

Churches Applying for Membership**Agenda Item 3.a.**

Based upon the recommendation of the respective Conferences and Regions, the Executive Board recommends to the 122nd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Covenant Church that the following churches be accepted into membership in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Church	Approximate Membership	Approximate Attendance
<u>East Coast Conference</u> Paradise Holtzschwamm Evangelical Covenant Church Thomasville, PA	241	102
<u>Great Lakes Conference</u> Austintown Community Evangelical Covenant Church, Austintown, OH	448	180
Federated Covenant Church Dowagiac, MI	76	50
New Harvest Christian Church Oregon, OH	141	225
<u>Midsouth Conference</u> Crossroads Covenant Church DeSoto, TX	40	200
Mosaic Community Covenant Church Missouri City, TX	40	100
<u>Midwest Conference</u> Abyssinian Christian Church Fort Collins, CO	275	200
Iglesia Cristiana Getsemani Colorado Springs, CO	30	60
New Day Covenant Church Boulder, CO	30	40
<u>Pacific Southwest Conference</u> Abundant Life Covenant Bible Church Pasadena, CA	59	45
Bayside Covenant Church of Lincoln Lincoln, CA	100	233
Bayside Covenant Church, West Roseville Roseville, CA	150	680
Maranatha Covenant Church Richmond, CA	38	80
New Song Los Angeles Covenant Church Los Angeles, CA	100	450

New Song Church North Orange County Fullerton, CA	150	400
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Southest Conference

All Nations Church Norcross, GA	850	800
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Summary:

Number of new churches	16
Cumulative approximate membership	2,768
Cumulative approximate attendance	3,845

Note: Churches with the phrase “An Evangelical Covenant Church” are generally adoptions, previously unaffiliated congregations joining the Covenant denominational family.

Report on Churches Joining the Covenant

The mission of the Covenant is stronger, richer and more diverse because of the 12 churches joining this year. Each of these churches bring with them a ministry that will enrich the kingdom contribution of the whole Covenant denomination, and will itself be enriched by its connection with the Covenant.

Below 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

Paradise Holtzschwamm Evangelical Covenant Church **approximate attendance: 102**
Thomasville, PA

Pastor: Rev. Thomas Bellis

Paradise Holtzschwamm Church was founded in 1762 just west of York, Pennsylvania. It was originally a German Reformed church and shared the same building with the German Lutherans. In about 1960, they built their own church building. In 2006, they severed ties with the UCC denomination and are seeking affiliation with the ECC. “We feel that belonging to a denomination is important to bring a focus and direction of mission to the church. Over the past two years, we researched many denominations. We found that ECC theology, a shared history of the Protestant Reformation, biblical teachings that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior and the sole head of the church, and celebration of the Sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion most closely align with the congregation's beliefs and traditions.” The church offers a Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, Vacation Bible School, Helping Hands community service, and supports many outreach and service organizations.

Great Lakes Conference

Austintown Community Evangelical Covenant Church **approximate attendance: 180**
Austintown, OH

Pastor: David B. Roberts

Austintown, population 32,000, is immediately adjacent to the city of Youngstown. The church's roots extend back to the 18th century, when a log structure was erected in the center of Austintown by Presbyterian Covenanters and was used jointly by several different congregations. In 1923, Rev. Albert Glessner reorganized the congregation as Austintown Community Reformed Church and the log building was replaced by the current sanctuary building. In January, 2004, the church committed itself to the vision of "transforming lives ... with the fullness of Christ's love," emphasizing evangelism and service and small groups. “Joining the Covenant is a matter of desiring to find an affiliation with which we could more readily and happily identify. A mission focus

we could more enthusiastically endorse and a structure which would still allow us the basic freedom of conscience and self-determination.”

**Federated Covenant Church
Dowagiac, MI**

approximate attendance: 50

Pastor: Rev. Beth Ernest, Interim Pastor

Dowagiac is a small town of 5,931 surrounded by rural farmland in Southwestern Michigan. The Federated Church of Dowagiac was a merger of the Congregational Church and the Baptist Church in 1918. The church became the largest Protestant church in town, enjoying a "First Church" status in the community. When the building burned in 1947, many organizations in the community banded together to rebuild the building. The church meets in the brick building completed in 1953, graced with a lovely series of stained-glass windows. The congregation flourished in the early to mid 1900's, with a high membership in the 500's. Like other mainline churches, it began to decline due to the demise of Christendom and the lack of evangelistic fervor and training. The church joined the UCC in 1968 and seceded in 2006 for theological reasons. Federated voted in June 2007 to seek affiliation with a denomination, rather than remain independent, and desired to connect with a like-minded denomination. They desire the resources a denomination can provide, including revitalization assistance, evangelism, finding clergy, and youth programming, and have voted to join the Covenant.

