

MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

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CHRISTIAN
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From the Deputy Executive Director

The reports below are from the ministries of the denomination and – in a real sense – are extensions of the ministries of more than a thousand congregations that make up the Christian Reformed Church. Saying it that way is more than rhetoric. Rather, understanding these ministries that way is imbedded in the polity of the CRC. These reports are an attempt to both inform and provide a measure of accountability. We know very well that these reports only reflect what we do together as a church. It is also recognized that the recipient congregations also minister in their settings. Collectively, the ministries are multiplied, the cause of Christ is served, and we together pray to “the Lord of the harvest” that “the world may know....”

The question we are presently considering is whether this means of providing information and exercise accountability is still effective. We invite you into that consideration. If you have a conviction about this please send an email to Henry Hess, Director of Communications for the CRC (hhess@crcna.org).

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Chaplaincy continues to be a dynamic and exciting area of ministry. Endorsed chaplains in the CRCNA are at an all time high: 122. By most reports and by our own observation, more seminary students are expressing an interest in chaplaincy than ever before. Maybe it is because the opportunities in chaplaincy are becoming more visible, or just indicates a declining interest in more traditional ministries. In either case, we are gearing up to help encourage and guide a growing number of students through the necessary training and endorsement process in the coming years. Our hope is that the economy will not reduce the hiring opportunities for these new candidates.

Almost fourteen years ago (1998) Synod agreed with the recommendation of this office that the relationship between calling churches and chaplains should be more structured and thus adopted the use of what is called a Covenant of Joint Supervision in which the church, the chaplain and this office sign on to a three-way agreement of reporting and supervisory responsibilities. Slowly, but surely, this type of document has become an important tool for creating discussions and accountability between the parties. Since it and a chaplain's endorsement are both to be renewed every five (previously three) years, we are slowly linking and synchronizing the two in a way that requires a renewal of this document before endorsement can be renewed. This was the first year that these two documents came together in every endorsement due for renewal. Though it has taken longer than first hoped, it seems clear that this was a wise move to create more conversations, more accountability, and a greater sense of support and supervision all around.

Disability Concerns

Because Disability Concerns (DC) supports churches in their ministry, the most important news comes out of the churches themselves.

Annually, churches are asked about their accessibility as part of the larger *Yearbook* survey. DC uses the results to quantify churches' efforts to become more hospitable to people with disabilities. In regards to building accessibility, churches reported this year that about 85 percent of them have accessible main entrances, worship areas, fellowship areas, and bathrooms. Ten years ago, only about 45 percent of churches reported that these four areas of their buildings were accessible. Clearly, making facilities accessible has been a major priority for many congregations over the past 10 years.

In that same time period, churches have provided sign language interpretation; aids for people who are hard of hearing, deaf, or visually impaired; transportation; and special programs for people with disabilities. However, the increases have not been as dramatic. For example, the same percentage of churches offers sign language interpretation now as did 10 years ago. Those that offer transportation to people with disabilities have increased from 33 percent to 50 percent.

A pastor once asked, "Why should our church build a ramp? No one who uses a wheelchair attends our church anyway." He answered his own question. As churches make their buildings and programming more accessible, more people with disabilities can become involved. How is your church doing? DC would love to help.

Faith Alive Christian Resources

Publishing

While Faith Alive is known for its high quality Reformed curricula it has a rapidly expanding line of stand alone books and it will launch a new imprint, SquareInch. Four books will be launched under this new imprint in February 2012.

- *Metallica: Searching for the Everywhere God in Everything*, by John Van Sloten
- *150: Finding your Story in the Psalms*, by Kevin Adams
- *Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places*, by Chuck DeGroat
- *Song of the Scientist*, by Cal Dewitt (coming in March)

SquareInch focuses on publishing books of general interest at the intersection of faith and culture. The imprint will bring new voices from previously unpublished gifted authors into the conversation. These books are available at faithaliveresources.org, or on Amazon. Each one is also available in a various eBook formats.

Another book published by Faith Alive last year has become a surprising success. *Seeking God's Face*, by Phillip Reinders, is a guide to daily prayer based in the scriptures. Many people are using this book to explore the rich tradition of the "daily office," an ancient practice that has enjoyed resurgence.

The Banner

The Banner has recently had some staff changes. Jena Vander Ploeg has left her features editor position to go into freelance editing. In her place The Banner hired Faith Alive editor, Judy Hardy, as associate editor. Judy will take over most of Jena's tasks and serve as The Banner's onsite staff person at the Grand Rapids denominational building.

