



AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2003

June 14-21, 2003
B.J. Haan Auditorium
Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa

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2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560 U.S.A.
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Synod 2003 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 14, at 9:00 a.m. in the B.J. Haan Auditorium of Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. Rev. Timothy J. Ouwinga, minister of First CRC, Orange City, Iowa, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 2003 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected.

A Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 15, 2003, at 3:00 p.m. at the First CRC, 408 Arizona Avenue SW, Orange City. Rev. Timothy J. Ouwinga will officiate at this service.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 8 and 15. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

I. Note to delegates

A. Delegates who travel by car are urged to carpool, if possible, to save on travel costs.

B. Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route. Synod will pay the lower amount of the cost of airfare for one round trip or the cost of driving with the reimbursement rate of 36 cents per kilometer/mile. A bus has been chartered to transport delegates from classes in Michigan and Illinois.

C. Synod provides accidental death and dismemberment insurance (up to \$125,000) for delegates to synod. While there are exclusions and restrictions identified in the policy, travel and activities that are related to participation in synod are covered. Synod does not provide health insurance. Canadian delegates may wish to review their policies and purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside of Canada.

D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 2003* and all supplementary materials.

E. Please direct any questions regarding synod to the office of the general secretary by calling 616-224-0744.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2003 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Synod 1954 stated that “the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not ‘report’” (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, privately, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not taped. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being

taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

B. *Visitor privileges*

1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

(Acts of Synod 1989, p. 445)

IV. Proposed daily schedule

Synod 2000 adopted several recommendations regarding the scheduling of future synods in a one-week format. Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2003:

Opening Saturday

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Opening session of synod

Election of officers

Finalization of committee assignments

11:00 - 12:30 p.m.

Lunch and orientation of committee chairpersons and reporters

1:15 - 5:00 p.m.

Advisory-committee meetings

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Advisory-committee meetings

Sunday

3:00 p.m.

Synodical worship service - First CRC, Orange City

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

Evening

Free time for fellowship

Monday

8:15 - 8:30 a.m.

Opening worship

8:30 - 9:15 a.m.

Brief plenary session

9:15 - 11:45 a.m.

Advisory-committee meetings

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:15 - 5:00 p.m.

Advisory-committee meetings

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Dinner

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Advisory-committee meetings

Tuesday - Friday

8:15 - 8:30 a.m.	Opening worship
8:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Plenary session

Saturday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session

(Final adjournment by 11:45 a.m.)

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2003

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Thomas J. Oosterhuis William D. Nieuwenhuis	Ministers Homer G. Samplonius Kirk MacNeil
Elders.....	Job Den Otter Norman F. Noordhof	Elders..... Hiddo W. Born Gordon E. Vlieg
Alberta South		
Ministers	Michael J. Vandyk Cameron J. Fraser	Ministers Curtis D. Korver John R. Huizinga
Elders.....	Allan Kielstra Peter J. Delleman	Elders..... Tony Vande Kraats Peter De Boer
Arizona		
Ministers	Ray P. De Lange Esteban Lugo	Ministers _____ _____
Elders.....	Peter S. Kuczynski John E. Dykstra, Jr.	Elders..... Harry Molling _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	William G. Vis Karl H. Bratt	Ministers Ted F. Gray Russ Palsrok
Elders.....	Kenneth Prol Phil V. Wassenaar	Elders..... William B. Jorritsma Brent A. Averill
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Michael H. Van Hofwegen Leonard H. Batterink	Ministers Richard C. Koopmans Henry Numan
Elders.....	Dick A. Nagtegaal John A. Vander Hoek	Elders..... William Crofton _____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Bert Slofstra Ronald A. Vanden Brink	Ministers Gerrit Veeneman Herb De Ruyter
Elders.....	Ron Frans Stanley J. Groothof	Elders..... Art Boersma Dick Van Reade
California South		
Ministers	Matthew C. Kim Tim A. Spykstra	Ministers David Y. Chong Randal K. Young
Elders.....	Charles C. Lim Phil Du Bois	Elders..... Benton J. Mulder _____
Central California		
Ministers	Bruce A. Persenaire David L. Smit	Ministers Tony W. Koeman Albert Helder
Elders.....	Floyd Burrus Jacob Oosterman	Elders..... Lambert Veldstra Mark C. Humphreys

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham		
Ministers	Dirk Miedema Richard T. Vander Vaart	Ministers
Elders.....	Martin Bosveld Henry Mulder	Elders..... Paul D. Stadt Peter Kapteyn
Chicago South		
Ministers	Anthony Van Zanten Timothy S. Bossenbroek	Ministers
Elders.....	Richard W. Fennema Donald Holwerda	Elders..... Gerald R. Erffmeyer John M. Ouwinga Richard Molenhouse Henry W. Washington
Columbia		
Ministers	Donald L. Recker Jude J. Reardon	Ministers
Elders.....	Harry Visser Michael J. Vander Veen	Elders..... Kenneth M. Van Schelven Russell J. Van Antwerpen
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Daryl J. Meijer Paul R. Vanderkooy	Ministers
Elders.....	Henry Boehm James Kooistra	Elders..... Norman J. Visser Herbert A. Vanderbeek Peter M. Macaskill Walter Neutel
Georgetown		
Ministers	Laryn G. Zoerhof Matthew A. Palsrok	Ministers
Elders.....	Harold Postma Will G. Byker	Elders..... Jeff Stam Gregory S. Janke Ron Toering Bernie De Young
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	David H. Beelen George F. Vander Weit	Ministers
Elders.....	Evert W. Vermeer James Vander Schaaf	Elders..... David H. Kromminga William Vanden Bosch Peter Buma Robert H. Eames
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Neil P. Jasperse Todd M. Zuidema	Ministers
Elders.....	John Byma Daryl Vogel	Elders..... Gerald A. Koning Brian Bosscher Ken Koll Donald Vander Mey
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Ronald L. Bouwkamp Maurice L. De Young	Ministers
Elders.....	Frank E. Doezema John A. DeJager	Elders..... Ecko De Vries Ronald L. Fyneweaver Bernard L. Scholten Richard Van Doeselaar
Grandville		
Ministers	John P. Gorter Hank F. Vlaardingebroek	Ministers
Elders.....	Jacob Lucas David R. Bouwkamp	Elders..... Daniel B. Mouw Thomas K. Groelsema Larry Groothuis
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Ron D. Black David R. Koll	Ministers
Elders.....	Howard D. Tazelaar Ben H. Tan	Elders..... Moses Chung Sid Sybenga Ben D. Solsma Chas Kim

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Hackensack		
Ministers	Peter L. Padro Daniel L. Mulder	Ministers
Elders.....	Gordon Kuipers Allan A. Vasquez	Elders.....
Hamilton		
Ministers	Kenneth F. Benjamins John H. Bouwers	Ministers
Elders.....	John Gilson William Wiersma	Elders.....
Heartland		
Ministers	Jeffrey L. Sajdak M. Dale Fopma	Ministers
Elders.....	Loren Veldhuizen Ken Draayer	Elders.....
Holland		
Ministers	Wayne A. Brouwer H. David Schuringa	Ministers
Elders.....	Stanley Ellens Roger N. Brummel	Elders.....
Hudson		
Ministers	Albert M. Sideco John G. Keizer	Ministers
Elders.....	James Putt Paul Szto	Elders.....
Huron		
Ministers	John Kerssies Harry J. Bierman	Ministers
Elders.....	Gary VanArragon Peter W. Beimers	Elders.....
Iakota		
Ministers	John L. Witvliet Wilfred Gesch, Jr.	Ministers
Elders.....	Arthur L. Attema Mike Vanden Bosch	Elders.....
Illiana		
Ministers	Joel W. Zuidema James La Grand	Ministers
Elders.....	John Faber Don Dykstra	Elders.....
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Robert D. Ritsema Joseph A. Brinks	Ministers
Elders.....	Leonard D. Klok Hugh Meints	Elders.....
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Randall O. Engle William C. DeVries	Ministers
Elders.....	Jim C. Grit	Elders.....

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior		
Ministers	James Busscher James Dekker	Ministers
Elders.....	Ben Kamphof Tom Van Engen	Elders.....
Minnkota		
Ministers	LeRoy G. Christoffels John P. Douma	Ministers
Elders.....	Wrede Vogel Paul Schelhaas	Elders.....
Muskegon		
Ministers	Leslie D. Van Dyke Edward J. Tamminga	Ministers
Elders.....	Donald Pranger James Sandin	Elders.....
Niagara		
Ministers	Jerry J. Hoytema Walter H. Vanderwerf	Ministers
Elders.....	Sylvan E. Gerritsma John Langendoen	Elders.....
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Kevin L. Jordan Matthew Ooms	Ministers
Elders.....	Mick E. Vanden Bosch William De Kruyff	Elders.....
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Wendell Davelaar Lee A. Koning	Ministers
Elders.....	Frank De Boer Thomas Kerkstra	Elders.....
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Robert D. Drenten John S. Meyer	Ministers
Elders.....	John E. Boynton Carl Veenstra	Elders.....
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Jin Choi David D. Chong	Ministers
Elders.....	Young H. Jae In Chul Kim	Elders.....
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Ho C. Song David K. Watson	Ministers
Elders.....	John M. Moes Douglas G. De Vries	Elders.....
Pella		
Ministers	Harvey A. Brink Kenneth L. Schepel	Ministers
Elders.....	Howard Vander Griend William B. Lapp	Elders.....

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Jake Kuipers B. Bernard Bakker	Ministers
Elders.....	John Bylsma John Schievink	Elders.....
		William T. Koopmans John Veenstra Hank Nieuwstraten Jim Heidinga
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Raymond Slim Michael J. Meekhof	Ministers
Elders.....	Norman Chee Jerry Haskay	Elders.....
		Anthony Begay Keith Bulthuis Phillip Deste Keith Kuipers
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Wondae A. Lee Steve J. Alsum	Ministers
Elders.....	Ronald Hassell Edward G. Dykstra	Elders.....
		Roger A. Bouwman Donald J. Wyenberg David T. Wondergem
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Doug L. Aldrink Pedro L. Toledo	Ministers
Elders.....	Owen J. Baas Harry C. Huyser	Elders.....
		Hector Garcia Thomas R. Dykstra Jon Vander Zee Don Vande Polder
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Thomas J. De Vries Paul R. De Vries	Ministers
Elders.....	Cornelius D. Korhorn Julius Kuiper	Elders.....
		James Cooper Timothy E. Van Zalen
Toronto		
Ministers	Harry D. Zantingh Dirk Evans	Ministers
Elders.....	A. Henry Eygenraam Ben VanderLugt	Elders.....
		H. Richard Nanninga John M. Rottman Ernie Jongkind Fred K. Van Laare
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Kenneth D. Van De Griend Glen O. Gerdes	Ministers
Elders.....	James L. Hendrikse David Kooiman	Elders.....
		Leslie J. Kuiper Peter T. Verhulst John Verdouw
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Jack Huttinga A. William Heersink	Ministers
Elders.....	Dick C. Flikkema Marion Menning	Elders.....
		Wayne A. Knight Jon Alberda
Zeeland		
Ministers	Ronald J. Meyer Henry Lengkeek	Ministers
Elders.....	John Knoppers Gerald Braun	Elders.....
		Bernard F. Tol Gerry G. Heyboer Chester Willemstyn, Sr.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Christian Reformed Church in North America-Michigan Corporation
Christian Reformed Church in North America-Canada Corporation
Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2002 and Synod 2003.

I. Introduction

A. General

The governing Board of the Christian Reformed Church is organized as two legal entities, one in Michigan and one in Canada. Together these legal entities form the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) and are known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The mandate given by synod to the Board is found in its constitution and bylaws, which were recently revised and received approval at Synod 2001 (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 519).

The Board has met two times since Synod 2002 (September and February) and is scheduled to meet again in May. At its meetings, the Board organizes its work around matters of polity, program, and finance. Polity matters often arise from assignments given the Board by a previous synod as well as the work associated with the office of the general secretary. Program and finance matters often arise out of the ministries of the agencies and the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries.

The Executive Committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees meet separately to consider Canadian issues. This arrangement complies with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities and provides a helpful way to consider and recommend solutions to issues unique to the Canadian churches.

Though the Board deals with many ecclesiastical matters as well as required corporate issues, a central focus of its work is to enhance the ministries of the whole church, especially those that are carried on through the agencies of the CRC. It is a privilege to see how many wonderful ministries the Lord is pleased to accomplish through the membership and organizations of the CRC. The work of education, relief and development, radio and TV, care and compassion, and missions at home and abroad have been blessed by God.

The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church in these challenging times.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. Dan Cooke (Region 12), Mr. Paul Dozeman (member-at-large), Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (Region 6), Rev. John P. Gorter (Region 11), Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen (Region 10), Mrs. Gail F. Jansen (member-at-large), Mr. Kenneth Kuipers (Region 10), Rev. W. Wayne Leys (Region 9), Rev. Al Machiela (Region 5), Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschäfer (Region 7), Mrs. Mamie Thomas (member-at-large), Rev. Robert J. Timmer (Region 8), Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen (Region 11), Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (Region 8), and Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks (Region 11).

The members of the Board from Canada are Mrs. Sarah Cook (member-at-large), Rev. James C. Dekker (Lake Superior), Rev. Edward Den Haan (Huron), Mr. Jack Geschiere (Chatham), Mrs. Verney Kho (member-at-large), Mr. Hessel Kielstra (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Rev. Jake Kuipers (Quinte), Mr. Enno Meijers (Toronto), Mr. Andrew Schaafsma (Hamilton), Rev. Bert Sloftstra (B.C. South-East), Dr. William H. Vanden Born (Alberta North), Mr. Edward Vanderveer (member-at-large), Rev. Michael Van Hofwegen (B.C. North-West), and Mr. Leo Van Tuyl (Niagara), and Rev. Norman J. Visser (Eastern Canada).

The general secretary (Dr. David H. Engelhard) and the executive director of ministries (Dr. Peter Borgdorff) serve ex officio as corporate trustees and members of the Board of Trustees.

1. Board officers: Mr. E. Vanderveer, president; Rev. W.W. Leys, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, secretary; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, treasurer.
2. Corporation officers: Mr. E. Vanderveer, president; Rev. W.W. Leys, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, treasurer; Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration.
3. Executive Committee: Rev. J.P. Gorter, Mrs. G.F. Jansen, Rev. W. Leys, Dr. W.H. Vanden Born, Mr. E. Vanderveer, chair, and Mr. L. Van Tuyl. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
19	1	3rd quartile
18	2	3rd quartile

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
2003 SALARY RANGES

Level	U.S. 2003 Range			Canadian 2003 Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$79,974	\$99,968	\$119,961	\$103,018	\$128,772	\$154,527
19	\$72,764	\$90,954	\$109,145	\$89,371	\$111,713	\$134,056
18	\$66,689	\$83,361	\$100,032	\$77,873	\$97,342	\$116,810
17	\$61,564	\$76,955	\$92,346	\$68,175	\$85,219	\$102,263

16	\$57,275	\$71,593	\$85,912	\$60,057	\$75,072	\$90,086
15	\$53,680	\$67,101	\$80,521	\$53,255	\$66,569	\$79,882
14	\$47,120	\$58,899	\$70,680	\$47,507	\$59,383	\$71,260
13	\$41,618	\$52,022	\$62,426	\$42,680	\$53,349	\$64,019

Note: The shaded areas are not currently in use.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the Board has ratified the following appointments made by classes:

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Chatham	Rev. Randall Engle	Rev. Paul D. Stadt	2005(1)
	Heartland		Rev. Carl J. Kolmpien	
	Lake Erie		Rev. Robert Arbogast	
	Pacific Northwest		Rev. Michael J. Kooy	
CRC Publications	B.C. North-West	Mr. Stan Potma	Mrs. Lynn Van Hofwegen	2005(1)
	Hamilton		Ms. Joanne van Dijk	
	Lake Superior	Rev. Henry Lengkeek	Mr. Jim Lipscomb	2005(1)
	Niagara		Ms. Marlene Bergsma	
Home Missions	Zeeland			
	B.C. North-West	Mr. Victor Chen	Ms. Joanne Schaap	2005(1)
	Chatham	Mrs. Ellen Van Til	Rev. Peter L. Vander Beek	2005(1)
	Grand Rapids North		Rev. Jerry L. Blom	
	Grand Rapids South	Dr. Thomas B. Swierenga	2005(1)	
	Lake Erie	Mr. David Armour	Rev. T.L. Van Milligen	2005(1)
	Lake Superior	Rev. Mark Brouwer	Rev. Art Van Wolde	2005(1)
	Minnkota	Rev. Gerrit Besteman		2005(1)
	Northcentral Iowa		Rev. Kevin Jordan	
	Northern Illinois		Rev. Daniel L. Jongsma	
	Pacific Northwest	Rev. Eleanor Rietkerk		2005(1)
	Red Mesa	Ms. Mary Huyser	Mr. Ernie Benally	2005(1)
	Rocky Mountain	Rev. Thomas Dykman	Rev. Kenneth Nydam	2005(1)
World Missions	Central California		Rev. Andrew Narm	
	Chatham		Rev. Gerald J. Hogeterp	
	Hackensack	Rev. K.J. Vander Wall		2005(1)
	Hudson		Rev. Albert Sideco	
	Lake Erie		Rev. L.T. Riemersma	
	Lake Superior		Ms. Rose Dekker	
	Minnkota	Rev. William D. Vis		2005(1)
	Northern Michigan	Rev. Raymond Brinks	Dr. Ed Stehouwer	2005(1)
	Red Mesa		Mr. John Kostelyk	
Toronto	Rev. John Tenyenhuis		2005(1)	
CRWRC	Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Mr. George Lubberts		2006(1)
	Chatham		Mr. Ed DeJong	
	Grand Rapids North		Mr. Wayne Van Wylen	

2. Classes that have declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 1995, the general secretary keeps a list of those classes that declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Kalamazoo
Arizona (deacons only)	Lake Erie
British Columbia South-East	Muskegon
Central California	Northern Illinois
Chatham	Pacific Northwest
Chicago South	Quinte
Grand Rapids East	Red Mesa
Greater Los Angeles	Rocky Mountain
Hackensack	Southeast U.S.
Holland	Toronto
Huron	

3. Ethnic advisers to synod

The position of ethnic adviser was approved by Synod 1995 and reaffirmed by Synod 2000. Ethnic advisers first served at Synod 1996. Guidelines for the position were approved by Synod 1996 and incorporated into the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The Board has appointed the following ethnic advisers for Synod 2003:

Mr. Fernando del Rosario
Mr. Joel Hill
Rev. Sheila Holmes
Ms. Sara Mills
Mr. Timothy Nguyen
Mr. Mack Randall

4. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new Board of Trustees member is needed from a region or when a member's first term is completed, each classis in the region is requested to submit or approve names for the position. When a slate has been prepared by the Board, the nominations are forwarded to synod for election. All first-term elections are from a slate of two nominees and all second-term elections are from a slate of single nominees (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

The following slates of names from various geographic regions are coming to synod for election of a first term:

Alberta North

Rev. Neil De Koning is the pastor of Woodynook CRC, Lacombe, Alberta. He has served on the classical home missions committee, classical interim committee, Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, classical ministry committee, and the Committee to Study Structure in Canada. In addition, he has served as pastoral advisor for Diaconal Ministries of Eastern Canada and as a regional pastor.

Rev. John Pasma is pastor of Covenant CRC, Edmonton, Alberta. Previously he was a history teacher in London District Christian High School. He has served on the board of London Parental Christian School, on the executive board of All-Ontario Deaconal Conference, on the classical home missions committee, as president of Niagara Falls Ministerial Association, as pastoral advisor of Classis Niagara Deaconal Conference, and on the Ontario Provincial Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy. He presently serves as chair of the classical interim committee as well as chair of the classical ministries committee.

B.C. North-West

Mr. William Crofton, a member of Christ Community CRC, Nanaimo, British Columbia, is a self-employed chartered accountant. He has served as an elder, as chair of a business management group, on various finance committees, and as delegate to the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. He has a personal interest in missions with past trips to Korea and Haiti.

Mr. Andy de Ruyter, a member of First CRC, Vancouver, British Columbia, is the owner of a landscape maintenance company. He has served as a delegate to synod, as an elder, and on various church committees. He presently serves as secretary of the classical Government Administration Team and as clerk of council.

Niagara

Rev. Andrew E. Beunk is pastor of Fruitland CRC, Stoney Creek, Ontario. Previously he was an engineer for Ford Motor Company. He has served as elder and clerk of council. He presently serves as chair of Classis Niagara Home Missions support team and as chair of consistory.

Rev. Jack Van Marion is pastor of Providence CRC, Beamsville, Ontario. He has served on the classical home missions committee and on the editorial council of *Reformed Worship*. He presently serves on the student fund committee and on the Board of Trustees of Dordt College.

Region 10

Rev. Marvin J. Hofman is pastor of Fourteenth Street CRC, Holland, Michigan. He has served on the Board of Trustees of Dordt College, numerous times as a delegate to synod, and as a regional pastor.

Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee is pastor of South Bend CRC, South Bend, Indiana. He has served on the CRC Worship Committee, board of CRC Publications, and as delegate to synod numerous times. He presently serves as an alternate for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Region 11 (alternate only)

Ms. Judy Bredeweg, a member of Church of the Servant CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has taught nursing at Hope College, Calvin College, Grand Valley State University, and the University of Michigan, as well as serving as school social worker for ten years at Byron Center Christian School. She has served on FISH, coordinating volunteer services; CRWRC; the Sierra Club; and as deacon. She presently serves on the West Michigan Environmental Action Council.

Ms. Karen Rupke-Brouwer, a member of Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a manager of National Quality Assurance for Quest Diagnostics. She has served on the Michigan Hospital Association Mercury Reduction Advisory Committee; the Michigan Department of Public Health Medical Waste Division Committee; and as a deacon, the last year as president of deacons.

The following slates of names from various geographic regions are coming to synod for election to a second term:

B.C. South-East

Rev. Bert Slofstra (incumbent), pastor of First CRC, Abbotsford, British Columbia, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada representative for the Aboriginal Rights Coalition and on the denominational Judicial Code Committee. He also served on the student-fund committees of Classes Huron and Toronto and as diaconal adviser for Classis Huron. Rev. Slofstra has been a delegate to synod five times, three times as advisory-committee reporter. Rev. Slofstra presently serves as chair of the classical ministry committee.

Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (alternate) is pastor of First CRC, Langley, British Columbia. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the CRC Campus Ministry executive's task force, the regional "Free to Serve"-Day of Encouragement committee, and the Langley Memorial Hospital Pastoral Care board. He currently serves on the classical home missions committee.

Region 9

Rev. W. Wayne Leys (incumbent), pastor of Community Life CRC, Lockport, Illinois, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He served on the World Missions Board and on the Home Missions Board and its executive committee. Rev. Leys also served on the Helping Hand Mission Board, the board of the Center for Correctional Concerns, the Timothy Christian School Education Committee, and the Chicago Christian Co-Curriculum Committee. He presently serves as regional pastor for Classis Chicago South and on the classical home missions committee.

Dr. James La Grand (alternate), pastor of Beacon Light CRC, Gary, Indiana, is a graduate of Calvin College, the University of Michigan, Yale Divinity School, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Basel University. He served on the World Missions Board and its executive committee for six years and as chair of the Halifax-Dartmouth Council

of Churches for three years. He was a CCRCC delegate to the Triennial Assembly of the Canadian Council of Churches in 1985 and has been a delegate to synod. Dr. La Grand received the Calvin Alumni Association Outstanding Service Award in 1986.

Region 10

Mr. Kenneth Kuipers (incumbent), a member of Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, is a self-employed businessman and previously was a Christian school teacher and principal. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received his master's degree in education from the University of Michigan. He has served four terms as elder, including two terms as president of council. He has been a delegate to synod. He served as reporter for the synodical study Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod.

Mr. Delvin Huisigh (alternate), a member of Borculo CRC, Borculo, Michigan, is recently retired, having been a business owner for thirty-seven years in financial planning and preservation. He also was a leader of business seminars and a motivational speaker. He previously served as a board member and president of Borculo Christian School and as finance chairman of Holland Christian Schools. He has been a delegate to synod and has served as president of the Holland-Zeeland elders conference. He has served on council and has been active in various church activities.

b. At-large member

At-large members for the Board (total of six) are also chosen directly by synod. This year Mr. Ed Vanderveer completes his second term and is not eligible for reelection; whereas, Mrs. Gail Jansen completes her first term and is eligible for reelection. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

The following slate of names for an at-large position is coming to synod for election of a first term:

Canada

Mr. Keith Oosthoek is a member of Community CRC, Kitchener, Ontario. He is vice president of the Royal Bank of Canada. He has served as a member and as president of The Back to God Hour Board and has served as elder and deacon.

Mr. Bert Schouten is a member of West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta. He is retired from Ford Motor Company of Canada and is currently operating his own business. Mr. Schouten has served as elder as well as a member of the council's executive committee. He has served as treasurer of a Christian school board and as a member of The King's University College's board of governors.

The following name for an at-large position is coming to synod for election of a second term:

United States

Mrs. Gail Jansen (incumbent - no alternate) is a member of Bethel CRC, Tucson, Arizona. She is an attorney-at-law and is a sole practitioner. She was graduated from Dordt College in 1974 and from the

University of Arizona College of Law with a J.D. degree. She has served as chair of the Board of Trustees of Dordt College, on the Board of Trustees for the Center for Public Justice, and on the board of the Christian Conciliation Service of southern Arizona. She has served as treasurer of the Board of Trustees for the past two years.

5. Women advisers to synod

Synod 2000 adopted the following recommendation regarding women advisers to synod:

That until the review [of the women in office decision] in 2005, synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod.

(*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 699)

Synod 2001 adopted a set of guidelines to regulate this advisory position (see *Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493).

On the basis of the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001, the Board appointed the following women advisers for Synod 2003:

Ms. Kathleen Boldenow
Rev. Thea Leunk
Ms. Diane Plug
Ms. Bonnie Smith
Ms. Vicky Van Andel
Ms. Jean Weening
Ms. Karen Wynbeek

6. Response to Overture 4 (Synod 1999) re policy for short-term disabilities for ministers

Overture 4 was submitted to Synod 1999 and that synod “instructed the Board of Trustees in consultation with the pension funds trustees to examine the requests of this overture and report back to Synod 2000.” The Board was unable to complete the assignment in 2000 but submitted its report to Synod 2001. Synod 2001 received the report as partial fulfillment of the mandate given the Board but referred the matter back to the Board for further exploration and development (see *Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 454-55).

During the past two years, the pension funds trustees have been reviewing the various provisions of the Ministers’ Pension Funds including the disability provision. If the pension funds trustees’ report and recommendations re disability coverage are approved by Synod 2003, then synod will have an answer to Overture 4 (1999) as well and will need to declare that the decision re the Ministers’ Pension Funds is its answer to Overture 4 (1999). If the pension funds trustees recommendations are not acceptable, then the Board of Trustees will need to be instructed to take further action.

7. Adoption of change in Church Order Articles 12-b, 13-a, and 13-b

Synod 2002 proposed to Synod 2003 that the following changes be made in Articles 12-b, 13-a, and 13-b of the Church Order (additions in italics; deletions struck through):

Article 12-b

b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions, or (2) Is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

Article 13

a. A minister of the Word *-serving as pastor of a congregation* is directly accountable to the calling church, and therefore shall be supervised in doctrine, life, and duties by that church. ~~When his work is with other than the calling church, he shall be supervised in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved.~~

New: b. A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision in doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for the supervision of duties.

New:—Supplement, Article 13-b

c. The current Article 13-b and its supplement would become Article 13-c and Supplement, Article 13-c.)

Grounds:

- 1) Assigning primary responsibility for each aspect of supervision eliminates the ambiguity and clarifies the expectations for both the calling church and the agency.
- 2) Prior to the revision of Article 13 in 1984, the Church Order required the calling church “to supervise in doctrine and life” and said nothing about cooperative supervision of duties. The proposed new wording provides a good solution by assigning primary responsibility to each party within the relationship of cooperative supervision.
- 3) Informing in writing the other partner in the supervision prior to any action that affects a minister’s status or future takes seriously the relationship and precludes precipitous action.

(Acts of Synod 2002, pp. 469-70)

These changes are being submitted to Synod 2003 for adoption. Church Order Article 47 states that “no substantial alterations shall be affected by synod [in the Church Order] unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.” The Church Order Supplement, Article 47 (section c) specifies further that:

- c. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to propose; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to adopt.

(Church Order Supplement, Article 47)

8. Convening churches of synod

The following churches have been designated as convening churches of synod:

2003 - First CRC, Orange City, Iowa (synod will be held at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa)

2005 - Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois (synod will be held at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois)

9. Judicial Code Committee appointment and nominations

In October 2002, Judicial Code Committee member Rev. Terry Lapinsky passed away. Article 23-d of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures permits the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint a person to fill the balance of the term of a deceased member. At its February 2003 meeting, the Board appointed Rev. John J. Steigenga to fill the term of Rev. Lapinsky that will expire June 30, 2005.

The Judicial Code Committee later this spring will process a slate of nominees for the positions that need to be filled due to the completion of terms. The names and biographical information will be included in the Board's supplementary report.

10. Review of the classical-local option regarding women in office

As part of its five year review of the decision regarding women's serving in the offices of elder, evangelist, and minister of the Word, Synod 2000 adopted the following recommendation for Synod 2003:

That Synod 2003 appoint a committee consisting of an appropriate balance of men and women to review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and to report its findings to Synod 2005.

Grounds:

- a. Since 1995 little public discussion has taken place to bring the church to unified insight into the issue.
- b. This time line provides opportunity for continuing discussion.

(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 698)

The advisory committee to which this matter is assigned will need to recommend a course of procedure for synod, including a mandate for the proposed committee and the committee's membership.

11. Review of the practice of appointing ethnic advisers to serve at synod

Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendation re ethnic advisers at synod:

That synod accede to Overture 31 by including up to seven members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod and that the Board of Trustees be asked to implement this practice for a period of five years.

Grounds:

1. The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.
2. Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of polity and decision making at the synodical level.
3. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
4. The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.
5. Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.
6. This practice affirms a sense of CRC "ownership" by various ethnic communities.
7. Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 695)

The recommendation seemed to presuppose a five-year period of implementation and provided no mechanism for review or extension.

In 2000, the Board of Trustees highlighted this matter in its supplementary report to synod (see *Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 520-21) and recommended the following:

That synod continue for an additional five-year period the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod, with the expectation that Synod 2003 will appoint a committee to conduct a review of this practice and report back to Synod 2005.

Ground: The positive results of this practice warrant a five-year continuation, after which there will be more evidence and experience by which to judge the practice.

(*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 634)

The advisory committee to which this is assigned will need to recommend a course of procedure for synod, including a mandate for the proposed committee and the committee's membership.

12. Judicial Code Procedure Review (see Appendix A)

At its February 2003 meeting, the Board of Trustees received a report from the Judicial Code Procedure Review Committee that it had appointed in September 2002. The report and its recommendations to synod can be found as Appendix A of this report.

13. Clarification of Church Order Supplement, Article 17 (see Appendix B)

Synod 2002 became aware of several difficulties that have arisen in the application of Church Order Supplement, Article 17 (see *Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 539). In response to the difficulties, Synod 2002 adopted the following:

- 1) That synod instruct the BOT to propose clarification of Church Order Supplement, Article 17 to Synod 2003 and make all congregations and classes aware of the procedures and resources stipulated there.

Grounds:

- a) This will assist congregations, classes, and released ministers by clarifying the process by which the recommendation for call is handled.
- b) This will assist Pastor-Church Relations in its work of intervention in such cases.

- 2) That synod instruct the BOT to prepare a list of recommended assessment resources for the use of congregations, classes, and ministers when a separation under Church Order Article 17-a is contemplated.

Grounds:

- a) This will assist congregations, classes, and released ministers by clarifying the process by which the recommendation for call is handled.
- b) This will assist Pastor-Church Relations in its work of intervention in such cases.

(*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 539-40)

The attached report (Appendix B) constitutes the Board of Trustees' address to this matter and comes to synod for action.

14. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. In addition to information about classes, congregations, ministers, and agencies, it contains a historical sketch of the life of the church during the previous year and provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

Each year, the *Yearbook* is published with greater facility than the year before because of technological refinements. The October deadline for *Yearbook* information allows us to publish in January rather than later in the year as was previously the custom. Thus, the book reflects denominational and local-church information up to a given point (August 31) in each calendar year.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 2002 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of souls (baptized and professing members) in a local congregation. By instruction of synod, the following membership totals are listed in the Classical Information: number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members. In addition, the Classical Information includes the total number of inactive members, total number of members leaving for other CRCs, and total number of members received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

The Directory of Churches and Ministries in the *Yearbook* includes organized churches, emerging churches, newly planted churches (not yet having statistics), and other ministries, for a total of 996 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was at the 81 percent level this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 797 ministries.

We acknowledge with gratitude the excellent services of Mrs. Nancy Haynes, *Yearbook* manager, and Mrs. Diane Recker, Mrs. Alice Damsteegt, and Mrs. Jan Ortiz, who assisted in gathering information, entering it into the database, copy reading, editing, and carefully attending to the myriad of details involved in publishing the *Yearbook*. The same hearty gratitude needs to be expressed to our computer staff who diligently provide the necessary support services for this exacting task.

b. Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was printed, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by Synod 2002. These booklets are updated by the general secretary and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the general secretary. This would not be accomplished by established deadlines without the invaluable assistance of Mrs. Diane Recker, administrative assistant; Mrs. Jan Ortiz, copy editor; and Mrs. Nancy Haynes and personnel from CRC Product Services.

As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church*

During the past year, the Board of Trustees has again sent to all CRC councils updated materials for the *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church: Your Church in Action*. Several councils ordered new notebooks because the old ones had been lost or misplaced. This binder should be kept available in every council room.

The *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church* contains the following sections:

- 1) Ministry Shares and Offerings—This section contains financial data and a description of the programs carried on by all CRC boards and agencies as well as by accredited outside agencies. It gives assistance for scheduling special offerings and suggests announcements to be made prior to receiving such offerings.
- 2) Denominational Insights—After a brief statement on the nature of the church and on some of the principles of Reformed church government, this section provides information about the nature of our assemblies, the function of major assemblies, the agenda for synod, and the denominational program structure.
- 3) Congregational Helps—This section contains helps that are available for councils and congregations; suggested rules of procedure and model agendas for council, consistory, and deacons meetings; suggestions for congregational committees; helpful information on the use of members' gifts; and other useful information.
- 4) Ministers' Compensation Survey—By mandate of synod, a survey of ministers' compensation has been prepared each year for use by our pastors and by finance committees of the church councils. The 2002 survey will be presented to Synod 2003 and later mailed to the churches for inclusion in the *Handbook*. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimbursements. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to "require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers' pensions."

(Acts of Synod 1982, p. 51; Acts of Synod 1988, p. 574)

5) **Doctrinal and Ethical Decisions**—This section is indispensable for all who wish to know the position of the CRC on various matters of doctrine and ethics. This section has recently been updated and will be sent on request to any church (or individual) who asks. It can also be found on the CRC web site at www.crcna.org/cr/crbe/crbe_pos.htm. An abbreviated version can be purchased through CRC Publications by calling 1-800-333-8300.

e. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

Previous editions of the *Index of Synodical Decisions* have been valuable aids for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The updating of the index was mandated by Synod 1995. The previously published index needed to be redone in a completely different software system; the indexing standards and practices needed rethinking and, in many instances, needed altering; and the *Agenda* and *Acts* of subsequent years needed to be seamlessly inserted into the older index. We are pleased to report that the revised index is now available in both book format and electronic (CD ROM) format through CRC Publications (1-800-333-8300).

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual, originally prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, was revised in 2001 by the general secretary and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the general secretary.

B. Program and finance matters

A significant part of the Board of Trustees' work relates to the ministry programs and finances of the denomination. The program details are reported to synod by way of agency reports in this agenda. The details about budgets and other financial matters are contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2003—Financial and Business Supplement*. All requests for offerings and ministry-share allocations will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

Regular reports are provided for the BOT at its meetings throughout the year as the Board provides oversight on behalf of synod. The primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries is provided for through the office of the executive director of ministries. The Ministries Administrative Council (MAC) is the interagency administrative entity that has responsibility for the administration of the Denominational Ministries Plan, promotes collaboration among the agencies, and recommends to the Board such matters as require its approval.

The Board is thankful to report that the cooperation between the agencies and educational institutions continues to be very good and may well be at an all-time high. Joint ministry initiatives, frequent interagency consultations, and the use of shared resources are common. The Board continues to encourage the consolidation of support functions that are common to several or all of the denominational agencies. Particular areas of expertise of one agency are made available to other agencies so that ministry effectiveness and resource efficiencies can be maximized. The result of these efforts has been gratifying while, at the same time, it is recognized that even more can be done to enhance

such efforts. The BOT is committed to continuing the trend of reducing duplication of skills and efforts while maintaining the specialties in ministry that pertain to specific ministry entities.

The program and financial matters that were processed by the Board are now presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are clearly identified within the body of this report.

1. Canadian Ministries

The focus of Canadian Ministries during 2002 and the early portion of 2003 was significantly governed by the Canadian Ministry Forum. Arising out of the actions of Synod 1997 and reshaped by Synod 1999, the Forum sought to bring the local congregations together with the intent to listen, to learn, and to renew.

A national forum took place in Edmonton, Alberta, on May 30 through June 1, 2002. It gathered together just under 130 people representing churches, classes, and denominational ministries. Broad discussions were held with a focus on the four strategic priorities of the Denominational Ministries Plan: church development, leadership development, integrated ministry to children and youth, and outreach and discipling.

A report was issued in October 2002 that summarized what had been experienced and learned and the seventeen goals that arose. That report, as well as a four-page summary is available upon request.

During the fall of 2002, refinements to the goals were made and priorities were developed by the Canadian Ministries Team. In the early months of 2003, consultation about the priorities and available resources to implement them will take place with each classis. It is expected that the Board of Trustees will be requested to give final approval to pursue implementation of the goals that have priority.

Other aspects of Canadian Ministries include the following:

- a. Urban Aboriginal ministry continues to take place in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton. Each of these centers sustained a review as part of the Comprehensive Program Review process implemented by the BOT. These reviews were positive, affirming that the gospel is being shared wholistically, and that there is a concern for community development and the pursuit of justice. This concern was also acknowledged by the broader community as William Davison, a leader in the Regina ministry, was a recipient of the Golden Jubilee medal from the Queen for his work in establishing a HOPE (Helping Our People Escape) school for those caught up in the sex trade.
- b. The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) welcomed new staff support in the person of Michael Hogeterp. He has made a significant impact already, assisting CCG in addressing issues of assisted human reproduction, affordable housing, definition of marriage, and numerous related issues.
- c. Sandra Elgersma serves as the Social Justice Coordinator, and she has been hard at work empowering existing social justice committees, encouraging the development of the same at the local level, and supporting such initiatives as antiracism training and the development of a social justice tool kit.

- d. In the area of ecumenical relations, the Interchurch Relations Committee continues to work closely with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches. We are still dialoguing with the Presbyterian, Lutheran, and United churches, and, in addition, we are seeking to open up dialogue with the Mennonites. One area of encouragement has been the agreement of the Reformed Church in America (Regional Synod of Canada) to appoint a representative to work more closely with CCG. The first such meeting is scheduled for February 2003.
- e. KAIROS: Canadian ecumenical justice initiative continues to receive our support and involvement. We are active with KAIROS in the areas of global economic justice, Canadian social development, international human rights, environmental and ecological justice, aboriginal rights, and education and animation. The Canadian ministries director serves on the KAIROS board.
- f. Incorporation: The CRCNA is now incorporated as a Canadian charity. The CRCNA-Canada Corporation will assume the assets of the Ontario Corporation sometime this calendar year.
- g. In addition, efforts are under way to incorporate the former Fellowship Fund as the CRC-Canada Foundation.
- h. Denominational agencies in Canada are in their eighth year of being involved with ServiceLink, a program that links members of the CRC in Canada to various volunteer ministry opportunities in both North America and countries overseas. An interesting statistic this year indicates that ServiceLink volunteers made a difference in the lives of others by sharing their love for Christ in as many as eighteen different countries including Romania, Honduras, Belize, Uganda, South Africa, Nicaragua, Guam, Cuba, Guatemala, and Rwanda. A continued challenge has been to find more opportunities for different service projects, especially in Canada. The year 2004 will see a few more opportunities, including a special project for university students called, "A Week with Micah 6:8" to be hosted by All Nations CRC in Halifax. Currently, there are ten regional coordinators of volunteers (RCVs) assisting the national coordinator and administrative assistant who together provide a "one-stop information resource center" to groups and individuals who wish to use their gifts and/or skills with any CRC agency or their partners in ministry. These coordinators promote volunteer opportunities and provide links for ministry in their own regions. We are still looking to recruit RCVs in Classis Toronto and B.C. South-East.

During the 2001-2002 year, 353 volunteers served with a combined total of 28,098 hours for ministries including CRWRC, World Missions, The Back to God Hour, Home Missions, Diaconal Ministries, Worldwide Christian Schools, and others. Of these, there were 319 new volunteers and 24 groups with approximately 287 members giving of their time for service. The winter months were extremely busy with numerous groups and individuals wanting to serve in a variety of ways.

For the first six months of 2002-2003, ServiceLink has already facilitated the logistics for four groups, three of which have traveled to Guam to assist in the construction of Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church.

Another fourteen or fifteen teams are leaving between January and March, including six youth groups.

We give thanks to God for his continued faithfulness in the ServiceLink program—for the volunteers that he provides and for the many hours they give in his name. The staff and RCVs covet your prayers as they work in this ministry.

- i. At the office, we have seen significant turnover in the staff that provide general ministry coordination and needed support services to maintain efficiency and effectiveness in Canadian Ministries. We are always encouraged that the Lord provides others who capably replace those who have taken their leave from serving World Relief, World Missions, Home Missions, Faith Alive Resources, The Back to God Hour, and the Denominational Office. God blesses, and we strive to be a blessing.
2. Report of BOT-related ministry programs

a. The Office of Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention was established by Synod 1994 and functions within the organizational framework of the Denominational Offices. Ms. Beth Swagman is the director of Abuse Prevention and her report is contained in Appendix C.

The issues surrounding abuse are complex. Societal attitudes keep changing, and so does the law. In Michigan, it recently has become a requirement that ministers be mandatory reporters for all cases of abuse involving a minor. That requirement has raised the issue of clergy-penitent confidentiality, a concept the state must honor if a denomination has a theology of the confessional (e.g., Roman Catholic Church). After discussing this issue with legal counsel and at the BOT meeting, it is prudent that synod be on record concerning this matter. Therefore, the BOT recommends:

That synod affirm that it does not require confessions of its parishioners to its clergy as a matter of church rule or polity.

Grounds:

1. The statement is intended for the purpose of determining the application and scope of the clergy-penitent privilege under Michigan law and other state/provincial laws as applicable.
2. Synod affirms that the CRCNA in no way condones child abuse and wishes to allow its clergy discretionary disclosure of such incidents to appropriate authorities in the absence of state or provincial law that requires it.

b. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries is presently being served by interim-director Rev. Herman Keizer and Canadian director Rev. Siebert Van Houten. Christian Reformed chaplains serve in many different settings, and most of them are employed by nondenominational organizations. The nature of chaplaincy work is challenging as people are encountered at their point of greatest need and vulnerability. It is all the more challenging because the ministry is often in a secular or interfaith setting. That reality led the Board of Trustees to appoint a committee “to review and evaluate

the nature of chaplaincy ministry with a view toward formulating a clearly worded mandate, to identify guiding biblical and theological principles that need to be integral to the gospel ministry as expressed in Chaplaincy by CRC personnel, and to recommend an appropriate organizational placement for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries within the denominational structure.” That committee issued its report to the BOT at its September 2002 meeting (the full text of the report can be found in Appendix D). The Board of Trustees adopted the recommended mandate, guiding principles, and administrative placement for chaplaincy ministries. The Board agreed to provide the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries (OCM) an advisory council of eight (8) persons to function within the guidelines set by the Board (see Appendix D-2). Operational Guidelines for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries were established, and the Board received as information the Policies and Practices for Calling Churches and Chaplaincy Ministries Personnel (see Appendix D-3). The specific items that need synod’s approval are the following:

- 1) That synod approve the following mandate for Chaplaincy Ministries:

Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings.

- 2) That synod adopt the following characteristics and guiding principles for chaplaincy (see Appendix D, III, B and C) and insert them into Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c (section c):

- a) Characteristics of chaplain ministries

- It is pastoral. It seeks those separated from the settled congregation and extends a ministry of compassion, healing, and reconciliation.
- It is wholistic. It is a ministry of word and deed, concerned about the well-being of the whole person; it encourages healing in a hospital, hope in a prison, and freedom for the addicted; it speaks for the voiceless and advocates for justice, bringing the shalom of God’s kingdom to the groaning parts of our world.
- It functions within “total institutions.” The military, the hospital, the prison, and the large corporation are all worlds unto themselves with environments that tend toward regimentation, depersonalization, and loss of freedom. They place any citizen or worker, but especially a Christian, in a situation with dual, sometimes conflicting, loyalties.
- It is public. It is often conducted in a public, interfaith setting where a witness to the faith is welcomed, but proselytizing is not fitting. The interfaith setting requires sensitivity to other faith traditions and readiness to work with them. At the same time, it provides a unique opportunity to let the light of Christ shine.
- It is team work. Hospital, prison, and military chaplains work with staff in other disciplines for the health and well-being of those they serve. Chaplains as members of a professional team

trust that their part, faithfully done, will add to the whole enterprise.

- It requires special training. The settings in which chaplains minister are so different from each other and from the parish ministry that specialized training is needed.

b) Guiding principles

The following principles apply to chaplaincy in a special way:

- Chaplains represent Christ and his church. Jesus links his own sending by the Father to his sending of disciples into the world (John 17:18) The church receives the task to represent the Lord and does this in person, through a cup of cold water, and especially by the means of grace. A chaplain's presence, therefore, symbolizes the Lord's care.
- The image of the Shepherd guides the pastoral ministry of chaplains. He who was sent by the Father, calls himself a shepherd, and instructs Peter to tend his sheep (John 21:16). Chaplains may travel far for one lost one (Matthew 18:10-14) or to be with those in distress (Luke 19:10), which causes them to express the threefold office in their own way.
- Chaplains concentrate on the fringes. Like the Great Physician who was accused of not spending more time with the healthy, chaplains work with those who are sick and suffering, mixed-up, or in jail (Luke 5:27-32) to bring change, healing, faith, hope, and justice.
- Chaplains minister for God in interfaith settings. Because chaplaincy often happens in public institutions, such as the military or a public hospital, it must be carried out in these religiously pluralistic settings with integrity to the chaplain's faith and that of colleagues and other members of this institution. The expectation is that chaplains "perform for your own, provide for others, care for all." Christian chaplains work with persons and chaplains of other faiths in the conviction that their witness will help bring into the kingdom these "scattered children of God" (John 11:51, 52).

Grounds for both a and b:

- (1) The mandate states the nature of chaplaincy as it has developed in our church's history.
- (2) The guiding principles emerge from Reformed theology and the reflections of our chaplains.

3) That synod amend (addition is underlined) the Church Order Article 12-b to read:

A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions or chaplaincy, or (2) is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committee of classis or synod.

Ground: This addition re chaplaincy will help to regulate the ministry of chaplains as a significant part of the church's ministry.

- 4) That synod instruct CRC Publications to develop an amendment to the forms of ordination and installation for use by the churches to install and ordain ministers of the Word as chaplains.

Ground: These amendments will recognize the significant ministry of chaplains as a regular part of the church's ministry.

The BOT requested Chaplaincy Ministries to propose a way for nonclergy chaplains to be ordained into one of the offices of the church. The complete report and its recommendations for synod's approval is contained in Appendix E.

By way of the supplementary report to synod, suggested wording for the amendment of Church Order Article 23 and its supplement will be provided.

The balance of the Chaplaincy Ministries report is contained in Appendix F.

c. The Office of Disability Concerns

It will soon be twenty years since Synod 1984 established the Office of Disability Concerns. Dr. James Vanderlaan continues to faithfully minister to and with persons living with disabilities. The report is contained in Appendix G.

d. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations and Ministerial Information Services

The ministry of this office is under the direction of Rev. Duane Visser. The assistance offered to churches and pastors was enriched and expanded this year with the appointment of Rev. Norman Thomasma. For the first time in twenty years, it is possible to devote more time and resources to a ministry of prevention. The changes are more fully described in the report that is contained in Appendix H.

e. The Office of Race Relations

The ministry of Race Relations has nearly completed its change in focus from multiculturalism to antiracism. Rev. Norberto Wolf, director; Dr. Peter Szto; and Ms. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley continue their work from Bellflower, California; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Chicago, Illinois, respectively. The report of this ministry is contained in Appendix I. Please note that synod is asked to designate the dates for All Nations Heritage Week.

f. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Concerns about systemic injustice throughout the world, injustices that are the root cause of immense suffering, continue to be the focus of this ministry. The activities that engage the staff of this office are carried out in cooperation with many congregations throughout the denomination, all of the CRC agencies and educational institutions, as well as a number of partner organizations that share our concern for the poor and disenfranchised. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen directs this effort, and his report is contained in Appendix J.

The BOT engaged in an extensive discussion about the conflict in Iraq and the complexity of an interdependent international community of nations. The BOT decided to send a pastoral letter to all the churches. A copy of that communication is attached as Appendix K.

g. The Office of Ministry Planning

Mr. Michael Bruinooge serves the denominational agencies and educational institutions as the director of ministry planning. The basic document of reference is the Denominational Ministries Plan that sets the direction for what we believe God calls us to be and to do as churches together. Mr. Bruinooge provides excellent facilitation and guidance as the agencies implement the goals and live by the core values that were approved by the BOT. The report of this office is contained in Appendix L.

h. Lilly Endowment, Inc. grant

Last year the CRC received a significant grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to support and strengthen pastors in their ministries. Over 700 proposals were submitted to the Endowment for funding under its new "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence" program. Only 47 were accepted, including the one from the CRC. Grant amounts ranged between \$250,000 and the maximum of \$2,000,000. The CRC's grant is for \$1,999,278 over five years, beginning December 1, 2002, and ending December 31, 2007.

The CRC's proposal was facilitated by the Denominational Office, and the design team included two pastors currently serving churches, as well as representatives from Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and Pastor-Church Relations. A project director (Mr. Michael Bruinooge) and a project coordinator (Mrs. Lis Van Harten) have been appointed, a web site created (www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence), and a variety of materials prepared. An implementation team of six members meets once a month to develop standards, evaluate proposals, and monitor progress related to five goal areas: (1) promotion and teaching; (2) mentoring; (3) peer learning; (4) continuing education; and (5) dissemination of learning.

Grant funds will be spent to assist small groups of pastors organized for peer learning; agencies, classes, and churches who sponsor continuing education events for pastors; and groups who provide mentoring for pastors. The denominational press release announcing the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program is attached as Appendix M.

3. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at Synod. The following roster for agency presentations is proposed for Synod 2003:

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- World Missions
- CRWRC

As in previous years, the times of these presentations will be arranged in consultation with the agency and the officers of synod.

4. Funding for new ministry programs

From time to time, synod has made decisions to approve a new program or to add personnel. It is not always clear when such decisions are made whether synod intends the implementation to be funded within already established ministry-share allocations or whether synod is approving additional ministry shares for the implementation of such new decisions. The BOT has instructed the Ministries Administrative Council (MAC) to clearly indicate its assumptions about funding when such a program or personnel recommendation is processed by MAC. The BOT adopted the following recommendation as its request to synod:

That synod clearly indicate, as part of any approval for programmatic and/or staff expansion whether the funding for implementation is in addition to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment in ministry shares for that year or whether the new costs must be absorbed by the CPI increase.

5. Denominational Ministries Review

The Board of Trustees authorized a review of all the denomination's ministries during 2002. Eight different review teams were appointed, one for each agency and educational institution and one for the Denominational Office. The complete review report was presented to the BOT at its February 2002 meeting. Presently, each agency and educational institution is reviewing the observations and recommendations that apply to each, and their responses will be received by the BOT at the fall 2003 meeting of the BOT. It is expected that this will generate a meaningful discussion about ministry priorities, effectiveness, and potential efficiencies as we pursue the mission together.

The BOT did consider several overarching recommendations that have emerged out of the review process. The actions of the BOT are recorded here for synod's information.

- a. The BOT referred each review report to the appropriate agency with the request that a response be given to the BOT by September 30, 2003.
- b. The BOT appointed a committee to propose overall ministry priorities that can guide the church in deciding the allocation of resources and the refining of ministry choices.
- c. The BOT believes that the organizational structure of the agencies will need to be aligned in support of the ministry priorities. It is the BOT's intent to address this issue when the priorities committee has rendered its report.
- d. The BOT endorsed the appointment of three administrative task forces to address the following:
 - 1) To conduct a formal review, in conjunction with The Back to God Hour, World Missions, and CRWRC of the present strategy of deploying staff in twenty-seven to thirty countries as contrasted to reducing that many locations to a more manageable number.
 - 2) To examine the missiology advanced by the mission agencies as well as Calvin Theological Seminary and recommend a missiological statement and terminology for use by all the agencies of the CRC.

- 3) To propose a denominational regional ministry-delivery model so that congregations can be better served.

The review process was one of the more significant denominational initiatives as the BOT deals with the need to coordinate and lead the ministries of the church. The BOT requests that synod take note of these activities and respond with an endorsement of the BOT's work.

6. Succession planning

The BOT has been giving attention to the fact that a number of denominational leadership positions will undergo a change during the next several years. One such change is presently in the process with the pending retirement of Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus from the position of Director of Finance and Administration effective July 1, 2003. However, other changes should be anticipated, and the BOT is addressing the need for orderly transitions. It is in this context that the BOT wishes to report to Synod 2003 the following:

- a. The BOT has appointed a Succession Planning Committee.
- b. The BOT has authorized the Succession Planning Committee to develop a proposal that will place denominational leadership in a team of executives that is led by a leader who will replace the present positions of executive director of ministries and general secretary.
- c. The BOT's rationale for developing the single-leader model is based on the experience of the BOT since 1992 and the BOT's thinking that both the BOT and synod may be more effectively served by a single leader. To avoid placing too much authority and leadership responsibility in just one position, however, it is being proposed that the concept include a cabinet, the membership of which may include, besides the appointed leader, other senior denominational personnel such as agency directors, a chief operating officer, a chief financial officer, and the Canadian ministries director.

No synodical action is requested at this time. Before a single-leader model would be implemented, the Board will present recommendations regarding this matter to a future synod.

7. Financial matters

Most of the financial information is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2003—Business and Financial Supplement* that will be distributed to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2004 (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004) and recommended ministry share amounts for the year 2004. In addition, synod is asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for CRWRC (in lieu of ministry share support), and the approval of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the supplementary report.

III. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Ed Vanderveer, chair of the Board; Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff,

executive director of ministries; and Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency and institution boards (II, A, 1).

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 4).

D. That synod adopt the changes in Church Order Articles 12-b, 13-a, and 13-b (II, A, 7).

E. That synod appoint a committee to review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and report to Synod 2005 (II, A, 10).

F. That synod appoint a committee to review the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod each year (II, A, 11).

G. That synod receive the report re the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures and adopt its recommendations (II, A, 12 and Appendix A).

H. That synod receive the report re Church Order Supplement, Article 17 and Church Order Article 17 and adopt its recommendations (II, A, 13 and Appendix B).

I. That synod affirm that it does not require confessions of its parishioners to its clergy as a matter of church rule or polity (Appendix C).

J. That synod receive the Report of the Chaplaincy Ministries Study Committee and adopt its recommendations (Appendix D).

K. That synod receive the proposal for approving Commissioned Chaplains and adopt its recommendations (Appendix E).

L. That synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 to October 5, 2003, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday on October 5, 2003.

M. That synod clearly indicate when it approves a programmatic and/or staff expansion whether the funding for implementation is in addition to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment in ministry shares for that year or whether the new costs must be absorbed by the CPI increase.

N. That synod endorse the overarching recommendations that have emerged out of the Agencies' and Institutions' Ministry Review Process (II, B, 5).

O. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (Appendix N).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
David H. Engelhard, general secretary
Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries

Appendix A

Judicial Code Procedure Review

I. Background

In September 2002, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA formed a committee to review the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures as it particularly related to the employee termination policy of the CRCNA. A particular termination situation had raised the need for the Board to review its policies. The committee was given the following mandate:

To review the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures (Church Order Article 30-c and its Supplement) and its appropriateness and applicability to the current CRC context. Included in the review is an analysis of the interface between the CRC's Employment Termination Appeals Procedure and the Judicial Code.

Those appointed to serve on the committee were: Rev. John Gorter, chair; Mr. Richard Bouma; Rev. Peter Hogeterp; and Mr. Keith Oosthoek, with Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Dr. David Engelhard serving as advisers.

The committee oriented itself to the subject by receiving and reviewing a concise overview of the history of the Judicial Code, a report on how the Judicial Code Committee works, an overview of the current employment termination policy for CRCNA employees, and a brief introduction to the benefits of mediation in an employee dispute process. After extensive discussion on a variety of topics, the committee gradually came to the following conclusions:

- That mediation be made available to CRCNA employees early in the dispute resolution procedure (section 606.2 of the Employee Manual). The goal of this is to bring healing between employee(s) and employer;
- That employee termination cases be removed from the scope of the Judicial Code;
- That the text of the Judicial Code be lightly edited but that the substance of it remain as is;
- That the employee termination appeal process be streamlined to a maximum of two or three steps with the final step in the process being an independent subcommittee of the Board of Trustees that would render final judgment; and
- That the Employee Manual be rewritten in line with the above decisions and as part of the report to synod.

In addition to the above, the committee discussed ideas about extending mediation services to congregations. Because this lies quite outside its mandate, it was decided that some of this work is in the purview of Pastor-Church Relations, and it should be left to that department to further these ideas. There is also web-site access to mediation documents from the Reformed Church in America and the Mennonite Peace Center.

II. Recommendations

The Board of Trustees recommends:

- A. That synod declare that CRCNA employee termination decisions no longer be appealable by way of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures.

B. That synod declare that an “employee of an agency, board, or committee” per the provision of Judicial Code Article 1-b, 2, c no longer be granted the right to bring appeals against “an agency board or committee.”

Note: If this change is adopted by synod, then a complete rewrite of that article will need to be made to comply with the change.

Grounds for A and B:

1. Internal policies and procedures provide several levels of safeguards for an employee who chooses to appeal an employment termination decision.
2. The Board of Trustees as the interim committee of synod has the final role in the appeals procedure, and it can both protect the rights of the employees and the concerns of synod for fairness and justice.

C. That synod approve the following changes (additions underlined; deletions struck through) in the text of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures (see Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c):

1. The Preamble

Preamble to the Judicial Code

The Judicial Code is not a document of broad applicability. It is intended to be operative in ~~two~~ strictly defined areas and therefore contains limiting language. ~~The two areas of applicability are covered separately in Article 1, a and b.~~

The Judicial Code deals with the following matters:

- a. Disputes involving members and/or assemblies of the church and, in some limited instances, nonmembers (see Article 1-a).
- b. Disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and members or assemblies of the church on the other side, excluding employee termination decisions (see Article 1-b).

With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only:

- a. when written charges are filed; and
- b. when either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a formal hearing.

The Judicial Code is intended to be a dispute-resolution mechanism of last resort. Brothers and sisters in Christ should make every effort to resolve issues between them amicably, according to the teachings of Scripture. If they require external assistance to reach agreement, they may, where appropriate, seek trained facilitators or mediators to help them reach agreement.

About Article 1-a

Article 1-a deals with matters involving members and/or assemblies of the church and, in some limited instances, nonmembers. With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only

- a. when written charges are filed; and
- b. when either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a formal hearing.

If Therefore, even if the above two conditions are met (i.e., written charges and request for formal hearing), the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not sufficient informal means for resolution have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further informal efforts are undertaken. If Only after the assembly determines that sufficient informal means have been exhausted or ~~if further informal~~ that such means do not resolve the matter, should the assembly will proceed to conduct a judicial hearing as set forth below.

It should be noted that matters of admonition and discipline do not require a judicial hearing unless there are written charges that either party or the assembly determines require a judicial hearing. The Judicial Code recognizes the fundamental and primary role of informal means in all matters of admonition and discipline; it assumes that these matters are best handled by informal counseling and entreaty; and if sanctions are required, it leaves the determination of them to the church under the Church Order.

The assembly must also decide, under Article 10 of the Judicial Code below, whether or not the charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing.

About Article 1-b

~~Article 1-b deals with disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and their employees or members or assemblies of the church on the other side. With respect to all such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only~~

- a. ~~when a written appeal or written charges are filed; and~~
- b. ~~when a judicial hearing is requested by one of the parties or when the assembly before whom the charges first are filed determines to constitute a judicial hearing.~~

~~Article 1-b is not to be treated as an alternative method whereby church members or assemblies can challenge or question the decisions or conduct of the agencies, boards, or committees in matters which are properly the substance of an overture or a gravamen.~~

[Note: Much of the current material under “About Article 1-a” and “About Article 1-b” has been incorporated into the new extended Preamble.]

2. Article 1-b

- b. Appeals from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church, excluding employee termination decisions.

3. Article 8

Article 8

- a. A hearing for an alleged offense shall ordinarily begin no later than one year from the time the charge is filed.
- b. The assembly, after consulting with the complainant and the respondent, shall set the time and place for the hearing on the charge and shall notify the parties.
- c. The assembly shall set a time, not less than fifteen (15) days and not more than thirty (30) days, before the hearing by which the parties shall each furnish the other party with a list of witnesses to be called and a copy of each exhibit to be offered at the hearing. A party shall be limited to such witnesses and exhibits unless the party persuades the assembly of good cause for not having the information available by the deadline.
- d. Within the same time period set forth in c above, each party shall furnish the assembly with a list of witnesses that the party plans to call at the hearing and a copy of all documents to be offered at the hearing, in chronological order and indexed.
- e. The assembly may, in its discretion, require further advance disclosures by the parties concerning the witnesses, documents, evidence, and arguments that they intend to present at the hearing.

4. Article 10

Article 10

Before the hearing. ~~T~~the assembly shall determine whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge; the answer; the proposed exhibits; and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but the assembly, after receiving a report from the committee, makes the determination. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.

5. Article 12

Article 12

The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the council, excluding those who have recused themselves from the case. Members who have not attended all the sessions and have not heard the case in its entirety shall read or listen to the record before a vote is taken.

6. Article 19

Article 19

If the appellant, having shown good cause therefore, desires to introduce additional evidence, the classis may remand the case to the council for a rehearing or for such additional hearing as classis may direct.

7. Article 20

Article 20

In all cases, the classis shall set a time for the hearing on appeal and send a notice as to the time and date of such hearing to all parties. After the statement and any applicable written record have been considered and oral arguments concluded, the classis shall ~~withdraw~~ go into executive session and shall ~~hereupon~~ immediately consider and decide the issues of the case. The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the classis. Delegates who have not attended all the sessions and have not heard the case in its entirety shall read the record before a vote is taken. The classis may sustain or reverse in whole or in part the decision of the council, or it may return the case to the council with instructions for a new hearing partial or complete rehearing.

Appendix B

Clarification of Church Order Supplement, Article 17

A. Background

Synod 2002 adopted the following:

- 1) That synod instruct the BOT to propose clarification of Church Order Supplement, Article 17 to Synod 2003 and make all congregations and classes aware of the procedures and resources stipulated there.
- 2) That synod instruct the BOT to prepare a list of recommended assessment resources for the use of congregations, classes, and ministers when a separation under Church Order 17-a is contemplated.

(Acts of Synod 2002, p. 539)

The Board of Trustees formed a committee to respond to the synodical directives. The committee consisted of: Rev. Duane Visser, convener; Dr. David H. Engelhard; Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen; Dr. Arthur Schoonveld; and Rev. George Vander Weit. The committee formulated recommendations for the Board of Trustees and now the Board presents the following to synod.

B. Recommendations

The Board of Trustees recommends:

1. That synod replace the current Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a with the following:

Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation

- a. If a classis believes a released minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call, it shall specify at the time of release what is required before the minister is declared eligible for call.