**New Harvest Christian Church
Oregon, OH**

approximate attendance: 225

Pastor: Rev. Michael S. Przybylski

New Harvest Christian Church desires to be a light to the community of Oregon and the Greater Toledo area by living out God's love in tangible, practical ways that bless the people we encounter. "We are seeking to live out the Greatest Biblical Commandment, the Shema, which was pointed out by Jesus, to love God with everything we are and have. We are experiencing what it means to embrace our part in the redemptive process of God's creation. This is messy, risky and beautiful all at once." New Harvest Christian Church was founded in 1944. In September 1978, the church congregation voted to become an independent evangelical church. In 2003, the church began a two-year journey to re-evaluate its purpose and direction. They thankfully give God the praise and glory for all that He has done and for the thousands of lives who have been touched by their ministries in the 64 years of its existence. The congregation affirmed joining the Evangelical Covenant Church in January 2008. One particular ministry, Food 4 Thought, has tremendous impact, operating a food bank serving over 200 people per month, a clothing pantry, as well as assisting people with furniture. Presently, a group of people meet every Friday evening, many from other churches, to make 300 sack lunches for the homeless of Toledo.

Midsouth Conference

**Crossroads Covenant Church
DeSoto, TX**

approximate attendance: 200

Pastor: Rev. Josef Rasheed

DeSoto, TX is a rapidly growing area in the south section of the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex. It is an area that was familiar to Rev. Josef Rasheed, who started Crossroads with a strong Core Group and good networks in this southern section of Dallas. After beginning in a small rented space, they moved to a church called "The Shepherd's House." For a year they shared this facility, until Crossroads Covenant Church was able to purchase the entire facility, including almost all the furnishings and the 6.5 surrounding acres. Rev. Josef Rasheed and his wife Rochelle had a fresh vision for a new church in Dallas, TX. Through Dr. Willie Peterson and Dr. Terry Woodson, Josef was introduced to the Evangelical Covenant Church. Josef and Rochelle and the leaders of Crossroads have many gifts that have helped Crossroads flourish. The pastor and church leaders have also made an intentional commitment to bless the city of DeSoto in practical ways. This commitment to their city has given Crossroads much favor and visibility. Since moving into their present building Crossroads has been on a steady and healthy growth trend.

**Mosaic Community Covenant
Missouri City, TX**

approximate attendance: 100

Pastor: Rev. Ed Lee

Missouri City is a fast-growing suburb in the southwest quadrant of Houston, TX. It is also one of the most multi-ethnic communities in the greater Houston area. One of the primary purposes of Mosaic is to be an

intentional multi-ethnic congregation. The Midsouth Conference and the Evangelical Covenant Church partnered to help plant Mosaic Community Covenant Church through financial, coaching, fellowship and peer-group assistance and support. Mosaic also received assistance and support from Fort Bend Community Church in Missouri City. Mosaic was started with Rev. Ed Lee as the church planting pastor. Ed immediately gathered a strong core group to help him launch this church to reach the growing population of SW Houston, TX. Mosaic Community Covenant Church has already had an impact in its community and in the Midsouth Conference through its mature pastoral and church leadership, as well as its commitment to and leadership in multi-ethnic ministry.

Midwest Conference

**Abyssinian Christian
Fort Collins, CO**

approximate attendance: 200

Pastor: Rev. David Williams

Fort Collins is a fast-growing, middle-class community in northern Colorado, the home of Colorado State University, with approximately 10% of its 150,000 residents being ethnic minorities. Pastor Williams was the church-planting founder of Abyssinian in 1989. They purchased their current facility in 1999. Abyssinian and their leaders had been looking at affiliation with a like-spirited group, and found it in the Covenant. The Covenant's value of freedom, not requiring a cookie-cutter mentality, and its practice of allowing churches self-autonomy, were common ideals that attracted the church. Additionally, access to good consultation in the areas of development, stewardship and evangelism were important. Pastor William also felt he needed a trusted place that could assist the church in pastoral transitions in its future. In addition to regular ministries, Abyssinian has found an obvious calling in cross-cultural connections within the Fort Collins community - another reason it found itself attracted to the Covenant. The city itself often seeks the counsel of the church in diversity issues and inter-racial dialogue. The church also finds effective ministry with addiction support programs, partnering with Denver Rescue Mission's Harvest Farm.

