



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

2005-2006

Sharing God's Love
AT HOME AND ABROAD



Guidelines for preparing the

Offering Schedule

It's more than a collection

The offering is more than a collection; that's clear. That means the preparation of the schedule is more than a collection schedule. It is a careful plan of how to help God's people "... excel in this grace of giving" (2 Cor. 8:7). There are a number of parts to this matter of growing in the grace of giving.

Give regularly (1 Cor. 16:2)

The time of the offering is meant to help people bring the offering that they have set aside for the first day of the week. It is essential to people to have this regular pattern in their giving.

Give of our firstfruits (Romans 12:1)

The time of the offering is more about the people's need to give than the church's to receive. Giving is an expression of our *thanksgiving response* to God for His gift to us in Christ. We need to be able to offer our firstfruits as a symbol of our offering ourselves as a "living sacrifice."

Give generously (2 Cor. 8:2)

People give generously because their hearts are open to God's grace and they want to thank God for the work of grace in their lives. That does not come naturally. People need to learn how to give gener-

ously; they need to do so for their own spiritual wellbeing (2 Cor. 9:5, 11).

Give proportionately (2 Cor: 8:3)

People need to be encouraged to give in proportion to how the Lord has blessed them. That is not a flat rate for everyone. It assumes differences in the ability to give. It invites people to give as they "... are able." In fact the Bible invites people to consider giving *sacrificially* when it goes on to say, "...and even beyond their ability."

Give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7)

We need to help people discover the joy of giving. The spirit of thankfulness needs to be primary also in the time of offering in the worship service. Especially when we present the information about the offering, we can do so with joy!

Give knowingly

The congregation assumes that some careful thought has gone into the preparation of the offering schedule. They assume that the deacons know enough about each cause that it deserves to be a priority in their giving. That is also why it is so important to *explain* each offering so that the people can give "knowingly."

Making the schedule

Here are some basic steps to remember:

- 1. Make a list of all offerings** based on the guidelines in this hand-out.
- 2. Use a calendar.** We've enclosed a 2004 offering calendar in this mailing for your convenience.
- 3. Identify on which Sundays specific offerings are requested**, i.e., Home Missions (Easter), World Missions (Pentecost), World Hunger (1st Sunday in November). These are already listed on the offering calendar and on the handy Offering Worksheets, also enclosed.
- 4. Identify special Sundays in your own congregation and classis**, i.e., Lord's Supper Sundays, benevolent funds, diaconal causes, CRWRC, Mission Sundays (Missionary support), Christian Education (Christian school, high school, college, tuition support), classical causes.
- 5. Deduct the above identified offerings** from the total yearly offering spaces.
- 6. Touch base with the pastor, worship committee or others** in the congregation who plan the church's yearly activities.
- 7. Use creativity in completing and assigning the balance of selected offerings** which may include specialized outreach or organizational programs, local or regional agencies, or specific community needs.
- 8. Plan an effective way of informing the congregation** and explaining each offering. Tell the congregation about the ministry. Explaining how people are helped by this cause is helpful in inspiring giving.
- 9. Pray for the ministries you support.** First pray about which ones you should support and then pray for them before or after the offering is taken. Be as specific about the ministries' needs as you are able.

About this handout

This handout is meant to give the diaconate and others involved in preparing the offering schedule some practical guidelines. You will find:

- biblical guidelines on giving
- suggestions for promotion
- guidelines for preparing the offering schedule

We can only make suggestions; you will need to make the important decisions. We hope this helps you as you lead the congregation to "grow in the grace of giving."

Some guidelines

A pastor, commenting on offerings and observing the variety of ways people give, wrote, "The various approaches are not the heart of the issue of giving. The best reasons for giving are heartfelt love and apparent need."

Planning an offering schedule is a **serious** exercise intended to help those who come on Sunday to celebrate and worship their Lord and cheerfully present their offerings.

An offering schedule needs to mirror your church's stewardship plans and reflect the direction the congregation is going in its ministry.

Some Do's...

- Each offering should have a purpose;
- Each offering should be based on need;
- Each offering cause should be carefully researched and selected.

...and Don't's

- Do not simply repeat last year's schedule;
- Do not base offerings on tradition;
- Do not plan offerings for miscellaneous causes.

➤ 1 Decide

who of the deacons will plan the offering schedule. Include one or two members of the congregation.