- 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor the evaluation process.
 - a) The committee, composed of both laity and clergy, may include one council member of the congregation involved in the separation.
 - b) The committee, in consultation with the interim committee of classis, shall develop specific expectations for the minister and shall monitor progress toward established goals. The issues

- addressed shall be determined by concerns raised by the council and the classis in collaboration with the minister.
- c) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.
 - d) After it has received the report of the evaluator(s), the committee shall make a recommendation to classis regarding the minister's eligibility for call.
- 2) The minister shall participate in the evaluation and assistance as follows:
 - a) The minister shall engage in an evaluation of readiness for ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/emotional status. An evaluator or evaluators mutually agreed upon by the classis and the oversight committee shall conduct the evaluation. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to recommend appropriate evaluators.)
 - b) The minister shall consent to the release of a detailed report, with recommendations, from the evaluator(s) to the oversight committee.
 - c) In addition to the evaluation stipulated above, the minister shall engage in any personal counseling required by classis with a therapist mutually agreed upon by the minister and the oversight committee.
 - 3) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee, the classis shall make the final decision concerning the minister's readiness to be declared eligible for call.
 - 4) If the classis does not declare the minister eligible for call, it shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, release the minister from office.
 - 5) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credential to a neighboring council within the classis during the evaluation process. If classis declares the minister eligible for call, the council that holds the minister's credential shall publicize the minister's availability.
 - 6) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credential to a council in another classis after the classis in which the separation occurred declares the minister eligible for call. The council that holds the minister's credential shall publicize the minister's availability.
- b. If a classis believes a congregation that has been separated from its minister needs a time of evaluation and assistance before extending another call, it shall specify at the time of separation what is required before the congregation calls another minister.
 - 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee composed of the council's classical counselor and at least two other persons to plan and monitor the evaluation process.
 - 2) In conjunction with the church council, the committee shall secure interim pastoral leadership, preferably a specialized interim

pastor, and set goals. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to assist with securing pastoral leadership.)

- 3) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.
 - 4) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee the classis shall make the final decision concerning the congregation's readiness to extend a call.
2. That synod revise Church Order Article 17 by inserting a new subsection (Article 17-d) as indicated below:

Article 17

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from active ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 17-a

b. The council shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of classis.

c. A minister of the Word who has been released from active ministerial service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare him to be released from the ministerial office. For weighty reasons, the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis.

d. In some situations the classis may decide that it cannot declare the released minister eligible for a call after the minister has completed the process of evaluation and assistance. The classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall then declare the minister to be released from ministerial office.

3. That synod take note of the following regarding assessment resources for congregations and classes:

Synod also asked the Board of Trustees to prepare a list of recommended assessment resources for use by congregations and classes. Given the wide variety of needs, the formation of such a list has proven difficult. It appears more advantageous, when a need for such a resource arises, that the congregation or classis contact the office of Pastor-Church Relations for recommendations. This approach will allow greater specificity in response to particular situations.

Appendix C

Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

The Office of Abuse Prevention was established by Synod 1994, and its mandate is to provide educational resources, policy guidelines, and training

events for the purpose of preventing the occurrence of abuse in the church. This office also encourages the formation of advisory panels to respond to allegations of abuse against a church leader and provides the training for the panels. Advisory panels are necessary so that the church can adequately respond to and process allegations.

I. Work accomplished during the past year

A. We conducted sixty-six seminars, training sessions, and/or conferences for church audiences; Calvin College students; Calvin Theological Seminary students; small group evangelism conference attendees; CR World Missions missionaries and CRWRC workers; classes delegates; Abuse Response Team members; and Day of Encouragement attendees.

B. We distributed 231 sample child abuse prevention policies to U.S. and Canadian CRC congregations as requested. This number is more than double the samples sent out in 2001 (108). Sixty-four Canadian churches have provided a sample of their child abuse prevention policy to the Office of Abuse Prevention; 113 U.S. churches have provided a sample. In the most recent *Yearbook* survey, about 360 churches indicate they have an abuse prevention policy.

C. We disseminated to 77 churches and 45 individuals 328 resources including books, booklets, pamphlets, articles, brochures, and other written materials (this figure excludes multiple copies of the same material sent to an individual or church). Additionally, 45 copies of the book *Preventing Child Abuse*, 56 copies of the book *From the Darkest Night*, and 7 copies of *Responding to Domestic Violence* were sent out.

D. We consulted with pastors, church leaders, classes representatives, school personnel, and agency staff about incidents of abuse or misconduct. We supported and advised persons who experienced abuse or whose family member experienced abuse. In 2002, 849 (643) requests for assistance were received from 792 (595) individuals; 126 (96) previously undisclosed cases of abuse were reported. The five categories of assistance most requested were consultation, training and/or seminars, abuse prevention policies, resources, and advice and/or support. The five categories of individuals who requested assistance most often were pastors, Abuse Response Team members, church leaders, office-bearers, and victims and/or survivors.

Note: The figures in parentheses represent 2001 totals, and the totals underrepresented the actual requests for assistance and the individuals making them.

E. We developed a comprehensive training for child safety policies for use on a regional basis. Regional trainings were held in Seattle, Washington, and Brantford, Ontario. Thirty-one churches were represented and eighty-five participants attended.

F. We published with World Literature Ministries the Spanish translation of *Preventing Child Abuse: A Guide for Churches*; and with Faith Alive, *Responding to Domestic Violence: A Guide for Churches*.

II. Challenges to the ministry

A. There continues to be a lack of resources for pastors, church leaders, and family members to use regarding issues of healing, restoration, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

B. For the prevention of abuse, resources need to be developed that address a biblical understanding of male-female relationships, marriage and family relationships, and a biblical understanding of power in relationships.

C. There is a lack of resources that addresses abuse prevention among the church's younger members ages 4 through 18. Additionally, resources are needed to address dating relationships and date violence that stress a biblical understanding of power, the gift of sexuality and its appropriate expression, and understanding male-female relationships.

D. There is a lack of policy for churches to implement in order to reduce the occurrence of the abuse of adult parishioners.

E. There is a lack of policy and resources that address sexual harassment among adolescents in youth ministries in church. There is also a lack of resources that addresses sexual harassment among paid staff and among paid staff and volunteers in the church facility.

F. The challenges to meeting every one of the above needs are: the urgency and competing interest of each request, the lack of personnel and time to develop a response to each request, and the lack of financial resources to design the resources.

G. Another challenge is to help congregations respond, heal, and grow following allegations of abuse against a church member or leader. When one family member is accused of abuse, all family members are affected. In order for the individual and family to heal, family members need to be involved in the restoration process. The congregation is an example of a family. When a church member or leader is accused of abuse, the affected congregation, with diverse needs, necessarily becomes involved in healing and restoring the "soul of the congregation."

Appendix D

Report of the Chaplaincy Ministries Study Committee

I. Committee mandate

The executive committee of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA mandated the Chaplaincy Ministries Study Committee:

- To review and evaluate the nature of chaplaincy ministry with a view toward formulating a clearly worded mandate;
- To identify guiding biblical and theological principles that need to be integral to the gospel ministry as expressed in Chaplaincy by CRC personnel; and
- To recommend an appropriate organizational placement for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries within the denominational structure.

II. Introduction

The earliest reference to chaplains in our synodical record is in 1918 and deals with chaplains in the military. In 1942, synod officially organizes chaplain ministry as a ministry of the CRC and appoints the first Chaplains Committee. Further references during the Second World War describe this chaplaincy as a ministry of Word and sacrament. Hospital chaplaincy begins in our church-related institutions, Bethesda and Pine Rest, as early as 1913.¹ A prison chaplaincy and general hospital chaplaincy is common by 1959 when the Chaplains Committee is mandated to give ecclesiastical endorsement. In 1980, the first industrial chaplain is appointed. In 1998, synod allows women to be endorsed and ordained as chaplains. By 2002, the *Yearbook* has an impressive list of more than one hundred active and reserve chaplains in the armed services and in ten civilian categories.²

It is surprising, at first, that no mandate is given for these chaplains and that their ministry seems not to be included in the Church Order, which mentions “pastor of a congregation,” “missions,” and “other work which relates directly to his/her calling.”³ The Form for Ordination has adaptations for “pastor in established congregation, foreign missionary, home missionary, and teacher of the theology,” but again no section for chaplains.⁴ The surprise lessens with the realization that chaplaincy has always been seen as a ministry of the Word and is simply included with that ministry. This understanding of chaplaincy as a ministry of the Word also leads to the requirement to demonstrate that new positions are “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.”⁵ In the 1980s, the issue of endorsing nonordained persons as chaplain-associates arises (see section VI and recommendation D).

The CRC has a high view of the chaplaincy as a ministry of Word and sacrament, but it lacks a recognition in liturgical forms, Church Order, and synodical mandates that this aspect of the ministry has a special focus and some unique challenges.⁶ This lack becomes apparent especially when denominational restructuring takes place and a new place is needed for Chaplaincy Ministries in our agency structure. A chaplain task force has submitted an extensive report,⁷ which we have consulted and found most helpful in understanding our mandate.

III. The nature of chaplaincy

Chaplains are ministers of the Word. The distinguishing mark of this ministry is that “it is a pastoral ministry in specialized settings to people who are hurting or in crisis, uprooted or dislocated.”⁸ Chaplains minister in the

¹ *A Place of Grace*, p. 7 (an unpublished document produced by chaplains in 2001)

² *Yearbook 2002*, pp. 588-90

³ *Church Order*; Art. 13

⁴ *Psalter Hymnal*, pp. 995-1001

⁵ *Church Order*; Art. 12-c

⁶ Campus ministry by contrast is defined by a clearly stated policy (*Acts of Synod 1967*, pp. 79, 279, 280) and a recent study.

⁷ *A Place of Grace*, January 2001

⁸ *A Place of Grace*, p. 10

armed services, visit those in prison or in the hospital, and encourage others in their workplaces.

As ministers of the Word, ordained and sent by the church, chaplains extend the church's ministry and the presence of Christ into the world by proclaiming the Word, by administering the sacraments, and by a shepherd's care.⁹

A. *A mandate for chaplain ministries*

Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings.

B. *Characteristics of chaplain ministries*

1. It is **pastoral**. It seeks those separated from the settled congregation and extends a ministry of compassion, healing, and reconciliation.
2. It is **wholistic**. It is a ministry of word and deed, concerned about the well-being of the whole person; it encourages healing in a hospital, hope in a prison, and freedom for the addicted; it speaks for the voiceless and advocates for justice, bringing the shalom of God's kingdom to the groaning parts of our world.
3. It functions **within "total institutions."**¹⁰ The military, the hospital, the prison, and the large corporation are all worlds unto themselves with environments that tend toward regimentation, depersonalization, and loss of freedom. They place any citizen or worker, but especially a Christian, in a situation with dual, sometimes conflicting, loyalties.
4. It is **public**. It is often conducted in a public, interfaith setting where a witness to the faith is welcomed, but proselytizing is not fitting. The interfaith setting requires sensitivity to other faith traditions and readiness to work with them. At the same time, it provides a unique opportunity to let the light of Christ shine.
5. It is **team work**. Hospital, prison, and military chaplains work with staff in other disciplines for the health and well-being of those they serve. Chaplains as members of a professional team trust that their part, faithfully done, will add to the whole enterprise.
6. It requires **special training**. The settings in which chaplains minister are so different from each other and from the parish ministry that specialized training is needed.

C. *Guiding principles*

The following principles apply to chaplaincy in a special way:

⁹*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 281: "Leaders, particularly ordained leaders, must always seek to imitate Christ, to represent Christ as well as they can."

¹⁰Richard G. Hutchinson, Jr., *The Churches and the Chaplaincy*, rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 34: "... total institutions are distinguished from other institutions by the fact that they control, to a considerable extent, the total lives of the persons involved." He also notes that there is a barrier between those inside and those outside the institution but that within the institutions the normal barriers between the spheres of life break down.

1. **Chaplains represent Christ and his church.** Jesus links his own sending by the Father to his sending of disciples into the world (John 17:18). The church receives the task to represent the Lord and does this in person, through a cup of cold water, and especially by the means of grace. A chaplain's presence, therefore, symbolizes the Lord's care.
2. **The image of the Shepherd guides the pastoral ministry of chaplains.** He who was sent by the Father, calls himself a shepherd, and instructs Peter to tend his sheep (John 21:16). Chaplains may travel far for one lost one (Matthew 18:10-14) or to be with those in distress (Luke 19:10), which causes them to express the threefold office in their own way.¹¹
3. **Chaplains concentrate on the fringes.** Like the Great Physician who was accused of not spending more time with the healthy, chaplains work with those who are sick and suffering, mixed-up, or in jail (Luke 5:27-32) to bring change, healing, faith, hope, and justice.
4. **Chaplains minister for God in interfaith settings.** Because chaplaincy often happens in public institutions, such as the military or a public hospital, it must be carried out in these religiously pluralistic settings with integrity to the chaplain's faith and that of colleagues and other members of this institution. The expectation is that chaplains "perform for your own, provide for others, care for all."¹² Christian chaplains work with persons and chaplains of other faiths in the conviction that their witness will help bring into the kingdom these "scattered children of God" (John 11:51, 52).

IV. Chaplaincy ministry in the denominational structure

Most chaplains work at a distance from the local congregations that called them. They rarely attend a classis meeting. Chaplains want and need to be connected. A solid connection to the church is vital to their recognition, credibility, and survival within the total institutions they serve.¹³

A. *Office of Chaplaincy Ministries*

This office is maintained by the Board of Trustees to implement and regulate the denomination's commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual caregivers,

¹¹Now that the church has acknowledged that the special offices are not tied to one of the aspects of the threefold office of Christ but rather that each office may have a different mixture of these functions (see Acts of Synod 2001, p. 267), the church can acknowledge a greater variety of ministry. In hospital chaplaincies the priestly side of the office may take up more space and time than the prophetic. Or the proclamation of the Word may happen without pulpit or lectern, as the shepherd goes where the flock is—to small groups or one to one.

¹²All US federal government agencies that hire chaplains (Armed Forces, Department of Justice-Bureau of Prisons, Veterans Administration) state that chaplains are to care for the needs of all in the unit, perform religious ministry to those members of the unit in their traditions, and to ensure that religious ministry is provided to other traditions.

¹³See Hutchinson, *Churches and Chaplaincy*, pp. 24, 25 for how important this is for chaplains in their "role conflict" where a substantial part of the perceived world in which they live and work is determined by church norms rather than by military norms.

hospice care, and others called to minister in places where the institutional church is not present. The office supports and promotes the development of chaplaincy and related ministries for the denomination (for purpose, staff functions, and staffing see Appendix D-1).

B. Governance and administrative placement

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries (OCM) shall function under the governance authority of the Board of Trustees of the CRC. To assure that adequate guidance is provided, the Board will establish and maintain a Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Council (CMAC) of eight (8) persons.

- The executive committee of the Board of Trustees shall nominate a slate of regional candidates for these positions.
- The director of Chaplaincy Ministries will advise the executive committee on the proposed slate of CMAC members.
- The Board will select from that slate.
- The CMAC shall function as a standing advisory committee of the Board of Trustees. The terms of those serving on the CMAC shall be staggered, and each member shall be limited to one six-year term.

This Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Council will represent both Canada and the United States. It will be advisory to both the Board of Trustees and the OCM. The executive director of ministries will monitor the council's activities as part of the supervision of the OCM (for recommended responsibilities of the CMAC see Appendix D-2).

C. Ecclesiastical connections

Chaplains are connected to the CRC and the CRC to chaplains through a complex of administrative and personal connections, which are summarized in Church Order Article 12-c and its supplement. (The recommended steps for entering the chaplaincy and the further policies and practices for calling churches, classes, and chaplaincy ministries are found in Appendix D-3.)

V. Church Order and liturgical changes

In order to make the work of chaplains more visible in our official documents, we recommend some changes in the Church Order and in our liturgical forms.

A. The Church Order should include chaplaincy as a category under Article 12-b so that it reads:

A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions or chaplaincy, or (2) is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

B. We judge it important that the material on the nature of chaplaincy and the guiding principles for chaplaincy be inserted in Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c (section c).

C. We judge it important that the form for ordination/installation provide a section 5: "For a chaplain."

VI. Chaplains who are not ordained ministers of the Word

While this committee studied chaplaincy, it also examined the current practice of endorsing as chaplains or chaplain associates some persons who are not ordained ministers of the Word. Since the mid-1980s, the OCM has provided several endorsements of that kind. Once a position was established as being a chaplain's position, the person to be hired for it sought endorsement from Chaplaincy Ministries.

Generally, it was second career people who sought such endorsement. Although these chaplains have not completed the denominational requirements for ordination as ministers of the Word, Chaplaincy Ministries has maintained standards for these endorsements that are comparable to the ministry of the Word requirements for endorsement. The standards for such endorsement include theological and ministry competence, clinical training, and ordination into an ecclesiastical office other than minister of the Word. The office into which that endorsed person is ordained has been left to the discretion of the local church. This practice has led to inconsistency and a lack of clear guidelines for the local churches.

The decisions of Synod 2001, which broadened the office of evangelist to include a variety of functions that extend the ministry of the Word may offer an appropriate place for ordaining lay persons under Church Order Article 23-b.

VII. Recommendations

A. That the Board of Trustees adopt the mandate, guiding principles, and administrative placement for chaplaincy ministries.

Grounds:

1. The mandate states the nature of chaplaincy as it has developed in our church's history.
2. The guiding principles emerge from Reformed theology and the reflections of our chaplains.
3. This administrative placement is the most appropriate choice at this time and is similar to the placement of the offices of Abuse Prevention and Race Relations.

B. That the Board of Trustees provide the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries (OCM) with an advisory council of eight (8) persons.

Grounds:

1. A group of persons familiar with chaplaincy will be able to assist the Board of Trustees and the director.
2. This council is similar to those advising the directors of Abuse Prevention and Race Relations.

C. That the Board of Trustees approve the operational Guidelines for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries (Appendix D-1); the Responsibilities of the Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Council (Appendix D-2); and receive as information the Policies and Practices for Calling Churches and Chaplaincy Ministry Personnel (Appendix D-3) and provide them as information to synod.

Ground: These operational guidelines are helpful to the OCM and to the churches in stating what each does and is to do.

D. That the Board of Trustees ask the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to investigate and report on whether persons who desire to use their gifts as chaplains but who are not eligible to be ordained as ministers of the Word under Church Order Article 6 can be examined and ordained as “commissioned chaplains” under provisions of Church Order Article 23.

Ground: Religious workers who were formerly recognized as chaplain associates have functioned as an extension of the ministry of the Word and appear to fit the parameters of the office of evangelist.

E. That the Board of Trustees recommend to Synod 2003:

1. That synod adopt the following mandate for the CRC chaplain ministry:

Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings.

2. That synod adopt the characteristics and guiding principles for chaplaincy (see section III, B and C) and insert them into Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c (section c).

Grounds:

- a) The mandate states the nature of chaplaincy as it has developed in our church’s history.
- b) The guiding principles emerge from Reformed theology and the reflections of our chaplains.

3. That synod amend Church Order Article 12-b to read:

A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions or chaplaincy, or (2) is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

Ground: This addition re chaplaincy will help to regulate the ministry of chaplains as a significant part of the church’s ministry.

4. That synod instruct the CRC Publications Board to develop an amendment to the forms of ordination and installation for use by the churches to install and ordain ministers of the Word as chaplains.

Ground: These amendments will recognize the significant ministry of chaplains as a regular part of the church’s ministry.

Appendix D-1 Guidelines for Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

I. Purpose of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

The purpose of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is to perform the following:

- Recruit chaplains consistent with position openings and opportunities;
- Provide information to the CRC on chaplaincy and related ministries;
- Administer the training stipend and salary supplement provisions in the budget;
- Administer the denominational endorsement process;
- Take responsibility for the shared supervision with the calling churches of persons ministering in specialized settings;
- Provide pastoral support and advocacy for those serving in specialized settings;
- Conduct periodic conferences for the training and encouragement of CRC chaplains;
- Maintain appropriate contact with national endorsing-related organizations.
- Serve as the employing agency for chaplains with regard to Ministers Pension Fund issues (*Acts of Synod 1970*, pp. 34-35); and
- Recommend to the Board of Trustees such policies as need to be proposed, revised and updated, or deleted.

II. Specific functions of the staff

A. *Recruitment*

The Chaplaincy Ministries staff:

- Works with high school, college, prospective seminary, and seminary students to challenge them early as they make their occupation choices with the possibilities and challenges of chaplain, pastoral counselor, and related ministries;
- Works with the colleges and the seminaries to acquaint students with the opportunities in these ministries, and to encourage the acquisition of specialized training early in their studies;
- Encourages people in second career choices to consider chaplaincy; and
- Challenges ministers and seminarians to consider opportunities for specialized ministry.

B. *Church relations*

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries develops public-relations programs to build a base of support in the CRC, including regular mailings to the CRC constituency; building a donors list; producing *Banner* ads; writing featured articles for *The Banner*, for *CRC Source*, and so forth.

C. *Training stipends*

The CRC is committed to a professionally trained and certified chaplaincy ministry. Therefore, the office provides and manages monies for training stipends in its operational budget. It solicits monies for the CRC Chaplain Professional Development Fund in the CRC Foundation. It solicits grants for the purpose of assisting chaplains and chaplain candidates in securing professional training and certification. Decisions for training and professional development will be made in consultation with the CMAC and submitted for the approval and/or disapproval of the executive director of ministries.

D. Salary subsidies

The office solicits and manages monies to assist churches and classes in subsidizing salaries for specific chaplaincies.

E. Endorsement for ministry

Synod 1998 required first, “that all ordained ministers serving in chaplaincy ministries be endorsed by Chaplaincy Ministries” and, second, stated “that endorsement is an on-going process. This process includes granting, monitoring, or withdrawing of endorsement based upon fulfilling the criteria for the ministry to which the chaplain is called.” Endorsement is part of “the regulations pertaining to the supervision of chaplains” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-92). The office will review the endorsement of chaplains when circumstances demand a review and at a minimum every five (5) years in conjunction with the review of the endorsement covenant (see section H below).

F. Pastoral care for chaplains

The specialized ministry of chaplains, like their fellow ministers in campus ministry, missions, and all who operate on the frontiers of kingdom engagement, is usually at a place where the light, guidance, and support of the community of faith are minimal. They often feel alone, vulnerable, and burdened by the challenges that confront them. One way the CRC lives with these chaplains is in the pastoral care provided by the office staff. The office acts as advocate for the chaplain within the denomination and in other professional, certifying associations. An annual conference, regional cluster-support groups, personal visits, the sharing of information, and ministry reports facilitate pastoral care.

G. Annual Chaplains' Conference

The conference provides the chaplains with professional training. Chaplains receive continuing education credits; they have an opportunity to meet other members of the CRC at the denominational offices, at Calvin College, and at Calvin Theological Seminary, and they meet with synodical delegates. The annual conference fulfills, in part, the synodical mandate that clergy engage in professional development. The U.S. Armed Forces Chaplain Corps and several employers provide leave of absence from the workplace for this training, recognizing the need for chaplains to maintain contact with their sending churches.

H. Joint supervision

Synod 1998 assigned “ecclesiastical supervision of the ministry of chaplains as a joint responsibility of the calling church and Pastoral Ministries [now the OCM]” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-92.). The supervisory process is a life-long mentoring process, extending the concept of mentor beyond the apprenticeship model to a professional-development model. Each endorsement of a chaplain should include a covenant among the calling church, the chaplain, and the OCM. This covenant assists the three parties in outlining responsibilities and procedures for joint supervision. It should also contain the mechanisms for the church visitors to fulfil their responsibilities as instructed by Synod 1978 and Synod 1982 (see Church Order Article 42-b) regarding annual inquiry into the supervision of the calling churches toward ministers of the Word in specialized ministerial tasks. The OCM will take the lead in the process of joint supervision. The covenant is reviewed every five (5) years.

I. Establish policies and procedures

The office is responsible for establishing and maintaining policies and procedures that allow for the effective and efficient management of chaplain and related ministries on behalf of the CRC, the CRC classes, and the calling churches. These policies and procedures address all the areas of responsibility assigned to the office and those that will advance the CRC chaplain ministries. The office will create a policies and procedures handbook for use in the denomination.

J. Assist churches in training in pastoral care

Chaplains are a source of training expertise in the art and theory of pastoral care for local congregations, classes, and regional organizations. The OCM will facilitate the design of training materials and solicit grants to support training efforts in which chaplains offer training events to pastoral caregivers in areas such as visitation in hospitals, prisons, and hospice-care centers. These training activities would also serve as another connection point for the chaplains with the local church and denomination.

K. Expand specialized ministry opportunities

Opportunities for chaplain ministry continue to expand in North America. Health-care organizations are required to provide spiritual care as an element in the delivery of health care. The aging population is creating a need for chaplain ministry in homes for the aged, in assisted living centers, and in nursing homes. Businesses and industry are becoming more aware of the relationship between religion and health and the effects of these on productivity. The OCM can monitor these developments and network with organizations promoting ministry in these new specialized settings.

L. Maintain contacts with other organizations

An important function of this office is the contacts and relationships established with governmental and nongovernmental organizations that promote, certify, endorse, and credential chaplains.

M. Maintain official files

In addition to the normal office correspondence and fiscal files, the office will maintain official files on all chaplains, student chaplains, and prospective chaplains.

N. Establish and encourage connections between the chaplains and the churches and provide advocacy for the chaplains.

The centralization of the denominational structure carries with it some distancing of chaplaincy from the local and regional churches. This office will continue to seek ways to maintain close contacts between the church and those ministers of the Word it sends into specialized settings.

III. Staffing of the office

The Board of Trustees determines the number of staff persons and the location of the denominational office(s) for the OCM. One staff person shall be appointed as the director. The executive director of ministries (EDM) supervises the director. The director supervises the other staff members.

Appendix D-2

Responsibilities of the Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Council (CMAC)

- A.* The Chaplaincy Ministries Advisory Council (CMAC) members will be selected regionally so that council members may meet with and be a support to the regional chaplaincy groups. Meeting with these groups will inform the CMAC members of the scope of the chaplain ministries in that region.
- B.* The CMAC members will communicate to the OCM on the state of chaplaincy in their regions, issues that need action by the staff of the office, and opportunities for chaplaincy ministry in the areas.
- C.* The CMAC members are encouraged to attend the meetings of classes and to contact the chaplains' calling churches in their regions.
- D.* The CMAC will meet two times a year to deliberate on chaplaincy issues, advise the staff of the OCM, and recommend issues that need to come to the attention of the BOT.
- E.* The CMAC will submit an annual report to the BOT on its activities.
- F.* The CMAC members will participate, where practical within the constraints of time and money, in the endorsement process, promoting chaplaincy and related ministries and supporting chaplains in their regions.
- G.* The CMAC will review and advise on all requests for training stipends and salary subsidies, especially those using monies from the Chaplain Development Fund.
- H.* The CMAC will assist the staff of the Chaplaincy Ministries Office in the promotion of chaplaincy and related ministries, explore opportunities and trends, and review new programs promoting chaplaincy and related ministries.

Appendix D-3

Policies and Practices for Calling Churches and Chaplaincy Ministries Personnel

I. Responsibilities and relationship of the calling church

- A.* The local church calls the men and women to chaplain ministry and ordains them for this ministry (Church Order Article 12).
- B.* The calling church's responsibility is outlined in the Church Order. The calling church's council assumes responsibilities in the calling process, in securing the approval of classis for the new chaplain position, in obtaining an endorsement from the OCM, and in the ecclesiastical supervision process (Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c.).
- C.* The calling church will seek the assistance and counsel of the OCM at the beginning of the calling process and maintain contact during the process of joint supervision (Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c and the synodical

rules related to the calling of chaplains as adopted by Synod 1998, [*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-92]).

D. The calling church council, the chaplain, and the OCM will make a covenant that clearly outlines the responsibilities, communication requirements, and reporting procedures that will be used in the joint supervision of the chaplain. This covenant is reviewed every five years to ensure continuity of review and supervision of ministry.

E. The calling church is encouraged to:

- Form a support group for the chaplain that consists of congregational members interested in the chaplain's ministry.
- Invite, when feasible, chaplains to participate in events important to the church's ministry, e.g., council retreats, ministry planning sessions, special congregational meetings.
- Invite chaplains to preach at least once each year or to participate in a service by discussing their ministries.
- Schedule opportunities for the chaplain to share his or her pastoral care expertise in training local congregations in Christian care.
- Ask the chaplains to communicate in writing when it is not feasible for them to be present in person.
- Designate a day each year to celebrate the chaplain's ministry in a special liturgy and with special bulletins when a special offering for OCM could be taken.
- Post pictures of the chaplain's ministry on the church bulletin board.
- Invite the chaplain to attend, if possible, classes meetings and CRC churches in areas where they are ministering.
- Urge classes to delegate the chaplain to a major assembly.

II. Responsibilities and relationship of the classis

The responsibilities of the classis to the chaplain are outlined in the Church Order. They include determining that the ministry task is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word (Church Order, Art. 12-c), ecclesiastical supervision of the chaplain as an associate minister (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 48 and Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c, section d), and the other functions associated with its responsibilities to all ministers of the Word.

A. Classis is urged to provide chaplains with opportunities to participate in the higher assemblies of the church (Church Order Article 45).

B. Classis is urged to invite chaplains ministering in its geographical area to attend the meeting of classis, classical retreats, inter nos meetings, and the social gatherings of ministers of the classis.

C. Classis may invite members of the BOT advisory council or members of the chaplain cluster groups to address classis on behalf of chaplain ministries.

D. Classis can explore and support the development of specialized ministries in their local communities in hospitals, jails, hospices, police and fire departments, and industry.

E. Classis is encouraged to consider student stipends for ministers interested in taking clinical pastoral training, marriage and family life training, and other pastoral care training and supervision

F. Classis, as part of the professional training of pastoral caregivers, is encouraged to promote training in pastoral care by using the expertise of the chaplains in their areas.

III. Responsibilities and relationship of synod and the Board of Trustees

Synod's responsibilities are outlined in the Church Order. Most of synod's ecclesiastical interaction with ministry in specialized settings is accomplished through the synodical deputies. The synodical deputies determine with the classis whether a new ministry task is consistent with the calling of the minister of the Word (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 48 and Church Order Article 12-c). They also determine that suitable arrangements have been made for defraying the cost of the pension of those engaged in ministry in specialized settings (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 48) and other functions associated with its responsibilities to all ministers of the Word.

A. Synod urges the calling churches and the chaplains to covenant with each other and the OCM to ensure the clarity of responsibilities in joint supervision (Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c, a, 2 and *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 47-48).

B. Synod reminds classes that they can elect chaplains as delegates to synod (Church Order Article 45).

C. Synod declares (pending approval) the following mandate for the CRC chaplain ministry: Chaplains are called to extend the ministry of the church to persons in institutional and specialized settings.

D. Synod acknowledges (pending approval) in the Church Order Supplement, Article 12 the characteristics of and guiding principles for chaplain ministry.

E. Synod mandates (pending approval) the development of forms of ordination and installation for use by the churches to install and ordain ministers of the Word to chaplain ministry.

F. Synod affirms its commitment to the unique opportunity provided to the church through the ministry of ministers of the Word in specialized settings. It also affirms the commitment to a professional, ordained, endorsed, and jointly supervised chaplain ministry.

G. Synod continues to recommend to the churches that chaplain ministries be celebrated in worship and supported financially through gifts and offerings.

H. The Board of Trustees will provide the OCM with an advisory council.

IV. Responsibilities and relationships of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

A. The specific functions of the OCM detail the responsibilities of that office (see Appendix D-1 above).

B. The OCM maintains contact with the calling church and the chaplain to ensure an effective communication and supervision relationship (Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c, a, 2 and *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 47-48).

C. The OCM will monitor and instruct chaplains to inform the office of any changes in the professional and personal standings in their ministry in order to manage the endorsement and supervision process (*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-92).

D. The OCM receives and monitors the chaplain's reports of ministry as agreed to in the established endorsement covenant.

E. The OCM will ensure that it fulfills its purpose and specific staff functions by reporting to synod through the Board of Trustees and through the executive director of ministries.

V. Responsibilities of the chaplain

The minister of the Word, called and ordained to the ministry of chaplain

A. Is accountable to the church and is endorsed by the OCM to classically approved positions.

B. Agrees to joint accountability involving the calling churches, the OCM with respect to credentials, ecclesiastical supervision, and ministry support.

C. Covenants with the calling church and the OCM to ensure a covenant that clearly outlines the responsibilities, communication requirements, and reporting procedures that will be used in joint supervision of the chaplain. Agrees to renew this covenant every five years.