**Iglesia Cristiana Getsemani
Colorado Springs, CO**

approximate attendance: 60

Pastor: Rev. Cesar Arroya

Colorado Springs is one of Colorado's most quickly growing cities. As is typical in fast-growing American cities, many persons of Latino extraction have moved to the area: immigrants representing many diverse Hispanic cultures now number in the scores of thousands. Pastor Cesar Arroyo is originally from the Ecuadorian Covenant Church, and moved to the Colorado Springs area in the early 90's. Long a part of a Covenant church in Colorado Springs, Cesar and his wife Lyn were called by God to plant a Hispanic church in 2003. They began developing a core group in Pastor Arroyo's tailor shop on Colorado Springs' east side. They moved to another rented facility upon outgrowing this venue. In 2005 they approached the Covenant regarding the possibility of affiliation, and have been in close relationship ever since. As Pastor Arroyo says it, "it is not our desire to be independent. We believe it is important to stay under authority, and we also desire to be supported spiritually. Connections are important to us." Their most effective ministries are in discipleship and evangelism.

**New Day Covenant
Boulder, CO**

approximate attendance: 40

Pastor: Rev. Doug White

New Day Covenant was a pioneered church plant, begun when Pastor Doug and Lesa White commenced gathering a core group in early 2005. The beachhead for this ministry has been a challenge to establish - Boulder is one of the more difficult venues for church planting. Several Colorado Covenant churches partnered with New Day, with special prayer and financial assistance from the Front Range Church Growth and Development Committee, and from Heritage Community (Covenant) Bible Church of Arvada, Colorado. New Day rents a church facility on the north side of Boulder. Besides the more typical offerings of engaging public worship, teaching and small groups, one of New Day's most effective ministries has been its `New Day Kitchen, a weekly, year-round hot food ministry offered in partnership with other local food ministries. The Kitchen has provided meals, fellowship, recreation, counseling and spiritual care to upwards of 70 persons per week, on Wednesday evenings.

Pacific Southwest Conference

Abundant Life Covenant Bible Church Pasadena, CA

approximate attendance: 45

Pastor: Rev. Camille Russell Wooden

Abundant Life Covenant Bible Church was developed out of a heartfelt vision given to Pastor Camille Russell Wooden in 1996. A core group was formed to pray for the birth of this church in 2000 and the church was planted in 2003 as a collaborative effort between Pastor Camille Russell Wooden, the ECC and Faithful Central Bible Church. They began meeting at Jackson Elementary School in the summer of 2003 and worshipped there for 2 years beginning with about 28 members. In the summer of 2005 they moved to the present location at St James United Methodist Church, where they currently have 50 members. Their vision is to see men and women "Learn Jesus, Love Jesus and Live Jesus". Many Covenant churches came alongside this new church as "partner churches." The effective ministries they currently have are Outreach Ministry, Youth Ministry, Pasadena Community Youth Orchestra. Sunday morning worship, Wednesday night and the Hospitality Ministry.

Bayside Covenant Church of Lincoln Lincoln, CA

approximate attendance: 223

Pastor: Rev. Ed Kemp

Bayside Covenant Church of Lincoln began as a church plant of Bayside of Granite Bay in 2006 with 35 people in the core group. Lincoln is a rapidly growing suburb on the northeast side of Sacramento. The new church followed the process of the four-step church planting launch. The first year and a half they met in a restaurant that had closed. They were parented by Bayside Church of Granite Bay and received coaching and financial support from the Pacific Southwest Conference and the Department of Church Growth and Evangelism. "Our desire is to reach the city of Lincoln with the good news of Jesus Christ and provide an environment where believers can be disciplined and built-up in their faith. The most "effective" ministries have been Women's Ministries, small groups, worship, Trunk and Treat/Easter egg hunt and preaching.

Bayside Covenant Church, West Roseville Roseville, CA

approximate attendance: 680

Pastor: Rev. Charles D. Wysong

In the spring of 2005, Chuck and Gail Wysong were called to plant a Bayside Covenant Church in West Roseville, California, just 5 - 7 miles from the parent church. On August 28, 2005, they had their first Core Group gathering with over 50 in attendance. They met at Woodcreek Oaks Golf Club for over 3 months as the group grew, playing, planning and getting ready for the first preview service. They had 4 preview services in the fall and winter of 2005/2006, and then had 5 Grand Openings Sundays (2 before Easter, Easter Sunday and 2 after Easter). They officially launched as a weekly church on April 22, 2006. They have since continued to grow in church attendance, as well as staff. Their children's and youth ministries are one of the greatest reasons for their continued growth. Their Motto is, "The church that impacts the youth and children of a community, will be the church that impacts the entire community." The Covenant has provided excellent coaching and Bayside has been a tremendous help with the blending of the name and assistance in planting this new church. As well as children's and youth ministries, they have added Adult Ministries and Small Groups, as well as a Care Ministry and offer the Alpha Course twice a year.

