



# 133<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting

OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH  
JUNE 21-23, 2018, Minneapolis, Minnesota

## **CANDIDATES' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

This folder contains biographical information and a personal statement for each candidate on the 2018 ballot.

Agenda Item 15.

**CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

**Evangelical Covenant Church  
Annual Meeting 2018**

**General Information Regarding Biographies**

- An asterisk ( \* ) before a name indicates incumbent.
- All information was provided by the candidates.
- Candidates are listed in alphabetical order.
- “Experience” indicates past and present activities.
- Guide to abbreviations:  
 CBC = Covenant Bible College  
 CHET = Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos  
 CHIC = Covenant High in Christ  
 CMB = Covenant Ministries of Benevolence  
 MHIPE = Ministerios Hispanos de la Iglesia del Pacto Evangélico  
 NPU = North Park University  
 NPTS = North Park Theological Seminary

**Board of Nominations and ECC Executive Board  
Process for Recommendation  
of Candidates for Denominational Boards:**

- Candidates are recommended and gathered from: Conference Annual Meetings, Conference Boards, superintendents, local churches (pastors and laypersons), ECC ethnic associations, Council of Administrators, and via ECC website.
- Candidate recommendations are reviewed and discussed by Board of Nominations during board meetings.
- Candidate recommendations are reviewed and approved by President of the ECC and Executive Minister of the Ordered Ministry.
- Local church pastors are contacted for reference checks for layperson candidate recommendations.
- Superintendents are contacted for reference checks for credentialed candidate recommendations.
- Candidates are contacted after all approvals and reference checks are completed to request consideration for denominational board ballot.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

– One candidate needed for each position. –

**(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Scott T. Dennis**, member of First Evangelical Covenant Church, Grand Rapids, MI. President, The Rapid Group, LLC. Experience: Covenant Enabling Residence, co-chair; Conference Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp building committee member; Church Council chair, vice-chair, and treasurer at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I grew up in Dearborn Covenant Church. I met my wife, Jodye, while working at Portage Lake Camp. We have enjoyed 35 years of marriage and*

*now have three grown children and four fantastic grandchildren. Jodye and I moved to Grand Rapids in 1984. My gift is in administration. I have served at First Covenant as CE Board chair, church vice-chair, church treasurer, and several terms as church chair, and chair of several building committees and pastoral search committees. I have also served on the board of Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp.”*

**(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Diane Trujillo Leavitt**, member of Pine Lake Covenant Church of Sammamish, WA. Office Administrator, Northstone Real Estate. Experience: Conference Youth Commission; PTSA treasurer; Little League coach; Sammamish Young Life committee member; youth ministry volunteer; Stephen Ministry leader; Pastoral Search Committee member; marriage team mentor; MOPS mentor; church council member; Sunday-school teacher/leadership at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I deeply care about the church in America (and around the world), desiring to partner with others on how to engage our changing communities with God’s message of grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. I desire to use my gifts of wisdom and discernment, along with other believers, to seek God’s direction and act on it. I especially care about engaging our youth.”*

**(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Julie A. Persson**, member of Redeemer Evangelical Covenant Church of Carrollton, TX. Title 1 reading tutor, Carrollton Farmers Branch School District. Experience: Racial Reconciliation Group member; Moms in Touch volunteer; church council member, Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I have been an at-home mom and an elementary schoolteacher. Currently, I work as a substitute teacher and a Title 1 reading tutor. I volunteer at my church in several areas but mostly in the area of spiritual formation, especially with children. My hope is, with God’s guidance, to help to develop lifelong disciples of all disciples of all ages. My desire is to be willing to serve wherever I am called.”*

**(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Vicky (Victoria) J. Reier**, member of Arvada Covenant Church, Arvada, CO. Retired/private consultant. Experience: Adult Commission member; Arvada Center program coordinator; Art Students League office manager; DiSC assessment certified trainer; Youth for Christ liaison; Board for Colorado Homeless Families vice-chair; City of Arvada assistant city manager; Pastoral Search Committee member at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I am a Jesus follower. I confess that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. He is the only way to*

God and through his death and resurrection, I have been saved from the penalty of sin. The indwelling Holy Spirit is at work within me to conform me to the image of Christ, according to the will of God. There is nothing I can do apart from faith in Christ to be saved. My life is intended to glorify God and serve him and others.”