D. Provides the OCM with timely reports of ministry as agreed to in the established endorsement covenant.

E. Connects with the church and integrates this specialized ministry as an important and integral part of the denomination's ministry and ministry plan.

F. Reports annually to classis either in person or through a written communication.

G. Invites members of classis and the Chaplain Ministry Advisory Council to their ministry sites to see and experience personally the chaplain's ministry.

H. Assists the church in developing effective pastoral care by training fellow officebearers and select laity.

I. Assists in the development of programs and training for those who engage in chaplain-style ministries.

Appendix E

Report Re Ordination of Chaplains under Church Order Article 23

I. Introduction

In paragraph VII, D of the Chaplaincy Ministries study committee report to the Board of Trustees (see Appendix D above), it was recommended:

That the Board of Trustees ask the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to investigate and report on whether persons who desire to use their gifts as chaplains but who are not eligible to be ordained as ministers of the Word under Church Order Article 6 can be examined and ordained as “commissioned chaplains” under provisions of Church Order Article 23.

Ground: Religious workers who were formerly recognized as chaplain associates have functioned as an extension of the ministry of the Word and appear to fit the parameters of the office of evangelist.

II. Background

Since the mid-1980s, the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries has endorsed nonclergy chaplains. Once a position was established by the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries and also by a local church council as being an approved chaplaincy position, the person sought endorsement from the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries.

Generally, such applicants were people who were entering a second career in Chaplaincy Ministry but who were not eligible for ordination. These individuals did not meet the requirements for candidacy or for ordination as ministers of the Word under Church Order Article 6. Although these persons had not completed the denominational requirements for ordination as ministers of the Word, Chaplaincy Ministries maintained standards for such endorsements that were comparable to the requirements for endorsement as minister of the Word. The standards for such endorsement include theological and ministry competence, clinical training, and ordination into an ecclesiastical office other than minister of the Word. These individuals, once approved, were then recognized as chaplain associates. The office chosen, either elder or deacon, that the chaplain associate was ordained into, was left to the discretion of the local church. This practice has led to inconsistency and a lack of clear guidelines for the local churches.

More recently, Chaplaincy Ministries has endorsed persons who have attended seminary and have received a masters degree from an accredited seminary but not necessarily a masters of divinity degree. Calvin Theological Seminary offers two masters of arts programs in specialized ministries: the Masters of Arts in Educational Ministry and the Masters of Arts in Missions. The Seminary catalog describes these courses as follows: “These programs are designed for persons who wish to prepare themselves for assuming positions of leadership in the ministry, particularly in the area of specialization” (Calvin Theological Seminary Catalog, p. 77).

Calvin Seminary also offers a masters of theology studies program that is: “designed for persons who do not seek ordination but desire theological education in support of various vocational objectives” (Calvin Theological Seminary Catalog, p. 84).

Upon completion of their studies, these persons had not sought candidacy or ordination. Several of them, however, were hired as chaplains in health-care institutions and in business and industry. As a condition of hire, they need to have an endorsement from the church. Once ministering in these positions, the person sees ordination as necessary, desirable, and advantageous for the conducting of ministry. The desire for ordination is kindled in the conducting of ministry and becomes a very strong motivation to seek ordination to one of the offices of the church. They also experience the reality that many of the institutions require or prefer ordained persons to function as chaplains. Some of the organizations that certify health-care organizations recommend ordination for professional staff chaplains. In addition, the majority of chaplain professional associations that credential chaplains require endorsement and ordination.

Returning to seminary and seeking candidacy is often not a realistic option or possibility for these chaplains, and, therefore, there is an inclination to seek ordination to become ordained as a minister of the Word via Church Order Article 7. That route to ordination is one route that is open to those chaplains with demonstrated gifts for ministry and who have the desire to be ordained as ministers of the Word. Ordination as minister of the Word under Article 7 is a perceived affirmation by the Christian Reformed Church of their calling to chaplain ministry.

The preference of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is that all chaplains be ordained as ministers of the Word. The routes to ministry of the Word in the CRC are through Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8. If Synod 2003 acts positively on the recommendations of the Board of Trustees, chaplains will have a synodically approved mandate, specific characteristics that describe chaplain ministries, clear guiding principles incorporated in the Church Order, and liturgical forms for the ordination and installation of ministers of the Word as chaplains.

III. Nonclergy chaplains

It is necessary to discuss the status of those who desire to perform chaplaincy ministries but who are not ordained as ministers of the Word in the CRC. Church Order Article 23 in its present form addresses ministries of the church that are most closely associated with congregational life or the establishment of new congregations. Therefore, as it now stands, Article 23 does not lend itself to be used for the ordination of persons to specific chaplaincy ministry positions.

In addition, the wording of Article 23-b presents a major disadvantage in that it entitles this office to be one of “evangelist.” The term *evangelist* is so freighted with meaning that its use is problematic for chaplains. The term *evangelist* has a history unique to the CRC’s understanding of this office of the church, but other faith groups and public institutions do not share that history. The title evangelist raises questions in the institutions where chaplains serve, with the organizations that professionally certify chaplains, and also with colleagues and chaplain associates. The following reasons help explain why this is so:

A. Public health care and other institutional pastoral care programs are loath to have evangelists on their staffs. The competition commonly associated with

winning people to a particular faith or point of view is not a desirable model for pastoral care programs in public health-care settings. These institutions are opposed to “proselytizing” by members of their staff and being an evangelist is understood as proselytizing.

B. While the CRC recognizes a chaplain as a “pastoral extension of the office of evangelist,” this language will require additional explanation and defense against skeptics in the institutions where the chaplain serves. This is an impediment to the chaplain’s calling and work.

C. The Lake Odessa CRC council reported to Classis Thornapple Valley that in consulting with members of the Committee to Study Ordination and “Official Acts of Ministry,” they learned that the committee did not have professional chaplains in mind when the committee’s report was written in 2001. The committee did refer to chaplains but as an extension of a pastoral ministry, having in view, for example, lay ministry to a nursing facility. Such a locally based ministry does not require any professional training but only a compassionate person working within the context of a congregation’s ministry. The reference to “chaplain” in the report did not make it into the supplement of Article 23-b.

D. The Christian Reformed Church is committed to providing trained and qualified chaplains for ministry in these specialized settings. The professional organizations that provide certification and accreditation of chaplains are partners with us in the process of maintaining a professional corps of Christian Reformed chaplains. Therefore, their standards also apply to our considerations of this office title.

E. For example, the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) credentials chaplains who are ordained by their faith groups to a ministry of pastoral care and are endorsed by their faith groups for ministry as a chaplain. The APC, as do almost all of the certifying bodies, has a code of ethics. That code of ethics is best served by a chaplain ordained to the office of minister of the Word.

F. Churches and other religious organizations have worked for years to ensure that the spiritual care and cure of souls is an integrated part of the treatment in our health-care facilities. The general principles and values section of the APC code of ethics states, in 110.12, “The spiritual dimension of a person is an essential part of an individual’s striving for health, wholeness and meaning in life.” Section 110.13 states, “The spiritual care of persons is a critical aspect of the total care offered in the delivery of care for public and private institutions and organizations.” This holistic emphasis through the years has resulted in spiritual care being a consideration in the accreditation procedures for our health-care facilities.

G. The Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) standards for hospital chaplains underscores credentials for a ministry of pastoral care rather than a ministry of evangelism.

These considerations have made it necessary for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministry to advocate with churches and classes that persons who are not qualified for ordination under Articles 6 and 8 but who seek ordination do so under the provisions of Article 7 and not under Article 23-b.

Church Order Article 23-b could provide an additional avenue of ordination that could be available for chaplains not eligible for ordination as ministers of the Word under Church Order Articles 6, 7, or 8 but who are gifted and would like to minister as chaplains. Ordination under Article 23-b has several positive aspects. It provides a route to ordination into a specific and specialized ministry, it involves the classis and the synodical deputies in determining that the position meets the guidelines adopted by Synod 2000, and it details procedures for examination. It also provides individuals the opportunity to use their education for ministry as envisioned in the new masters of arts courses. These programs, now offered at Calvin Seminary, focus on the preparation for serving in specialized ministries in the church. Ordination under Article 23-b also provides the individual with the affirmation of gifts for ministry and ordination into a recognized office.

Since ordination is an ecclesiastical matter and prerogative, the Christian Reformed Church in North America could determine that those persons not meeting the ecclesiastical requirements for ordination as ministers of the Word, could be ordained and endorsed for ministry as commissioned chaplains. The church would require of these persons a demonstration of the gifts, knowledge, clinical skills, and endorsement for chaplain ministry. The ministry that these persons perform would be like that of ministers of the Word; the difference would be in the office into which the person is ordained. It would essentially be the same office as is now used for evangelists and the same restrictions would apply (i.e., ordination is for a specific position, within the classis, and is not transferable to other places or ministries). The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America would have the same relationship to commissioned chaplains as it does to other chaplains. Therefore, the synodically approved mandate characteristics of chaplain ministries and guiding principles that are established in the Church Order and liturgical forms to ordain and install these persons would apply to commissioned chaplains as well.

The difference between chaplains who are ministers of the Word and those who are commissioned chaplains is not their work or their qualifications for ministry but the flexibility that these persons have in moving from ministry to ministry.

A change in the title of the “office of evangelist” in Article 23 would make ordination as commissioned chaplains another route for chaplain ministry. Having commissioned chaplains identified as a designated application of that office, having reference made to the synodically approved mandate (the recommended Church Order’s chaplain characteristics and guiding principles), and having the appropriate liturgical forms would give the Christian Reformed Church a two-tiered chaplain track distinguished not by training and ministry but by type of ordination for ministry.

IV. Recommendations

With respect to commissioned chaplains, it is recommended that the Board of Trustees request synod to:

A. Approve a two-tiered chaplaincy track distinguished not by training and ministry but by type of ordination for ministry.

B. Approve the designation of, and establish a unique form of ministry for, a person ordained under the provisions of Article 23 called commissioned chaplain.

C. Once it has approved the Chaplaincy Ministries mandate, the chaplain characteristics and guiding principles, and the proposed revisions of the liturgical forms, that synod declare that these provisions apply to the office of commissioned chaplain.

D. Prescribe the ordination of commissioned chaplains to be under the revised provisions and procedures as outlined in the Church Order Article 23-b.

E. Request that churches encourage persons gifted in pastoral care to exercise those gifts in the work of chaplain ministry.

F. Request that churches encourage persons desiring chaplain ministry to seek qualification and ordination as ministers of the Word under Articles 6, 7, or 8.

G. Request that churches encourage persons desiring to serve in chaplaincy ministry who are not eligible for ordination as ministers of the Word under Articles 6, 7, or 8 but who are interested and skilled in pastoral care to seek the requisite training and ecclesiastical endorsement to function as ordained commissioned chaplains and seek ordination under the provisions of Church Order Article 23-b.

Appendix F

Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., interim director; Rev. Siebert A. Van Houten, Canadian director)

I. Introduction

Chaplaincy Ministries is a denominational ministry of nearly one hundred full-time and twenty part-time chaplains serving throughout North America and the world. Our chaplains serve in the military, in hospitals, in nursing homes, in youth centers, in correctional institutions, in hospice centers, in counseling centers, in veterans' medical facilities, and in workplace settings. New models of community chaplaincy are emerging. In this new model, a chaplain's ministry will consist of contracts with diverse groups such as local businesses and industry, social-service centers, federal and local court programs, and nursing homes. Because economic and fiscal resources impact chaplain programs in the civilian sector, these new contracted ministries provide an affordable resource to the community and an expanding opportunity for future ministry.

Our United States Military Chaplains and the men and women to whom they minister are preparing for the possibility of a war with Iraq. These times of preparation are filled with personal busyness: preparing for separation from families, getting military equipment and uniforms ready, making certain that wills and other legal and financial issues are complete, saying good-bye, and facing the uncertainties of going to war. All this personal stress happens as they minister to men and women who are making the same preparations and experiencing the same emotional tugs. These are times of uncertainty, of

anxiety, of military secrecy, of importune prayer, of the steeling of will and resolve. Most of all, these are times for surrendering to the will of God. These times also provide precious opportunities for doing Christ's ministry.

The Chaplaincy Ministries staff works with prospective chaplains to review their training, certification, and application for endorsement. We offer pastoral, personal, and professional support to our chaplains by keeping in touch through phone and e-mail, periodic site visits, newsletters, regional cluster meetings, and an annual conference. The staff works with the calling churches to provide ecclesiastical supervision. Through the generosity of the churches, the denomination is able to assist prospective chaplains with training stipends and salary subsidies.

An important role for our staff is their participation in governmental and professional organizations. In these organizations, standards and competencies for ministry and ethical standards for the practice of chaplaincy are discussed. Decisions made by these organizations have an impact on the level of training required for chaplains and on the development of chaplaincy programs within institutions. The Christian Reformed Church has a reputation for excellence in these accrediting and certification agencies and in the institutions in which they perform ministry. Many of our chaplains have positions of leadership and responsibility in these organizations and in the institutions in which they work.

We note with gratitude the retirement of the following chaplains: Donald Klompeen, Carroll Keegstra, John Lamsma, and Karl Willoughby. One of our Air Force chaplains, Karl Wiersum, was seriously injured in an accident and is being medically retired. We welcome the following chaplains who were added to the roster during the past year: Timothy Won, Scott Koeman, Andrew Gorter, Wick Hubers, Louis Korf, Tom Haan, Jake Heerema, John Hutt, and Roger Kraker. We are also working with several other prospective chaplains.

II. Noteworthy events

A. The Board of Trustees committee that was established "to review and evaluate the nature of chaplaincy ministry with a view toward formulating a clearly worded mandate, to identify guiding biblical and theological principles that need to be integral to the gospel ministry as expressed in Chaplaincy by CRC personnel and to recommend an appropriate organizational placement for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries within the denominational structure" completed its work and provided its report to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees approved the report and the Board's recommendations are in its report to Synod 2003. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries thanks the committee and the Board of Trustees for their prayers and efforts in bringing this process to a successful conclusion.

B. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries in the United States and in Canada are active in discussing the shape of religious and pastoral ministry in the event of another terrorist attack. A letter, signed by four denominational officials, was sent to the President of the United States asking him to ensure that some office in the new Department of Homeland Defense has the responsibility to coordinate and train clergy who would respond to these disasters. In Canada, a task force is being formed to analyze how the churches can cooperate, plan, and respond to a crisis. Chaplaincy Ministries and the Christian Reformed World

Relief Committee (CRWRC) are working closely together to ensure that spiritual care is an integral component of response to a terrorist attack and in our disaster relief.

C. Chaplains are aging and about forty will retire in the next eight years. In order to maintain the commitment to excellence in chaplain ministry, a special account called the Chaplain Development Fund was established in the Christian Reformed Foundation. This fund will be used for chaplain training, subsidy of salaries, and support for other professional training and development.

D. New chaplains will be needed to replace those who will leave this specialized ministry. We now have no chaplains in the United States Federal Prison system. We are down in the number of Air Force chaplains. Both of these ministries need men and women who are under forty years of age. We encourage pastors to prayerfully consider this vital and rewarding form of ministry, and we also encourage pastors to hold before their congregations the importance of providing a ministry of pastoral care to those people who for various reasons are unable to be a part of congregational life.

E. The demographics of our nations and of the church show that our population is aging. This provides both a challenge and an opportunity for ministry. Some churches have expressed a need for training materials and training for both clergy and laypersons who minister to this aging population, especially those in long-term care facilities. Chaplaincy Ministries is working with other agencies to respond to this expressed need in the church.

III. Challenges to the ministry

A. Chaplaincy Ministries seeks to encourage younger persons to enter military and prison chaplaincy and requests that synod encourage younger pastors to consider entering such ministry.

B. Chaplaincy Ministries is completing its study and report to the Board of Trustees as requested. In paragraph VII, D of its report to the Board of Trustees, the study committee recommended: "That the Board of Trustees ask the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to investigate and report on whether persons who desire to use their gifts as chaplains but who are not eligible to be ordained as ministers of the Word under Church Order Article 6 can be examined and ordained as commissioned chaplains under provisions of Church Order Article 23." One difficulty with Article 23 is the term *evangelist*, which does not adequately describe the ministry or the guiding biblical and theological principles of the chaplain.

C. The office staff will work to establish and publish clear guidelines for the endorsement of chaplains and for the responsibilities in joint supervision of chaplains.

D. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries asks synod to urge those pastors who volunteer as chaplains or do limited part-time chaplain ministry in addition to their pastoral duties to contact our office so we can include them in our support network.

E. The office staff continues to seek out opportunities to work collaboratively with other agencies and ministries in developing wholistic ministries.

As the Christian Reformed Church continues to minister in a wide variety of institutions and moves into the marketplaces of our society, there are many opportunities for the gospel to touch the lives of people who feel hurt, alienated, and, in some cases, abandoned. This population is the one to which chaplains are called and sent to serve. Our chaplains help people come to grips with the many vexing questions surrounding suffering, death, loss, and the quest for meaning in their lives. Our chaplains represent the church in many diverse settings to bring samplings of Christ's love and hints of hope.

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr. will be available to meet with the advisory committee reviewing the Chaplaincy Ministries report, and it is requested that he be granted the privilege of the floor when these matters are discussed by synod.

Appendix G

Disability Concerns (Dr. James Vanderlaan, director)

I. Activities

Disability Concerns continues to develop the following:

A. Regional disability concerns committees

These committees are constituted primarily of the regional (classical) disability consultants. They give encouragement and advice to each other.

The eastern Canada committee is the oldest, and it is functioning well. The Chicago committee is struggling along for lack of local leadership. The Southern California committee is dormant because there are only two consultants in the far-west area. The West Michigan committee is off to a good start since last fall.

B. Regional cross-disability conferences

We continue to hold the eastern Canada annual conference. This year's conference will be a three-day conference like that in 1996 and will specially target the people who themselves have disabilities. We have discussed other CRC regional cross-disability conferences for Chicago and West Michigan, but they have not yet materialized.

C. Regional disability consultants

The regional disability consultants are vital in our effort to assist churches to remove the barriers that keep people with disabilities from using their gifts in the congregation. We take all the consultants to an annual disability conference once a year for instruction and inspiration. We have just revised the position description for the consultants as well as for the church contact people they recruit.

Out of the eleven Canadian classes, three still need consultants: Alberta South/Saskatchewan and the two British Columbia classes. In the United States, nine out of thirty-six classes still need consultants. They are Arizona, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, Columbia, Central California, Los Angeles, Pacific Hanmi, Wisconsin, and Muskegon.

D. Church contact people

At present, 313 churches have church contact people in place; 154 in Canada and 159 in the United States. They see to it that *Breaking Barriers* (BB) gets

distributed. Out of the 996 total Christian Reformed Churches, 394 receive bulk orders of BB—195 in the United States and 199 in Canada. The 81 churches receiving bulk orders but not having a church contact ask us to send the order to the pastor, clerk, deaconate, or secretary. We also send one copy each to every minister, clerk, and secretary of deacons regardless of whether the church receives a bulk order.

E. Breaking Barriers

The circulation of *Breaking Barriers* continues to increase as the following figures show.

Issue	# Ordered	Delivered
60	47,000	49,150
59	45,100	45,775
58	45,000	45,885
57	43,000	44,450
56	37,100	38,500

The following is the distribution breakdown for the November 18, 2002, issue of *Breaking Barriers*:

Individual U.S.	3,171
Individual Canada	424
Quantities U.S.	15,368
Quantities Canada	22,861
Agency U.S.	672
Agency Canada	118
Clerks & Sec U.S.	1,480
Clerks & Sec. Canada	480
Pastors U.S.	1200
Pastors Canada	300
Total	46,134 plus 700 extra = 46,834

F. Agency contacts

We give class lectures and hold conversations about fieldwork assignments at Calvin Seminary. We also have conversations with agency personnel to raise awareness of disability issues that may arise in their ministries.

G. Participation in ecumenical and interfaith disability organizations

We participate in the following: National Council of Churches of Christ Disability Committee, Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities, and Pathways to Promise (mental illness and communities of faith).

H. Personal contacts

We are in constant conversations by e-mail, letter, phone, and face-to-face meetings with individuals about disability matters. A daily log is kept, and, over the course of the year, this becomes an impressive record of ministry contacts and lives touched.

II. Church survey

Synod 1993 adopted the following: “That synod heartily recommend full compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act PL 101-336 and its accompanying regulations in all portions of the CRC located in the

U.S. and Canada” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 539). Disability Concerns is responsible to synod for monitoring denominational progress in achieving this compliance. The *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, gather the data.

The questionnaire has remained unchanged from year to year, and the reader can gauge denominational progress in including people with disabilities by comparing the numbers this year to those of previous years. We have included the primary figures from previous years below that for comparison. Disability Concerns questionnaire results for 2003 (the database contains 996 churches) are as follows:

A. Barrier free – 411

B. Partially accessible – 494

1. Worship area – 577
2. Fellowship areas – 542
3. Classrooms – 448
4. Restrooms – 491
5. Pulpit area – 112
6. Main entrance – 514

C. Signing for the deaf – 46

1. All services/programs – 4
2. When requested – 57

D. Aids for hard of hearing and deaf – 432

1. Special hearing aids – 386
2. Captioned video screening – 29
3. Printed texts of the sermons – 58
4. Other – 44 (they consist of Power Point presentations, overheads, sermon outlines, sound system and loops, wireless hearing aids, tapes, and video tapes)

E. Aids for the visually impaired – 409

1. Large-print bulletins – 217
2. Large-print song books – 345
3. Large-print Bibles – 290
4. Braille when requested – 26

F. Special programs – 226

1. Friendship classes – 197
2. Fellowship activities – 115
3. Christian housing assistance – 29
4. Respite care – 23
5. Other – 24 (care to shut-ins, one-on-one for children with mental impairments, special programs as needed, GEMS counseling, attention-deficit education, children’s school for autistic and mental impairments, support network for special- needs children.)

G. Transportation – 300

1. In a lift-equipped church vehicle – 20
2. In an ordinary church-owned vehicle – 72
3. In a privately owned vehicle – 326
4. Weekly – 196
5. When requested – 263

The final question on the questionnaire asks about participation in church activities. The data generated by the answers to this question are not shown in the *Yearbook* but are helpful to Disability Concerns in tracking denominational progress in bringing people with disabilities more fully into church life. This question was first included on the questionnaire in 1997. The answers this year are as follows:

Participation of members with disabilities serving in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation (284 churches responding).

1. Paid staff – 23
2. Office-bearer – 66
3. Church-school teacher – 51
4. Usher/greeter – 174
5. Committee member – 149
6. Other – 130 (classroom attendant, friendship staff, choir, sound-booth operator; most did not state what position the person held.)

The number of participants with disabilities and other statistics for previous years are as follows:

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Paid staff	9	23	20	13	21
Office-bearer	32	26	34	48	61
Church-school teacher	36	29	42	42	49
Usher/greeter	102	108	116	120	155
Committee member	78	94	99	108	128
Other	66	72	70	90	106
Barrier-free access	368	365	318	383	394
Partial accessibility	459	470	417	481	528
Signing for deaf	31	29	35	44	45
Providing aids for hearing impaired	190	185	437	479	459
Providing aids for visually impaired	346	364	284	444	480
Providing special programs	240	244	225	254	244
Providing transportation	292	324	346	399	334

Appendix H

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Duane A. Visser, Director)

Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) is celebrating its twentieth anniversary of operation this year. From its inception, PCR was given a dual mandate by synod:

- To provide assistance, consultation, and intervention for pastors and congregations as they experience challenges and changes to ministry.

- To provide prevention by way of education, retreats, and other support services.

We are pleased to note that in August 2002, PCR added a second professional staff person, Rev. Norm Thomasma. Norm's title is Education Specialist, with an emphasis on the second part of the denominational mandate—education and prevention.

Also, PCR has experienced a boost in its program by way of a grant from the Lilly Foundation. This grant will fund the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program and is a cooperative venture with Calvin Seminary, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, CRC Home Missions, and the Denominational Office. Our part is centered on the improvement of mentoring programs and the regional pastor training.

I. Activities

A. As noted above, with the addition of Rev. Norm Thomasma to the PCR staff, there has already been an increase in educational activity and programs that have not received adequate emphasis. These include expanding attention to specialized ministry staff, a rapidly growing area of CRC congregational staffing; staff ministry needs; and training opportunities at the congregational and classical levels.

B. PCR has a committee to receive and process requests for denomination continuing-education funds for ministry staff. During this year, we have provided grants to twenty-two applicants. We encourage ministry staff to take part in continuing education and to apply for the necessary funds to make this possible.

C. There are sixty-one regional pastors serving fellow pastors in the forty-seven classes of the CRC. They do this additional task with real concern for colleagues and congregations. The CRC is blessed by their work. In the next few years, PCR will be taking opportunities to enhance the work of the regional pastors through programs made possible by the Lilly grant.

D. Another strong emphasis for PCR is made possible by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (Lilly grant) program. We will provide intensive training and cooperate with Calvin Seminary in expanding the mentoring programs. There are already many experienced pastors who serve as mentors to new candidates and individuals entering CRC ministry from other denominations. PCR is planning to expand and intensify the required mentoring program with training, educational offerings, and accountability design.

E. The Ministerial Information Service (MIS) maintains about 680 pastor profiles and congregational profiles of those looking for pastors (there are 135 vacant churches at this time—a number that has stayed fairly consistent over recent years). During this year, PCR has sent over two thousand profiles to pastors and search committees. A word of appreciation is in order at this point. First, thanks to Ms. Laura Palsrok, administrative assistant who maintains this information system and efficiently responds to requests for assistance. Also, we appreciate the five-person committee that assists our staff in processing all of the requests and supports the director in this ministry—Rev. Mike Abma,

Rev. Morris Greidanus, Rev. Art Schoonveld, Rev. Kathy Smith, and Mr. John Vander Lugt.

F. There are currently five specialized interim pastors serving throughout the denomination. Their current placements are:

- Rev. Allan Groen – First CRC, Montreal, Quebec
- Rev. Mel Pool – Sunrise CRC, Ponoka, Alberta
- Rev. Larry Slings – Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan
- Rev. Leonard Troast – Jamestown, Michigan CRC
- Rev. Robert Walter, Jr. – Bethany CRC, Bellflower, California.

A note of thanks also goes to Rev. Peter Mans and his wife, Jo, who retired from the ministry this year after serving three congregations as a specialized interim pastor. They, and the others, have provided a vital service to congregations in transition. The challenge is great, and their work is appreciated.

PCR also recognizes the many retired pastors who provide stated supply to congregations who are without pastors. They also provide a necessary service to the denomination.

G. One of the most demanding and consistent tasks of PCR is providing interventions and consultations for congregations and pastors. This year has been no exception. There are the challenges of conflict, crisis, and change that demand much of leaders and congregations. We seek to provide assistance throughout the United States and Canada and to walk with those who request our services.

II. Challenges to the ministry

A. With the addition of Rev. Norm Thomasma, PCR faces the positive challenge of defining the ministry in the light of the synodical mandate.

B. The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program provides funding for expansion of the mentoring and regional pastor programs. This is also an opportunity for greater collaboration with other denominational ministries.

C. The Specialized Interim Ministry program has been a vital service to congregations. We continue to explore ways in which we can assist pastors who serve and congregations who seek help during transitional times.

D. PCR continues to focus on ways to support staff ministries and those who serve—both the ordained and the specialized ministry staff.

Appendix I

Race Relations (Rev. Norberto Wolf, ministry director and regional director for Southern California; Ms Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, regional director, Great Lakes; Mr. Peter Szto, regional director, Michigan and East Coast.)

I. Our mandate

The mandate of Race Relations is “to design, organize and implement programs which the denomination, churches, and members can effectively use

to eliminate racism, both the causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world.”

To fulfill this mandate we follow the following strategies:

A. Advocacy

We seek to identify behaviors and structures that inhibit multiethnicity or create unjust situations for believers from diverse ethnicities. We also provide forums and structures that will allow people of color to be heard by the majority and for the majority to give an attentive ear to the voices of people of color.

B. Education

We actively promote the biblical vision of an all-nations church, and we promote the work of reconciliation completed by our Lord, Jesus Christ. We invite all cultures in our denomination to experience the richness and diversity of the united and diverse family of God. This implies not only celebratory events such as All Nations Heritage Week but also that we challenge notions of prejudice and preferential treatment. We also provide the new ethnic groups with information concerning our denomination’s culture and procedures in order to allow them to become full participants in the life of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. Leadership development

We seek to identify potential leaders among all people of color. Toward this end, we provide scholarships and grants that will help them to become a strong voice in our denomination. We also provide training to help such leaders understand our theology and church government.

D. Consultation

We are committed to help churches and agencies change in ways that encourage diversity. In cases of crisis, we have helped churches find solutions to conflicts involving ethnic, social, and cultural diversity. We also serve as consultants and advisors in several denominational and classical committees.

E. Antiracism initiative

The ministry of Race Relations exercises leadership in carrying out stage two of the antiracism initiative, working with both agencies and churches. Through training and organizing, the antiracism initiative has helped us uncover not only visible prejudice and discrimination present in society and in the church but also the hidden sources of racism buried in historical decisions, institutional processes, documents, cultural preferences, and systemic structures. This strategy has been the most intensively followed by our ministry of Race Relations. It aims at a transformational change in our denomination, and it requires a great deal of planning, organizing, and sustained effort. It has proven to be an excellent tool not only to motivate people from all ethnic groups but also to provide great support to strategies A to D mentioned above.

II. Our work

A Race Relations Advisory and Review Council has been appointed to review the work of Race Relations and the stage two antiracism initiative. This council reports to Race Relations and to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA through the executive director of ministries. The appointed members of this council are Mr. Ted Charles, Mr. Tim Nguyen, Rev. Francisco Golon, Ms. Joyce

Jackson, Mr. Bradley Breems, Rev. Robert Price, Ms. Mattie Young, and Ms. Cindy Vander Kodde.

A. Key activities of the Race Relations team

1. Presented thirteen seminars and workshops on cultural diversity and facility sharing in CRC churches and classes.
2. Attended fifteen meetings of classes and, when invited, reported on the work of Race Relations, inviting congregations and classes to promote an all-nations church.
3. Held six one-day introductory events in preparation for Crossroads antiracism training, and coordinated six presentations of Crossroad Ministries' training workshops on antiracism.
4. Co-chaired the monthly meetings of the Core Organizing and Planning Team, and the quarterly meetings of the MAC Antiracism Team.
5. Recommended the dates for the celebration of All Nations Heritage Week, promoted the event among CRC congregations, and prepared and distributed all the liturgical aids for that celebration.
6. Visited many of the people-of-color leaders in the three regions, affirmed their ministries, and provided advice and training whenever necessary.
7. Organized and led two middle-school multicultural camps.
8. Organized three large regional multicultural celebrations in Southern California and in the Chicago area.
9. Improved the Race Relations Team's professional capacity by taking Crossroads' advanced trainers' workshops (stages 1 and 2) and group facilitation methods.
10. Reviewed, by request of the synodical Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry, its pre-final report that will be submitted to Synod 2004.
11. Administered the Multicultural Scholarship and Multicultural Grant funds and designated recipients as shown below.

B. Scholarships and grants given toward leadership and congregational development

Race Relations reports that the following thirty-one multicultural scholarships were awarded to qualified recipients, for a total of \$21,000.

Recipient	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	Native-American
Calvin College	1	7	3	2
Calvin Seminary	1	2		
Dordt College		3		
Reformed Bible College	1	6	1	
Trinity Christian College	1		1	
Western Seminary	1			
New Jersey University			1	
Total	5	18	6	2

The following ministries received Multicultural Race Relations Grants:

- Antiracism Trainers Program
- Calvin Seminary Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy

The Ministry of Race Relations requests that synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 to October 5, 2003, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 5.

Grounds:

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism need to be balanced by celebrating and affirming God's gift of unity in diversity through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ (cf., Ephesians 2). The congregations that also celebrate World Communion Sunday can find a meaningful Christian Reformed way of doing it by combining both celebrations.
2. The financial support our ministry receives from the All Nations Heritage Sunday celebrations dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award scholarships and grants to promote leadership of people of color in the life of our denomination.

Appendix J

Social Justice and Hunger Action (Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator)

The office of Social Justice and Hunger Action implements the synodical report on world hunger as well as sections of the outreach and justice goals of the Denominational Ministries Plan.