Maranatha Covenant Church Richmond, CA

approximate attendance: 80

Pastor: Rev. Walter Gomez

The Church is located in the Bay Area city of Richmond, with a high percentage of Hispanic population. The church started to minister in the city of Richmond in September of 2004, meeting in homes of members who lived in the city. After a year they arranged to share facilities at First Presbyterian Church of Richmond and the partnership has been a blessing because the church has grown in number and also spiritually. The main reason they desired to join the Covenant is because of its biblical foundation. Also, many of the membership have previously attended Covenant churches. The church has a focus on building lives that are dependent on God, They have evangelism ministries and also disciple the whole congregation. They also have Sunday school, and Cell groups that meet in the homes of the members in strategic areas where people can attend.

**NewSong Los Angeles Covenant Church
Los Angeles, CA**

approximate attendance: 450

Pastor: Rev. Adam Edgerly

NewSong - LA was started as a multi-site location of NewSong Community Church in Irvine, with the first official service on March 23, 2003. While they will still remain connected to the NewSong churches, they are now being organized as a separate Covenant church. They currently meet at Crenshaw High School in the Crenshaw Area of Los Angeles. They have many vital ministries: Creative Arts Ministry, overseeing all the creative elements in the Sunday service from production and film to worship and dance; Cause, which takes Care Of all local and overseas outreach, including the Justice, Advocacy and Compassion group; The SHAW (Sports, Health, Arts, and Well-being), which is a community transformation group, which includes an open mic club for Christian artists; and Community, where individuals, couples, and families can delve deeper into the Word and each other in smaller settings.

**NewSong Church North Orange County
Fullerton, CA**

approximate attendance: 400

Pastor: Rev. Brian Kim

NewSong - NOC is a mosaic of ethnicities and economic backgrounds that live, work, and play together in the north Orange County area. NewSong NOC also has an opportunity to become an Irresistible Influence to the nearly 30,000 students at Cal State - Fullerton and, as well as to serve some of the most under-resourced School districts in the state. The original NewSong Church started in 1994 in the small Irvine, CA apartment of founding pastor, Dave Gibbons. Over the years, God has sent hundreds of the younger generation of the Southern California community to NewSong. The average age of NewSong members is 27 with 70% of the members being single. A significant population of the congregation was commuting from the north Orange County area, and NewSong leadership saw the need to start another site in north Orange County. Hence, NewSong Church - North Orange County was birthed in April of 2005. Since then, they have grown to become financially and operationally self-sufficient. NewSong's leadership decided that it would be most strategic for all sites to become separate legal entities, though they are still one church in spirit, with multiple locations throughout the world. The leadership in all sites regularly meets to share best practices, align with how God is moving in NewSong, and collaborate. A huge value and culture at NewSong is relationship. Another value is 'In the essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty.' The Covenant and NewSong have so much alignment with each other's values and vision and the direction that the Covenant is going is where they want to be. They see the Covenant as a family of believers investing in and pursuing diversity, reconciliation, and being the church instead of just doing church. They embrace the priesthood of all believers and believe that women are gifted by God to lead and teach in the church. The Covenant feels like a family and opens their arms to people of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and journeys. They feel that the Covenant and NewSong have so much potential in partnering to further the kingdom of God.

Southeast Conference

**All Nations Church
Norcross, GA**

approximate attendance: 850

Pastor: Rev. Frank Appiah

All Nations is a growing multicultural community in the greater Atlanta area. The church is located in a middle class neighborhood, surrounded by new housing and commercial developments. The ministry was started on September 24, 2000 by Pastor Frank Appiah as a church plant. The church started with five members and has grown to 800 in attendance on a Sunday morning. They believe the ECC is a family of rational, affirming and empowering believers. The pastor and congregation feel these are values and qualities they have been looking for in a denomination. Further, it is a family which allows gifts and leadership skills to be nurtured and deployed for the great good of God's Kingdom. All Nations Church has a sixteen acre campus with 4 buildings; the worship center seats 600. The church was purchased from a Presbyterian group who had dwindled in size and ministry. All Nations Church has an active mission throughout the world. It is involved with church planting both in Europe and Africa. The congregation is composed of 35 different nationalities. The church has a strong teaching and preaching ministry. Currently, All Nation is working on a leadership Institute in Ghana, West Africa~ with the vision to raise up new, young leadership.