

Churches Applying for Membership

Based upon the recommendation of the respective conferences and regions, the Executive Board recommends to the 133rd Annual Meeting that the following churches be accepted into membership in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Church	Approximate Membership	Approximate Attendance
<u>EAST COAST CONFERENCE</u>		
Church of the Resurrection Bronx, NY	20	100
Highrock Covenant Church Acton Acton, MA	40	200
Highrock Covenant Church Quincy Quincy, MA	30	110
Newton Covenant Church Newton, MA	175	150
Promised Land Covenant Church Bronx, NY	60	600
Sanctuary Church Providence, RI	70	400
<u>MIDWEST CONFERENCE</u>		
Faith Connection Covenant Church Washington, KS	25	50
Shalom Covenant Church Urbandale, IA	75	140
<u>NORTHWEST CONFERENCE</u>		
Catalyst Covenant Church St. Paul, MN	150	200
City of Lakes Covenant Church Minneapolis, MN	65	95
Genesis Covenant Church St. Louis Park, MN	250	260

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Church	Approximate Membership	Approximate Attendance
Grace Outreach Covenant Church Coon Rapids, MN	35	60
New Evangelical Covenant Church Minneapolis, MN	27	119
Renew Covenant Church Eau Claire, WI	100	215
<u>PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE</u>		
Disciple Community Covenant Church Bellevue, WA	12	70
<u>SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE</u>		
Bridge to Grace Covenant Church Riverdale, GA	135	70

Summary:

Number of new churches:	16
Cumulative approximate membership:	1,269
Cumulative approximate attendance:	2,839

Report on Churches Joining the Covenant

The mission of the Covenant is stronger, richer, and more diverse because of the 16 churches joining this year. Each of these churches brings with it a ministry that will enrich the kingdom contribution of the whole Covenant denomination, and will itself be enriched by its connection with the Covenant. Following is a synopsis of each congregation. Each story testifies to both the handiwork of God in raising up a ministry and to the faithfulness of committed people in carrying out that ministry. What is less visible is the role that every Covenanter has had in these stories. Through making possible the elements of a pastoral assessment process, financial support, training, and strategic services, every Covenanter has a place in these stories.

East Coast Conference

**Church of the Resurrection
Harlem, New York**

Average Attendance: 100

Pastor: Kimberly Wright

Kimberly Wright, the East Coast Conference's first woman church planter, has effectively led this "2.0 style" plant with a current congregation of around 100, reaching ethnically and economically diverse Harlem and Manhattan. She was formerly on staff at the decades-old Church of the Resurrection before succeeding the former pastor after his death. She led a core team to fully relaunch the church and partnered with the East Coast Conference as an official church plant in 2012. In 2009, Wright led her congregation into a newly built church and community center in the first two floors of a multistory building in Harlem. Covenant Church Planting partnered with this congregation through the pathway of assessment, residency, training, and team development. The church's mission is to glorify God, know God more deeply, and experience God's power and presence. The Holy Vessels Dance Ministry promotes creative expression through the art of liturgical and expressive dance. The church also offers effective educational programs to reach more than 350 children and adults throughout the year.

**Highrock Covenant Church Acton
Acton, Massachusetts**

Average Attendance: 200

Pastors: Will and Becky Barnett (Co-Senior Pastors)

In late 2014, based out of Highrock Covenant Church in Arlington, MA, a launch team was cultivated and sent out to Acton, a bedroom community northwest of Boston that was ripe for a friendly, innovating, community-focused evangelical congregation with a focus on reaching and serving with the community. The church launched with multiple staff and strong support from the Highrock Network, the conference, and the Evangelical Covenant Church. Within their third year the church was asked to merge with a nearby congregation in Stow, MA, welcoming 40 new members and a part-time pastor. Currently gathering more than 200 each week, the congregation has ministries for all ages and stages. The church has hosted a church planting residency, supporting a launch of Nashua Covenant Church.

