Arbor Covenant News

Arbor Covenant Church J July 2018
Madison Wisconsin

I have been to around ten Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) annual meetings. Mostly they function as a combination prayer meeting— pep rally, where delegates from local congregations learn about the ministry and mission of the denomination. In the proceeding there is time to celebrate successes, acknowledge the faithfulness of individuals and the commitments of communities who are sharing the good news of God's love with neighbors near and far. Attenders pray and worship together, engaging with each other the mission and ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church in ways that can be inspiring and hopeful.

Generally, it's pretty choreographed. Committees and boards have been working all year to prepare the agenda and present the decisions they've been formulating to be affirmed by the delegates (whose collective voice constitutes the highest authority in the ECC). There is time for questions to be asked and new ideas to be engaged but seldom are there issues or policy matters that are actually up for "debate" or "discussion." This year was different.

This year some delegates attempted to add an item to the agenda. It was a motion to form a working task force to discuss the Covenant's policy towards the LGBTQ+ community. It was not a motion to change the policy, but one simply acknowledging the reality that there are diverse voices, experiences, and opinions within our congregations and that discussing how we do ministry together and how we understand the experience of the LGBTQ+ community might shed light on how to go forward. The motion to add this item to the agenda (not the item itself) was defeated by two to one majority.

I have always been a hopeful Covenanter, always grateful for and passionate about the impulse we've demonstrated to discuss theological difference relationally while maintaining our commitment to the thing that unifies us — common faith in Christ. This decision betrayed that impulse. It cut off discussion before the discussion ever even started. It was painful.

Some things that have taken place in local ministry settings over the course of the last year meant that the 133rd annual meeting was always going to be tense. But the way things turned out left me and others grieving. To be honest, in the week since, I have struggled to understand where I fit in this beloved denomination that I have always considered my spiritual home.

This does not mean that I am without hope. Nor does it mean that Arbor Covenant can't still embrace and live out this good Covenant instinct to share life and seek unity even while discussing our differences. It does not mean that we can't open wide our doors to all our neighbors regardless of their orientation, their gender identity, or their theological background. It does not mean that we can't do ministry together that models Christ's radical insistence upon breaking every barrier and transcending every border to bring wholeness and peace to all of God's creation.

Pastor Peter Morris

Reflections on the Evangelical Covenant Church's (ECC) Annual Meeting

Pastor Peter and Mark Hanson were delegates to the 133rd Annual Meeting held in Minneapolis on June 21 to 23. There were 1157 registered attendees, of which almost 900 were delegates.

I thought three themes stood out at the meeting:

1. Diversity of the Covenant Church
2. Women in church leadership
3. Treatment of refugees

Taking these in reverse order, the message from leaders and speakers was uniformly and unequivocally that we are called by our faith to help the refugee and stranger. What is happening is totally unacceptable. Under the umbrella of the Love Mercy Do Justice mission work, the ECC is involved in efforts to support refugees.

The ECC has made substantial progress in terms of women in ministry. 24% of our ministers were woman in 2017 compared to 3% in 1990. There remains under representation especially in terms of women as senior pastors. And it was noted that some churches, as is their right under congregational polity, refuse to call women as pastors.

There were broad calls to make further progress on encouraging and supporting women in leadership. The Call of Mary Karstens Surridge as the new President of North Park University is a timely response to this challenge.

The Covenant today has an ethnic diversity of 32%, which means that 32% of our members are not from the dominant race which in our case is Caucasian. It makes the ECC one of the two or three top churches in terms of this measure. In 1990, that measure stood at 7%.

A large focus at the meeting was on Diversity with respect to LGBQT issues that Arbor considered a year ago. A motion to amend the agenda was made at the beginning to add an agenda topic to consider a commission for a systematic process to discuss LGBQT issues and report at the next annual meeting was introduced. After a lively pro and con, a vote was taken on whether to add the agenda item. 35% supported adding the agenda item. I was struck at how many delegates wanted to have this discussion, and by the diverse geography of those asking for this conversation. The topic of LGBQT emerged at other times during the meeting as it related to other items including the election of John Wenrich as the new president of the ECC. I suspect that this will be a discussion that the ECC will continue to engage in the coming years.

