



# Connections

## WESTERN CANADA REGION

Report to Classes in Western Canada

Fall 2009

*Following Christ. In Mission Together*



Christian Reformed

## Home Missions

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### A TIME TO REFOCUS

Home Missions, like all denominational agencies has been experiencing the reality of the economic recession which has significant implications on our work. We ended the fiscal year with an approximate 2.8 million dollar deficit, which includes a planned spend down of some financial reserves. This represents about 1/3 of our budget. As a result we have had to

cut our funding to new church plants, put most new work on hold for the first 3-6 months of the new fiscal year which started July 1, 2009. The loss of income is a result of decreased Denominational Ministry Shares and above ministry share giving.

For the past year, Home Missions has been under new leadership with Ben Vandezande as our new director. Ben has been leading us in a strategic planning process, in which we are rethinking what is the main thing that we do. We hope to present details of this process by the time classis meets. We are unable to do all the things we have done in the past, but it is clear to us that we are still about developing partnerships that further God's mission so that lives and communities are transformed by God's Spirit. Our core strategies include *developing diverse missional leaders, multiplying new churches and campus ministries, and engaging existing congregations* who want to become more involved in their local communities. We are excited about what God continues to do as his mission advances here in North America. Some highlights of that are expressed in this report.

### MULTIPLYING NEW CHURCHES AND CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Two calls have been extended to a candidate to become a church planter in *either Lethbridge or Airdrie*, Alberta. Both sites have interested CRC people who want to start a new church and so two different calling churches have issued a call to the same prospective planter. With our Sea to Sea funding, we in Canada are able to go ahead with a new plant, though with reduced denominational funding. At the time of writing we don't know to which site or if the planter will actually accept either call.

**Existing CRHM funded church plants:** Just a few comments about CRHM funded churches reveal the challenges and blessings of our mission as CRC in Western Canada:

- **MosaicHouse –Edmonton:** Victor and Eunae Ko have completed their first year. The church has 3 different house churches meeting in various areas of Edmonton, and then they gather all together on Sunday for worship. A total 50-60 people, some of different ethnic people have joined mosaicHouse to date.
- **Downtown Friends -Vancouver.** Mary-Lee Bouwma has started to work bi-vocationally in order to support this work in the urban core of Vancouver. The church has many informal and formal connections with a number of people in the area. Many are interested in spiritual matters, but not necessarily in more formal discipleship or worship.
- **The Tapestry** in Richmond continues to see new people reached and disciplined in this growing plant. A number of Regent College seminary interns also attend The Tap, seeing in it a creative, multi-ethnic congregation engaging its community.
- **The Well**, in Kelowna continues to make a difference in the community of Rutland. One Sunday a month the church 'leaves the building' in an effort to take the love of Christ to the streets in a variety of service projects. Many other weekly service opportunities characterize how this church is impacting the community in tangible ways.

### Non Funded Church Plants

**The Lantern** in Calgary continues to bless the community of Inglewood with innovative ways of using its building and its people to serve the community. Ed and Michelle Top provide creative leadership and the church is well known for its support of their community.

**Hillside** has joined with several other CRCs in reaching beyond its community to also involve themselves in mission work in Uganda. Geoff Vandermolten provides coaching in his capacity as licensed coach to other planters and leaders involved in church planting work.

**West Coast Community** in Delta, BC- Jim Berry works bi-vocationally to support this word and deed ministry. The Berry's have continued to deal with a long struggle with Joan's health, as surgery on her leg was not successful.

**Cariboo Community** in Williams Lake remains a vibrant church focused on discipling people and growing leaders and has continued favor with First Nations people, who comprise up to 25% of the congregation.

**The River** in Edmonton was in negotiations to purchase Taylor College with some partners and turn part of the campus in to a permanent church site. They heard recently that their bid was not accepted. They now are continuing a discernment process to determine what a more permanent home for the church might look like as they outgrow their current rental space.

**New Hope** in Calgary became the calling church for Airdrie, in its desire to start a new church in that growing community.

## Campus Ministries

Our region is blessed with 3 vibrant campus ministries that challenge students with the claims of the gospel, and help them integrate faith and learning. Rick Van Manen at **U of Alberta** had a successful review of his work this past year. He engages with undergraduate students primarily, helping them to integrate faith and learning, and leading them in service projects. Paul Verhoef at **U of Calgary** is currently coordinating the efforts of about 10 multi-faith chaplains. Campus ministry is tied into a student wellness center, and provides a very visible presence along with doctors and counsellors to assisting students. **U of Northern BC** in Prince George, BC with the Lettingas has proven to be a very strategic campus ministry, and because Neil and Virginia are the only full time chaplains, they are called upon to assist in a number of issues and department concerns at the university. They also coordinate other para church agencies on campus, and provide leadership to 'church in a pub' on Sunday afternoon.

## ENGAGE CHURCHES IN A MISSION TO REACH THEIR COMMUNITIES

Many congregations in the region are experiencing some significant challenges. The reasons may vary but the symptoms often look the same: reduced attendance in worship and participation in the life of the church, difficulty in finding officer-bearers willing to serve, reduced financial support, changing leadership dynamics are some. The Regional Ministry Team, collaborating with other resources in the denomination, like Sustaining Congregational Excellence and Pastor Church Relations is available to provide consultation and help to churches on how to address some of these issues, become a more missional presence in their community, strategic planning, assistance in leading Council or congregational retreats, Healthy Church seminars, and other resources to assist congregations toward greater missional effectiveness.

## CULTIVATE DIVERSE MISSIONAL LEADERS

Over 30 participants this past year were part of 3 lay leadership training networks in the region. Billed as 'Reformed theological education for the whole people of God', **Leadership Development Networks** (LDN's) are happening again this fall in 3 locations: Surrey BC, Kamloops, BC and Calgary, AB.

Wilma Vanderleek provides overall leadership and curriculum development based on guidelines provided by synod and coordinates the 3 year program for all three sites. Henry De Vries leads the Kamloops network, Curtis Kovers gives leadership to the Calgary network, called Chinook Mentoring Ministries, and Wilma leads the Surrey network. The training involves participation in a day-a-month interactive teaching forum, reading books dealing with biblical, theological issues and ministry skills, and interacting with a personal mentor. For more information check out our website [www.bcldn.ca](http://www.bcldn.ca).

## Missional Training Network (MTN)

Many local CRC's are more intentional in seeking to be the presence of Christ in their localized community. The goal is seeing communities and neighborhoods that are being transformed by the power of the gospel. Often the church has been a 'come to us' kind of church in which we seek to bring the community into the church, whereas the approach of the missional church movement is to join with what God is already up to in the neighborhood, and taking the church more directly into the community. Obviously these two approaches are not opposed to each other, but rather complement each other. Karen Wilk is giving leadership to a growing Missional Training Hub in Edmonton again this fall, where pastors and leaders commit to personal involvement in their local communities as they also encourage and teach their congregations to do the same. Other MTN hubs are being started in BC and Alberta. Contact Karen for more information [kwministry@shaw.ca](mailto:kwministry@shaw.ca).

## RMT

The Regional Ministry Team is here to serve your congregation. We are working alongside other denominational agencies, helping congregations engage people in ministry, assisting leaders to lead in challenging times, and exploring ways to help the local church connect more directly with its community. Call any one of the team members listed or myself as team leader [mcontant@crcna.org](mailto:mcontant@crcna.org) (604)574-0669). Thanks for your continued support of Home Missions as we seek to partner with you for more fruitful, effective kingdom service.

Blessings, *Martin Contant*