**Highrock Covenant Church Quincy
Quincy, Massachusetts**

Average Attendance: 110

Pastor: Stephen Sharkey

Highrock Covenant Church Quincy was planted by the Highrock family of churches in 2012. Stephen Sharkey followed a church planting residency established and funded by the conference, the ECC, and Highrock. The church aspired to begin in a multiethnic context and launched with a multi-staff model from the start. Over the past six years, the church has developed solid ministry

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connections with a diverse congregation of younger adults and families. In the last year, the congregation hosted a church planting residency to support the launch of Brockton Covenant Church. The church supports a vibrant worshiping community with weekly and seasonal ministries, and it supports mission in South Africa and church planting in Tokyo, Japan, as well as the East Coast Conference, the ECC, and the Highrock Church Network.

Newton Covenant Church Newton, Massachusetts

Average attendance: 150

Pastor: Garrett Smith

Newton Covenant Church is a new congregation within the Evangelical Covenant Church that was formerly associated with another denomination. After a painful season which culminated in needing to leave their former worship space, Newton Covenant Church now meets in a local school. As challenging as the season has been, the congregation has been able to identify a new excitement about community and worship, and has been reinvigorated by the Covenant's Vitality pathway. Newton Covenant Church has been blessed by local ECC congregations as they have continued their journey. The church is a community deeply rooted in experiencing God through a thoughtful, intellectual approach to worship and faith. The congregation has been a first experience for many who are exploring following Jesus, and frequently meets in casual settings to discuss faith and provide fellowship. Within the church, people have been drawn to the culture of wanting to connect with God and each other. God has brought about new growth, vitality, invigoration, sense of vision, and tangible ministries in beautiful, remarkable ways.

Promised Land Covenant Church Bronx, New York

Average Attendance: 600

Pastor: Michael Carrion

Promised Land Covenant Church was formed with several individuals—many of whom were on staff with Urban Youth Alliance (a grassroots parachurch organization in the South Bronx)—who felt the need to minister more intentionally to the spiritual formation needs of broken community members they were serving through social outreach programs. The church began meeting in 2006. In 2010, the church partnered with the East Coast Conference and launched a second campus to accommodate significant growth. Since then, the church has continued to grow exponentially in membership and various outreach and ministry programs. In January 2016, the church made the biggest move yet, to the heart of Parkchester in the Bronx and a space ten times larger than the original Bronx location. The Parkchester church meets in a former gymnasium that was renovated to seat 500. For a season, the church also maintained a neighborhood ministry center in their former meeting location in the South Bronx. Promised Land Covenant Church also partners with South Bronx Kids, a free dance school that serves hundreds of youth per week within impoverished areas of the Bronx. They support the work of youth Christian rehabilitation programs, serve the needs of the homeless, and are launching a charter school.

**Sanctuary Church
Providence, Rhode Island**

Average Attendance: 400

Pastor: Andrew Mook

Sanctuary Church began hosting home groups and holding services in Providence in the spring of 2012 after residing in East Greenwich as an evening service, then church-within-a-church at Christ Church. Their decision to plant in the city was in response to a clear call by God to serve their community which was predominantly made up of people who lived in or were already serving in Providence. Sanctuary is now an emerging church network of three congregations they call parishes: the original “Down City” congregation (2012), Sanctuary North (2016), and currently planting Sanctuary Eastside (2018). Sanctuary Down City meets in a beautiful stone Swedish Lutheran Church in the heart of Providence. Sanctuary North is fully embedded in their neighborhood at a local elementary school, while the newly launching Sanctuary Eastside is meeting in a historic church building in their neighborhood. Through the Evangelical Covenant Church’s assessment process, training intensive, and ongoing coaching and training, Sanctuary has become a fruitful handful of pioneers in network church planting models. Sanctuary has a robust system of home groups to allow people to connect for weekly meals, study, and mission.

Midwest Conference

**Faith Connection Covenant Church
Washington, Kansas**

Average Attendance: 50

Pastor: Rustin McClure

Faith Connection Covenant began in 2010 when Pastor Grant Clay and a team from the Clay Center Covenant Church began a Bible study in Washington, Kansas, a town of 1,100 residents thirty miles north of Clay Center. Rustin McClure was a firefighter in Wichita, Kansas. As a first responder, he was reminded daily how broken our world is and that life is hopeless without Christ. He was compelled by Clay Center Covenant’s vision to plant a church in a small town like Washington. McClure and his wife, Joy, explored their call to ministry and were recommended for Covenant Church Planting in 2013. He says, “I’m a simple guy and have pretty straightforward ideas for ministry. If Christ fed the hungry, then maybe we should do that. If Christ spent time in prayer, maybe we should do that also.” Living into that vision, FCC is active in sharing Christ’s love and hope with their community. Each year, 300 people participate in Tigerfest, an event that provides school supplies to 70 percent of the town’s elementary school children. Recently, the congregation purchased a building that will serve as a kingdom outpost for Washington County. The space will allow expanded ministry to serve children and youth, addiction aid, and adult learning opportunities.