Pastor-Church Relations

Current literature includes considerable discussion about the formation and functioning of effective teams. Councils, staff members and congregations experience some of the dynamics that describe these effective teams which are often characterized by an atmosphere of trust, a willingness to engage conflict, commitment to common goals, mutual accountability, and a focus on collective results. It is a joy to work as a member of an effective team whether that is a council, a staff, a committee, or the combination of any of these groups. Effective congregational ministries are often fueled by a strong sense of team within the staff as well as with the council and volunteers/lay leaders.

The Staff Ministry Committee (SMC) of Pastor-Church Relations has been exploring key ingredients of effective team functioning. This is a timely subject for SMC since its membership is in transition. RuthAnn Schuringa (Caledon ON) has recently finished her term of service and Laura Keeley (Holland MI) will be completing her term in the spring of 2012. Pastor Henry Kranenburg (Hamilton ON) joined the team early in 2011, and Kevin Kroondyk (Grand Rapids MI) and Rachel Vroege (Chilliwack BC) will be attending their first meeting in March, 2012. Ongoing members are Norm Thomasma (Stevensville MI), Ryan Link (Sioux Falls SD), Brad Bierma (Grand Rapids MI), Anita Beem (Troy MI) and Jeanne Kallemeyn (Hudsonville MI). The team is reading and discussing together Patrick Lencioni's book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* as well as exploring team building strategies, and is also considering ways to encourage team building at the congregational level.

Safe Church Ministry

The office of Safe Church Ministry responds to requests for consultation regarding safe church policies or situations involving abuse. Over 150 interactions with churches, organizations and individuals have been recorded this quarter.

To better equip Safe Church Ministry team members to be a resource in their local churches, plans are being finalized for the first Safe Church Ministry conference. As well as providing learning opportunities and valuable synergy; the conference will help Safe Church Ministry to build partnerships with other organizations who are presenting at the conference (local and international). Churches are encouraged to support Safe Church Ministry by providing resources for their representative to attend this conference (thus developing closer partnership with churches).

Highlights:

- **Team Training:** Weekend training in Classis Eastern Canada included overviews of the Panel Process, the new resource *“Safe Church Ministry: A Church Leader’s Role*, and church responses to domestic violence.
- **Restorative Practices:** Safe Church Ministry partnered with the Office of Social Justice to present a day-long workshop on restorative practices and hosted an informal dinner discussion regarding future collaboration.
- **Updating:** Updated contact information for Safe Church Team members has been posted to a Google map, soon to be available on our website.
- **Presentation:** An overview of Safe Church Ministry and information related to abuse was presented to two classes of senior Calvin Seminary students.
- **Intervention:** The office of Safe Church Ministry provided resources and participated in a panel in response to a situation that became public at Calvin College.
- **Publicity:** Conference publicity has been posted to the website and sent to safe church team members.

Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations continues its pursuit of greater impact for ministry through partnerships by collaborating with denominational agencies, specialized ministries, the Reformed Church in America, and institutions, as well as organizations outside the CRC. The strategic initiatives we are primarily responsible for are: (1) antiracism and racial reconciliation programs providing education and resources, (2) the Multiethnic Conference, (3) All Nations Heritage celebrations, and (4) scholarships providing both financial assistance and training in antiracism and cultural awareness for students.

Within our mandate, we provide education and resources to equip our denomination to combat the effects of the sin of racism with materials and workshops. First are the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR), Widening the Circle in Canada, and the newest Dance of Racial Reconciliation 2. Second is Church between Borders: A Workshop on Immigration Reform (CBB). Third is *Facing Racism*, a DVD for small groups to engage the issue. Fourth is Leadership & Race, a workshop to develop and support leadership that contributes to racial justice.

Our work and its effectiveness is expanding throughout our North American borders, thanks to the hard work of

regional staff and volunteers. For example, in Canada we represented the CRC and met with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in Nova Scotia. The visit was a catalyst for the CRCs in the Maritime Provinces to work together on Aboriginal issues. In New Jersey, we held a DORR workshop at a Hispanic church that recognized that within its own multicultural community it needed to understand antiracism and racial reconciliation and how to reach out to others. In California, the two Race Relations Teams are functioning. A CBB workshop and a facilitator training are scheduled for the area in February. A similar workshop will be conducted during the same time in Grand Rapids.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Celebrating and dreaming—that’s what participants do when they attend an SCE learning event. Every year, SCE hosts five to six learning events throughout Canada and the US. Twelve smaller congregations, represented by the pastor and three ministry leaders, gather for a time of learning, encouragement, sharing, and fellowship.

