

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

April 2017

Is the American church in crisis?

Most American churches are stagnating or in decline. Worse yet . . . many fear that we are in the process of failing to pass on biblical faith to the next generation.

We believe God's direction for us is found in the early name given to Covenant people: **Mission Friends**. We believe if we **connect as friends** and **collaborate in mission** carrying forward the best of the past while building connection and collaboration in ways we have never seen, we will pass on a vibrant church to those who follow.

Ministerial Health

Moving mission forward requires healthy leaders and healthy churches.

In 2016, we have:

- Provided and coordinated pastoral care for our pastors and their families, supporting them through personal crises (family situations, health, ministry burnout, depression, etc.) and professional transitions. We are grateful for additional support from conference care teams of seasoned pastors.
- Provided consultation to our pastors and churches around sensitive situations, navigating staff transitions and resolving conflict in ways that advance mission.
- Piloted projects to build relationships and equip leaders – an online learning community for second chair leaders (with Betsy Vanderpool), one-day retreats for clergy women (led by Susan Cosio), and a young couples retreat (with Mark and Lauren Neely).
- Gathered ministry spouses at PSWC events (Women's' Retreat, Fall Retreat) and at a retreat for spouses only (in partnership with Luann Budd and NEWIM)
- Helped churches build strong staff and lay leadership teams through teaching and consultation.
- Through online learning community and individual consultations, supported and developed second chair leaders to thrive and bless their churches.
- We have assisted pastors and churches when ministry leaves and sabbaticals were appropriate.

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: Integrating what we have repeatedly heard from pastors and leaders and what research has consistently shown about resiliency in ministry, we are sketching out a plan for more systematic care for pastors. "Care", because of its personal and often complex nature, is very difficult to scale up. I anticipate slow improvement.

Church Planting

Church planting is considerably more difficult now, than a decade ago. That said, we are grateful for the movement forward.

- The fruitfulness of our Latino church planting has been amazing. The deep wisdom of Dave Olson teamed with the amazing and complimentary gifts of Fil Nesta and Abraham Bejarano are bringing much fruit. (See Latino Ministries)
- Justin and Maddie Noseworthy were approved to plant a new Covenant church in the Monterey, CA area. They have deep roots in the community, and should be able to rally a strong launch team. Jeremiah Fair, pastor of our Scott's Valley church, is helping coach and encourage them.
- Shawn and Kenna O'Brien were approved to plant a Covenant church in LA's South Bay Area. They also have deep networks in the community, and we look forward to putting together a strong project with them.
- We are exploring a church planting partnership with World Impact, of which our former superintendent, Efrem Smith, is president.
- In Phoenix, we are relaunching a small Sudanese church plant. Under the leadership of Pastor Simon Chuolnyaang, the church is experiencing very strong growth.

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: The reality of property challenges (i.e. high real estate costs). . . not just purchasing, but even entering into long term leases . . . makes it challenging for churches that do not grow to at least 200 people. We need to learn to grow stronger projects. Generous parenting/partnering churches which send people and better equipped planters (our training needs to continue to get better) are key.

Youth Ministry

We are on track to build a community of young people with event participation totaling 10,000 by 2025. Along with celebrating and seeking to serve younger leaders and ministries now, we see no more important task than passing on biblical faith to the next generation. The PSWC youth initiative is among the most comprehensive attempts to evangelize, nurture and equip young people in decades.

- The annual children/youth workers retreat has averaged around 60. This last August, 130 gathered. This coming August, we anticipate over 200 will deepen in friendship and mission.
- We prayed that 200 junior highers and leaders would join us for a pilot retreat. Over 400 attended; around 40 gave their lives to Christ. More than 700 are anticipated at the next event.

- We prayed that God would fill all 300 spots open for next November’s pilot high school retreat. Two weeks later, over 400 had signed up. Mission Springs is scrambling to creatively expand their capacity so that 450 might participate.
- Emerge . . . the innovative community college/disciple-making program has been successfully piloted in Sacramento. Two additional sites in Southern California are anticipated for fall 2017.
- The PSWC is the only conference that has a full-time Director of Youth Ministries. (Two conferences have part time.) I am glad we made this decision and that Matt Aalseth said “yes.”

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: Encourage lead pastors, youth pastors/directors/volunteers and the church at large to see that God is giving us the opportunity to build an extraordinary community across our region, which has the capacity to TRANSFORM THE LOCAL CHURCH.

Latino Ministry

We are on track for our goal to grow 70 new Latino church plants by 2025. There are seasons of remarkable potential fruitfulness for the church. Historically, new immigrants have been far more open to the Gospel than more settled populations. This coupled with the deep faithfulness and giftedness of PSWC pastors and leaders provide the possibility of being used by the Holy Spirit to make an enormous contribution.