➤ 2 Announce

the offering schedule preparation to the congregation and ask for input.

➤ 3 Determine

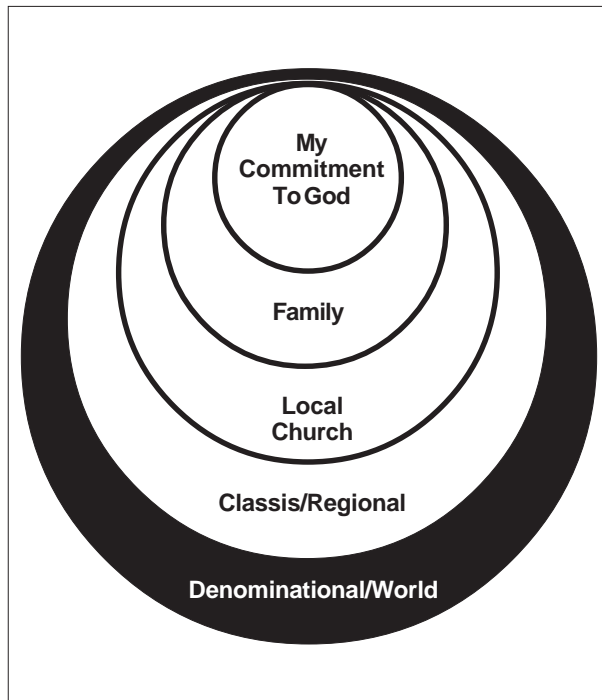
the number of offering opportunities. Each year has 52 Sundays, in addition there are special days: Prayer day, Thanksgiving, Good Friday, Ascension Day, Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. The number of offerings taken in each church is not the same.

➤ 4 Sort

the requests in denominational/classical ministry shares, diaconal ministries, Christian education, and others. Remember that some causes are recommended by Synod (see CRC 2005 Yearbook p. 672-673).

➤ 5 Request

additional information on ministries and organizations that ask for your support such as: mission statements; description of ministry; financial statements; and the number of people they help each year.



Some guidelines to consider

1. Keep the congregation's ministry priorities clearly in mind.
2. Benevolence offerings should be based on need, not on tradition (i.e., one offering for the deacons each month).
3. Budget "ministry shares" and know which CRC ministries do not receive ministry share support (i.e., CRWRC).
4. Budget for local congregational activities (e.g., Church education, GEMS, Cadets, Youth and Senior programs, evangelism outreach). Funds needed for these activities need not necessarily come from offerings.
5. Develop a policy for support offerings (e.g., Christian Education) and be very specific in informing the congregation of the amount required and the schools that will be involved.
6. Add your own...

Denominationally-recommended offerings

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has recommended that its member congregations consider supporting denominational agencies with one or more offerings per year, above ministry-share giving.

The list of these agencies is available on page 671 of the 2005 CRC Yearbook and also online at www.crcna.org, under What We Offer > Resources > Diaconal.

Background information on these agencies and the work in which they are involved is also available at the CRC's web site.

Please consider using the denominational web site as a place of reference for diaconal information on the various agencies of the CRC.

www.crcna.org

What are Ministry Shares?

The Christian Reformed Church's ministry-share system is the foundation that supports much of the work we do together.

Through synod, we have covenanted to support ministries at home and abroad, sharing the cost through ministry shares that each adult member is asked to contribute through his or her church.

Together, we can do far more than any one congregation can do alone. For about \$5 a week per member, you share in the programs of mission and ministry that are unparalleled for a denomination of our size.

Another strength of the system is its stewardship, enabling agencies to save millions of dollars a year that would otherwise be spent on fundraising. More than 87 cents of every ministry-share dollar goes directly into ministry programs.

To find out more about ministry shares, call the denominational office for brochures, a video, and other useful resources.

US: 616-241-1691

CAN: 905-336-2920

Want more resources? The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee can help.

Simply call, fax, write or e-mail: **CRWRC-US**

2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560
tel: (800) 55-CRWRC
fax: (616) 224-0806
e-mail: crwrc@crcna.org

CRWRC-Canada

P.O. Box 5070 Stn LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
tel: (800) 730-3490
fax: (905) 336-8344
e-mail: crwrc@crcna.ca

Diaconal Ministries Canada

A resource to CRCs in Canada
Call: 1-800-730-3490
e: dmc@crcna.ca
www.diaconalministries.com