The 1993 synodical report, "Free to Serve: Meeting the Needs of the World," essentially calls for infusing the mission and ministry of the Christian Reformed Church—at all levels—with a deeper and more effective concern for the poor, the hungry, and the powerless. This includes a commitment to confronting root causes of hunger and poverty—the tough issues.

The office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, with two full-time staff in the United States and one part-time staff in Canada, acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions, and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships. In short, this office aims to be a catalyst that energizes and organizes our denomination for more appropriate, effective, and efficient action on behalf of and with the poor and the oppressed.

This office recommends strategies and sets priorities based on the needs of existing ministries to the poor and the judgments of the Coordinating Council for Church in Society (CCCiS)—a group of representatives from each CRC agency and institution. During the past year, we have worked on the following general goals:

A. We assist congregations to understand and become active in social justice issues.

We do this in a growing variety of ways.

1. *The Advocate* is a monthly paper and portal for CRC justice activists. This increasingly popular newsletter goes in electronic and paper form to over 745 addresses a month and supplies a uniquely CRC take on social justice news and events.
 2. Our web site, www.crcjustice.org, serves well over one thousand visitors a month. The site contains information, links, and action alerts of assistance to almost anyone interested in putting her faith into justice witness.
 3. Shalom Seekers: Living the Call to Do Justice is a workshop binder that takes your group from good intentions to justice actions. This excellent resource was the product of collaboration between the Public Justice Resource Centre and the Canadian Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action.
 4. The Just Worship conference sponsored together with Kings University College, the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, and Citizens for Public Justice it drew over 130 participants from Canada and the United States to Edmonton (including people acting as “seed groups” to replicate the learning). Speakers Nicholas Wolterstorff, Pablo Sosa, and Alison Adam brought the group repeatedly to a deeper understanding of the unity of justice and worship. Justice and worship will continue to be a focus of our work.
 5. LISTSERV technology is used to build up the CRC network (Canadian justice groups LISTSERV for established social justice committees) and to respond to felt needs for education and advocacy (CRC Peace Builders LISTSERV serves approximately 130 subscribers and hosts vigorous discussions on matters of war, justice, and peace).
 6. In Canada, network building also includes regular workshops at diaconal conferences, Days of Encouragement, and other venues (i.e., adult Sunday school)
- B.* In addition to our core goals of helping congregations and small groups become effective communities of salt and light, we work on education and advocacy in selected issues that relate to root causes of poverty and hunger. Highlights this year:
1. “We Have AIDS” was a major collaborative effort this year with CRWRC, responding to a proposal from staff in East and South Africa. The campaign consisted of a series of monthly newsletters entitled, *We Have AIDS*, and materials for World AIDS Day (December 1). Those materials included a litany, AIDS pins, and advocacy postcards on access to medication and care. The evaluation of this campaign will help set goals for further work in this area.
 2. In the United States, we continue to work with Bread for the World and a broad Christian coalition to produce and distribute a six-session educational packet called Hunger No More. This biblically based material serves as a thoughtful introduction to U.S. poverty issues and lays a base for individual and group advocacy.
 3. In Canada, we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives opportunities and advocacy initiatives, as

well as working with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission of Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

4. We facilitate advocacy to Washington or Ottawa when appropriate for our areas of focus. This year, such ad hoc advocacy included refugee issues and regulation of the diamond industry.
5. In the area of criminal justice, we are supporting two working groups on restorative justice: one on the biblical basis and one on education and action opportunities for churches. Synod 2003 will consider an overture on this subject.
6. We are strongly supporting the goals of our denominational antiracism program as well as exploring ways we can help the church work toward greater justice for aboriginal peoples in Canada.
7. Peace building has been an expanding effort this past year. We were pleased to celebrate the peace agreement among three tribes and two Reformed denominations in Takum, Nigeria, this past year but are dismayed at developments in the Middle East. We continue to educate, promote, and advocate for peace and peace building.

The office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist our denomination to become salt and light in the service of God's justice.



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

Appendix K Pastoral Letter to CRC Churches

February 28, 2003

Dear Congregations,

Because we live in a critical moment of history, we, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, urge the church to continue to pray, study, and reflect on what our denomination has said over the years concerning war and peace. We ask the church to do this particularly in the light of the reality of the war on terror and (as we write this) the distinct possibility of a war with Iraq. Continue to pray for the leaders of our countries and of the world as they exercise their responsibility to govern for justice and peace.

The rising tide of anarchy and terror with which many countries have lived for years has reached our shores. Many of us now, for the first time, know the names and faces of victims. Many of us in North America are angry and afraid; afraid for ourselves, our society, and the world.

As we watch countries prepare for war, some of us hear a call to support our governments in this action; others hear a call to question and resist. Some of us—our sons, daughters, husbands and wives—have been called to active military duty. The church is called to pray and pastorally care for our members in the military as well as those who object to and work against this war.

Decisions on war and peace are always grave and usually complex. Because of this, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has spoken several times and at length on matters of war and peace (Synods 1939, 1977, 1982 and 1985). This material is available at www.crcjustice.org.

We urge all CRC congregations to engage in prayer, reflection, and thoughtful discussion and to assist members as they discern their own consciences and God's will in the matter of the war on terror and the war in Iraq.

We affirm that as citizens of Christ's kingdom and of nations we have a right and responsibility to participate in critical national discussions on war and peace. These decisions are not merely individual political decisions. They are moral decisions because they involve life, death and justice. We are also aware that as synod affirmed in 1977:

Weighty moral decisions are made responsibly before the face of God only if the prayers and counsel of the covenant fellowship are sincerely sought and lovingly offered.

(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 46)

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Grand Rapids MI 49560
Voice: 616-241-1691
Fax: 616-224-5895

3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington ON L7R 3Y8
Voice: 905-336-2920
Fax: 905-336-8344

It is in this spirit that we lovingly and urgently call the church to reflect on our commonly held principles as enunciated by Synod 1977:

If the nation has or is about to become involved in war or in any military action against another nation, Christians, as morally responsible citizens of the nation and of God's kingdom should evaluate their nation's involvement by diligently seeking answers to the following, drawing on the counsel of fellow members with special qualifications as well as pastors and the assemblies of the church:

- a. Is our nation the unjust aggressor?
- b. Is our nation intentionally involved for economic advantage?
- c. Is our nation intentionally involved for imperialistic ends, such as the acquisition of land, natural resources, or political power in international relations?
- d. Has our nation in good faith observed all relevant treaties and other international agreements?
- e. Has our nation exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the matters in dispute?
- f. Is the evil or aggression represented by the opposing force of such overwhelming magnitude and gravity as to warrant the horrors and brutality of military opposition to it?
- g. Has the decision to engage in war been taken legally by a legitimate government?
- h. Are the means of warfare employed or likely to be employed by our nation in fair proportion to the evil or aggression of the opposing forces? Is our nation resolved to employ minimum necessary force?
- i. In the course of the war has our nation been proposing and encouraging negotiations for peace or has it spurned such moves by the opposing forces or by neutral or international organizations?

(Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 46-48)

We urge you to continue to pray, think and talk broadly, deeply, and in love on these matters as citizens of Christ's kingdom, members of His church, and those called to be salt and light in this sin-damaged world. We ask you to do this together in the power of the Prince of Peace, because:

We who claim his name must live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace loving, harmonious living, and must also privately and publicly denounce war and strive to prevent it by prayer, by redressing the grievances of oppressed peoples, by prophetic calls to peace, by urging the faithful exercise of diplomacy, by entering the political arena ourselves, and by strong appeals to all in high places to resolve tensions by peaceful means. Christians must be reconcilers.

(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 588)

We do live in a critical moment, yet our world belongs to God and our hope is in Him. With this sure knowledge we encourage you to pray, to reflect, and to work with joy and confidence for justice and for peace.

For the Board of Trustees of the CRC



Edward Vanderveer, chairman

Appendix L

Denominational Ministries Plan

A. Introduction

The Denominational Ministries Plan provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. Last year, synod reviewed and endorsed the plan, and since then the “identity statement” section of the Plan has been made available in booklet form as well as posted on the denominational web site.

The plan identifies three strategic values and four ministry priorities for our denominational ministries. These are:

Values

- collaboration
- justice
- stewardship

Ministry priorities

- church development
- leadership development
- integrated ministry to children and youth
- outreach and discipling

The Board of Trustees asks the agencies and institutions to reflect these priorities in their plans and monitor programs and budgets for alignment.

In addition, the board has adopted several goals to advance these priorities, goals that are currently being addressed by interagency teams. In each case, one of our agencies or institutions serves as the convener of the goal team. The goals are listed below.

The board uses the ministries plan to set standards for and promote integration of our denominational ministries. As it does so, the board has been pleased with the cooperative spirit shown by our institutions and agencies. The plan’s strategic priorities and goals are being regularly reviewed to ensure that they reflect changing circumstances and the movement of God’s Spirit among us.

B. Goals adopted under the Denominational Ministries Plan

In order to advance the strategic values and ministry priorities of the Denominational Ministries Plan, the Board of Trustees has adopted the following seven goals to be achieved by interagency teams:

1. To advance collaboration, with the Denominational Office as the convening agency

CRC agencies and institutions will evaluate existing networking and collaboration among themselves and other associations, institutions, and organizations, whether Christian, interreligious, or secular, and in doing so will:

- Summarize and examine what is occurring, including the benefits, risks, and challenges; and

- Assess where the greatest opportunity lies for CRC agencies and institutions to make a positive ministry impact through networking and collaboration with other groups.
2. To advance church development ministries, with Home Missions as the convening agency

CRC denominational ministries will covenant with classes, congregations, and other ministry partners to identify levels of ministry health and develop a plan that strengthens local ministries and enhances our partnerships.
 3. To advance church development ministries, with Home Missions as the convening agency

CRC denominational ministries will serve congregations and classes by encouraging and supporting a denomination-wide movement that extends our kingdom witness for Jesus through increasing our capacity to plant up to thirty new churches a year.
 4. To advance leadership development, with Calvin Theological Seminary as the convening institution

CRC agencies and institutions will nurture effective servant leaders for our congregations and denominational ministries by:

 - Articulating a working definition of leadership that is biblically and theologically grounded, organizationally relevant, culturally responsive, and community sensitive;
 - Ensuring appropriate and accessible training for leaders;
 - Cultivating networks for leaders to be mentored for continued learning, professional and spiritual renewal, and revitalization.
 - Expanding opportunities for leadership for women, people of color, and volunteers; and
 - Supporting and advancing Christian education and Christian schools at all levels.
 5. To advance integrated ministry to children and youth, with CRC Publications as the convening agency

CRC denominational ministries will articulate and implement a vision for wholistic children and youth ministry that:

 - Provides means by which families and congregations can nurture children and youth in the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith;
 - Reaffirms covenant theology;
 - Provides guidelines and models for involving children and youth in the full life of the congregation;
 - Advances Christian education and Christian schools at all levels in a way that appropriately supports wholistic ministry; and
 - Helps make ministry to children and youth and its support systems an integral part of the denominational structure.
 6. To advance outreach and discipling, with World Missions as the convening agency

CRC agencies and institutions will ensure that all CRC mission outreach is characterized by a strong disciple-making component that reflects the

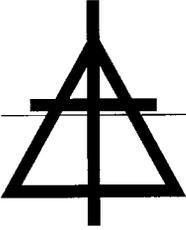
values (and their implications) contained in the denominational ministries plan.

7. To advance outreach and discipling, with World Relief as the convening agency

CRC agencies and institutions will develop within eighteen months two or more models for international and domestic ministry programming that include these characteristics:

- A wholistic ministry foundation that reflects Reformed principles and learning from previous ministry models;
- Christian day school education as a component of mission strategy;
- Strong participation from people outside the agencies and institutions;
- A major service learning component;
- Significant engagement with local congregations;
- Engagement with, and capacity building of, the ministry partners;
- Strong collaboration at all levels; and
- Program sustainability.

In addition, a new location or locations will be proposed where these models can be tested.



Appendix M
Press Release Re Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program
News Release

To: **Religion Editor**
From: **The Christian Reformed Church**
For information contact: Henry Hess, Communications Director
Tel: (905) 336-2920; Fax: (905) 336-8344; email: hessh@crcna.ca
Date: **September 23, 2003**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Christian Reformed Church receives Lilly grant to
“sustain pastoral excellence”**

Grand Rapids MI, Sept. 23, 2002 – The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) will receive a grant of \$1,999,278 from Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment Inc. as part of a national program called “Sustaining Pastoral Excellence.” The program is an effort to focus attention and energy on maintaining the high caliber of pastoral leaders in the United States.

Overall, 47 grants totaling \$57.9 million were awarded to religiously-affiliated organizations across the U.S. The three- to five-year awards range from \$252,355 to \$2 million.

The CRC’s program, “Creating a Culture of Pastoral Excellence,” will be funded for five years. The areas of programming under the grant are:

- Promoting and teaching the concept of pastoral excellence.
- A strengthened mentoring program for pastors, with special attention to those in their first five years of ministry.
- A peer-learning program that connects pastors within accountability groups.
- Regional continuing education opportunities that promote lifelong learning.
- Dissemination of learning that increases denominational impact.

The denomination’s proposal was developed by a task force of eight people representing various agencies of the CRC through a process that included consulting with parish pastors and a forum with Calvin Theological Seminary faculty. The agencies included Calvin Theological Seminary, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and the office of Pastor-Church Relations. The CRC Denominational Office coordinated the effort.

Craig Dykstra, Lilly Endowment vice president for religion, said the grants are aimed at “identifying, nurturing, and educating a talented new generation of

pastors” as well as “recognizing and supporting the excellent ones we have. Not surprisingly, we know that healthy, engaged, thoughtful, dedicated ministers usually go hand in hand with healthy, vibrant and effective congregations,” Dykstra said.

Over the past few years, the Endowment has put several programs in place to encourage pastors in their work. It established the Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations and the National Clergy Renewal Program. It also has supported small pilot programs of peer-learning groups.

“It became obvious, however, that many more pastors would be candidates for such programs and would benefit greatly from participating in them,” Dykstra said. “So we invited ‘any nonprofit organization committed to supporting pastoral work and prepared to create or enhance a high-quality pastoral leadership program’ to submit a proposal in this program.

“Judging from the response, we seem to have tapped into a wellspring of interest. More than 700 institutions put time and thought into proposals for this competitive program,” he noted.

“We will be most interested in following these projects over the next few years,” Dykstra said. “They offer the promise of meaningful renewal for many pastors in this country.”

Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries for the Christian Reformed Church, said: “We are grateful for this development and the opportunities it represents.

“The approval is due, I am sure, to the excellent work of the task force, enhanced by the quality of Lilly-supported programs at Calvin College and its Worship Institute. No doubt the commitment and generosity of our supporting membership also made a difference,” Borgdorff said.

The project director for the grant, Michael Bruinooge, commented, “We are grateful for all the strong pastors in the CRC and are eager to encourage them and to learn from them. In addition, we are excited about this opportunity not only for the pastors it will support, but also for the congregations it can energize for further service.”

Only two Michigan organizations received grants under the Lilly program, both based in West Michigan: the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America’s Western Theological Seminary, located in Holland, MI.

Note: For a complete list of award recipients and/or a brief summary of their project, visit the program’s web site at www.pastoralexcellence.org.

For more information contact: Michael Bruinooge, 616-224-0770

Appendix N Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Hour/CRC-TV Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2002-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,341	-	-	-	1,341
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	2,102	1,708	-	100	3,910
Receivables & Advances	39	-	18	-	57
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	20	-	-	-	20
Partnerships	245	-	-	-	245
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	910	-	-	-	910
Other	309	-	-	-	309
Total Assets	4,966	1,708	18	100	6,792
Accounts Payable	421	-	-	-	421
Notes/Loans Payable	698	-	-	-	698
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,553	-	-	-	1,553
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,672	-	-	-	2,672
Net Assets	\$ 2,294	1,708	18	100	4,120
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.	Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Board Restrictions: 1,708,000 Estate				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	In process church programs with Home Missions				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,316	\$	4,435
% of Total Income		48.6%		48.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,274	\$	3,395
Estate Gifts	\$	885	\$	869
Total Gift Income		4,159		4,264
% of Total Income		46.8%		46.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	398
Miscellaneous	\$	407	\$	80
Total Other Income		407		478
% of Total Income		4.6%		5.2%
TOTAL INCOME		8,882		9,177
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	3,017	\$	2,875
FTEs		5		5
International	\$	2,826	\$	2,958
FTEs		13		12
Television	\$	2,509	\$	2,035
FTEs		10		10
Television - Animation	\$	331	\$	750
		-		-
New Language Program Initiatives	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,683	\$	8,618
Total Program Service FTEs		28		27
% of Total \$		86.0%		85.7%
% of Total FTEs		80.0%		79.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	599	\$	471
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	819	\$	964
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		1,418		1,435
Total Support Service FTEs		7		7
% of Total \$		14.0%		14.3%
% of Total FTEs		20.0%		20.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	10,101	\$	10,053
TOTAL FTEs		35		34
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(1,219)	\$	(876)

**Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,033	-			1,033
CDs, Time Deposits	100	-	-	-	100
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	18,345	-	1,549	1,668	21,562
Inventory	590	-		-	590
Prepays & Advances	297	-	9		306
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	30,100	-	1,561	11,316	42,977
Equities	24,313	-	6,503	33,298	64,114
Partnerships	-	-	-	2,885	2,885
Property (non-operating)	172	-	-	68	240
PP & E	116,020	-	-	-	116,020
Other	7,661	-	5,400	1,886	14,947
Total Assets	198,631	-	15,022	51,121	264,774
Accounts Payable	5,493	-	-	-	5,493
Notes/Loans Payable	52,870	-	-	182	53,052
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	4,378	-	-	-	4,378
Deferred Income	620	-	-	-	620
Other	31,653	-	105	7	31,765
Total Liabilities	95,014	-	105	189	95,308
Net Assets	\$ 103,617	-	14,917	50,932	169,466
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Over 500 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	endowed gifts				

**Calvin Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 681	-	-	-	681
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	26	-	-	-	26
Receivables & Advances	1,707	1,242	-	-	2,949
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	4	3	-	-	6
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	3,408	-	997	7,846	12,250
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	800	-	-	-	800
PP & E	8,856	-	-	-	8,856
Other	26	-	-	-	26
Total Assets	15,508	1,244	997	7,846	25,595
Accounts Payable	646	-	0	-	646
Notes/Loans Payable	736	280	-	-	1,016
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	293	293
Deferred Income	160	-	-	-	160
Other	482	-	-	-	482
Total Liabilities	2,024	280	-	293	2,597
Net Assets	\$ 13,484	964	997	7,553	22,998
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	scholarship and grants				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	endowment and annuity				

**Calvin Seminary
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,170	\$	2,201
% of Total Income		50.5%		49.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	589	\$	736
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	79
Total Gift Income		589		815
% of Total Income		13.7%		18.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,061	\$	1,264
Grants	\$	286	\$	25
Miscellaneous	\$	194	\$	133
Total Other Income		1,541		1,422
% of Total Income		35.8%		32.0%
TOTAL INCOME		4,300		4,438
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,154	\$	1,899
FTEs		25		28
Public Service	\$	91	\$	86
FTEs		-		0
Academic Support	\$	582	\$	727
FTEs		4		3
Student Services	\$	422	\$	477
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	254	\$	345
FTEs		2		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,503	\$	3,534
Total Program Service FTEs		35		37
% of Total \$		77.0%		77.0%
% of Total FTEs		77.5%		76.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	711	\$	571
FTEs		5		7
Plant Operations	\$	228	\$	260
FTEs		3		2
Fund Raising	\$	184	\$	366
FTEs		2		3
Total Support Service \$		1,124		1,198
Total Support Service FTEs		10		11
% of Total \$		24.3%		25.3%
% of Total FTEs		22.5%		23.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	4,627	\$	4,732
TOTAL FTEs		45		49
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(326)	\$	(294)

**Canadian Ministries
Balance Sheet (000s)**

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Canadian Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	975	\$	521
% of Total Income		95.7%		83.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	41	\$	60
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		41		60
% of Total Income		4.0%		9.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	3	\$	42
Total Other Income		3		42
% of Total Income		0.3%		6.7%
TOTAL INCOME		1,019		623
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Govt. Contact/Church in Soc.	\$	38	\$	26
FTEs		1		1
Indian Ministries	\$	307	\$	322
FTEs		3		3
Electronic Media	\$	77	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Canadian Ministry Forum	\$	27	\$	23
FTEs		-		-
Other	\$	20	\$	27
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	469	\$	398
Total Program Service FTEs		4		4
% of Total \$		93.1%		91.5%
% of Total FTEs		80.0%		100.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	35	\$	37
FTEs		1		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		35		37
Total Support Service FTEs		1		-
% of Total \$		6.9%		8.5%
% of Total FTEs		20.0%		0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	504	\$	435
TOTAL FTEs		5		4
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	515	\$	188

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----December 31, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,325	-	-	-	1,325
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	40	-	-	-	40
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	144	-	-	-	144
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,520	-	-	-	2,520
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,029	-	-	-	4,029
Accounts Payable	192	-	-	-	192
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	317	-	-	-	317
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	509	-	-	-	509
Net Assets	\$ 3,520	-	-	-	3,520
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

	2001 Actual	2002 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Participant Premiums	\$ 6,791	\$ 6,677
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 295	\$ 213
Total Other Income	7,086	6,890
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	7,086	6,890
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 5,406	\$ 5,084
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 354	\$ 363
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 251	\$ 612
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 6,011	\$ 6,059
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	96.7%	97.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 204	\$ 185
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	204	185
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 6,215	\$ 6,244
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 871	\$ 646

CRCPublications
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2002-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 184	51	41	-	276
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	677	-	-	-	677
Inventory	2,458	-	-	-	2,458
Prepays & Advances	111	-	-	-	111
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	79	-	-	-	79
Other	112	-	-	-	112
Total Assets	3,621	51	41	-	3,713
Accounts Payable	500	-	-	-	500
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	576	-	-	-	576
Other	147	-	-	-	147
Total Liabilities	1,223	-	-	-	1,223
Net Assets	\$ 2,398	51	41	-	2,490
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Proceeds remaining from Tell property sale designated for Spanish.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Language and special project use - eg. PH supplement; Russian lang.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

CRCPublications
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	252	\$	364
% of Total Income		4.5%		6.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	50	\$	83
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		<u>50</u>		<u>83</u>
% of Total Income		0.9%		1.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	5,138	\$	5,212
Grants	\$	119	\$	108
Miscellaneous	\$	90	\$	16
Total Other Income		<u>5,347</u>		<u>5,336</u>
% of Total Income		94.7%		92.3%
 TOTAL INCOME		 <u>5,649</u>		 <u>5,783</u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,211	\$	1,122
FTEs		6		5
Education	\$	3,681	\$	3,590
FTEs		24		23
World Literature	\$	711	\$	728
FTEs		5		5
Agency Printing (PS)	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	<u>5,603</u>	\$	<u>5,440</u>
Total Program Service FTEs		35		33
% of Total \$		88.3%		89.5%
% of Total FTEs		94.6%		94.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	742	\$	636
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		<u>742</u>		<u>636</u>
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		11.7%		10.5%
% of Total FTEs		5.4%		5.7%
 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	 <u>6,345</u>	\$	 <u>6,076</u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u>37</u>		<u>35</u>
 NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	 <u>(696)</u>	\$	 <u>(293)</u>

**Denominational Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,182	-	94	-	1,276
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	784	-	-	-	784
Inventory	310	-	-	-	310
Prepays & Advances	19	-	-	-	19
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	7,369	-	-	-	7,369
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,470	-	-	-	5,470
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	15,134	-	94	-	15,228
Accounts Payable	598	-	-	-	598
Notes/Loans Payable	8,626	-	-	-	8,626
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	259	-	-	-	259
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	9,483	-	-	-	9,483
Net Assets	\$ 5,651	-	94	-	5,745
Footnotes:	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program				
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Denominational Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,873	\$	1,879
% of Total Income		17.9%		18.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	2	\$	49
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		2		49
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,828	\$	4,758
Grants	\$	388	\$	87
Miscellaneous	\$	3,370	\$	3,420
Total Other Income		8,586		8,265
% of Total Income		82.1%		81.1%
TOTAL INCOME		10,461		10,193
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	888	\$	1,027
FTEs		5		5
Education/F-T-Serve/Commun.	\$	379	\$	223
FTEs		2		2
CRCPlan/Lilly Grant	\$	287	\$	254
FTEs		1		2
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	4,876	\$	5,119
FTEs		34		31
Finance/Payroll Services	\$	1,486	\$	1,367
FTEs		17		17
CSIS/DEVELOP. SUPPORT	\$	562	\$	554
FTEs		7		7
Personnel	\$	107	\$	116
FTEs		2		2
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,585	\$	8,660
Total Program Service FTEs		68		66
% of Total \$		87.4%		88.0%
% of Total FTEs		90.7%		88.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	470	\$	523
FTEs		3		5
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	716	\$	608
FTEs		3		3
Fund Raising (Foundation)	\$	55	\$	51
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,241		1,182
Total Support Service FTEs		7		9
% of Total \$		12.6%		12.0%
% of Total FTEs		9.3%		12.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,826	\$	9,842
TOTAL FTEs		75		75
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	635	\$	351

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States

Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	22	-	-	-	22
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,554	-	-	-	2,554
Equities	6,144	-	-	-	6,144
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	5,938	-	-	-	5,938
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	14,658	-	-	-	14,658
Accounts Payable	3	-	-	-	3
Forfeitures Due Agencies	2	-	-	-	2
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	5	-	-	-	5
Net Assets	\$ 14,653	-	-	-	14,653
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	2001		2002
	Actual		Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$	-
% of Total Income	0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$	-
Total Gift Income	-		-
% of Total Income	0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:			
Employer Contributions	\$ 840	\$	922
Grants	\$ -	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$ (464)	\$	(1,270)
Total Other Income	376		(348)
% of Total Income	100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	376		(348)
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$ 394	\$	655
FTEs	-		-
	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
Total Program-service \$	\$ 394	\$	655
Total Program-service FTEs	-		-
% of Total \$	91.0%		94.7%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 39	\$	37
FTEs	1		1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
Total Support-service \$	39		37
Total Support-service FTEs	1		1
% of Total \$	9.0%		5.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 433	\$	692
TOTAL FTEs	1		1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (57)	\$	(1,040)

**Fund for Smaller Churches
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,183	-	-	-	1,183
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2	-	-	-	2
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,185	-	-	-	1,185
Accounts Payable	17	-	-	-	17
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	17	-	-	-	17
Net Assets	\$ 1,168	-	-	-	1,168
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Fund for Smaller Churches
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 00-01 Actual	Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 469	\$ 356
% of Total Income	89.2%	91.8%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 1	\$ 5
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	1	5
% of Total Income	0.2%	1.3%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 56	\$ 27
Total Other Income	56	27
% of Total Income	10.6%	7.0%
TOTAL INCOME	526	388
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Subsidy Requests	\$ 288	\$ 211
FTEs	1	1
Auto & Moving Expenses	\$ 23	\$ 15
FTEs	-	-
Small Church Specialists	\$ 36	\$ 64
FTEs	-	-
Education	\$ 8	\$ 15
FTEs	-	-
Small Church Technology Upgrade	\$ 20	\$ 16
FTEs	-	-
Small Church Program Support	\$ 58	\$ 79
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 433	\$ 400
Total Program Service FTEs	1	1
% of Total \$	98.9%	97.1%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 5	\$ 12
FTEs	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund Raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	5	12
Total Support Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	1.1%	2.9%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 438	\$ 412
TOTAL FTEs	1	1
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 88	\$ (24)

**Home Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 567	-	-	-	567
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	2,271	-	-	72	2,343
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	42	-	-	-	42
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	681	977	15	-	1,673
Equities	-	71	-	454	525
Partnerships	-	2,982	-	-	2,982
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	112	-	-	-	112
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,673	4,030	15	526	8,244
Accounts Payable	283	-	-	-	283
Notes/Loans Payable	354	-	-	-	354
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	326	-	-	-	326
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	963	-	-	-	963
Net Assets	\$ 2,710	4,030	15	526	7,281

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations.

Note 3: List details of restrictions.

Note 4: List details of restrictions.

Trng:\$449	Hawaii: \$1768
Estates: \$1813	
NA Trng: \$15	
Short term Loan:\$481	NA Trn:\$30 Trust:\$15

Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 5,232	-	-	-	5,232
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	12,453	-	-	-	12,453
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	13	-	-	-	13
Total Assets	17,698	-	-	-	17,698
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	13,711	-	-	-	13,711
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	13,711	-	-	-	13,711
Net Assets	\$ 3,987	-	-	-	3,987

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.

Note 2: List details of designations.

Note 3: List details of restrictions.

Note 4: List details of restrictions.

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Balance Sheet (000s) in Canadian \$

	-----December 31, 2002-----			
	Pension	S.A.F.		Total
Cash	\$ 118	133	-	251
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	139	-	-	139
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	9,924	-	-	9,924
Equities	11,133	-	-	11,133
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	21,314	133	-	21,447
Accounts Payable	235	-	-	235
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	235	-	-	235
Net Assets	\$ 21,079	133	-	21,212
Footnotes:				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.				
Note 2: List details of designations.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.				

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

	MPF 2001 Actual		MPF 2002 Actual		SAF 2001 Actual		SAF 2002 Actual	
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:								
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:								
Participant Assessments	\$	980	\$	1,036	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	(1,138)	\$	(923)	\$	5	\$	2
Total Other Income		(158)		113		5		2
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		(158)		113		5		2
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	1,492	\$	1,686	\$	9	\$	18
FTEs		-		-		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,492	\$	1,686	\$	9	\$	18
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		84.1%		86.2%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	283	\$	271	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		283		271		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		15.9%		13.8%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,775	\$	1,957	\$	9	\$	18
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(1,933)	\$	(1,844)	\$	(4)	\$	(16)

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2002-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 5,307	158	-	-	5,465
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	541	-	-	-	541
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	31,087	-	-	-	31,087
Equities	40,985	-	-	-	40,985
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	77,920	158	-	-	78,078
Accounts Payable	106	16	-	-	122
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	106	16	-	-	122
Net Assets	\$ 77,814	142	-	-	77,956
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	MPF 2001 Actual	MPF 2002 Actual	SAF 2001 Actual	SAF 2002 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 2,546	\$ 2,680	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ (1,931)	\$ (9,389)	\$ 10	\$ 4
Total Other Income	615	(6,709)	10	4
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	615	(6,709)	10	4
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 5,340	\$ 6,120	\$ 81	\$ 54
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 5,340	\$ 6,120	\$ 81	\$ 54
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	90.4%	92.4%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 565	\$ 504	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	565	504	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	9.6%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 5,905	\$ 6,624	\$ 81	\$ 54
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (5,290)	\$ (13,333)	\$ (71)	\$ (50)

**Pastoral Ministries
Balance Sheet (000s)**

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Pastoral Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,202	\$	1,232
% of Total Income		83.1%		87.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	137	\$	138
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	1
Total Gift Income		137		139
% of Total Income		9.5%		9.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	2	\$	4
Grants	\$	93	\$	40
Miscellaneous	\$	12	\$	-
Total Other Income		107		44
% of Total Income		7.4%		3.1%
TOTAL INCOME		1,446		1,415
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	327	\$	262
FTEs		2		2
Race Relations	\$	326	\$	385
FTEs		3		4
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	380	\$	394
FTEs		1		2
Abuse Prevention	\$	181	\$	141
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	162	\$	172
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,376	\$	1,354
Total Program Service FTEs		8		10
% of Total \$		97.8%		98.4%
% of Total FTEs		88.9%		90.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	31	\$	22
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		31		22
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		2.2%		1.6%
% of Total FTEs		11.1%		9.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	1,407	\$	1,376
TOTAL FTEs		9		11
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	39	\$	39

**World Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 811	20	465	5	1,301
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	631	18	1	4	654
Inventory	372	-	-	-	372
Prepays & Advances	12	-	-	-	12
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	398	3,679	112	494	4,683
Equities	27	23	-	373	423
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	70	-	-	-	70
PP & E	634	-	-	-	634
Other	81	-	-	-	81
Total Assets	3,036	3,740	578	876	8,230
Accounts Payable	510	121	-	-	631
Notes/Loans Payable	74	-	-	-	74
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	355	-	23	-	378
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,135	-	-	-	1,135
Total Liabilities	2,074	121	23	-	2,218
Net Assets	\$ 962	3,619	555	876	6,012
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Restricted Land Gift \$70				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Japan Fund \$2,509 - Legacy Fund \$568 - Insurance Fund \$190 Endowment/Annuities \$186 - Other \$166				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts \$450 & Unitrust				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments				

**World Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,932	\$	4,858
% of Total Income		38.7%		37.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	5,404	\$	5,645
Estate Gifts	\$	690	\$	609
Total Gift Income		6,094		6,254
% of Total Income		47.8%		48.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,085	\$	891
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	630	\$	913
Total Other Income		1,715		1,804
% of Total Income		13.5%		14.0%
TOTAL INCOME		12,741		12,916
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,471	\$	3,051
FTEs		44		42
Asia	\$	4,908	\$	4,140
FTEs		32		29
Latin America	\$	3,461	\$	3,369
FTEs		39		36
Europe	\$	694	\$	709
FTEs		15		13
Education	\$	558	\$	503
FTEs		6		6
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	13,092	\$	11,772
Total Program Service FTEs		135		125
% of Total \$		90.0%		88.4%
% of Total FTEs		91.4%		91.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	737	\$	863
FTEs		6		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	723	\$	681
FTEs		7		7
Total Support Service \$		1,460		1,544
Total Support Service FTEs		13		12
% of Total \$		10.0%		11.6%
% of Total FTEs		8.6%		9.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	14,552	\$	13,316
TOTAL FTEs		148		137
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(1,811)	\$	(400)

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2002-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 352	\$ 1,751	\$ 442	\$ -	2,545
CDs, Time Deposits	-	4	-	-	4
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	68	-	-	-	68
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	1,438	-	-	-	1,438
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	917	461	-	1,378
Equities	-	1,250	-	23	1,273
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	116	-	129	-	245
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,974	3,922	1,032	23	6,951
Accounts Payable	1,305	-	-	-	1,305
Notes/Loans Payable	10	-	-	-	10
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	290	-	-	-	290
Deferred Income	300	-	-	-	300
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,905	-	-	-	1,905
Net Assets	\$ 69	3,922	1,032	23	5,046
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by Board = \$2869 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$1053				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$129 Gifts rec'd for subs years = \$503 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$400				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments				

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 00-01 Actual		Fiscal 01-02 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	0
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	10,146	\$	9,534
Estate Gifts	\$	1,570	\$	896
Total Gift Income		11,716		10,430
% of Total Income		85.8%		83.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	1,587	\$	1,809
Miscellaneous	\$	358	\$	231
Total Other Income		1,945		2,040
% of Total Income		14.2%		16.4%
TOTAL INCOME		13,661		12,470
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	6,672	\$	6,925
FTEs		49		54
No America programs	\$	1,185	\$	1,012
FTEs		9		8
Disaster relief programs	\$	3,528	\$	2,234
FTEs		7		8
Education	\$	326	\$	433
FTEs		3		4
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,711	\$	10,604
Total Program Service FTEs		68		74
% of Total \$		82.2%		83.0%
% of Total FTEs		75.6%		79.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,092	\$	1,033
FTEs		7		8
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	1,448	\$	1,141
FTEs		15		11
Total Support Service \$		2,540		2,174
Total Support Service FTEs		22		19
% of Total \$		17.8%		17.0%
% of Total FTEs		24.4%		20.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	14,251	\$	12,778
TOTAL FTEs		90		93
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$	(590)	\$	(308)

REPORTS OF AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a unified report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order using the agency's name. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, at the time that synod convenes.