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Shalom Covenant Church Urbandale, Iowa

Average Attendance: 140

Pastor: Eugene Kiruhura

In 2007, Eugene Kiruhura came to Des Moines, Iowa, as a refugee from Congo. During his first English class he was invited to worship at Urban Heights Covenant Church, where retired Covenant missionaries translated the worship service each week for him. A year later, he began a ministry in his language to other refugees settling in Des Moines, and a partnership with Urban Heights Covenant began. In 2014, seven families felt God's call to form Shalom which began with worship on Sunday mornings within the walls of Urban Heights Covenant. Shalom grew and has become a place of refuge and healing for many fleeing the violence of their homeland. Their passion is to be a place full of spiritual growth for all refugees, especially youth growing up in a very different culture and facing different challenges than within their home countries. The tragic past of Shalom's members continues to teach both congregations to stop and consider forgiveness in more profound ways. The two congregations continue to share many ministries in the church and community.

Northwest Conference

Catalyst Covenant Church St. Paul, Minnesota

Average Attendance: 150

Pastor: Jeff Olson

Four years ago, Catalyst Covenant Church was little more than a prayer. What began in a living room near Roseville, Minnesota, is now a steadily growing community of believers. Catalyst meets in the Saint Anthony Park neighborhood at Luther Seminary, near several universities and borders both Minneapolis and St. Paul. The area is home to a diverse population that includes students, young families, and older adults. The Northwest Conference, along with the broader Covenant denomination, played a crucial role in firmly establishing Catalyst with financial support, coaching, and prayers.

City of Lakes Covenant Church Minneapolis, Minnesota

Average Attendance: 115

Pastor: David Berge

City of Lakes Covenant Church began over breakfast at the Original Pancake House in Edina in 2011 when Covenant pastor Brad Jackson encouraged David Berge to plant a Covenant church in Minneapolis. In October 2013, Berge signed a Covenant agreement. The congregation has gone from worshipping in a school to worshipping in Aldrich Church where Berge grew up. Aldrich Church has been an invaluable partner as the two congregations have worked together to bring a vital Christian presence to the neighborhood. Through hardships within their pastor's own life, the

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congregation has been brought together to see the tender mercies of God, and they have identified a call not to be spectacular but to be simply faithful. The past year has been a season of growth for the church in both attendance and generosity. The church has come into life-giving relationships with Jesus and through ministry avenues they seek to bless the neighborhood, city, and world. The congregation has started a ministry called Blue Cooler to bring food, clothes, and fellowship to the homeless. They have co-sponsored a refugee family from Burma and are now partnering alongside another new church plant to help them start strong.

Genesis Covenant Church St. Louis Park, Minnesota

Average Attendance: 260

Pastor: Steve Wiens

Genesis Covenant Church was planted on June 1, 2014, by Steve Wiens, founding pastor. The church exists to “join God’s work of cultivating new beginnings in all of us, everywhere.” Since its inception, Genesis has met in the Jewish Community Center in St. Louis Park. The church has financially supported the launch of four church plants, and this spring planted their first church, Genesis East, in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The congregation is made up of a wide diversity of ages and socioeconomic statuses. Their emphasis on seasons in the church calendar and the Revised Common Lectionary keeps them grounded in ancient traditions, and their focus on loving and serving those outside of the church keeps them connected with needs outside of their walls. Their vision is to “join God’s work of cultivating new beginnings in all of us, everywhere” and their mission is to “become ordinary apprentices of Jesus who are learning to love God, ourselves, and others wholeheartedly.” Their values are simplicity, conversation, rhythms, delight, ordinariness, restoration, and attentiveness.

