

On a Mission

Essential News from Christian Reformed Home Missions

Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ's mission.

Colorado Church Still Growing, with God's Help

Nearly twenty years ago, pastor Shawn Sikkema was leading a new Colorado church plant that was struggling to grow above 100 people. These days, that church — *Eastern Hills Community Church* — packs 2,300 people into three services every weekend and overflows with a wide range of evangelism and youth programs, small groups, and support groups.

So how does a new church last so long, grow so much, and become such a presence in the community? "It really is a God thing," Sikkema remarks. "God has clearly had His hand in our ministry, and we've been able to keep growing and reach a lot of people for Him."

Formed in the Denver suburb of Aurora, Colorado in 1989 with help from Christian Reformed Home Missions, *Eastern Hills* wasn't always a thriving mega-church, of course. Like many young church planters, Sikkema struggled at first to attract new members and was unsure how long this new worship community would last. "I had originally planted a church in British Columbia in 1985 that didn't work out, so I was well-acquainted with the challenge of getting a new church off the ground," says Sikkema.

However, Sikkema and his team had a clear vision. "From the beginning, we were intentional about being relational, accepting, and inviting to those in our community," he says. "We wanted to ask the hard questions about what it would take to reach people and bring the gospel to them effectively. We have always had a clear commitment to reaching and renewing our community for Christ."

At the heart of Sikkema's vision was a passion for prayer. "We've prayed a lot, and are committed to holding fast to the vision God has given us, to renew this community," he says. Sikkema was also no stranger to hard work. Shortly before the first worship service at *Eastern Hills*, Sikkema and others phoned 20,000 homes throughout



Rev. Shawn Sikkema

Denver, inviting people to worship. "Almost overnight, we became a 200-member church," he recalls.

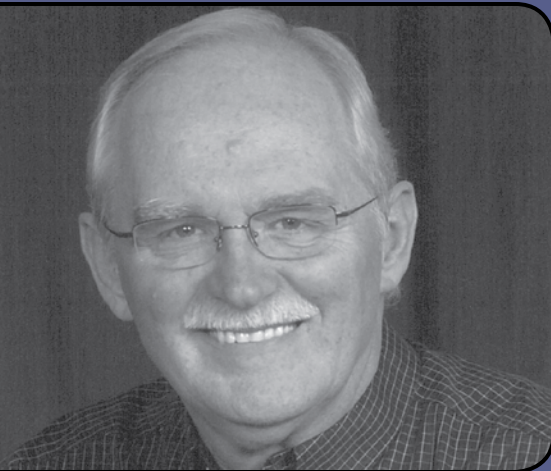
Still, the road to becoming a popular, community-focused church was not easy. "There have been many challenges along the way," states Sikkema. "We have constantly changed to meet the community's needs. We were originally very liturgical in worship style, for example, but over time we had to become more contemporary and evangelistic." Sikkema also learned to become more focused on ministering to the youth in Aurora. "Young people are the key to the future, and that's why we put a lot of resources into our youth ministry," he says.

If *Eastern Hills* continues to grow in the future, it will also be in part because Sikkema has made leadership development a part of his DNA as a church planter. Sikkema points to a person he hired in 1992, with help from an additional Home Missions staffing grant. "We appointed

Continued on last page



Bearing Fruit—That Lasts



Ben Vandezande

One of the joys of being involved in ministry for a while is the privilege of seeing how God has blessed our efforts with some real fruit. Often people will surprise you and say, “You probably don’t realize it but you really helped shape my ministry in that conversation we had.” And sometimes we are aware, even in the moment, that God’s Spirit is leading and shaping something and He’s using you to do it.

What’s even better is when the fruit lasts. God chose and appointed us “so that we might go and bear fruit — fruit that lasts.” (John 15:16) That’s true for each of us personally. We have been “chosen and appointed” to bear fruit. That’s also true for our churches and for organizations such as Home Missions.