The first afternoon of the event focuses on celebration. Too often congregations tend to put much of their energy into the church’s *challenges* or trying to fix *what’s wrong*. By celebrating what’s going well, and the gifts and resources a church has, a shift in how things are approached can take place. The theme of celebration comes through in a number of ways at the events: the presentation the Home Missions Regional Leader gives; *Celebrate What’s Right with the World* DVD; individual and group activities; and an atmosphere of appreciation.

Dreaming is the theme for the second day. After being encouraged to celebrate what is, participants dream about what could be. A variety of activities and presentations fill the day. This includes: some of the ministry leaders sharing how an SCE grant has impacted their congregation and its community; thought-provoking tasks; presentations on healthy congregations; and the opportunity to dream about a project that would enhance congregational health. In several instances, the dreaming has led to new and exciting ministry.

The denominational priority is to create and sustain healthy congregations. And that’s exactly what SCE is all about.

CRWRC

For 50 years, CRWRC has been living justice and loving mercy on your behalf. Since its humble beginnings in 1962, CRWRC has represented the love and hope of Jesus in communities around the world. By responding to natural disasters, providing peace in times of conflict, feeding the hungry, and enabling communities to lift themselves out of poverty, CRWRC has delivered hope

to the world on behalf of the Christian Reformed denomination.

Take time at your Classis meeting to celebrate all the good work that you've been doing through CRWRC. It is because of your support and prayers that CRWRC has been able to share God's heart for the world for the past 50 years.

At the same time, please continue to pray for CRWRC as we meet new challenges. For example, in the Philippines CRWRC is distributing emergency food and supplies after Tropical Storm Washi killed more than 1,250 people and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless, and in Africa CRWRC is completing its aid of food, clean water, and livestock assistance following the East Africa drought. Pray for staff and volunteers, that they may offer hope in these times of disaster. At the same time, CRWRC staff and partners are also facing the ongoing, daily disaster of injustice, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and malnutrition in many communities. Please pray for God's blessing on this ministry.

We look forward to celebrating the past 50 years of ministry with you, and are excited about what God has in store for us in the next 50 years as we continue to partner in ministry! For more information about the anniversary, please visit www.crwrc.org/50

Calvin College

On December 13, 2011, the Calvin Presidential Search Committee unanimously recommended Dr. Michael Le Roy, Provost and Executive Vice President at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, to Calvin's Board of Trustees for the position of President. The Board met January 6 & 7, 2012 in special meetings to get to interview Dr. Le Roy, and approved him as the next president at that meeting. Dr. Le Roy also met faculty and staff of Calvin Seminary as well as with leadership of the CRC on January 6. He will be in Hamilton, Ontario in February to be interviewed by the CRCNA Board of Trustees. The CRCNA Board will then place him on the Agenda for Synod 2012 for an interview and ratification by Synod in June as the final step in the process. Dr. Le Roy and his family are eager to join the Christian Reformed church when they arrive in Grand Rapids and will be deeply committed its mission and Reformed theology. Upon ratification by Synod 2012, Le Roy will become the ninth president of Calvin College, taking the helm on July 1, 2012.

Chaplain Mary Hulst, of the search committee, wrote in a letter to CRC pastors: "Dr. Le Roy is pious, wise, intellectually gifted, academically astute, collaborative and humble. He is a man who loves the Reformed faith, is eager to join the CRC, and aligns easily with our particular expressions of Reformed theology and practice."

Please pray for the Le Roy family as they experience further interviews, prepare to move from Spokane to Grand Rapids, and say farewell to their friends and colleagues in the Whitworth community. And, please remember Gaylen and Susan Byker in your prayers in

these final months at Calvin. We wish them God's blessing and thank them for their service in God's kingdom.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Transitions: Change is part of life and ministry. Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has experienced and is experiencing change. Rev. Richard Sysma will be retiring as Dean of Students/International Student Advisor at the end of this academic year. A search process is underway for a replacement, though CTS is clear that the spirit of service Rev. Sysma and his wife, Sandra, have so freely shared will be very hard to replace.

As you pray for this need, CTS also invites you to pray for ongoing searches for a Director of Mentored Ministries and also a Professor of Missiology. These postings and other news can be found at www.calvinseminary.org. The nomination process is open and the assistance of the churches is vital.

