ filled week!



Senior camp brought 18 campers to us. Staff who helped counsel and supervise kids at the other camps got their chance to be campers. The Lion of Judah put the adversary on the run. We all grew deeper in our faith. We had our first Alumni Reunion in September bringing 17 former campers back to CMMBC. Everyone spent time reminiscing about the way camp was done when they attended. A former camper who is now a pastor, was the speaker. They sang old camp songs, competed in Bible Quiz, and told stories of tent time.

Women's Retreat brought 30 attendees, 15 of these were overnights. Our speaker came with her husband from Wahoo, Nebraska. She had volunteered earlier in the year as part of a work group who enclosed one of our boys' cabins.

The Splash Pad was busy almost all the time. We had groups rent the grounds for meetings, reunions, birthdays, and other get togethers. It was a busy year. We are prayerfully excited to see what the Lord has for us in 2025.

Our theme for the 2025 camping season is "Spirit of Power". Our theme verse is 2 Timothy 1:7 and our theme song is "Your Name is Power".

Camping dates for 2025

Pathfinders Camp	June 16-20
Arts Camp	June 23-27
Senior Camp	July 6-11
Sports Camp	July 14-18
Trailblazers Camp	July 21-25
Alumni Retreat	September 5-7
Women's Retreat	November 7-9

Please be in prayer for us that we may be good stewards of God in the coming year.

Cindy Laws

Director, Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp

(Director in name only since God is really the One in Charge)

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OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

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*Trust in the Lord with all
your heart and lean not on
your own understanding;
in all ways submit to him,
and he will make your
paths straight.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

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