Grace Outreach Covenant Church Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Average Attendance: 60

Pastor: Paul Robinson

The seeds that gave birth to Grace Outreach Covenant Church were planted a number of years ago when Paul Robinson had hosted a number of Bible studies among friends and family. He felt called to return to leading a church after assuming the role of spiritual care director for Catholic Charities in 2001. Prior to that, he served as senior pastor for Community Covenant Church in Minneapolis for five years. The first service of Grace Outreach Fellowship was held in 2011 in Robinson’s living room. After searching for a location to hold worship, a dance studio graciously offered use of their studio at no cost, with only the request that the congregation cleans the mirrors. Robinson reached out to the Northwest Conference to inquire about the planting process and in 2013 Grace Outreach Church was relaunched with the support of a Covenant Agreement. Over the last four years, the church has witnessed the grace of God in building a faith community that reaches up to God, reaches in, and reaches out to the community and world.

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New Evangelical Covenant Church Minneapolis, Minnesota

Average Attendance: 119

Pastor: Mauricio Dell’Arciprete

In 2014, a launch team of 30 adults started a congregation focused on reaching, loving, and serving the young second generation of Hispanic/Latino immigrants. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24, and in a nationwide survey among high school students in the US, the CDC found that Hispanic youth were more likely to report attempting suicide than their black or white non-Hispanic peers. Many of these young people were born in the United States to immigrant parents and do not fit completely with “American” culture, and they don’t fully identify with their “Latino” heritage. They find themselves in the middle, rejected by peers and searching for identity. The church’s call, as a bilingual and multicultural ministry, is to reach these youths and their families with the gospel to find their identify in Christ and a community of faith. During the fall of 2014, the church launched weekly services and different programs at Minnehaha Academy South Campus. The next year all programs and services were moved to Bethlehem Covenant Church. New Covenant Church’s youth ministry began with three teenagers and has now grown to more than 30 students. Children’s ministry has tripled in size. The church served its third annual Thanksgiving meal to those without family or resources and provided a meal for more than 250 people. The congregation is now a strong and thriving community of believers reaching hundreds of people seeking identity, opportunities, and significance.

Renew Covenant Church Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Average attendance: 215

Pastor: Jamie Staples

Renew Church has had an incredible journey since starting in 2015. There were many obstacles in the first year as their original location did not work out. After a summer of transition, they landed in their downtown storefront location, and then doubled in size. At this point, they were able to buy a Baptist church, and again doubled in size. The congregation reaches many through their Sunday service, has a thriving children’s ministry, a college meal outreach, a small group ministry, and partnership with local nonprofits to bring about racial reconciliation. The calling of the Lord is coming true—people are coming to know Jesus and are being transformed by the gospel.

Pacific Northwest Conference

Disciple Community Covenant Church Bellevue, Washington

Average Attendance: 70

Pastor: Sung (Derek) Hwang

Disciple Community Covenant Church began with 12 people in the pastor’s basement in October of 2010, and the church was formally planted in June of 2011. Each year the church has grown

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steadily in number and vision. The congregation is currently 70 members strong and they are excited for what God has in store. Highland Covenant Church offered great support to the congregation by introducing them to the denomination and helping them to connect to Covenant church planting. Recently, the congregation began sharing space with Newport Covenant Church in Bellevue. The denomination and the Pacific Northwest Conference have been formative to the church from the beginning—being instrumental in guiding, teaching, training, and supporting throughout the challenges of church planting. Church planting coaches and financial sponsors have also blessed the congregation in many tangible ways. Currently, the church sponsors many ministries such as Bright Scholars International, which gives hope to children affected by HIV/AIDS or extreme poverty through educational subsidies, relational connection, and guidance.

Southeast Conference

**Bridge to Grace Covenant Church
Roswell, Georgia**

Pastor: David Bonselaar

Average Attendance: 70

Bridge to Grace Church has celebrated 35 years of ministry in Roswell. The church gives thanks for the diversity of its members and the community in which it ministers. Bridge to Grace has vibrant ministries for all age groups from children to adults. The congregation is relationship focused and driven, embracing a relationship with God that is lived out in relationship with each other. Additionally, the congregation is active within the community, supporting Project Lift, a nonprofit interacting with at-risk youth, as well as supporting the local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