CTS continues to prepare for the launch of its five-year, on-line Master of Divinity cohort in the fall of 2012. Applications are being received for this ground-breaking small group that will learn where they are as Calvin Seminary reaches these students where they live. Your help in identifying potential students is vital as we continue to seek to serve the church and church leaders in various avenues.

Finally, we invite continued prayer for Dr. Ron Nydam, Professor of Pastoral Care, who was recently diagnosed as having a recurrence of leukemia. Treatment over the month of December has resulted in preparations being made for a bone marrow transplant. Thank you for your ongoing care and concern for Dr. Ron Nydam and his family. You can follow the Nydam's journey by going to Care Pages at the [rjnydam](http://rjnydam.com) site.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The three Canadian CRC urban Aboriginal ministries are Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, and Native Healing Centre found in Edmonton. As more Aboriginal people migrate to the big city, these ministries are evolving into important cross roads. Many Aboriginal people have left loving support systems, community and family to move into the city. This rural to urban transition affects folks spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. A hot or cold drink, a meal together, and times of common prayer help urban Aboriginal people adjust to their new environment.

The three ministries become the listening ears and hands of help during high crisis in people's lives. It is the gospel story of Jesus' love dwelling among his created beings that builds a lasting peace. In Edmonton this past year, ENHC ran a successful kid's cultural camp and pre-

employment program as well as developing a worship circle called “Standing Stones”. IMCF helped people in Regina to honour Christ’s sacrificial death through a ‘Memorial wake’ held on Good Friday. The ministry’s Chimatawa Dance Troupe learned and danced traditional and hip hop dances glorifying Christ. In Winnipeg, IFC staff and volunteers created a new parent centre within the ministry. Unfortunately, a break in occurred and educational toys and books were taken. The broader Winnipeg community responded by giving even more books and educational toys to the ministry.

The Creator’s Spirit continues to empower ministry staff and volunteers and community members to worship and live in truth, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, wisdom and love.

Back to God Ministries International

Thanks to new media outreach opportunities, in 2011 Back to God Ministries International recorded more than 16 million contacts with people all around the world. That’s more than double the number of contacts from the previous year—and doesn’t account for those who received the message via radio, TV or print media but didn’t contact BTGMI.

The major reason for the significant increase is due to advances in social and digital media. However, our media ministry teams also continue to share the Gospel through more traditional means. For example:

- Following the March 2011 earthquake in Japan, BTGMI began broadcasting a new program, *Words of Hope*, in cooperation with the Reformed Church of Japan. Response has been encouraging. Nobuhiro, from the devastated area of northern Japan, told our Japanese staff that the program encouraged him to begin attending a partner church in the area.
- Lasiyem, a Muslim convert, is one of more than 16,000 members of BTGMI listener communities in Indonesia. When she first became a Christian, Lasiyem’s mother rejected and abused her. Then our listener community coordinator gave her mother a radio, and now Lasiyem and her mother listen to our programs together. The messages have touched both of their hearts with God’s love.
- Pastors in Africa have very little opportunity for in-depth theological training. One pastor from Central African Republic told BTGMI French staff that our Bible study correspondence course renewed his pastoral ministry and prayer life. Since the program began in 2003, more than 15,000 participants have completed the Bible study course.

Your support enables BTGMI to reach millions of people. Through media ministry God is transforming hearts and lives one person at a time.

At the time of this writing the Board is searching for a new director candidate (following the death of BTGMI Director Bob Heerspink last October) to present for approval to Synod 2012.

Home Mission

As Christian Reformed Home Missions continues to sharpen the focus and clarity of our mission in North America, we are prayerfully engaged in defining our current reality.

As we spend time praying and discerning this, we are asking some critical questions: What is it that God is specifically calling us to do? How can we best serve the congregations of the CRC? And how can we move forward with the next generation of churches while continuing to respect the needs of our established congregations?

While we ponder these things, we are committed to a posture of coming alongside our denomination’s churches and leaders, walking with them as a coach and partner on their journey. That means not only partnering with classes and local churches to multiply new churches and campus ministries, but also working with older churches that are facing uncertainty and are struggling with tough questions.

Home Missions is experiencing a renewed sense of urgency and opportunity to serve the CRC through:

- **Partnering with classes.** We are forming partnerships that are leading to local church renewal and new ministry development initiatives.
- **Developing diverse leaders on a local level.** We want to help identify and train the next generation of diverse missional leaders for the CRC.
- **Coaching.** We walk alongside local churches that want to become more mission-shaped and outward-focused in their neighborhoods.
- **Expectant prayer.** We continue to be on our knees, seeking God’s face as we listen to what He is calling us to do.
- **Cluster development.** We are encouraging local pastors and leaders of new and established churches to gather together regularly.
- **Discipleship.** We are guiding and training local churches in their small groups, evangelism, and prayer ministries.