As noted, John Wenrich was elected President with 82% of the vote. Lance Davis was elected as Executive Minister of Develop Leadership and Ordered Ministry.

Please see Pastor Peter or me if you have questions. We'll be sharing more information from the meeting in the coming days.

Mark Hanson, Chair

June Leadership Team Report:

-The leadership team spent much of the June meeting reflecting on where we have seen God at work in our personal lives, as well as the church community. We also reflected on the recent congregational meeting, specifically on the identified values of Arbor.
-The team is working on a plan to follow up with congregation members, through conversation, to help identify ministry passions and life-giving work.
-Discussed improvements to congregational communication: updating email list & directory, keeping Amanda informed for social media, regularly posting meeting minutes in the fellowship hall, and including meeting summaries in the newsletter (what you're reading now!)
-Mark is gathering bids for a new boiler, and though there has not been interest in the music position, Peter is checking with a possible contact.
-Though financial contributions are less than anticipated for the year so far, we have also spent less than anticipated, so we have a positive net and are meeting day-to-day expenses. We continue to be in a good cash position.

The Leadership Team will not need to find another member, as our Constitution and Bylaws allow between seven and ten members, including the Pastor. With Sue Springman's resignation, we are now at eight. If the Leadership Team feels a need to add another person until the next elections in May, it can do so per the Bylaws.

Mark Hanson

Sue Springman

Thanks to Sue Springman for her work on Leadership Team
The Leadership Team would like to express its great appreciation to Sue for her work as a member of the Leadership Team. Sue resigned in June after two years of work on the Leadership Team. I'd note that I appreciated Sue's steady, quiet, and sunny presence on the Leadership Team.

Deb Levin

Deb Levin has finished her two terms--thanks for six years of service! Thank you, Deb for your faithful service including several years as the treasurer.

Current Members of the Leadership Team

Members of the Leadership Team for the next year include Mark Hanson, Dan Meyer, Kris Brown, Jan Gietzel, Joyce Boggess, Ulrika Swanson, Rachel Woofter and Pastor Peter Morris. Thank you for your faithful service.

Congregational Meeting

On June 3, 2018 a congregational meeting was held after church. Several important decisions were made:
The nominating committee brought three nominations to the Leadership Team. Ulrika Swanson was nominated for a new term, first year. Joyce Boggess was nominated for a second term. Jan Gietzel was nominated for a new term. These nominations were approved. Thanks to Deb Levin for serving a six-year term and to Sue Springman for serving a term.
Rev. Peter Sjoblum led a discussion of the ways in which we have seen God at work at Arbor. Groups then talked about how those trends are relevant to making decisions about ministries. Several people expressed frustration over the lack of decision-making at this meeting. They wanted to see decisions about future ministries. Specifically they wanted to talk about Luke House. Members of our church have served a noon meal at Luke House for many years.
A discussion was held and it was agreed that June will be the last month of service at Luke House. Pastor Peter will contact Luke House and explore ways to help interested individuals continue to serve.
Sue Pecotte announced that the Prayer Shawl Ministry is finished. Contact Sue is you want to help or need a shawl

Zoo Trip

On June 25, a small group of Arbor friends toured the Vilas Zoo. It was a beautiful day and the children were energetic and excited about visiting all the animals. The zoo has improved so many areas that those of us who had not been in a while were very impressed by the overall appearance.
This is an attempt at taking a group picture- Bucky is looking good!!

Summer Picnics

We had a lovely evening at our first picnic dinner! It was gorgeous weather, and the kids thoroughly enjoyed the playground and greenspace. We shared delicious food and conversation about the ways that God provides for us through food and the land. **Please join us July 12 at 5:30 for our next dinner together. Grilled entrees will be provided; please come to share! You are welcome to bring a dish to pass, and a lawn chair or blanket to sit on.**
****We are in need of someone to help out on the grill this evening! Please let Rachel know if you are able to help in this way.**

July Events

Concert on the Square

TIME TO GET UP AND DANCE!