Writing these reports is an exercise of accountability that is appropriate in our life together as a denomination. Much of what is written is provided as information for synod. Some of the material provides a background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. In either case, these reports really are the story of what God is pleased to do through the agencies of the church. As you read the material, we invite you to join us in thanksgiving for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who serve on your behalf at home and around the world.

Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director of Ministries
Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Introduction

The Back to God Hour, the electronic media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, fulfills a mandate to:

give leadership in media missions and to supervise the production of denominational radio, television, and other electronic programs, which express the Reformed faith in response to . . . need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction . . . and it is required to give leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communication media.

II. The board of trustees

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a regionally representative board that meets three times a year to set policy and to evaluate the work of the staff.

B. Officers of the board

The officers of the board are Rev. Scott Greenway, president; Rev. Robert Heerspink, vice president; Ms. Willa Beckman, secretary; Mr. Marten Van Huizen, treasurer.

C. Nominations for board members

1. Nomination for first term

The following slate of names has been presented to the classes in Region 3 for vote at the spring classis meeting:

Mr. John Struyk is a retired professor, having taught for many years at Dordt College. He served on many college committees during his tenure at Dordt and just recently moved to the Trenton, Ontario, area where he is a member of Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church.

Mr. Sybren VanderZwaag is a member of All Nations CRC, Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is a quality-environment manager at Michelin Tires Canada. He has served on church committees and is well acquainted with the work of The Back to God Hour.

2. Nominations for second terms

a. Region 6

Mrs. Charlotte Holland (incumbent) is a member of First CRC, Ripon, California, and is involved in various church ministries in addition to her work at Bethany Home for the Elderly in Ripon.

b. Region 11

Rev. Robert Heerspink (incumbent) has been pastor of Faith Community CRC, in Wyoming, Michigan, since 1999. He has served other churches in Michigan. He has authored a number of books on Christian stewardship. Rev. Heerspink is currently vice president of The Back to God Hour Board.

c. Region 12

Rev. Don Wisse (incumbent) is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church and a retired U.S. Air Force chaplain. He is a member

of Midland Park CRC, Midland Park, New Jersey. He has served churches in Michigan, Utah, Florida, and New Jersey and has served on many classical and denominational boards.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile

III. The Back to God Hour ministries

The Back to God Hour proclaims the gospel using radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. In the rapidly changing world of technology the ministry attempts to utilize the best means to announce that our God reigns. As an example of its adaptation of technology, The Back to God Hour is working on an animated Christmas special, *Prince of Peace*, which has been scripted for children. Through the use of animation, we are able to use one production in a number of different languages. Whatever the medium used, people respond to the message of the gospel by phone, mail, or increasingly by e-mail or in a number of countries by walking to a Back to God Hour follow-up center or to a local church identified with The Back to God Hour. Some object to the claims of Jesus; others want to know more about him and how to serve him. The Back to God Hour staff and trained volunteers supply literature, help people find a church home, refer people to Christian counselors, and pray with and for people. Prayer requests are sent to a network of partners who covenant to pray regularly.

Each year the staff evaluates potential ministries in languages not currently used by The Back to God Hour for appropriate recommendation to its board or to synod.

A. English-language ministry

1. "The Back to God Hour," a weekly half-hour radio program, proclaims the historic Christian faith and is heard on every continent in the world. Rev. David Feddes addresses contemporary society with timeless truth. The Back to God Hour English-language ministry is heard on nearly 150 North American stations and on over 15 major stations in urban areas in Nigeria. A follow-up center in Nigeria has been organized in concert with world missions personnel and indigenous church leaders.
2. The news/magazine format television program, "Primary Focus," airs on Vision TV throughout Canada and on CTS in Ontario. It is also carried in the United States on over eighty local stations. The potential viewing audience is nearly seventy million persons. Responses from the target audience of nonbelievers and the unchurched have been very positive.
3. "Insight," a four-and-a-half-minute commentary, has been heard weekdays on many radio stations. Dr. Joel Nederhood, currently The Back to God Hour director of ministries, emeritus, hosted this program for the last thirty-six years. In November of 2002, Dr. Nederhood expressed his desire to conclude his responsibilities for producing this program. The last

“Insight” programs were produced at the end of 2002. We thank God for Dr. Nederhood’s faithful service as the “Insight” chapter is concluded at The Back to God Hour.

4. The Voice of Life radio station located on the island of Dominica covers the eastern Caribbean Islands and carries our English and French programs.
5. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over four hundred thousand copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional), and over thirty-five hundred printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit*, as well as printed transcripts of “Insight.” All of these publications are available on The Back to God Hour web site.
6. “The First Easter,” an animated television special, aired during the Easter season of 2002 throughout the English-speaking world.
7. “Kids Corner” radio program seeks to call children to a life of discipleship in Jesus Christ. This program is now heard on over 250 stations in North America as well as throughout the eastern Caribbean islands. The Back to God Hour is in the process of developing three years of new children’s programming for this ministry.

B. Arabic-language ministry

The Back to God Hour maintains a cooperative ministry agreement with Words of Hope, (Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for electronic media ministry to Arabic speaking people. The joint ministry maintains production studios and follow-up centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. This year has seen unusual interest in this ministry that addresses societies heavily influenced by Muslim belief and culture.

C. Chinese-language ministry

The Back to God Hour broadcasts in Cantonese and Mandarin cover all twenty-six provinces in China, home to over 1.1 billion people. Seven super-power stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China. Alliance Radio staff in Hong Kong work with The Back to God Hour to provide follow-up and listener contact for the sixteen programs produced each week.

Rev. Jimmy Lin gives direction to this crucial ministry.

The Back to God Hour Chinese programs are heard in major metropolitan areas in Australia, Belize, Canada, New Zealand, Panama, and the United States where concentrations of Chinese-speaking persons are found. In some of these areas the programming is bilingual.

The Internet ministry is proving to be a valuable tool in ministry to Chinese persons, in spite of attempts to curtail its use in some locations.

D. French-language ministry

The focus of the French-language ministry is Africa and Haiti. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, gives leadership to this ministry. The Mpindis moved back to the States following an outbreak of violence and a coup attempt in Central African Republic in 2001. Rev. Mpindi is finishing up his doctoral work at Calvin Theological Seminary while giving leadership to the ministry of *Perspective Reformees*. A program devoted to a

biblical perspective on women's issues in the African context has received very good feedback from listeners throughout Africa.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaja was installed by the Christian Church of Indonesia in January 2002 as The Back to God Hour Indonesian broadcast minister. He has given leadership in developing a closer tie to the Indonesian churches and has helped introduce a web site to the ministry.

Indonesia, an island nation, has the largest Muslim population in the world. The bombing in Bali in 2002 called attention to the crucial need for the gospel in this culture.

F. Japanese-language ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic media ministry in the Japanese language. This technologically advanced culture shows signs of opening up to the gospel. Economic difficulties and a stagnant economy may soften hearts for the call of the gospel.

Electronic media that allow a person to listen to the gospel in private without risking the loss of face that a more public listening to the gospel might entail are very valuable ministry tools in this country. The Internet allows persons to obtain information about the Christian faith in a quiet unobtrusive way. The ministry has had to add a person to the staff during this past year to handle the follow-up generated by Internet ministries.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, and telephone are components of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. This past year a new children's television program called "The Ark Clubhouse" was produced in both Spanish and in Portuguese. The Presbyterian Church in Brazil and many of its congregations are significant partners in this ministry.

H. Russian-language ministry

Mr. Serguei Sossedkine, a Calvin Theological Seminary graduate, was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church in December of 2002. Rev. Sossedkine, a native of Moscow, gives leadership to this ministry.

The Back to God Hour ministry to the Commonwealth of Independent States is part of a coordinated effort of Christian Reformed agencies to minister in this area of the world.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly three hundred radio stations and forty television stations carry The Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America, as well as Spain.

The Back to God Hour is also committed to reaching the large Spanish-speaking population in the United States. Much of this population is located in major metropolitan centers or along the Mexico-U.S. border. The radio ministry features multiple formats to speak to a variety of different kinds of audiences.

Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to this ministry. The Back to God Hour Spanish television is produced in Campinas, Brazil, in conjunction with the Portuguese television ministry.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with Admark, an advertising agency, and RACOM, the public relations agency dedicated to support the ministry of The Back to God Hour.
2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
3. The Back to God Hour and Christian Reformed Home Missions work together in a campaign to raise the visibility of selected developing church plants through the use of media.
4. The Back to God Hour partners with Crossroad Bible Institute, which provides a correspondence program as part of a follow-up ministry. This program has been very effective in the English language. This ministry expanded into the French language during 2002.
5. The Back to God Hour and the education department of the board of CRC Publications are collaborating on an educational video series based on selected "Primary Focus" programs for adult educational programs.
6. The Back to God Hour sustains relationships with a variety of churches, agencies, and organizations to provide broadcasting or follow-up in each of the nine languages.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That Rev. Scott Greenway, president; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, executive director, be given the privilege of the floor when The Back to God Hour matters are discussed.
- B. That synod elect board members to serve from the nominations presented.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

The Back to God Hour
Calvin L. Bremer, executive director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from and actions taken at the October 2002 and the February 2003 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

For the October 2002 meeting, the 31-member Calvin College Board of Trustees met in the Prince Conference Center on campus in a board retreat focused on the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. The book was discussed in several plenary and small group sessions in the light of the Calvin College Strategic Plan for 2002-2007. The board also participated in the dedication activities for the new DeVos Communication Center and Prince Conference Center that included a worship service, all-campus lunch, tours, and a banquet. Dr. John D. Witvliet led a plenary session to acquaint the board with the comprehensive work of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the many worship initiatives on campus for students, faculty, and staff.

Board officers elected for 2002-2003 are: Mr. Milton Kuyers, chair; Rev. Charles DeRidder, vice-chair; Rev. Edward Blankespoor, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, Vice President for Administration, Finance, and Information Services, treasurer.

At the February 2003 meeting, the board discussed the Ministries Review of Calvin College and those of other CRC agencies and institutions conducted by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. The board conducted twenty-two faculty interviews—fourteen for tenure appointments and eight for first reappointment. They discussed the future challenges of the college regarding support for the president and for college programs and services, feasibility for major fundraising, tuition increases, competitive faculty salaries, fiscal management, building needs, and strategic planning.

II. General college matters

The board discussed procedure and progress of the self-study currently in process for the reaccreditation review by the NCA Higher Learning Commission to be completed in 2004. This three-year review process assesses and measures areas of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment. All areas must be aligned with the mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities of the college. A 12-person college committee oversees the process over the three-year period and writes the self-study report. This culminates in 2004 with a campus visit by an outside assessment team.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty Interviews

Faculty interviews were the highlight of the February meeting. The board interviewed fourteen faculty members for tenure appointments (see Recommendations) and eight for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. Peter De Jong, professor of social work, was presented the eleventh annual Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's career.

C. Administrative appointments

The college made the following administrative appointments and reappointments:

1. Claudia D. Beversluis, Ph.D., Dean for Instruction, three years
2. C. Robert Crow, M.A., Dean of Student Development, four years
3. Kathleen L. DeMey, M.A., Reference and Instruction Librarian, four years
4. Henry E. DeVries II, Ph.D., Vice President for Administration, Finance, and Information Technology, four years
5. William H. Katerberg, Ph.D., Director of the Mellema Program in Western American Studies, three years
6. James J. McKenzie, Ph.D., Director of Student Academic Services, continuing appointment
7. Ellen B. Monsma, Ph.D., Director of Off-Campus Programs, two years
8. Gregory E. Sennema, M.A., Digital Resources Librarian, four years
9. Corwin E. Smidt, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics, three years
10. Dean A. Ward, Ph.D., Director of the Academic Writing Program, three years

IV. Finance

The board approved the 2003-2004 budget of approximately \$76 million. Tuition was set at \$16,775, room and board at \$5,840. This represents a 6.5 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 2002-2003. Financial aid will also increase by a similar percentage.

V. Recommendations

That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure (*italics indicate promotion to that rank*):

- A. Jonathan B. Bacsom, Ph.D., Professor of Geology, Geography and Environmental Sciences
- B. Gayle E. Ermer, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Engineering
- C. David R. Fuentes, Ph.D., Professor of Music
- D. Ruth E. Groenhout, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Philosophy
- E. Majorie L. Gunnoe, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology
- F. Won W. Lee, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Religion
- G. Paul E. Moes, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology
- H. Carl J. Plantinga, Ph. D., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences (CAS)
- I. Paulo F. Ribeiro, Ph.D., *Professor* of Engineering
- J. Stephanie L. Sandberg, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Communication Arts (CAS)

- K. S. Kumar Sinniah, Ph.D., *Professor of Chemistry*
- L. Donald J. Tellinghuisen, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Psychology*
- M. Todd M. Vanden Berg, Ph. D., *Associate Professor of Sociology*
- N. Kevin N. VandeStreek, Ph.D., *Professor of Health, Physical Education*

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Edward Blankspoor, secretary

The seminary board of trustees presents this report to Synod 2003 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with great hope and anticipation.

I. Board of trustees

The board met in plenary session in May and September 2002 and February 2003. The board was especially grateful to meet with the other denominational boards in September and to celebrate with all the denominational boards the inauguration of Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. as Calvin Theological Seminary's (CTS) sixth president.

The board officers are Rev. Norman Meyer, chair; Mr. Mark Muller, vice-chair; Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., secretary.

Openings on the seminary board will be filled by regional elections and reported to synod for ratification in our supplementary report. The board recommends that the following seminary trustees and alternates who have completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment be approved:

Rev. Al Lindemulder (trustee)	Region 7
Rev. Daniel Brink (alternate)	
Mr. Loren Veldhuizen (trustee)	Region 8
Mrs. Carol Kramer (alternate)	
Rev. Ronald Kool (trustee)	Region 11
Dr. Byron Bossenbroek (alternate)	

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. as president, Rev. Duane Kelderman as vice president for administration and Dr. Henry De Moor as vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Rev. Don Byker as the director of field education; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor; and Mr. David De Boer as director of recruitment and financial aid.

This year the board gave Mr. David DeBoer and Rev. Richard Sytsma three-year appointments and Mr. Philip Vanden Berge a new four-year appointment. The seminary is grateful for their commitment and service to the seminary and to the church at large.

III. Faculty

The seminary's faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Although teaching and preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to lie at the heart of their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, attend significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ world-

wide. We are grateful to God for each and every one of these persons who contribute so much to the health and welfare of our denomination.

At its February meeting, the board dealt with the reappointments of several faculty members and with sabbaticals. Those decisions will be reported in a supplementary report to synod.

The board approved a number of part-time teaching arrangements for the 2003-2004 academic year after noting that in view of financial restraints these are being kept to an absolute minimum.

IV. Curriculum and programs

Providing a classical theological education for contemporary Christian ministry in a global context necessitates an annual review of courses offered at Calvin Seminary. Again this year, the faculty has identified courses no longer to be offered and therefore to be dropped from the catalog; it has reviewed existing courses and, in some cases, suggested changes in titles and descriptions. It has also identified new needs to be addressed by offering new courses. The board approved several new courses and various revisions in course titles and descriptions.

Calvin Seminary continues to develop its distance learning program. The Master of Arts in Missions Program (New Church Development track) is increasingly and quite successfully incorporating distance learning courses using the original Blackboard server acquired from Calvin College. Students admitted to the master of arts program register at the seminary, and our professors become the professors of record. For those who do not qualify for admission at the masters level, the seminary has reached a consortium agreement with Reformed Bible College whereby students register at that baccalaureate-level institution and have a professor of record there while making use of our courses. It is our intention to keep building upon this foundation every quarter until the entire program (except for mandatory in-residence components) can be offered at a distance. In addition, we hope soon to seek approval from the Association of Theological Schools to depart from standards that require a more significant in-residence component based on our unique situation as a denominational seminary needing to respond positively to denominational needs. It should be noted that distance learning is currently limited to the M.A. in Missions Program (New Church Development track). Depending on how successful we can become, we may eventually be able to incorporate elements of distance learning into other programs. The seminary is grateful to Home Missions for its generous provision of the services of Mr. Gary Teja in developing this online program.

V. Students

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics suggest the impact that our school is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

Christian Reformed students: 192

Non-Christian Reformed students: 93 (40 denominations)

International (does not include Canadian students): 55 (17 countries)

The programs offered by the seminary and the number of students in each are:

M.Div.: 111

M.A.: 31

M.T.S.: 23

Th.M.: 48

Ph.D.: 33

Unclassified: 14

Male students: 227

Female students: 58

VI. General matters

The seminary's building program has been completed. The additional space includes a student center that includes offices for those engaged in student services, an expanded computer laboratory, two elevators, four administrative offices, and a board-faculty conference room. Funds for this 4.6 million dollar building program have been totally pledged and are coming in on schedule.

The seminary continues to face acute financial challenges in its general operating budget. The seminary board and administration have worked very hard to deal with this financial challenge. We are grateful for the generous response of many individuals and churches to our financial need. The seminary is also grateful for the commitment of synod and of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to the seminary in this challenging time.

The "Facing Your Future" program for high school juniors and seniors again generated wide interest in the spring of 2002. One hundred seven nominations were received from local leaders, and thirty-five students participated in the month-long program last summer. The funding provided by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. partially covered the costs of the program for the summer of 2002. Additional grants from other sources will enable the seminary to continue the program for 2003 and 2004. The program is designed to expose young people to ministry and theology and to deepen the call to ordained ministry. This year the seminary will change the excursion component of the program from an overseas trip (to Turkey the past two years) to several ministry encounter sites in North America. The board requests that an offering for this program be recommended to the churches (see Recommendation D).

For a number of years, synod has approved for special offerings in our churches the seminary's operating fund and the seminary revolving loan fund. These have been important revenue sources for the seminary and its students. This year the board requests that synod again approve an offering for the seminary's International Student Subsidy Fund. In addition, it is requested that one or more above-ministry-share offerings for CTS be approved.

VII. Recommendations

A. That the Rev. Norman Meyer, chairman, and Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., secretary, be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

The mission of CRC Publications, as adopted by the CRC Publications Board in 1998, is:

To provide resources that help followers of Jesus Christ to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom.

The core values that we have identified for our work are the following:

- Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture that are articulated in the Reformed confessions and expressed in "Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony."
- We will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.
- Our organizational structure, working environment, and resources will consistently reflect an antiracist perspective.

These statements undergird our work as we attempt to develop and distribute resources that serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. The ministry of publishing is becoming an ever-greater challenge as we work in a contemporary world that reflects trends such as the following:

- Progressing anti-intellectualism
- Dwindling interest in denominations and in a Reformed interpretation of Scripture
- Shrinking number of children in the CRC
- Expanding expectations of "choices" in all areas of life
- Changing denominational makeup
- Decreasing interest in reading
- Developing new technology
- Growing needs for solid, biblical Christian literature throughout the world

As a result of trends such as those identified above, CRC Publications has been facing flat or declining sales for a number of its product lines. This trend has led to a very tight financial situation. About a year ago, it became clear that we were in a financial crisis. This crisis was exacerbated by the fact that we are currently developing a new children's curriculum—a multimillion dollar project. Fortunately, the decisions made last year in response to this crisis have led to a more stable situation at this time. However, as will become clear in this report, to ensure its long-term financial viability, CRC Publications is undertaking a time of intensive examination of the strategic direction for each area of its ministry: *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and World Literature Ministries.

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administrative developments of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to CRC churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

I. Board organization, membership, governance, and other administrative matters

A. Organization

A board of fifty delegates, one nominated by each of the forty-seven classes and three at-large delegates elected by synod, governs CRC Publications. The board ordinarily meets annually in February.

Between board meetings an eighteen-member executive committee (elected annually by the board) normally meets three times to supervise the ongoing work of the agency. Each member of the executive committee serves on one of four subcommittees: administrative, Faith Alive, periodicals, or World Literature Ministries.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications Board through June 2003 are as follows: Ms. Carol Veldman Rudie, president; Rev. Clayton Libolt, vice president; Ms. Winnie Klop, secretary; and Mr. Eric Van Namen, treasurer.

C. Long-range planning

The CRC Publications Board discussed the annual edition of CRC Publications' long-range plan, developed by staff. The board offered suggestions to the staff in the various areas of CRC Publications' ministry. The plan incorporates, where appropriate, strategies necessary to implement the Denominational Ministries Plan.

D. Relationship with the denominational structure and denominational plan

CRC Publications has been a strong supporter of the Denominational Ministries Plan. Staff members from our agency have been heavily involved in the various cross-agency groups that have been appointed to carry out the plan.

As staff does its planning for new resources, it does so with careful attention to the strategic priorities and goals incorporated in the denominational plan.

More specifically, during the past year, CRC Publications was assigned as the lead agency for a strategic priority of the denominational plan titled, "Integrated Ministry for Children and Youth." To focus on this priority, CRC Publications convened a team of people from several denominational entities and from Dynamic Youth Ministries to develop a vision statement for this strategic priority along with strategies for achieving the vision. The vision statement adopted is as follows:

We envision a transformed body of Christ that makes God real to children and youth, nurturing them in a dynamic relationship with God so that they can transform the world for him.

The strategies for achieving this vision include the following:

- Hold a series of regional conferences of pastors and children/youth leaders to "promote a denominational dialogue about children and youth ministry."
- Identify and work with churches that model effective integration of children and youth ministry.
- Create a diagnostic tool for churches to use to evaluate their ministry to children and youth.

To implement these strategies, a new half-time position was established for one year. This effort is being funded by a grant from the CRCNA Foundation.

In addition to the work directly associated with the denominational plan, CRC Publications works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministries. Examples of this include the following:

- The Faith Alive Department provides all the CRC-developed English publishing resources needed by Home Missions to carry out its ministry. Recently, a policy statement was adopted whereby we do the same for all the other CRC agencies.
- The Worship Office within the Faith Alive Department works very closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.
- The World Literature Ministries area of CRC Publications works closely with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs. Most of this work is focused on Spanish language resources.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions.

E. Ministry review

As noted in the Board of Trustees Report, all the CRC agencies and institutions have been going through a ministry review process during the past year. CRC Publications' administrative staff responded to the specific review of its ministry as requested.

The CRC Publications Board is also developing its response to the report of the review process committee for the Board of Trustees as requested.

F. Relationships with other organizations

During the past few years, CRC Publications has placed an increased emphasis on developing relationships with other Christian organizations in an effort to increase the impact of our ministry and to enable us to broaden the range of resources we offer. Many of these relationships have proven to be very helpful. Some of the more significant relationships are as follows:

- Youth Unlimited – We meet regularly with the staff of Youth Unlimited to discuss how we might better cooperate in ministry. We are now the exclusive distributor of their materials. We also copublish some resources with Youth Unlimited.
- GEMS – We also meet regularly with GEMS staff to discuss possible cooperative efforts. Each year our two organizations provide the lead in putting on a children's ministry conference in West Michigan.

Note: As a result of a proposal prepared for the Board of Trustees in response to a request from synod that the relationship between the Dynamic Youth Ministries agencies and the denomination be reviewed, it is anticipated that even closer working relationships with Youth Unlimited, GEMS, and Cadets will develop.

- Reformed Church in America – The LiFE curriculum was developed cooperatively with the RCA. They also provide staff input into the new curriculum that we are developing. We have an exclusive arrangement with the RCA whereby it carries and promotes virtually of all our

resources to RCA churches. This relationship is currently undergoing some scrutiny as the two organizations involved each face financial stress.

- Evangelical Presbyterian Church – Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the general secretary of the denomination and numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination.
- As of this writing, we are exploring a potentially significant new relationship with the Presbyterian for Renewal organization within the Presbyterian Church USA. This organization, serving over four thousand local congregations, is considering endorsing our new Walk With Me curriculum.
- We meet regularly with staff members from Christian Schools International to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues.

G. Use of CRC Publications resources by CRC churches

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by CRC Publications. In fact, about 90 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list.

However, there are several trends that do provide cause for some concern. For example,

- The percentage of CRC churches that use our children's curriculum has declined in recent years; less than 70 percent of the churches currently purchase one of our children's curricula.
- Many churches seem to make decisions about resources without thinking about whether they are written from a Reformed perspective.
- Only about one-half of our churches purchase our resources focused on teaching doctrine to our high school age youth.
- Many churches are hiring staff for children and youth ministry positions who have little or no background or appreciation for a Reformed view, for example, of interpreting Scripture.
- Many pastors, who might be more appreciative of this issue, have delegated to their staff or appropriate committees the selection of resources for use in their church school.
- In the past two years, synod adopted motions asking churches to strongly consider purchasing their resources from CRC Publications.

H. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting, the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. About 98 percent of CRC Publications' materials were printed on recycled paper during 2002.

I. Antiracism

CRC Publications has been an active participant in the effort of the Ministries Policy Council to respond to synod's directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. Several years ago, the CRC Publications Board approved an extensive antiracism plan that was developed by staff. That plan is being implemented.

The CRC Publications Board also adopted an antiracism plan developed by a board task force. The vision approved by the board is as follows:

The CRC Publications Board covenants to become an antiracist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as God-given assets of the human family.

The report approved by the board contained a number of strategies for helping the board achieve this vision.

J. Salary disclosure

CRC Publications, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd quartile
17	2	2nd quartile
15	1	2nd quartile

II. CRC Publications’ ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. The Banner

a. General update

The synodically adopted mandate for *The Banner* is to “inform readers about what is happening in the CRC, as well as in the church at large, to provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living, and to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and to the culture of which Christians and the CRC are a part.”

After ten years, Rev. John Suk will be completing his service as editor of *The Banner* in August. *The Banner* has changed a lot in the ten years he has served as editor. It moved from a weekly to a biweekly to a monthly publication. It has changed from a partly black and white, journal format to a much more interactive and colorful magazine. It is newsier, contains more pictures, more short pieces, and more levels of entry than it used to. However, the function of the magazine has not changed. It still educates readers about important matters, informs them about what is going on in the church at home and abroad, and engages in thoughtfully criticizing both the church and the broader culture.

Rev. Suk’s themes have included such emphases as the following: the notion that Christians should be Jesus’ ambassadors of reconciliation; that women ought to be able to use their gifts in the church; and that our denomination needs to focus on home missions, on public justice issues, on stamping out racism, and on redefining what it means to be a confessional church in an era when most CRC people do not care much about theology.

During the past year, Rev. Suk has been traveling around the denomination “in search of the CRC.” The articles that have resulted from this “search” have been appreciated by many. Some of the other articles and editorials of note during the past year include the following: “Does Terrorism Rule Out Pacifism” on the anniversary of the 9/11 bombings; the update on the IRM/JCM matter; the editorial titled “Say No to War with Iraq,” and the news story about Toronto First CRC’s decision re practicing gays.

The Banner staff continues to make conscious efforts to include people of color as writers. They also are increasingly sensitive to showing “color balance” in the art and cartoons.

The decision to go monthly was made primarily for financial reasons. However, most readers seemed to welcome the change. This larger *Banner* allows for a greater variety of editorial content in each issue.

The news correspondents continue to do an excellent job of ensuring that readers of *The Banner* are exposed to a wide variety of developments in the CRC. The news section continues to be the most read section of *The Banner*.

b. The future of *The Banner*

In May 2002, the CRC Publications Executive Committee agreed that a Future of *The Banner* Committee should be appointed to “do a year-long study of the future of *The Banner*.” The key reason for this decision was the recognition that *The Banner* may face another financial crisis in about five years; thus, it was important to start this discussion now when there is sufficient time to gather the necessary information and to thoroughly and thoughtfully explore all options.

A committee of ten people was appointed, and they met throughout the fall and winter to gather information and develop and discuss alternatives.

The report of the committee was presented to the CRC Publications Board at its annual meeting in early February. The single recommendation of the committee that *The Banner* be changed from a subscription-based magazine to a membership-based and ministry-share-supported magazine was approved for recommendation to synod by the board. The full report and recommendation, with grounds, are contained in the appendix.

As the last paragraph of the report indicates, some of the implementation details of this change still need to be worked out at the time of this writing. The resolution of these matters will be shared with synodical delegates as needed.

c. Interim editor for *The Banner*

As the result of the decision to appoint the Future of *The Banner* Committee, it was impossible to initiate the recruitment process for a new *Banner* editor in time to have someone in place by the time Rev. Suk left this position. Accordingly, an interim editor had to be found. At its meeting in February, the CRC Publications Board appointed Rev. Robert De Moor (editor in chief of Faith Alive Christian Resources) as interim *Banner* editor. The board agreed that Rev. De Moor has demonstrated excellent skills in all aspects of the publishing process, including writing and editing, and that *The Banner* readers will benefit from his thorough knowledge of the CRC and deep insight regarding the key issues facing the CRC. Rev. De Moor will continue to serve as editor in chief of Faith Alive during this time.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For the past several years, synod has helped fund the *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC community

through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the content of the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

Rev. Bomsu Kim is the editor of this periodical. During the past year, the monthly print run was increased from fifteen hundred to three thousand and the number of pages was increased from twenty-four to twenty-eight.

B. *Faith Alive Department*

This department, under the brand name Faith Alive Christian Resources, publishes and distributes resources for all areas of a local church's ministry. This department hopes to be the "first stop" for resources among CRC churches.