**BOARD OF THE ORDERED MINISTRY**

– One candidate needed for each position. –

**(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Sharon R. Anderson**, member of Pine Lake Covenant Church of Sammamish, WA. Pastor of discipleship and care, Pine Lake Covenant Church. Experience: Elementary schoolteacher; piano teacher; Covenant Board of Women Ministries (chair), Covenant Triennial planning team; Covenant Women’s History Commission; Conference Committee on Ministerial Standing, Conference Annual Meeting vice-moderator; Conference Executive Board of Conference Ministerium chair; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: “Being a member of the Covenant clergy community is a sacred responsibility. I have an interest in seeing vital, committed, well-trained and well-supported Covenant ministers who will pastor and lead well. I believe the gifts I’ve been entrusted with—wisdom, leadership, and exhortation—can add clarity and caring discernment as I humbly serve on this board.”*

**(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Randall E. Friesen**, member of Malmo Mission Covenant Church, Wetaskiwin, AB. Lead pastor, Malmo Mission Covenant Church. Experience: Church pastoral ministry from church planting to church revitalization. Spiritual director; Conference ministerial chair and treasurer; Covenant Bible College Board, Covenant Spiritual Director contact person; University of Manitoba Chaplaincy board member; interdenominational ministerial committee member; Emergency Disaster Services; on-call hospital chaplain; church council member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: “Being involved in local church pastoral ministry these thirty years has made me aware of some of the challenges and struggles pastors face. Those challenges are only increasing these days. Here, we have opportunity to invest in and care for our women and men, and I believe that as a result, our churches will be stronger in health and vitality.”*

**(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Terrance S. Woodson**, member of Bethel Bible Fellowship Covenant Church, Carrollton, TX. Pastor, Bethel Bible Fellowship. Experience: Covenant Ministerium vice-president; Five-Fold Test; city-wide church associations; Youth for Christ, African American students adviser; Dallas Theological Seminary adjunct faculty; Dallas Theological Seminary board chair; church council chair; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I have pastored for more than 30 years, almost half of those with the ECC. I have served in the Covenant Ministerium and in various capacities in the Midsouth conference. I am currently an assistant dean of students at a major evangelical seminary and am a licensed professional counselor intern for the State of Texas.”*

**BOARD OF PENSIONS AND BENEFITS**

– One candidate needed for each position. –

**(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Rachel E. Burke**, member of Kingdom Builders Covenant Church, Conyers, GA. Housewife/entrepreneur, Vybe Chyle, Inc. Experience: Covenant Executive Board; Communications Committee chair; Develop Leaders Committee chair; Covenant Executive Board liaison to Board of Pensions and Benefits; Conference Executive Board member and treasurer; Make and Deepen Disciples: Women’s Ministry Project; bank branch manager and assistant vice-president; Business Development credit union officer; church council secretary, treasurer, and member at local church.

*Personal Statement: “I love Jesus. I love his church. I have been a member of a Covenant church for almost all of my life. I enjoy serving his people and I am happy to serve when I can which includes at my church, on my conference board, and at the denominational level. I have a professional background in banking.”*

**(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Jim Stanley-Erickson**, member of Christ Covenant Church, Harleysville, PA. Co-pastor, Christ Covenant Church. Experience: Covenant Ministerial Association Nominations Board member; Covenant Midwinter Planning Committee; Covenant National Ministerial Executive Board; Conference Ministerial Association treasurer and chair; Conference Executive Board member; South Plainfield Ecumenical Association member; youth leader; church council member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

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*Personal Statement:* "I love Christ and the church. It has been an honor to serve as a pastor and co-pastor in the Covenant at the local church level for almost 25 years. I have also served pastors in leadership positions within several of our conferences. Serving on the Board of Pensions and Benefits will allow me to continue to serve the Covenant Church and those who serve the Covenant Church, its credentialed clergy."

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### BOARD OF BENEVOLENCE

– One candidate needed for each position. –

#### **(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Hilary Applequist**, member of First Covenant Church, Omaha, NE. Nurse practitioner, college faculty, Nebraska Methodist Hospital and College. Experience: ICU assistant manager; Covenant Board of Nominations chair; Christian Formation chair; church council member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement:* "My calling to be a palliative care nurse practitioner gives me opportunity to bring God's compassion, mercy, and, hopefully justice to those who are sick and/or love someone who is sick. Given that the charge of the Board of Benevolence is to provide leadership and coordination for ministries within the larger denomination that bring compassion, mercy, and justice to the needs of this world, I see my gifts fitting well into this charge. It would be an honor to use my talents and experiences to serve on the Board of Benevolence."