On July 18th, Arbor Covenant is going to gather at Concerts on the Square for the "Don't Stop Believin'" Concert featuring Jeans 'n Classics with the music of ***Journey*** and ***Queen***. Let's gather at 6:00 p.m. Jan Gietzel will spread blankets out in the afternoon for us to sit on. She will also try to make sure that one side of the area is near the edge of the lawn so that some people can sit on chairs they bring. Bring your own food, beverages and utensils or treat yourselves with a great meal from the many local food vendors. It's a great opportunity for all of us, no matter what age, to enjoy fellowship and a beautiful summer night. Any questions? Call Jan at 577-8154. Put July 18th on your calendar now.

Summer Sundays at Covenant Harbor

On July 22 we will be joining the worship service at Covenant Harbor Bible Camp in Lake Geneva. We will then enjoy a picnic lunch and spend time visiting and playing on the shore of beautiful Lake Geneva. Rev. Dr. Keith Hamilton, President of Alaska Christian College will be preaching. You may bring your own lunch or purchase a box lunch at the camp.

Carpooling will be available to those who wish to share a ride. Contact Kris Brown (kristinelbrown@yahoo.com) if you are planning to attend and/or wish to share a ride.

Pastor Peter also plans to offer a **worship service at Arbor** that morning. So if you are unable to join the group at Covenant Harbor, plan to worship at Arbor as usual.

Mallards Game

We will plan to go to an afternoon Mallards Game on July 29 (at 4:05 PM). Pastor Peter will organize this.

Parish Notes

Phil and Kris Brown are delighted to share the news that their fifth grandchild Vera Devoe Brown was born in Cleveland on June 25. Vera's parents are their son Peter and his wife Abbey. Vera also has two older brothers. God's blessings on this family.

Birthdays

July 12	Phil Brown
July 15	Trudy Nordling
July 19	Anika Simmons
July 25	Seairra Goettler
July 26	Karen Pecotte
July 28	Kris Brown
July 28	Amanda Fledderjohann
July 31	Nancy McDuff

Anniversaries

July 20	Phil and Kris Brown

The Personal Essentials Pantry Item of the Month

Toilet Paper

Please leave donations in the box in the front hallway. Thank you

	Host	Nursery	Children's Church	Reader	Projector
July 1	Amanda and Matthew Fledderjohann	Joyce Boggess	Rachel Woofter	Joyce Boggess	Mark Hanson
July 8	Deb Levin Ruth Hallblade	Ulrika Swanson	Ruth Hallblade	Elrene Lund	Michelle Stachowiak
July 15	Tamsin Ford Peter Morris	Amanda Pecotte	Rachel Woofter	Ruth Hallblade	Debby Meyer
July 22	Joyce Boggess Mary Keehn	Amanda Pecotte	Matthew Fledderjohann	Ulrika Swanson	Chuck Gietzel
July 29	Deb McGill Glenn Hanson	Deb Levin	Mark Hanson	Sue Pecotte	Sue Pecotte

July Calendar

1 10:00 AM Call to Worship Communion Deacon Fund	2	3	4 Fourth of July	5	6 10:00 AM-noon Personal Essentials Pantry	7
8 10:00 AM Call to Worship	9	10 6:30 PM Leadership Team	11	12 5:30 PM Church Picnic	13 10:00 AM-noon Personal Essentials Pantry	14
15 10:00 AM Call to Worship	16	17	18 7:00 PM Concert on the Square	19 5:30 PM-7:30 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	20 10:00 AM-noon Personal Essentials Pantry	21
22 10:00 AM Call to Worship WORSHIP at Covenant Harbor	23	24	25	26	27 4:30 AM-7:00 AM Homeless Shelter @ Grace Episcopal *** 10:00 AM-noon Personal Essentials Pantry	28
29 10:00 AM Call to Worship 4:05 PM Mallards Game	30	31				

*** Shelter Volunteers: Doug Keillor and Ken Lund