One of the actions taken as a result of the financial crisis last year was to substantially reduce the breadth of resources that will be developed. This became necessary because of the increasing variety of needs among our customers—it is increasingly difficult to find one resource that most of our churches will use. Thus, a financial model based on cost recovery through sales proved to be more difficult.

As the result of these and other changes, such as staff reductions, increase in ministry share to support the development of our new children's curriculum, and good sales of most of our new products, this department is in considerably better shape financially than it was a year ago. During the next year, the board will be reviewing various options for the long-term future of this department, perhaps with the help of an outside consultant. In the meantime, our plans are to develop only those products that have a good probability of substantial contribution to overhead; i.e., high volume of sales.

1. Curriculum Office

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, youth groups, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of this department.

a. For younger children

By far the most significant project of this department, indeed of our entire agency during the past year is the development of a new children's curriculum called *Walk With Me*. The continued decline in the sales of *Bible Way* and *LiFE* curricula demonstrates the validity of the decision to develop a new curriculum. Most curriculum publishers agree that the life-span of children's curriculum has declined to ten years or less. The *LiFE* curriculum was first published in 1992.

The core values of the *Walk With Me* curriculum are as follows: biblical and Reformed, easy to use, kid-friendly, faith growing, community building, diversity celebrating, and fun.

Progress on this multimillion dollar project continues as scheduled. Extensive plans to market the curriculum to the CRC as well as to a variety of other denominations have also been developed.

Projected release date is the summer of 2004.

b. For youth

Staff has completed a substantial revision of most of the longstanding resources for youth education programs. The new courses are substan-

tially more interactive than prior editions and thus more engaging for the youth.

Among the more significant new and/or revised resources completed in the past years are the following:

- *Questions Worth Asking – Year 2* – a complete rewrite of the longstanding course on the Heidelberg Catechism, formerly called *Landmarks*.
- *No Easy Answers* – a revision of the course on ethics formerly called *Decisions*
- *Which Way to God* (world religions) and *What's Up with the Church Down the Street* (other denominations) – courses replacing two of the three foci of the *Reasons* course.

Some significant soon-to-be-completed courses for youth include:

- *Sunday Morning Live* – a course for teens on worship
- *Believe: Getting Ready to Profess My Faith* – a mentoring resource for early teens who wish to make public profession of faith.

c. For adults

Because of the issues mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this section, Faith Alive has substantially reduced the variety of resources that it will publish for adults. The only Bible study series that is being refreshed (outside of the Discover Your Bible series supporting the Coffee Break program) is the Word Alive series of intensive Bible studies.

Some of the other significant resources published for adults in the past year are:

- *The Compassionate Congregation: A Handbook for People who Care*
- Several new and/or revised Bible studies in the Word Alive series
- *Responding to Domestic Violence: A Resource for Church Leaders*

Significant resources to be published soon include the following:

- *The Best of Primary Focus* – two videotapes of three segments each, including a discussion guide for adults, developed in cooperation with The Back to God Hour
- *Forgiveness: What the Bible Teaches, What You Need to Know*, co-authored by Andrew and Leonard Kuyvenhoven.
- *The Empty Pew: Caring for Christ's Wandering Sheep* by Louis Tamminga – offering practical helps for elders and pastors in dealing with those who neglect the means of grace.

d. For people with mental impairments

The Friendship Ministries board, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds for supporting the development and marketing of resources for people with mental impairments. The two most significant current projects are the following:

- A total revision the basic three-year Friendship curriculum. The first year will be published by July 2003. The curriculum will be called *Friendship Bible Studies*.

- The Friendship Ministries board is also funding the translation of the entire curriculum into Spanish.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with a ministry in Minneapolis, we continue to expand the list of resources available in Braille. A small ministry-share amount is allocated for this work.

2. Evangelism Office

Our publishing partnership with Home Missions continues to provide the basis for most of the publishing we do in this area. CRC Publications and Home Missions staff meet regularly to chart our course for working together to supply the resources that Home Missions must have to accomplish its strategies for serving the churches.

Most of the publishing work has been focused on developing the Bible studies needed to support the Coffee Break and Men's Life programs. However, this past year, the staffs agreed that, due to declining sales, we would no longer "refresh" the Discover Life Bible-studies product line (supporting Men's Life) due to declining sales.

One significant development during the past year was the buyout of the People Together series from Church Innovations. These resources feature David Stark's principle-based approach to small group ministry. We agreed to purchase the rights to these materials because they are vital to Home Missions' program of small group development and because the series was up for sale. We needed to ensure that these resources would continue to be available in the form that was responsive to Home Missions needs.

Significant resources published during the past year include the following:

- *Who in the World Can You Trust* – a six-session study for seekers and new Christians (a possible first product for a new series)
- *Launch and Lead Your Own Small Group: A Principle Based Approach* in the People Together series.
- A number of new and/or revised courses in the Discover Your Bible series.

A significant new product being developed is a guidebook for evangelism and/or outreach committees.

3. Worship Office

Over the past few years, we have significantly cut back on our publishing of worship resources. However, some of those that we have published this past year have met with excellent response. Subscriptions of *Reformed Worship* continue to climb (to more than five thousand). Also, sales of the new songbook, *Sing! A New Creation* have tripled first-year projections.

This office continues to work very closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. In fact, during the past year, the lead editor in the office began working two-thirds time for the Institute.

The success of *Sing! A New Creation* caused the CRC Publications Board to raise the question of whether we should begin to research the need for, and the advisability of, developing a new *Psalter Hymnal* over the next few years. Some of the reasons for discussing this matter now include the following:

- a. Most denominational hymnals have about a twenty-year lifespan. The current *Psalter Hymnal* was published in 1987.
- b. Changes in hymnody continue to accelerate. Also, there are significant areas where updating might better serve the churches; for example, many of the Psalms in the current hymnal are not being sung.
- c. *Sing!* sales demonstrate that there is still a large market for print worship resources.
- d. The CRC will be well served by a shared collection of songs that can form the backbone for our denomination's music ministry.

The CRC Publications Board authorized staff to conduct a study to ascertain the need for, and advisability of, developing a new *Psalter Hymnal* that would be published around the end of this decade.

One other significant product that will be published by this office, in cooperation with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, during the next year is *The Worship Sourcebook*, a wide variety of practical worship resources drawn from *Reformed Worship* and a host of other sources.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Introduction/overview

World Literature Ministries supports the efforts of the various CRC agencies in publishing and distributing biblical Christian literature in a variety of languages. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to, and nurture them in, a Reformed view of faith and life. This department is heavily involved in collaborative planning with other agencies—especially the mission agencies.

During the past year, this department, along with the executive committee of CRC Publications did an analysis of the various languages in which it produces products. The executive committee decided that World Literature Ministries would focus its publishing efforts on Spanish resources via the brand name *Libros Desafío*. Most of the Spanish publishing is focused on theological and other works for leaders. Some continuing work may be done in Russian, based on needs identified by the CRC mission agencies.

2. The publishing work

a. Spanish literature

Among the key products released during the past year are the following:

- *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Little Kittel)
- *Guiding God's People in a Changing World: A Handbook for Elders* (L. Tamminga)
- *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (L. Berkhof)
- *New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (S. Kistemaker)
- *Redemptive History and the New Testament* (H. Ridderbos)
- *Spiritual Warfare* (J. Stam)

b. Russian/Eastern Europe literature

Products released during the past year are:

- *Lectures on Calvinism* (Russian - Abraham Kuyper)
- *Our World Belongs to God* (Hungarian)

D. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *The Banner* ads and subscriptions, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting. The executive director has been serving as marketing director for the past several years; however, in February 2003, Mr. Tim Postuma was appointed to this position.

The primary vehicle for communicating about our products to the churches is our annual catalog. However, we use a variety of other strategies to do this because not all the people who need to know about our resources have ready access to our catalog. It is increasingly difficult to stand out among the “clutter” of promotional pieces that churches receive from publishers. Sales from our web site continue to increase; they are now approximately 8 percent of our total sales.

It is becoming clear to staff that personal contact with churches will be an increasingly important marketing strategy.

The most significant project for the next several years will be the promotion of the Walk With Me curriculum. An extensive plan has been developed for this purpose.

One other significant task of this department is market research. In a time of declining sales, research becomes an ever-more-important function to help ensure that we are meeting the needs of our churches. During the past year, research efforts focused on supporting the work of the Future of *The Banner* Committee. In the prior year, this work focused on providing the information needed by the Walk With Me curriculum planning group.

As can be seen from the chart below, the CRC’s publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; 80 percent of CRC Publications’ accounts and over one-half of our sales for our English language products are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active Customers	%	Sales	%
CRC	902	18	1,446,042	37
Other	3,521	71	1,736,431	44
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	550	11	262,650	19
TOTAL	4,973	100	3,933,802	100

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of about thirty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The staff council is a management group made up of the executive director, Mr. Gary Mulder; and the department heads, Ms. Jena Rich, Periodicals Department (*The Banner*); Rev. Robert De Moor, Faith Alive Department;

Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services, Mr. Tim Postuma, Marketing Department, and Ms. Pat Nederveld, managing editor, Faith Alive Department.

F. Finances

The CRC Publications Board remains committed to the goal that CRC Publications' ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that there may always be projects undertaken (either because our synod or our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. As mentioned earlier, this situation is particularly true for our World Literature Ministries Department.

If the Board of Trustees approves the proposals from the review process committee, then CRC Publications' dependency on ministry share for its ongoing ministry will probably increase.

As mentioned at the outset of this report, CRC Publications has been going through a very difficult time financially in recent years; the severity of this problem came into focus a year ago. At that time, a number of measures were taken to help us through the crunch. Among them were the following:

1. Staff increased its focus on identifying product lines and product areas that did not recover full costs. No new products are being added in these areas. During the past few years, we have stopped publishing in almost twenty product areas from devotionals for all ages, to adult intensive Bible studies, to adult issue studies.
2. Restructured and downsized our staff. During the past few years, a total of eight full-time equivalent positions have been eliminated.
3. Eliminated the Church Education Consultant Program.
4. Asked for supplementary funding (via ministry share) from the churches for our new curriculum.

These actions, in addition to some good sales of many of our new products, have resulted in a more stable financial situation. However, the board is committed to doing ongoing analysis of all of our ministry areas to ensure the long-term financial viability of the denomination's publishing ministry. Accordingly, as mentioned previously, a Future of *The Banner* Committee was appointed. Furthermore, new strategic directions for World Literature Ministries are being explored. Finally, plans are being developed to consider possible financial models for the Faith Alive Department.

CRC Publications submits for synod information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2002, and budgets for the fiscal years 2003 and 2004. These reports have been submitted to the denominational financial coordinator for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2003—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 2004.

III. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications Board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed—for the board: Ms. Carol Veldman Rudie, president; Rev. Clayton Libolt, vice president; Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director. For *The Banner*, Dr. John Suk, editor in chief.

B. That *The Banner* be changed from a subscription-based magazine to a membership-based and ministry-share-supported magazine as described in the Future of *The Banner* report (see Appendix).

Grounds:

1. *The Banner* has long been an important part of the life of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. For much of that history, it has been a virtual town square, where members of the denomination have heard the voices and seen the faces of other members, where important issues have been discussed, and where directions for the denomination have been set.
2. *The Banner* as a subscription-based magazine is less able now, and will be even less able in the future, to fulfill the role of a central forum of communication for the denomination because a decline in the number of subscribers, especially among younger and newer members, threatens its financial viability and its position in the denomination.
3. Despite the best efforts of editors and marketing staff, *The Banner* has been unsuccessful in turning around, or even interrupting, the trends toward diminishing numbers of subscribers.
4. For the past decades, churches in North America, including the CRCNA, have witnessed a loss of denominational loyalty. Getting *The Banner* into the hands of every member helps the CRC reverse this trend and promote a strong denominational identity.
5. As the Christian Reformed Church grows more diverse, the need for a voice to call its members and congregations together, a forum to introduce members to members and ministries to ministries, and a place to discuss what involves all the diverse sectors of the CRC will become more important.
6. The *Church Herald*, which has been sent to all member households in the Reformed Church of America for a decade, has been widely read and has become an effective means of communication for its denomination.
7. The Christian Reformed Church is already sending the *CRC Source* to its member households. By incorporating the *CRC Source* into *The Banner*, savings can be achieved and better communication effected.

C. That synod recommend the Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 2004.

CRC Publications
Gary Mulder, executive director

Appendix

The Future of *The Banner* Report

I. Introduction

Over a number of months, a committee appointed by the CRC Publications Board, called the Future of *The Banner* Committee, met to consider a matter of great importance for our denomination—the future of our denominational periodical, *The Banner*.¹ The Committee was acutely aware that its conversations were but a small piece of a much larger conversation in the CRC, a conversation about not only the direction and future of *The Banner* but of the denomination as a whole. It tapped into this conversation in a variety of ways, including an invitation in *The Banner* to correspond with the committee; a large survey of former subscribers; a smaller telephone survey of current *Banner* subscribers; surveys conducted at several classis meetings; a survey of nine senior pastors of large and growing Christian Reformed churches; and, of course, the committee's own conversations with many people as a committee and, outside of its meetings, as individuals.

The specific question facing the committee is simple enough: what to recommend to the CRC Publications Board and, through CRC Publications, to the denomination for the future of *The Banner*. Given the longstanding, almost linear, trend toward ever decreasing numbers of subscriptions, *The Banner* will no longer be financially viable in about five years.² To this problem, a number of solutions present themselves. These solutions tend to fall into four basic approaches, with many variations on each:

- Accept the current trend toward diminished subscriptions as irreversible, discontinue publication of *The Banner*, and give the magazine a decorous death, rather than allow it to slowly sink into insolvency.³ Besides being a counsel of despair with respect to *The Banner* itself, a magazine with a long and important history in the denomination, this approach raises important questions about the future of the denomination. Some of these questions are discussed below.
- Continue publishing *The Banner* on the present business model as long as possible by finding new ways to cut costs and to increase revenue. *The*

¹The committee members are Carol Veldman Rudie, chair; Ken Bosveld; Jim Bratt; Henry Hess; Clayton Libolt; Gary Mulder; Reggie Smith; Kelli Schutte; Michael Van Hofwegen; Jena Vander Ploeg; and Bert Witvoet.

²This subscription decline started in 1984, when subscriptions were at almost 52,000; they are now at about 25,000. All the changes throughout the intervening years, from changing editors, to redesigns of the magazine, to increasing the amount of "practical" content, to changing the frequency of the magazine have not stopped this trend in any significant way.

³One might be inclined to take this approach, for example, if one is convinced that the underlying problem is a cultural movement away from print as a medium of communication. There is some data to support this idea. In our survey of former subscribers, a prominent reason given for no longer subscribing to *The Banner* is lack of time to read (this reason is given by 37%), and, it appears, former subscribers to *The Banner* subscribe to very few other magazines (40% of former subscribers from the United States and 28% from Canada spend less than \$25 per year on magazines). However, does this evince a lack of interest in reading in general or a lack of interest (and therefore the time) in reading *The Banner*?

Banner has aggressively pursued both sides of this strategy for years. The staff of *The Banner* have made many and various attempts to increase subscription revenue by making the magazine more attractive and by increasing the sophistication of its marketing campaigns, including a brief fling with telemarketing. They have aggressively pursued advertising revenue. None of these efforts have reversed the long-term trend toward reduced subscription and revenue numbers.

On the cost side, *The Banner* has gone from a weekly, to a biweekly, and recently, to a monthly. Editorial staff has been reduced to two-and-a-half full-time equivalent positions. Not much margin remains for reducing costs. The present sixty-four-page magazine could be cut to, say, a forty-eight-page magazine, but further reductions in size, frequency, and staffing are likely to reduce the attractiveness of the magazine, thus undermining the attempt to sell more subscriptions. In the opinion of the committee, there is little reason to believe that this strategy would result in anything other than a slow death for the magazine.

- Continue to publish *The Banner* on a subscription basis, subsidizing the cost of the magazine with denominational ministry shares. Perhaps there are two strategies here. The first provides a subsidy sufficient to maintain financial solvency for the magazine at the present subscription rates, assuming the present size, frequency, and quality. However, if one plays out this scenario, the result is, once again, the death of the magazine. Assuming that the present trend toward fewer subscriptions continues, *The Banner* would become more and more marginal in the life of the denomination. Soon, questions would arise about the need to subsidize the magazine. Eventually, the subsidy would be cut, the subscription cost would go up, and the magazine would be forced to cease publication.

A second approach of this kind would subsidize the magazine at a much higher level with the goal of substantially lowering the subscription price. This approach builds on the idea that cost is a major reason why people do not subscribe to the magazine and why some subscribers have dropped their subscriptions. Evidence supporting this idea is as follows: In a survey of former subscribers, cost is one of the factors cited as a reason that people drop their subscriptions to the magazine. In addition, a small marketing test indicated a higher response when the subscription cost was lowered. Caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, however. Cost was a factor in dropping subscriptions for a limited demographic slice of *The Banner* readership. The survey summarizes:

The 16 percent who stopped subscribing because cost was a problem can be characterized as follows: longer-term subscribers, who don't use the internet for reading, mostly females who are single (mostly widowed), 60 years old or older, with a high school education or less, currently CRC expressing a lot of loyalty to it, spending less than \$50 on magazine subscriptions, and have household incomes of less than \$50,000.

And, while the marketing test was encouraging, the response rate was still low.⁴

⁴The response rate went from 500 to 800 from a mailing to 70,000 households.

Lowering the cost may help out the loyal and traditional readers of *The Banner* characterized by the survey, but the evidence does not conclusively support the idea that lowering the cost would bring new and younger readers to *The Banner* and reverse the long-term trend toward fewer subscribers. Moreover, there are risks associated with this strategy. If it fails, the magazine may have been fatally weakened.

- Change *The Banner* from a subscription-based to a membership-based periodical. There are a variety of ways to implement this approach, but in all cases it would involve placing *The Banner* in the hands of every member of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. This would require a substantial increase in the ministry share allotment assigned to *The Banner*.⁵ Because this is the approach taken by the committee, it is explained in greater detail below.

One can make arguments in favor of or against any of these options, but they do not stand by themselves. Almost as soon as the committee began to consider these approaches to the problems faced by *The Banner*, it realized that we had to face another set of questions. What is the role of *The Banner* in the life of the denomination? What should its role be? What is the future of the denomination? Is *The Banner* a vestige of the past and our attachment to it mere nostalgia? If this is the case, then perhaps it would be better to let it die. Or, will *The Banner* remain important, even crucial, in the life of the denomination? Are their futures—that of *The Banner* and that of the CRC—intertwined? Surely, in that case, we would want to take firm and bold steps to insure the future of the magazine, indeed, to enhance its future. However, these and questions like them cannot be answered simply by looking at *The Banner*. We must also look at the future of the denomination.

II. The Future of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

What will the CRC look like in the future? There are at least a couple of ways to answer that question. The first is an attempt at prediction: attempting to discern the future by projecting present trends. Despite the best efforts of experts on religious trends in North America, this is risky business. If we cannot predict the weather for more than a few days, our ability to predict the ecclesiastical climate years and decades from now is even less. Trends cannot be confidently predicted into the future, but perhaps predicting the future is not what we are really after. The Lord will have for us what the Lord will have for us. Perhaps it would be better to ask and attempt to answer: What kind of denomination do we (the members and leaders of the CRC) believe we should be in the future? Into what kind of future do we believe that God is calling the CRC and how, in faith, do we determine to reach that future? These call forth not prediction but determination, not guessing but planning.

Of course, in planning for this future, we must take account of present trends. Many of the trends present in North American Christianity seem to point to diminished roles for denominations. When people choose a church today, denominational affiliation is far less important than it has been in the past. For congregations, this is both peril and opportunity. It is perilous

⁵This is the solution adopted by *The Church Herald*, the official magazine of the Reformed Church in America.

because the members of the congregation are no longer constrained by denominational loyalty from leaving for other churches, often churches of quite different theological and denominational backgrounds. In addition, persons who have been affiliated with a certain denomination in the past do not feel compelled to seek out a church from the same denominational affiliation when they move. They may, in fact, wish to try out new and different ways to think and worship. CRC churches are frequently faced with defections of these kinds. However, the same trends that make it easier for people to leave also make it easier for people from outside of the CRC to join CRC churches. In this fluid atmosphere, some congregations will lose members, and others will gain members, related less to denominational affiliation than to the quality and appeal of the congregational program.

Are these winds blown by the Spirit of God or by the fetid spirits of the age? The answer surely is both, but sorting out what is a fresh breeze of renewal from God and what is the breath of the spirits of the age is not always easy. On the one hand, one could say that these trends often set congregations against one another in an unholy competition; on the other, they force congregations to attend more closely than before to the quality of their congregational lives. On the one hand, the claim could be made that these same trends tend toward theological homogenization, what has been called “the McDonaldization” of church; on the other hand, they help the church to set aside old and tired European theological differences that have for so long placed Christians over against Christians. We could go on with this analysis, but much of it is familiar and well rehearsed. We raise it only to set the context in which to raise again the question: What sort of denomination is the CRC called to be in this strange new world of church?

As congregations make their choices about how to respond to these winds of change, they go in various directions. Some hunker down more deeply in the ways they remember; other congregations experiment with the intoxication of new ways. Some downplay their denominational affiliation; others proclaim it. Often Christian Reformed congregations find themselves in the middle, losing members from both sides. Some of their disaffected members seek out new-denomination, blue-hymnal churches where, it seems to them, the old ways are better honored. Others seek out nondenominational, praise-band churches where, it seems to these disaffected members, faith is more vibrant and personal. For churches who wish to honor both the past and future, it can seem that they are too little of either for too many people, and their numbers slowly dwindle. How can these congregations make wise choices, find the right ways, articulate the broad and precise center of the Christian gospel, and thrive in a market-driven world of church? As congregations make these choices, what should be the role of the denomination? Can and should the denomination lead or follow? Can there be such a thing as a denominational direction—more than just the sum of congregational choices—that will shape our churches and our mission for the future?

Another way to ask this question is whether the CRC will be a denomination with a small *d* or a denomination with a big *D*. The difference has to do with identity, not only of the denomination itself but also of the congregations and the members of those congregations. In denominationalism with a small *d*, members and congregations base their identity primarily in the local congregation. The fact that the congregation may have a denominational affiliation is

not of first importance to its members or its leaders. The denomination serves the congregations by extending their ministry into the world (missions), by providing resources (education and publications), and by providing an order with which the congregation can function, but identity is congregational. A person may join a congregation without knowing or caring whether that congregation is part of a larger body. A denomination, in this scenario, should be small, efficient, and decidedly behind the scenes.

In denominationalism with a big *D*, the denomination seeks to be more—a bridge, not only among congregations but between past and future. Such a denomination is more than a collection of mission agencies and a denominational office, a polity and a set of assemblies; it is a congregation of congregations, no, more than that, a movement, a movement represented in each congregation but broader and deeper than any of them—a movement worth signing on to in its own right. In fact, if such a movement is to be worth anything, it must be broader and deeper than the denomination as well. The denomination is simply one way in which the movement takes institutional shape. Denomination with a big *D* seeks to be church, an articulation of the church of Jesus Christ. When people become part of its congregations, they are made aware that by their membership in the congregation they are also joining this broader and deeper movement and the missions that flow from it. Identity is both congregational and denominational.

Which sort of denomination does the CRC seek to be? Which will it be in the future? In official decisions and statements, the assemblies and official agencies of the CRC have repeatedly and strongly expressed the desire to be a denomination with a big *D*. The latest such statement, proposed by the Board of Trustees and adopted by Synod 2002, is a preface attached to the Denominational Ministries Plan. The preface has been published separately and distributed to the churches under the title, *What It Means to Be Reformed: An Identity Statement*. As the title indicates, the document has in mind denomination with a big *D* in which the membership identifies with the denomination. The document ends with this challenge:

Finally, one might very well ask whether this identity statement is descriptive or prescriptive. Does this identity statement *describe* what the CRC is or *prescribe* what the CRC should be? The answer is both. The identity statement should be viewed as a description of the Reformed faith at its best as well as a fervent call to live more fully into this biblical vision.

However, official statements issuing from the assemblies and agencies are only one side of the argument. Some congregations, and among them some of the newest and the fastest growing, seem to have cast their vote for denominationalism with a small *d*.⁶ Such congregations downplay or eliminate denominational references from their publications and signs, may limit their participation in denominational assemblies and committees, and shield their members from denominational controversy. Whether we need or want a denomination with a big *D* or with a little *d* threatens to become an institutional tug-of-war between the congregations on the one side, and the assemblies and agencies on the other, each pulling to become the center of gravity in members' lives. What is at stake here? Identity. Direction. Which way is the Spirit leading?

⁶Evidenced by the comments in our survey of pastors of large, growing churches.

III. An identity for the future

Where will we find identity? Consider personal identity for a moment. Ask someone who she is, and you might, depending on the circumstances, hear about where she came from, what she does day-to-day, who her family is, what she thinks and feels about a variety of subjects, and even what her dreams are. These are each windows into her identity but not her identity itself. She is the product of all these things and more than they. Identity is never static. It never just is. It is never just the sum of this or that. What the Bible suggests is that our identity finds its unity in a dynamic relationship with whatever we count as our God. Identity—what the Bible calls “heart”—is a dynamic relationship with all these things as we grow toward the Lord or away from the Lord, toward what God has called us to be or away from it, toward the transformation of which Paul speaks in Romans 12 or away from it. Identity has a direction, a movement. When we stop growing, we begin to die.

So, too, with a living congregation or denomination. Depending on the circumstances, a congregation or denomination might express its identity by talking about its history, its activities, its affiliations, its teachings, or its dreams. It is all of these things and more, of course. Identity is a dynamic relationship with the Lord that it serves, a movement toward greater obedience or away from it; toward a fuller understanding of the Lord’s purposes or away from that understanding; toward what the Lord has called it to or, like Jonah, away from it.

In the measure that this identity is a movement toward the goal of fully serving the Lord, it becomes attractive, inclusive, and unifying. This is the genius of the Reformed tradition. It is a deep dissatisfaction with the way things are; with the depth of our present understanding; and with the character of our obedience and a strong desire to belong more fully to the Lord who calls us out of darkness into light. Our pursuit of this goal is fully informed by what we have learned from the past and what we are in the present, but it leans toward the future.

Too often we have based our unity in what cannot be inclusive or unifying. We fall prey to the temptation to base our denominational identity in experiences and connections only open to those who grew up in the CRC: a common ethnic experience, family connections, an immigrant mentality, and experiences centered on educational institutions such as Calvin College and Calvin Seminary. We have faced backward and inward. These sources of identity are necessarily exclusive, giving people the subtle and sometimes not so subtle message that if one did not grow up in the CRC, one will never be a full member.

The project of the CRC, represented among things by the statement of identity referenced above, is to shift from a denominational identity based on that which excludes others to a denominational identity that is open to all who would pursue a right relationship with the Lord of life. This is a very difficult thing to do in practice. It involves a change of self-identity at a very deep and subtle level. Often, in pursuing this goal, the language of the CRC betrays it. It is common, for example, to speak of “the Reformed tradition,” but *tradition* can be a way of sneaking back in nostalgia about a lost past. Additionally, tradition, even a sturdy and beloved tradition, is not enough to establish a new identity, just as memory is not enough to maintain identity in a person. One also needs the commitments and activities of the present, along with dreams and intentions for the future. Identity, if it is to be healthy, needs movement

and mission. A healthy denominational identity is dynamic, a way in which experiences and values get pressed into action toward certain goals.

Then, what people find off-putting about denominationalism—the sense that it is all about preserving the institution, not about the mission of Jesus Christ—is overcome. This is the best of denominationalism with a big *D*. It is seeing the big picture, reaching out to the whole world. It is not so much a tradition as a movement with deep roots and a long future. It is not about preservation but about discovery of the full truth of Jesus Christ. It is an attempt to faithfully follow the movement of the Spirit in every age as the Spirit leads the church into all truth.

IV. The role of *The Banner* in the future of the denomination

How can this sense of a dynamic movement be fostered in our denomination? No one way will suffice. Part of the answer is the training and support of leaders for our congregations. Part of the answer is the fostering of new congregations and new ministries. Any such movement in its denominational form would seem to need a voice, a pulpit. It is this that *The Banner* has been in the past, and it is this that *The Banner* can be in the future. It can be this, however, only if it is widely, if not universally, read in the denomination. It can be this only if it is in the homes of new as well as old members. It can be this only if the voice with which it speaks is a call, not to denominationalism for the sake of denominationalism, but to this movement, this movement to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century.

V. The future of *The Banner*

If, as we have suggested above, *The Banner* has a key role to play in the future of such a denomination, then several key conclusions follow. Among them:

- *The Banner* needs to be a visionary and unifying expression of the identity of the denomination.
- *The Banner* must reach the broadest possible spectrum of people in the denomination, reaching across lines of age, race and ethnicity, geographical location, length of membership, congregation type, worship style preference, and so forth.
- *The Banner* needs to continue to be an appealing and excellent magazine.
- *The Banner* needs to be established on a solid financial base for the future.

In short, *The Banner* should strive to become the centerpiece of denominational reflection and conversation, a town square, as it were, where those who care about the denomination and the broader movement that the denomination represents can meet to talk and consider how to address the challenges of the present moment.

When the committee began to look at options for the future of *The Banner* in the light of these values and goals, three things became apparent:

A. The approach that best addresses these values and goals is sending *The Banner* to every member household, supported by ministry shares. This solution increases the readership of the magazine, provides financial stability, and promotes the role of *The Banner* as a central venue for denominational

conversation and unity. The experience of *The Church Herald*, which has implemented an every-member policy, supports this approach.⁷

B. Such an approach would change the magazine in obvious and subtle ways. While the committee has only begun to think about the nature of these changes and, in any case, the details of the changes should be made together with a new editor, we have sketched out in the addendum some initial thinking about the directions such changes would take.

C. Such an approach requires careful thinking about how *The Banner* is integrated into the structures of the denomination.

D. Such a move would require a sizable investment on the part of the denomination. We believe that this investment is best approached as a structural readjustment in ministry shares. Instead of attempting to fit the increase required by *The Banner* into the present ministry share amounts, this adjustment would increase the total ministry share by an amount sufficient to fund *The Banner*. The amount needed would be about \$1 million per year, or approximately \$10 in ministry share per CRC member.

VI. Recommendations

A. Based on the above analysis, the CRC Publications Board recommends the following to synod:

That *The Banner* be changed from a subscription-based magazine to a membership-based and ministry-share-supported magazine as described above and in the addendum.

Grounds:

1. *The Banner* has been long an important part of the life of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. For much of that history, it has been a virtual town square where members of the denomination have heard the voices and seen the faces of other members, where important issues have been discussed, and where directions for the denomination have been set.
2. *The Banner* as a subscription-based magazine is less able now and will be even less able in the future to fulfill the role of a central forum of communication for the denomination because a decline in the number of subscribers, especially among younger and newer members, threatens its financial viability and its position in the denomination.
3. Despite the best efforts of editors and marketing staff, *The Banner* has been unsuccessful in turning around or even interrupting the trends toward diminishing numbers of subscribers.

⁷*The Church Herald* experience also addresses a key question: would a magazine that people didn't pay for directly be read and taken seriously. In a telephone survey of the RCA, two-thirds of those surveyed reported reading at least 31% of the magazine. Only 7% reported not reading the magazine at all. This contrasts with a written survey of the readership of *The Banner*, which reports that 24% don't read it at all. In addition, *Church Herald* readers appear to read more of the magazine than *Banner* readers, perhaps because they are not passing the magazine along to others.

4. For the past decades, churches in North America, including the CRCNA, have witnessed a loss of denominational loyalty. Setting *The Banner* into the hands of every member helps the CRC reverse this trend and promote a strong denominational identity.
 5. As the Christian Reformed Church grows more diverse, the need for a voice to call its members and congregations together, a forum to introduce members to members and ministries to ministries, and a place to discuss that which involves all the diverse sectors of the CRC will become more important.
 6. *The Church Herald*, which has been sent to all member households of the Reformed Church of America for a decade, has been widely read and has become an effective means of communication for its denomination.
 7. The Christian Reformed Church is already sending the *CRC Source* to its member households. By incorporating the *CRC Source* into *The Banner*, savings can be achieved and better communication effected.
- B. The CRC Publications Board also approved the following motion:
That the Board of Trustees be asked:
1. To endorse the above recommendation, and
 2. To participate in a discussion concerning the parameters of editorial freedom that would pertain if synod approves the main proposal. It is understood that a report about the outcome of this discussion will be provided to synod by way of the supplementary report to Synod 2003.