- CHET is now the largest equipper in the west of Latinos for pastoral and other leadership . . . 158 graduated in December.
- 70 plus pastors and Latino leaders gather at cluster meetings in Los Angeles . . . the movement is beginning.
- Nearly 700 attended the Spanish speaking Men’s and Women’s Retreats in fall.
- Through our partnership with the ECC, we led a church planting assessment center which is being described as good or perhaps stronger than any the Covenant has ever done. It was done for less than half the cost. Learning is now being translated into English speaking assessments.
- Along with Alex Rahill, The Covenant’s Director of Church Planting, Dave Olson, Fil Nesta and Abraham Bejarano developed a new and excellent "How to Plant a Latino Covenant Church" training event which is now the gold standard not only for PSWC Latino plants, but for the ECC.
- 5 new Spanish speaking churches officially began in February. They include:
 - **Comunidad Cristiana IPE** - Canoga Park, CA - Leonardo Carrillo & C. Quinche
 - **Vida Nueva Covenant Church** - Isaac Scott - Perris, CA
 - **Place of Grace** - Alejandro Marsalek - Lynwood, CA
 - **Vida Abundante** - Freddy Merida - Burbank, CA
 - **Fuente de Vida Covenant Church** - Eloy Castro - Riverside, CA (launched anew)

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: Continue to grow the “familia”, appreciating/serving those who are already a part of us and courageously recognizing and correcting systemic power/ethnic inequities inherent in all organizations with long histories.

Leadership Development

We have observed that without exception: “Leader dynamics predict outcomes.” We are committed to providing leadership experiences and community that foster growth and deep friendships.

- Significant growth in attendance at Fall Retreat and Celebration (We hope this is true again this year!)
- Once again we mention “Emerge” . . . a great way to grow leaders.
- More and more people “sense a rightness” in being together and attendance at Energize and Equip Events increases. Eight of these regional one-day training events are being planned for the 2017-18 school year.
- Beginning Fall 2017: Through a partnership of the PSWC and the Youth Cartel, an EXCELLENT youth pastor/director/leader two year coaching program will be offered. As far as we are aware, no regional conference nor has the ECC offered the depth of coaching we will provide.
- Among all the other great things that will result, I believe Chuck Wysong’s new ministry as Executive Director of Mission Springs will make our conference center a “hot bed” of leadership development.
- Coming in 2018-19: A conference-wide church intern community.
- Beginning in the fall of 2017, through a partnership of North Park Seminary and the PSWC, Masters level courses and degrees offered in our region. We anticipate an immensely transformational pastor/leader development experience resulting from: excellence in academics, excellence in the involvement of PSWC pastors/leaders, life-long friendships of those who are and will be serving together at an unheard of low cost. This is a BIG DEAL.

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: Recognize the catalytic power of moving ministry forward in a community of friends who are growing as leaders. Never shrink back from the conviction that contemporary leaders must grow much deeper in both biblical faith and fruitful practices.

Helping Churches Do Better

There is nothing more important or challenging or more rewarding to me than helping our local churches do better.

- I don't want to overstate this, but in the last year, the PSWC has more churches moving forward in reaching more for the Kingdom. We rejoice and believe the momentum will build.
- Our lead pastor searches have gone extremely well . . . much better than one might hope. For this, I am very grateful. That said, I tend to lose sleep over the church that is waiting. (The one that waited the longest – three years – now gives testimony that it was *really* worth the wait.)
- I am so grateful for the addition of our associate superintendent, Pat Stark. Pat has been trained to assist churches in the ECC's Vitality Pathway.
- Contact Pat if you would like to learn more.
- I had hoped last year to pilot a new coaching ministry that will be of GREAT BENEFIT to our churches. I am now ready. Presently named "Simplify", I am ready to try this out with three or four churches beginning this fall. The plan is to see what we learn, and if we have something of value, scale up to serve many.
- We are learning how to "raise impact" while "lowering costs." It is our hope to wrap these practices along with increased communications capacity (above) into "Simplify."

KEY IN MOVING FORWARD: Trusting God, knowing that He is always at work and helping churches and leaders adopt a "whatever it takes" attitude.

Thanks!

I cannot tell you how grateful I am to serve you all. I do so cognizant of the fact that I am running the race not as a "sprinter", but as one more superintendent who is part of a relay of servant leadership that spans the decades. I serve in the grace of this calling for a season. Many thanks to all you pastors, staff, PSWC team, PSWC board and others who are so patient and gracious to me. May we all grow to know God and give away His grace to others in ways that we have not yet known.

In His Goodness,

Paul Wilson

"The Pacific Southwest Conference is committed to growing a mosaic of ministries and leaders known for integrity and growing fruitful people."

-- Superintendent Paul Wilson

**Printed Superintendent Reports as distributed to Delegates onsite
will include the following addendums:**

- Alpine Camp & Conference Center
- Mission Springs Camp & Conference Center
- CHET
- Current List of PSWC Churches