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#### **(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Kristen M. Brown**, member of Glen Ellyn Evangelical Covenant Church, Glen Ellyn, IL. Executive Director of Administration, Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan. Experience: pastor; church council member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement:* "I have spent my life as a follower of Jesus and a member of his church in its local forms. Since a very young age, I have felt called to vocational ministry and have pursued that calling throughout my life in different capacities. My vocational calling is to love God through loving and serving his church."

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#### **(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Sixto Michael Carrion**, member of Promised Land Covenant Church, Bronx, NY. Senior director, Workforce Development at Fedcap. Experience: Senior pastor and community mobilizer; Vocational Rehabilitation Services deputy director; Covenant Pilgrim Pines; Covenant Ashram Planning

Committee; Covenant Justice Conference; Conference Church Planting regional coach; National Latino Evangelical Coalition; National Director of Criminal Justice Reform; Executive Minister, Nehemiah Project director (PR Relief), NYC mayor's city-wide clergy council.

*Personal Statement:* "25 years in ministry, 13 of those as a senior pastor and community mobilizer. Converted under the ministry of David Wilkerson in Teen Challenge. Called out of generational addiction and brokenness into the light of his grace."

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#### **(6-year term; elect 1)**

**Karen A. Rydell**, member of First Covenant Church, Portland, OR. Adult nurse practitioner – cardiology/heart failure care, Providence Heart Clinic-East. Experience: RN assistant head nurse; heart failure consortium; high school group leader; kids day camp nurse volunteer and teacher; Mexico mission trip participant; Youth Life volunteer; Oregon Food Bank volunteer, soccer coach (7-8th grade girls) Covenant CHIC counselor, worship team pianist/vocalist; pastoral search committees; church council chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer and member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement:* "I have actively participated in the ECC for than 30 years. During that time, I have held various leadership positions within my local congregation, most recently as the council chairperson. My faith is foundational and undergirds my professional work as an advance practice nurse in the management of heart failure patients. I would bring a nursing-medical perspective to this position."

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### BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY

#### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Gregory E. Crawford**, member of Naperville Covenant Church, Naperville, IL. Senior vice-president, Human Capital Management, Assured Partners Illinois. Experience: North Park University Board of Trustees for 10 years; Naperville Covenant Church Missions Committee; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement:* "I firmly believe that the Bible is the word of God and Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I promise to follow him as a faithful follower and member of the local church."

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#### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Gail A. Dahlstrom**, member of New Community Covenant Church, Chicago, IL. Senior consultant, HDR Inc. Experience:

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North Park University Board of Trustees for five years; Strategic Planning group; Facilities Master Planning task force; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: "I was raised in a Christian home and came to faith at the age of five. I have grown in my faith and am now an active member in New Community Covenant Church."*

### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Peter C. Nelson**, member of Winnetka Covenant Church, Wilmette, IL. Dean of engineering and professor of computer science, University of Illinois at Chicago. Experience: church Board of Trustees.

*Personal Statement: "I would like to see North Park leverage its Chicago location and strong alumni base by developing very strong internship programs to the point where every student is required to have at least one internship before graduation."*

*In the bigger picture, I want North Park to continue to increase its diversity and also to do whatever it takes to fully integrate the campus student body. North Park had some diversity when I was a student, but there also was not nearly enough interaction and relationship-building among the different student populations (e.g., white/black, residential/non-residential, Christian/Jewish, etc.) and this was a lost opportunity that I still regret today. Because North Park is an intentionally Christian university, I want North Park to be a welcoming place for all, regardless of religion, ethnicity/race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, political diversity, nationality, and as well as for every other dimension of diversity."*

### **ANNUAL MEETING OFFICERS**

– One candidate needed for each position. –

#### **Vice-Moderator**

### **(2-year term; elect 1)**

**Weston W. Gibson**, member of First Covenant Church, Salina, KS. Executive Pastor, First Covenant Church. Experience: Covenant Ministerium Executive Board member; Covenant Church Vitality CO-OP coach; Conference Ministerial Association chair, Conference Committee on Ministerial Standing; Covenant Sustaining Excellence pilot program; Church Planting coaching group; North Central Kansas Church Planting Committee; Omaha MWC cluster leader; Smoky Valley MWC cluster leader; Salina Ministerial Alliance; Salina Pastors Prayer Group; Freedom Fire Ministries coach; Omaha Hope Center leader; ICHTUS Kansas State University ministry campus leader; Church Council chair; Sunday-school teacher.