In this newsletter, you read stories about significant fruit — fruit that lasts, which God has given to these ministries. They demonstrate the power of the gospel to change lives and transform communities especially through local churches, campus ministries and missional initiatives that have *measurable* community impact in the context in which they are found.

Working with partners ...

Home Missions serves as a *catalyst* to stimulate local partners to launch new churches, campus ministries, and missional initiatives. We work with The Network for Congregations and other agencies to *assist* churches in discovering their place in God’s mission. We

cultivate leaders and pastors and gather them together in clusters for coaching, learning, support, accountability and prayer.

... expecting fruitfulness

We in Home Missions work to create healthy environments for leaders to grow and ministries to flourish. And flourishing means bearing fruit — fruit that lasts. And, thank God, we are seeing more and more evidences of fruitfulness. May we continue to *expect* fruit but also be *surprised* by fruitfulness in our work. After all, it is God who is at work in and through us to make the fruit possible. John 15:16 ends with these words: “and so whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” Let’s pray for much fruit, born of the Spirit at work in and through us.

And by the way, you don’t have to be an older person (like me) to see this kind of fruit. Young vines bear much fruit.

—Ben Vandezande

Four Decades of Faith at the University of Toronto

The late 1960s were an ominous time of war and civil unrest, and North American university campuses were at the forefront of the action. Against the backdrop of an unpopular war, political assassinations, and rioters taking to city streets, students everywhere protested loudly on a daily basis.

But at the University of Toronto, a man named Morris Greidanus called on students to do something different, something quieter: worship God. In 1968, Greidanus started Hart House Fellowship, with support from Home Missions. Hart House Fellowship was a campus ministry full of lectures, film nights, and discussion groups for graduate students.

Now simply known as the campus ministry at the University of Toronto, it’s

still going strong 41 years later. “You have to acknowledge God’s faithfulness in this longevity,” says Dr. Brian Walsh, who has been campus pastor for the ministry for the past 15 years.

Walsh was an undergraduate student at the university in 1974, just six years after the campus ministry started. After he started participating in Hart House Fellowship activities that year, he began assisting pastor John Veenstra with on-campus evangelism and the weekly film series.

When Veenstra departed in the late 1970s, Walsh took on an even more active role in the ministry. “During this time, Hart House Fellowship became an actual church, so the campus ministry became more focused

on expanding beyond simply worship,” recalls Walsh. “To support that vision, we led conferences and retreats across the province.”

Today, Walsh leads a team of four permanent and two part-time staff members who all help lead worship, Bible studies, pastoral counseling, film discussions and seminars, and a weekly dinner fellowship.

Walsh also leads “Wine Before Breakfast,” a service of the Eucharist, the Word, prayer, and music that takes place Tuesday mornings at 7:22. In addition, he oversees the ministry’s Emerging Leader internship program, a scholarship supported by Home Mis-

Continued on last page

California Church Plant Gives Birth to Cluster

In 1990, pastor Kevin Adams decided to team up with Home Missions to plant *Granite Springs Church* in fast-growing South Placer County, California.

Little did he know that the church would become a catalyst for church planting and help spawn a new leadership training movement in this still-growing community.

Adams, who grew up in Michigan, was serving as pastor of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Princeton, Minnesota when he was contacted by Home Missions and other denominational representatives in 1990. The CRC had decided it was the right time to plant a church in the area, which is near the state capital of Sacramento. At that time, thousands of new people were moving to South Placer County each year, and few of them had found a church home.

In 1991, Kevin and his wife Gerry decided to make the move and become California church planters. They spent their first summer getting to know the Lincoln, California area and searching for a launch team. Within months, Kevin and Gerry were leading small group Bible studies and holding strategic planning meetings with local church

representatives. Soon, a launch team of 15 adults and 10 children came together.

Eighteen years later, 400 people now worship at *Granite Springs* every Sunday, and the church reaches approximately 700 people through its many ministries. "Many of these people were not attending church at all before they came to our church," marvels Adams.

