

## Secretary CANDIDATES

# COVENANT MINISTERIUM CANDIDATE BIOS



## Paul Burger

My name is Paul Burger and I have served as a Covenant pastor for the last 13 years with my wife, Britta. We have three creative, story-loving, and compassionate children: Bjorn (11), Sonja (8), and Lilja (3). The gift of learning from these three kind and courageous kids has been transformative for me both as a parent and as a person. I attended both North Park University and North Park Theological Seminary where I received my Masters of Divinity in 2013 and was ordained to Word and Sacrament in 2016.

Through my roles as both an Associate Pastor of Worship & Administration and as a Co-Lead Pastor, I have developed a deep appreciation for how systems, organization, and communication shape the health of a ministry and broader church body. In these roles, I have regularly led and collaborated in areas such as staff and congregational communication, meeting planning, administrative systems, strategic coordination, and organizational decision-making. My approach to administration is always grounded in the question: 'How is this serving people?' rather than expecting people to serve the system. I believe strong administrative leadership creates clarity and trust that ultimately allows ministry to flourish. I want to create kindness through clarity—helping leaders stay informed, aligned, and equipped to focus on the shared work of ministry.

## Gary Carlson

I call three places home — Connecticut, Japan, and now Minnesota! Growing up in a Christian home in Connecticut, I attended Bethany Covenant Church in New Britain (now in Berlin). At Camp Squanto (Pilgrim Pines) at the age of nine, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. During confirmation I began to sense a call to become a pastor, and that calling was affirmed and encouraged by the pastors and people of my church.

While in college I applied and was accepted to be a one-year short-term missionary to Japan, serving from the fall of 1975. In that year God showed me that he was calling me to return to Japan as a career missionary, and that was affirmed by the Covenant mission staff there. I graduated from North Park Theological Seminary in 1983. In the same year I was ordained to Word and Sacrament at the Covenant Annual Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, where my wife Pauline and I were also commissioned as Covenant missionaries to Japan. We served in the areas of church planting and evangelism with the Japan Covenant Church for forty years.

I am currently interim pastor at Fridley Covenant Church in Fridley, MN. In my free time I enjoy taking long walks, reading novels in Japanese, and I have been known to play a bit of bluegrass banjo! Pauline and I have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and seven grandchildren. They all live in Tokyo, so we go back once a year to see them all!