*Personal Statement: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who took on human flesh—the living Word of God introducing the kingdom of God and pointing people to his Father, died on the cross—the love atonement for our sins, was raised to life after three days, defeating death, and ascended to heaven to join his Father until he returns again to fully establish the kingdom of God here on earth. I gave my life to Christ when I was nine years old, committing as best as I could to follow him as my Lord and Savior. I continue to journey as his disciple, experiencing his transforming work in my life through the Holy Spirit, and desiring to be a faithful servant to his call on my life as his disciple and as a pastor."*

#### **Moderator**

### **(2-year term; elect 1)**

**Jonathan M. Wilson**, member of Evangelical Covenant Church, Elgin, IL. Pastor, Evangelical Covenant Church. Experience: Covenant Parliamentarian, North Park Theological Seminary adjunct teacher (concurrently). German American Singers Conference Ministerial Association secretary; BOOM adviser; church council chairperson and secretary; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: "Pastor at the Evangelical Covenant Church of Elgin, Illinois, and celebrating fifteen years of being ordained in 2019. Parliamentary experiences include parliamentarian at national and conference-level business meetings and Ministerium meetings for the Covenant, and six years as the secretary to the Central Conference Ministerial Association."*

### **BOARD OF NOMINATIONS**

– One candidate needed for each position. –

### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**James A. Fretheim**, member of Bemidji Covenant Church, Bemidji, MN. Retired ECC pastor. Experience: Conference superintendent; Conference Ministerial Association chair; Bemidji Community Food Shelf Board of Directors' president.

*Personal Statement: "I would be honored to serve on the Board of Nominations. The ECC has blessed me in numerous ways. I have been privileged to serve as a member of the Executive Board, the Board of Ministry and as superintendent of the Northwest Conference of Covenant Churches. I am excited to see the continuing growth and outreach of our denomination. I believe the opportunities that I have had to serve could be of service on the Board of Nominations. God is clearly calling people from all walks of life to join this mission outreach."*

### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

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**Meghan A. K. Johnson**, member of The River Covenant Church, Soldotna, AK. Annual Fund Manager/Development Coordinator, Alaska Christian College. Experience: North Park Seminary Partners in Ministry Leadership Team; Church Relations Task Force; Covenant Women Leadership Team member; Youth Leader; Missions Board member; Deaconess Committee; Sunday school superintendent and teacher; children's ministry coordinator at local church.

*Personal Statement: "I have served in the local church for over 20 years, across three different conferences. I have had opportunities to lead in congregational care, small groups, mentoring and youth and children's ministries. The eight years I have spent in Alaska working to support post-secondary Native Alaskan students have been one of my greatest joys. I'm passionate about seeing people of all ages and backgrounds get connected in our local churches and to the larger work of the church around the globe. I'm grateful for the intentionality of the Covenant Church in selecting leadership that reflects our broad range of diversity and look forward to being a part of that effort."*

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### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Theodore B. Law**, member of Access Covenant Church, Houston, TX. Lead pastor, Access Covenant Church. Experience: Conference Committee on Ministerial Standing; Conference treasurer; Vision Casting; Plant with Purpose nonprofit board member, Fuller Seminary Houston Vocational Formation group leader; pastors advisory team; church planting; spiritual formation; fundraising; nonprofit work; Community Events Vocational Formation group leader; church council member; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: "Jesus is my Lord. He is the Savior. He is my Shepherd and the one I look to every day for wisdom and guidance. I am a leader charged with leading others to him, whether they are new to faith or have walked in the faith for years. I preach so that others can come to know him."*

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### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Juana I. Nesta**, member of La Jornada Covenant Church, Concord, CA. Teacher, Pittsburg Unified School District. Experience: Church planter; Mi Familia Legal Center director; Los Medanos Community College Professional Growth advisor; Hispanic Women Retreat director/planning committee; Women Commission; East Bay Hispanic Pastors

Association; Church council member/secretary; Women Ministry director; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: "I currently live in Oakley, California, with my husband and three daughters. I have been involved with the ECC for the past twelve years. My husband and I planted our first church plant over fifteen years ago and have had two others since then. I have served on the Executive Board for the past six years. I have also served on MHIPE, CHET, Women's Commission, and various task forces. I am committed to serving God and this church."*

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### **(5-year term; elect 1)**

**Julia D. Sandstrom**, member of Holy Community Covenant Church, Winnipeg, MB. Associate pastor, Holy Community Covenant Church. Experience: Conference Ministry Support director; Covenant Heights vice-chair; Sunday-school teacher at local church.

*Personal Statement: "I am a Covenant pastor currently looking for a call. I spent five years as the Director of Ministry Support for the Canada Conference. This allowed me to meet and get to know many clergy and laity across the country. I am eager to connect qualified Canadian candidates to the larger body of the ECC."*

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