In addition to leading a long-lasting church plant that has touched many lives in the Lincoln community, Adams has also been able to use his leadership skills to help birth a new church multiplication movement in the Sacramento region. Currently, he's serving as New Church Development Specialist for the Home Missions West Coast Regional Team. He also leads the Sierra Leadership Network, which is a Home Missions-sponsored training program for new church leaders.

Adams also leads a growing ministry cluster in the region, which includes ten CRC pastors from new and existing congregations that regularly meet to pray and discuss ways to collaborate and birth new churches. "Relational networks like this are wonderful ways to grow ministry," says Adams. "It re-



Rev. Kevin Adams

moves the isolation of ministry and encourages relationships while building in peer mentoring and coaching."

For Adams, leading a growing church and helping direct a church planting and leadership training movement is all the work of God. "We have been richly blessed by the mercy of God, without a doubt," he says. "And we've also had many faithful supporters over the years who have helped make this possible."

Reaching Your Community and the World with the Power of the Gospel



Praise God! He is changing lives with the power of the Gospel in your community and around the world.

This year, Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions have joined efforts to shine a spotlight on how God has used your partnership with us to bring the message of salvation to people in North American and around the world. From Easter to Pentecost, Home and World Missions will be focusing on our shared theme from Romans 1:16: The Gospel is the power of God, and it brings salvation for those who believe!

For a downloadable devotional and two ministry highlight videos, go to www.crcna.org/powerofthegospel.

Honoring Lives and Legacies through Gifts to Home Missions

Memorial donations to Christian Reformed Home Missions through January 31, 2010. Those memorialized or honored are listed in bold, with respective donors indicated below each name.

In Memorium:

In Memory of Anthony Admiraal

Tena A. Admiraal

In Memory of Loraine Apol

Henry W. Apol

In Memory of Roger Ball

John and Catherine Mulder

In Memory of Jack F. Billings

Henrietta Billings

In Memory of Gerrit Bos

Henry A. Bos

In Memory of Herbert Bosloper

John A. and Judith K. Bosloper

In Memory of Rev. Edward Cooke

Annette M. Cooke

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In Memory of Baldwin De Korne

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Clara Togtman

In Memory of Emily Vandenbos

John R. Vandenbos

In Memory of Trent Van Diest

Grace D. Van Diest

In Memory of John Van Drie

Susan Van Drie

In Memory of Bill and Deane Van Dyke

Dr. William K. and Mary Van Dyke

In Memory of Al and Hazel Wanders

Charles and Marsha Veldhuizen

In Memory of Orville J. Whip

Virginia Whip

In Memory of Joe Wybenga

James H. and Lorraine J. Halma

In Memory of Ezzat S. Younathan

Janet N. Younathan

In Memory of our daughter Ann

Gerald and Helen Bosch

In Memory of Floyd Leo's mother

Gerry Bangen

In Memory of loved ones

Ada Marie Pontier

In Honor:

In Honor of Chaplains

Phyllis Van Andel

In Honor of Dorothy Den Ouden

David Den Ouden

Continued from first page

a woman named Jan Engbers to be our ministry coordinator, and she's now the executive pastor," he says. "We've looked to find people like Jan who have the right leadership skills to help us grow."

This year, Sikkema will become the leader of a new ministry cluster in the Denver area. This group of churches and church leaders will work together to find diverse missional leaders and plant new churches in the region. "I was really shaped by Home Missions, in terms of its leadership training and dedication to God's mission," he says. "Hopefully God can work through this cluster to bring the gospel to this entire community."

Continued from page 2

sions. "Home Missions is really committed to raising up young leaders for the North American mission," Walsh says. "We grabbed onto this program immediately, because we believe in the future of the church and are committed to a vision of campus ministry that provides a place for apprenticeship of leaders."

When Walsh reflects on the success of the past four decades of ministry at the University of Toronto, he believes that God was instrumental in bringing the right group of pastors to the university. "Together, we've all been deeply rooted in and shaped by a vision of biblical transformation. That's the common thread running through all 41 years," he says.