Through all of our work, we are also taking what we’re learning at the edges of ministry and applying it to our work in helping to lead and grow the Christian Reformed Church.

World Missions

What does the Good News of Jesus look like here and now? How has God brought us together to be part of that? These two questions are at the core of transformation networks.

Through a growing chain of such networks, Christian Reformed World Missions and its partners are identifying, encouraging, equipping, and connecting Christian leaders for Christ-centered renewal in lives, communities, and cultures across the globe. Begun in Nicaragua over 10 years ago, the movement has spread to Nigeria and El Salvador. Now, it's beginning in Bangladesh, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and the United States of America too.

In December, CRWM missionary Joel Huyser met with potential transformation network partners in Montreal, Quebec seeing and hearing how they were working to proclaim Christ's name in Montreal. Afterwards, he joined colleagues from Christian Reformed Home Missions and Canadian Diaconal Ministries in dreaming how CRCNA members, congregations, and agencies might connect, encourage, learn from, and contribute to Gospel transformation in French-speaking Canada. Though the dialogue is just beginning, hopes are strong that these conversations could lead to a strong coordinated, collaborative, and Christ-centered outreach in Montreal that connects with similar transformation networks worldwide

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Youth Unlimited

There are people in need all around us. A widow that needs a new roof. A family without shelter. Children who just need someone to care. A hungry man without means to get nutrition. How will the body of Christ respond to those asking for help?

This summer, Youth Unlimited is offering two faith forming options to expand a student's worldview and deepen their Kingdom work ethic while sharing the Gospel in a tangible way.

Churches that are partnering with Youth Unlimited to host Serve have asked for nearly 1,600 students to help complete hundreds of service projects which will open the door to thousands of people hearing the Gospel and advancing in their walk with Christ.

As a result of Youth Unlimited's 2011 large youth event, Live It!, the city of Marion, Indiana has asked Youth Unlimited to return and recruit 200-400 students and leaders to continue encouraging people by renovating and refreshing parts of their community. Youth Unlimited is stepping up to meet this need by offering a new event for the summer of 2012 called the Marion Project! Our world is calling out for Christ's love and presence and Youth Unlimited is excited to mobilize a generation of young people eager to step up in faith and engage it!

Calvinist Cadet Corps

This report is a follow up to the report only two months

ago, when we were assigned "Transitions." The new president for Cadets will be Larry DeHaan, a builder from Jenison, Michigan. The new Cadet Chaplain is Jim Hoekstra, a Bible teacher at South Christian High School in Cutlerville, Michigan. We thank God for both men and the leadership they bring.

Another advance in leadership took place in December, when Daniel Nandwa, the Cadet coordinator in Kenya, trained a dozen new African Cadet counselors. The Kenyans have done well in taking initiative to train and grow without need for North Americans to be present every time. We praise God for their progress and pray that they continue to flourish and serve Him in this way.

Other news will have to wait until the next report. Cadets' annual Congress is scheduled to take place two days after the due date of this report.

Partners Worldwide

This past year, Partners Worldwide empowered thousands of business people and entrepreneurs around the world to overcome poverty with sustainable solutions. As people fulfill their unique calling in Christ's transformation, and this movement of business people gains tremendous momentum, the Christian Reformed Church is making a lasting impact in people's lives through the support of Partners Worldwide.

Business affiliates of Partners Worldwide mentor and encourage business people across the globe. This year, more than 400 dedicated mentors offered over 11,400 hours as they walked alongside others in long term partnerships.

These businesses have been able to maintain 25,062 jobs and created 1,638 more jobs, directly impacting the lives of 133,500 people with a sustainable job and steady income!

One business owner in Haiti points to the book of Ruth where "owners are instructed not to work their whole field but to leave the edges for the poor to work; yet, many people these days tend to work the whole field, bag the excess, and then hand out the bags to the poor."

She says her calling to business is essential in long-term solutions to poverty. "To me, [providing employment](#) is the most obvious and effective way a Christian can care for the poor."

Thank you for partnering in this vital ministry of Partners Worldwide, and we ask you to continue affirming and commissioning business people as members of the Body of Christ. We look forward to partnering with more CRC churches to continue creating jobs and transforming lives!