Addendum to the Appendix **Reflections on Editorial Guidelines for an Every-Home *Banner***

A magazine sent to every home in the denomination must be different from a subscription-based magazine. A subscription magazine is invited into a home; a membership-based magazine comes to the home without special invitation. It must earn its right to be read and to become an important part of the life of each member home. The goal of such a magazine is to draw our denomination together by honoring the diversity of its members and seeking our common heart as we pursue the mission to which the Lord has called us. In doing so, *The Banner* must:

A. *Unify*

Apart from its role as the news and information medium of the Christian Reformed Church, *The Banner* must be recognized as the town square or speakers' corner of the denomination—the place where we learn about events in our neighbors lives, share our views and opinions, express our common beliefs and values, and lend encouragement to those who are partners in our journey of faith and service.

B. *Honor our differences*

Unity does not mean papering over differences or failing to note the diversity and variety of our denomination. For *The Banner* to serve as a unifying force within the denomination, it must reach out to readers from all corners of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. Be local

One way to better reflect and represent what is happening in the denomination is to provide greater emphasis on local news—the events and activities taking place within congregational communities. Each issue of *The Banner* should include several pages of denominational briefs, congregational briefs, submitted items, pictures, events, and achievements.

D. Be global

The Banner should consistently and powerfully present the global movement of the Spirit of God in the church and in the world. The ministry stories now included in the *CRC Source* should be combined with a perspective that calls each Christian to service in God's kingdom.

E. Be easily read

The greatest competitor with which *The Banner* must contend is not another publication but the reader's precious and limited resource of time. Because of their busy lifestyles, younger readers, particularly those with children, tend to equate value of any publication in terms of the time required to absorb the information and the usefulness of the information. For the print media, the struggle to achieve value is compounded by societal expectations that news should be packaged as entertainment.

F. Be practical

Readers are looking for content that has practical application to their daily lives and that addresses the issues they confront at home, work, or church.

G. Be challenging

The formula for long-term viability and the development of a broad readership base is to present a full spectrum of content that delivers quality and value. To truly be a denominational publication with a future, everyone within the CRC community must have the opportunity to feel that they are reflected in and represented by the content of *The Banner*.

H. Reach children and teens

Being Reformed is to hold dearly to God's covenant promise to children, and instructional content geared specifically for children should also be accommodated within the pages of *The Banner*. Using the creative expertise of Faith Alive staff, appealing and exciting content can be developed that offers biblical instruction in fun-filled exercises. Similarly, considerable attention must be given to content that addresses the real-world issues faced by teens. As this is one of the most difficult readership segments to attract, creative solutions must be found, including presenting youth issues in a format that lends itself to discussion by Sunday school classes and youth groups.

I. Be consistently of high quality

The Christian Reformed Church is indeed blessed to have a publication such as *The Banner* upon which it can pursue these important objectives. Through a clear mandate, broad readership base, and a continuing commitment to editorial excellence, *The Banner* can play a central role in fostering unity and community within the denomination.

I. Introduction

Synod has mandated Christian Reformed Home Missions “to lead the church in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.” The mandate is expressed in these three ministry activities:

- a. Encourage and assist churches and classes in their work of evangelism.
- b. Initiate, support, and guide new-church development in cooperation with local churches and classes.
- c. Initiate, support, and guide other evangelistic ministries (i.e., campus ministry and Christian-schools ministry in New Mexico) with local churches and classes.
(Home Missions Order, Art. 2, 1992, 1979)

II. Motivation for Mission: Foundational Statements (approved by the board, February 2003)

A. *Theme, vision, and mission*

1. Theme

Gathering and Sending God's growing family—all for God's glory.

2. Vision

That all Christian Reformed congregations and related ministries are healthy mission-focused communities that are learning to follow Jesus by:

- Praying to know God's heart; praying for those who do not know God.
- Witnessing faithfully for Jesus to those who do not know him and in every area of life.
- Discipling new believers and enfolded them into Christ's church.
- Raising up new leaders who will help others to follow Jesus.
- Giving and living sacrificially toward fulfilling God's mission.

3. Mission

The mission of Home Missions is to collaborate with classes, regional and cultural groups, agencies, and educational institutions in fulfilling God's mission in North America by providing encouragement, guidance, and assistance so that

- Local congregations are healthy and mission-focused,
- New disciple-making churches are planted and multiply, and
- Mission-focused communities in educational settings flourish.

This mission is supported through prayer mobilization, through small group ministries, through developing disciple-making leaders, through coaching, through consultation and training, through financial assistance, through working for diversity, through justice and reconciliation, and through other specialized mission supports.

B. *Core mission values*

The core mission values of Home Missions are anchored in the Word and works of God and are affirmed by our confessional statements. As Home Missions encourages God's people to gather God's growing family, these values capture our hearts and minds, and direct our passions and plans.

1. God's mission

God's redeeming love for his world and its people inspires us to participate in his mission.

God did not turn his back
on a world bent on destruction;
he turned his face to it in love.
With patience and tender care he set out
on the long road of redemption
to reclaim the lost as his people
and the world as his kingdom.

*(Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary
Testimony [CT], 19; John 3:16; Acts 7)*

2. Prayer

Persistent prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission.

The church is the fellowship of those
who confess Jesus as Lord . . .
his chosen partner . . .
loved by Jesus . . .
seeking him in prayer.

(CT, 38; Acts 4:31; Col. 1:3-14)

3. Community

Congregations and other mission-focused communities are the primary agents of God's harvest in North America.

Christ gathers a new community.
Satan and his evil forces
seek whom they may confuse and swallow
but Jesus builds his church,
his Spirit guides
and grace abounds.

(CT, 37; 1 Pet. 5:8-11; Matt.16:13-19)

4. Leadership

Raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work.

As covenant partners
called to faithful obedience,
and set free for joyful praise,
we offer our hearts and lives
to do God's work in his world.

(CT, 6a; Eph. 4:11-13)

As God's people hear the Word and do it,
they are equipped for discipleship,
to witness to the good news:
Our world belongs to God
and he loves it deeply.

(CT, 36b)

5. Disciple-making

The call of Word and Spirit to make disciples demands our eager response.

Following the apostles, the church is sent—
sent with the gospel of the kingdom
to make disciples of all nations.
This mission is central to our being.
. . . we rejoice that the Spirit
is waking us to see
our mission in God's world.

(CT, 44; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

6. Reconciliation

Working for diversity, justice, and unity in Christ is critical to our witness in North America.

We marvel that the Lord gathers the broken pieces
to do his work,
and that he blesses us still
with joy, new members,
and surprising evidences of unity.
We commit ourselves to seeking and expressing
the oneness of all who follow Jesus.

(CT, 43b; John 17:22-23; Rom. 15:7; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:15b)

7. God's provision

God provides abundant resources for his work as his people step out in faith and witness.

Our world belongs to God—
Not to us or earthly powers,
. . . The earth is the Lord's.

(CT, 7; Ps. 24)

C. Spiritual and theological foundations for encouraging diversity and antiracism education and action on the part of Home Missions

1. The Mission of God—The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages (see revised report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, *Acts of Synod 1996*, Principle 5). Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work (see revised report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, *Acts of Synod 1996*, Principle 6). God's redeeming love for his world and its people inspires us to participate in his mission (CRHM, Proposed Core Value 1).
2. The Agents of God's Mission—In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church—power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture (see revised report of the Committee

to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, *Acts of Synod 1996*, Principle 8). The church is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation (see revised report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, *Acts of Synod 1996*, Principle 9). Working for diversity, justice, and unity in Christ is critical to our witness in North America (CRHM, Proposed Core Value 6).

3. Summary Statement—To be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people, and to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions (see revised report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, *Acts of Synod 1996*).

III. Board and executive committee

A. Board

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home missions program. The board has fifty members. Forty-seven members are chosen by their respective classes; three are members-at-large who have special expertise. Twelve board members are from Canada and thirty-eight from the United States.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Al Gelder, president; Rev. Keith Doornbos, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (executive director); Rev. Philip Stel, recording secretary; and Mr. Harvey Jansen, treasurer.

The officers of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions of Canada are Rev. Gerrit Bomhof; president (formerly vice president); Ms. Diane Proper, treasurer; Rev. Philip Stel, assistant treasurer; and Rev. Andrew Vander Leek, secretary.

C. Executive committee

The executive committee meets in May and September. It is made up of elected delegates from the following regions.

Region	Classes	Delegates
Western Canada	B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Rev. Philip Stel
Central Canada	Chatham, Huron, Niagara	Rev. Gerrit Bomhof
Eastern Canada	Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte, Eastern Canada	Ms. Diane Proper
Northwest U.S.	Pacific Northwest, Columbia, Central California, Yellowstone	Rev. Virgil Michael
Southwest U.S.	California South, Greater Los Angeles, Arizona, Pacific Hanmi, Red Mesa	Mr. Harvey Jansen
Midwest U.S.	Rocky Mountain, Iakota, Minnkota, Heartland	Rev. Bernie Haan
Central U.S.	Lake Superior, Northcentral Iowa, Pella	Mr. Ivan Mulder

Chicago	Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illiana, Wisconsin	Rev. D.A. Crushshon, Sr.
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, Hackensack, Southeast U.S.	Rev. Al Gelder
Out-state Michigan	Northern Michigan, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie	Rev. Ed Visser
Ottawa County	Holland, Zeeland, Georgetown, Grandville	Rev. Keith Doornbos
Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Thornapple Valley	Ms. Mary Buteyn
Members-at-Large	For Finance For Advancement For Intercultural Ministry	Mrs. Lynne Heyne Mr. Mark Feldkamp Mr. Charles Brown

IV. Home Missions' ministries

A. Established-church development

1. The ministry of Home Missions reaches into every classis and influences most CRC congregations. Through established-church development, Home Missions seeks to assist churches in becoming mission-focused, spiritually vibrant, and outreaching so that seeking those who are far from God, discipling those who know him, and planting new churches are integral to the calling of every member, every church, and every classis.
2. This ministry in support of established churches is accomplished through:
 - a. Assisting and encouraging churches to pray that the CRC may be increasingly and effectively used by God to gather and disciple spiritual seekers and send out workers to the harvest.
 - b. Planning and consulting with churches and classes so that they are focused and structured to effectively live out the mission of God, to effectively communicate the good news to those far from him, and to disciple and send out those who embrace him as Savior and Lord.
 - c. Developing leadership through networks, conferences, and teaching churches so that pastors and other church leaders grow in their ability to lead mission-focused churches and classes.
 - d. Training in principle-based small groups so that local churches provide a needs-based ministry that reaches spiritual seekers and leads to authentic community.
 - e. Resourcing churches and classes with partnership grants and materials to help them become mission-shaped churches and classes.
3. The results prayerfully envisioned and worked for in established churches are:
 - a. A praying church. Members, churches, and classes are mobilized in prayer for the Spirit's blessing on the witness of the CRC to bring an increasing number of people to faith and to disciple them as followers of Jesus.

- b. A focused church. Spiritually vibrant churches and classes know their purpose, values, and vision and are growing in every way—including size—while effectively ministering where God has placed them.
 - c. A committed people. They are part of God’s family, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and contributing to and participating in the mission of God and the ministry of the church.
4. The strategies and activities used in working for these results may be summarized as follows:
- a. Mobilizing prayers for the harvest. Implementing a plan for congregational and classical prayer leaders to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray for effective outreach. This includes *The Prayer Paper*, a newsletter to classical and congregational prayer coordinators; an annual training opportunity for classical prayer coordinators; training Christian Reformed participants at Willow Creek and Saddleback conferences; and regional prayer events.
 - b. Promoting ethnic (non-Anglo) ministries. Working with CRHM’s New-Church Development (NCD) department and three intercultural ministry directors to help the CRC grow in its multicultural, multiethnic character and ministry, including participation on the agency and denominational antiracism teams.
 - c. Collaborating with (1) Calvin Theological Seminary by participating in teaching courses on mission subjects; (2) CRC Publications and GEMS by doing mutual planning for a children’s ministry conference and publishing evangelistic resources; and (3) Youth Unlimited, CRWRC, and Christian Reformed World Missions by providing a developmental pathway of ministry experiences for young people and providing short-term student volunteers for churches, community development ministries, and world mission settings. In addition, representatives from the Established-Church Development Department, along with representatives from other Christian Reformed agencies and ministries, serve on denominational ministry plan teams to implement the denominational vision and plan.
 - d. Focusing networks. Focusing networks continue to be used to develop congregational leadership and ministry focus. Previously, this ministry was coordinated through the central office. Now networks are coordinated and developed regionally in an effort to serve churches more effectively.
 - e. Ministry focusing. Twenty-five to thirty churches were assisted in defining their ministries and drawing up specific ministry plans by means of several discernment processes, including merger planning, planning during a pastoral vacancy, and leading leadership retreats. A primary vehicle for planning is the Natural Church Development Survey, which has been used by more than sixty-seven congregations. Results are used by the church for reflection and focused planning.
 - f. Promoting small-group evangelism strategies/ministries and providing resources. More than 2,570 people participated in leadership training

events and consultations in 2002, which includes small groups/Coffee Break/Story Hour/Little Lambs, evangelism, and prayer workshops. Small group representatives throughout the United States and Canada work with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and a variety of small group leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry. In addition to workshops, another 1,479 people participated in other events such as director days, rallies, and retreats. The combined number of people involved in both training and other events is 4,055. The first Small Group Evangelism Conference for Women, hosted by Coffee Break, Story Hour, and Little Lambs, was held in July 2002 for 900 women who lead outreach small groups.

- g. Sponsoring Gathering conferences in connection with Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church. Fifty-two leaders representing 9 churches participated in the Willow Creek Prevailing Church Conference in October 2002; 51 leaders representing 11 churches participated in the Saddleback conference in May 2002; and 65 people from the Eastern U.S. region attended the August 2002 Willow Creek Leadership Conference.
 - h. Training events. Fifteen events were held with 375 churches represented and 1,500 individuals attending. Also, more than 1,200 people attended prayer training events and retreats.
 - i. Partnership Assistance Grants. Financial grants were provided for fifty-two established churches and classes to help them advance their ministries.
5. Assistance for Smaller Churches

The Smaller Church Ministry of Home Missions is a resource for more than one-third of the organized congregations in the Christian Reformed Church. Of the 826 organized CRC congregations, 305 of them are classified as smaller churches (150 or fewer total members or approximately 100 professing members.) Two smaller church specialists work hand-in-hand with regional and intercultural directors to provide information, consultation, and training for smaller churches.

In keeping with the decisions of Synod 1995, agreements with churches currently receiving salary funding from the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) will be honored under the annually diminishing subsidy system as long as the churches qualify. For the calendar year 2002, thirty churches were approved and received or were eligible to receive FSC salary subsidy for their pastors.

In addition, Home Missions has initiated other grants for smaller churches. In 2002, eighteen churches received program assistance up to \$5,000, twenty-seven received continuing education assistance up to \$600, and twenty received assistance for technology upgrades (e.g., telephone answering machines). The technology assistance grant program has been expanded and enlarged for 2003.

The Heritage Church Guidelines approved by last year's synod were distributed to interested churches and to each classical Home Missions committee.

6. In summary, Home Missions works with established churches to implement principle-based small groups; to develop, equip, and train leaders for the harvest; and to assist congregations in becoming spiritually vibrant and outreaching. Prayer is foundational. In all of this there is a prayerful expectation that God will continue to build his church, use the gifts of his people, and add to the church daily those who are being saved (Acts 2).

B. New-church development

1. Church planting and the CRC

Before returning to heaven, and anticipating the Spirit’s outpouring, Jesus promised his followers, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8b). The first followers of Jesus, soon scattered by persecution, began telling other people about Jesus wherever they went (Acts 9:19-20). Only a few years after a new church arose in Antioch, this young church released its best leaders to plant new churches elsewhere (Acts 13:1-3). This sending off of Paul and Barnabas launched the planting of new churches throughout the world from the first century to the twenty-first.

Church planting is also a part of our CRC story. Beginning in 1857, and for most our first hundred years, the CRC usually planted churches by sending missionaries to far-away places such as New Mexico, Nigeria, and China or to nearby towns and cities to gather scattered Dutch immigrants.

There were exceptions, however. Chapel ministries were started as early as 1909. Located primarily in urban areas such as Chicago and Grand Rapids and New York City, these chapel ministries marked our early efforts to reach out to neighbors “where they were.” They were chapels, i.e., not-quite churches, on the assumption that our neighbors would not feel at home in our churches. Many of these chapels were located in communities of high need and many were clearly designed to target non-Anglo ethnic groups. They also involved various forms of compassion ministry and—in spite of best intentions—often resulted in long-term dependency. At the same time, many neighbors learned to follow Jesus through these ministries.

Interestingly, the first and only congregation of color to be received into full CRC membership in our denomination’s first hundred years was the Navajo congregation of Bethany CRC in Gallup, New Mexico—started in the 1930s, with its request for recognition as an official Christian Reformed congregation approved by the synod of 1956. Black congregations, begun in the 1940s and 1950s, were also not organized until years later. For example, Northside Paterson (New Jersey) was begun in 1935 and not organized until 1973. Buckley Chapel in Grand Rapids was begun in 1949 and organized as Grace CRC in 1962.

CRC Growth through Evangelism 1990-2002

Yearbook Year	All Churches	NCD Only
1990	2913	216
1991	2599	305
1992	2699	416
1993	2351	474
1994	2766	768
1995	2489	1102

1996	3170	890
1997	2846	1238
1998	2738	795
1999	2777	614
2000	2462	534
2001	3005	633
2002	2563	596
2003	2650	686*

*Based on 69 churches reporting as of 2/05/03

Gradually the CRC has been learning to plant churches among our neighbors “where they are,” fully expecting that when our neighbors become brothers and sisters in Christ, they will be enfolded, along with their new congregations, into the Christian Reformed Church. About five new churches were started annually in the 1970s, ten new churches annually in the 1980s, and nearly twenty new churches per year in the 1990s. All new churches are started with the commitment to “bring the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, and draw them into fellowship with Christ and his church” (Home Missions mandate). More than half of the churches started in the last two decades enrich our denomination not only with new followers of Jesus but also with new languages and cultures.

2. New-Church Development and Home Missions

“Helping Churches Plant Churches” is inscribed on a Christian Reformed Home Missions complimentary pen. Home Missions is about helping churches plant churches! Especially through its regional, intercultural, and NCD personnel, Home Missions helps churches plant churches by way of the several key strategies outlined below:

a. Prayer mobilizing and communication

One essential strategy is to provide leadership and support to classes and congregations in communicating the vision for a church planting movement and in mobilizing prayer for enfolding lost people into fellowship with Christ and his church through new and emerging churches.

Local planning groups, parent churches, and church planters alike are encouraged to develop and sustain vital prayer ministries—both for the new church and through the new church. Once again, Home Missions, in partnership with World Missions, launched a Lord of the Harvest prayer challenge in January to plead with God for harvest workers. Forty-six thousand Lord of the Harvest bookmarks have been distributed in English, with additional copies in Korean and Spanish, for use by nearly half of all CRC congregations. The interagency prayer and communications team is heading up the development of a comprehensive strategy that squarely places the church planting challenge before the denomination.

The planting and thriving of new churches is dependent on parenting churches’ sharing their stories and what they have learned with other potential parenting churches and of new and emerging churches sharing their stories of changed lives and other answers to prayer with the whole church. In turn, Home Missions encourages both planters and their local partners in prayer and prayer ministry by way of the monthly *PowerLink*, the quarterly *Networker*, various web resources, and other materials and networks.

b. Developing disciple-making leaders

One of Home Missions' seven Core Values declares that "raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work." In church planting, this begins with the challenge of identifying the potential leaders for tomorrow's new churches. Along with encouraging church leaders and church members to pray for God to provide harvest workers (Matt. 9:38), Home Missions distributes various promotional materials and, with assistance of The Back to God Hour, is developing a church planting video for vision casting and recruiting purposes.

Home Missions is involved in the actual development of future church planters in a variety of ways. It partners with classes in supporting Leadership Development Networks, also called Evangelist Training Programs, in more than fifteen locations. Over the past two years, Home Missions staff has worked vigorously with Calvin Theological Seminary and Reformed Bible College in developing a masters (or bachelors) of missions in church planting with a distance education approach and design. Home Missions also provides funding for ten to twelve one-year internships or work-study programs in both formal (academic) and nonformal (more flexible) training tracks.

Students or leaders who are asking whether God may be calling them to church planting are invited to enroll in Home Missions' Directions program. The watershed component of Directions is the assessment center, an intensive two to three days of participation, observation, and learning, in which experienced new-church leaders provide prayer-saturated feedback that helps those assessed to determine their passion and giftedness for church planting leadership. Home Missions also can arrange for intensive interviews with trained assessors at various locations. A Directions program endorsement is a prerequisite for CRHM funding of a new church plant.

c. Resourcing partners, planters, and new churches

As noted above, Home Missions does not plant churches but *helps* churches and their local partners do the planting. Home Missions personnel are eager to help classes and congregations cast vision and develop specific strategies and plans for starting more new churches. In the past year, Home Missions staff supported special planning initiatives with classis leaders in the Eastern U.S. and the Great Lakes areas, with Korean-American and other Asian American leaders, and with classis structures and ethnic planning groups around the country in ongoing planning. Home Missions also provides materials and consultation for congregations interested in serving as parenting or sponsoring congregations.

One of the critical ingredients in starting a new church is selecting a qualified leader and helping the leader make a good beginning. For leaders who are new to ministry or who lack experience in church planting, the actual start may be preceded by a period of *residency* with the parent church or other sponsors. For all new church starts, it is important that the planter receive high quality *coaching*—usually by way of a nearby ministry leader who brings wisdom, accountability, and support. Home Missions also arranges for Boot Camp (an intensive

planning week) attendance by the planter and coach and provides additional on-site orientation in a central location.

As the new churches develop themselves in Christ and their ministries for Christ's service, various denominational helps are available. Home Missions provides guidance and support, both through general planning materials and guidelines and through ministry consultation on-site. The Back to God Hour provides assistance for "media helps" to leverage grand openings, relocations, and other special events. CRWRC personnel are eager to assist in serving high-need populations through community development ministry.

The most significant learning often occurs through planters helping one another. For the last decade, Home Missions conferences for church planters have been led almost exclusively by pastors themselves. Also, some planters have been challenged and encouraged through *peer forums*, intentional gatherings of small groups of selected planters to share blessings and concerns and to receive the loving support and challenge of their peers.

One such forum is a group of pastors who serve young churches ranging from three hundred to six hundred in Sunday worship. Having encouraged and challenged and blessed one another for three years, these five young pastors—Kris Vos of St. John, Indiana; Mark Brouwer of Savage, Minnesota; Jul Medenblik of New Lenox, Illinois; Rob Hogendoorn of London, Ontario; and Larry Doornbos of Hudsonville, Michigan—decided they want to give back. As one step in sharing their story and what God has been teaching them, they have developed a training seminar entitled *Navigating the Growth Matrix* for presentation in early May 2003 at Calvin College's newly opened Prince Conference Center.

d. NCD financial partnering

Financial support is a key part of Home Missions' partnering with new churches. Ever since September 1992, all new church plants have started by way of grant funding to the local partners, in contrast to prior years when most planters were sent out as Home Missions' employees. Today Home Missions provides grant funding for up to six years to church plants located in majority culture communities and most ethnic/language communities. For new churches in communities characterized by high need, Home Missions' funding may continue for up to twelve years and even longer in exceptional circumstances.

The longest-term financial partnering has been with some churches in Classis Red Mesa, dating back to 1964 when denominational support of "the Indian field" was transferred from World Missions to Home Missions. Classis Red Mesa was organized in 1982, and most of its churches have made giant strides toward self-support, in some cases in creative, indigenous ways. As the need for ongoing subsidy decreases, Home Missions and Red Mesa leaders continue to explore creative approaches to financial partnering in the future. This exploration is encouraged by the recent establishment of the Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation, which aims to serve as an important future resource for the classis.

As long as many church leaders can remember, Home Missions has provided financial assistance—both grants and loans—to new churches

for facility development. However, due to financial constraints, Home Missions is appealing to denominational partners and classical leaders to develop ways and means for assisting emerging churches in meeting their first-facilities needs.

3. New and emerging churches: August 2001 through February 2003

In ministry year 2003, Home Missions is providing financial assistance to approximately 110 new and emerging churches. Frequently, as noted below, the actual start is preceded by a period of residency (or final grooming) prior to the launch of the new church ministry. Fifteen to twenty additional locations are approved for opening when missionary pastors become available. New-church starts and funding conclusions for the following periods are listed below.

a. New-church starts from September 2001 through June 2002 (10 months)

Location/name	Personnel	Began
Anaheim, CA/Grace Filipino #3	ETP Students	9/01
Burbank, CA/Bethany Kor. Staff	David Kong	9/01
Cambridge, ON/River City	Darrell Bierman	4/02
Central, CA/Sierra Lead Network	Leadership Team	3/02
Chicago, IL/GAP	John Zayas	10/01
Chicago, IL/Rogers Park	John Hoekwater	10/01
Danvers, MA/North Shore	Michael Laird	9/02
Frankfort, IL/Bridge Community	Nick Ahrens	9/01
Hialeah/Iglesia Crist. Vida Nueva	JuanPablo Sanchez	9/01
Los Angeles/Believers Chr. Fell.	Melvin Jackson	3/02
Mt. Vernon, WA/Vida Nueva	Joe Strong	9/01
Muskegon, MI/Angel Comm. Staff	Kenneth Jackson	4/02
Orlando, FL/Elohim (Haitian)	Raymond Clotaire	9/01
Paterson, NJ/East Coast LDN	Ricardo Orellana	9/01
West Kendall, FL/Iglesia Renacer	Hector Garcia	3/02

b. New-church starts from July 2002 through February 2003

Location/name	Personnel	Began
Buena Park, CA/City on a Hill	David Chong	7/02
Calgary, AB/City Center	Ed and Michelle Top	2/03
Denver, CO/Denver LDN	Pete Van Elderen	7/02
Grand Junction, CO/Abundant Life	Allen Kleine Deters	7/02
Grand Rapids, MI/Iglesia Paz Y Esperanza	Augusto Liza	7/02
N. Pacific Reg. NCD Specialist	John Van Sloten	7/02
Standish, ME/Crossroads Community	Douglas Walker	1/03
Ventura, CA/Bridges	Bill Garner	7/02

c. New-church residencies in process as of February 2003

Location/name	Personnel	Began
Cerritos, CA/Cerritos Home Church	Paul Cha	7/02
Grand Rapids, MI/Monroe Mall Min.	Henry Schenkel	9/01
N. Natomas—Granite Springs, CA	David Lindner	1/03
Renton, WA/Evergreen Community	Steve Kim	4/02
Rochester, MN/Rochester NCD	Ken Ritsema	9/02
Rockford, MI/Rockford Area	Paul Worster	11/02
Sacramento, CA/Sacramento Area	Doug Bouws	8/02
Socorro, TX/EI Paso Area	Jose Rayas	8/02

d. Funding conclusions during MY2002

Location/name	Personnel	Began
Philadelphia/Spirit & Truth	Randy Baker	6/02
Holland, MI/Mision del Rey Jesus	Florenzio Lopez	10/02
Jamestown, MI/Searchlight	Stan Drenth	6/02
*Chicago, IL/Living Spring Community	MunChul Kim	12/02
Albuquerque, NM/Galilee	Won Dae Lee	6/02
*Denver, CO/Outpost	Jeff Van Kooten	12/01
Grand Junction, CO/New Life	Ken Nydam	6/02
Houston, TX/Peace	Gary Schipper	5/02
Mission, BC/Mission Hills	Andrew Turkstra	6/02
Diamond Bar, CA/Body of the Lord	Myung Soo Lee	6/02
Las Vegas, NV/Grace Valley	Steve Wunderink	6/02
San Jose, CA/Liberty Vietnamese	Nam Kieu	6/02

*Funding conclusions occasioned by conclusion of the ministry.

4. Church planting goal for the twenty-first century

Based on the conviction that God is calling the CRC to increasingly become a church-planting denomination, the third of seven key goals in the Denominational Ministries Plan reads as follows:

CRC denominational ministries will serve congregations and classes by encouraging and supporting a denomination-wide movement that extends our kingdom witness for Jesus through increasing our capacity to plant up to thirty churches a year.

From a denominational perspective, ten to twenty new churches are needed annually simply to offset the loss of congregational mergers, closings, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, twenty to thirty new churches are needed annually to help meet the massive harvest challenge of reaching unchurched and underchurched millions in Canada and the United States. Home Missions is the convening agency for implementing this resource—demanding, obedience-testing, and faith-stretching goal. Home Missions is joined and supported, however, by various CRC agencies and educational institutions in the form of an interagency church planting goal team and subteams. The church planting goal team is prayerfully working to lift up this goal in a special way for the prayers and support of the whole denomination in ministry year 2004.

C. *Other disciple-making ministries*

1. Partnering with campus ministries

a. The *VISION* statement for CRC campus ministry says,

We see places of higher education
 As institutions where people seek truth;
 As providers of knowledge, discovery, and future leaders;
 As centers that shape society's values, attitudes, and trends;
 As gatherings of students, faculty, and staff
 Who share in the brokenness of humanity
 And who need God's Good News of
 Wholeness, reconciliation, compassion, and community.

We gratefully and obediently pursue [campus] ministry
 To listen on behalf of the church;
 To extend God's reign of compassion, truth, and justice

In a broken and sinful world;
 To proclaim God's word of reconciliation;
 To gather people in community,
 To be encouraged in the pursuit of truth,
 To be nourished by the Word and Sacraments,
 To be strengthened in faith, hope, and love.

The Christian Reformed Church is uniquely gifted for this work because of its theological heritage and educational fervor. Institutions of higher education are a primary means by which our culture claims the hearts and minds of the next generation. The power of the gospel to transform, redeem, and renew the world therefore needs to take root and flourish at this threshold of social and intellectual change.

Our campus ministries seek to influence the entire university. They encourage students, faculty, and staff to love God with heart, soul, strength, and mind. They challenge social and intellectual centers of power with a prophetic call to be merciful, just, and generous in their institutional habits and hopes. Recognizing that the church is made up of many denominations and traditions, called together to herald the coming of God's reign, we celebrate our unity in Christ, partnering with others on campus who confess his name.

An expanding set of foundational documents outlines our understanding of and expectations for CRC campus ministry. To date, these documents include our vision statement (1989), *To Pursue the Mission* (1995), *Guidelines for Campus Ministries* (1998), *Educational Requirements for Campus Ministry Personnel* (1998), *Making Disciples—Developing a Campus Movement: A Strategic Plan* (1999), *Ideal Campus Minister Profile* (1999), *Stewards of God's Mysteries: Measuring Ministry Effectiveness* (2000), and an *Ideal Profile for Campus Committee Members* (2002). Over the past two years, we have worked at drafting a set of (federal) incorporation and bylaws for the use of our Canadian Campus Ministries. This work nears completion. In addition, a workshop on campus ministry reviewed the history of CRC campus ministry; engaged the missiological framework for campus ministry; and outlined the vision, goals, key characteristics, and governing structures that best support our campus ministries. Most of these documents have been compiled into a Campus Ministry resource binder (available for purchase from the office of the Campus Ministry Director, c/o Christian Reformed Home Missions) and are also posted on our web site (www.crcna/hm/hmcm.org). In addition, our web site contains a current listing of our campus ministry locations, and a listing of the personnel serving in those locations.

- b. The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on more than forty campuses in Canada and the United States. As of September 2002, twenty-four campus ministries are supported by Home Missions partnership-assistance grants. These are:

Central Michigan University
 Chicago State University
 Dalhousie University
 Eastern Michigan University
 Fanshawe Community College
 Ferris State College

Queen's University
 University of Alberta
 University of Guelph
 University of Iowa
 University of New Brunswick
 University of Northern British Columbia

Iowa State University—Anglo
Iowa State University—Korean
Kennedy-King Community College
McMaster University
Michigan State University
Passaic County Comm College

University of Toronto
University of Western Ontario
Western Michigan University
Wilfrid Laurier University & Waterloo University
William Paterson University
York University

In addition, Calvin Theological Seminary has once again joined Home Missions in supporting a campus internship (currently hosted at Western Ontario University) for an M.Div. student, and a pilot internship project has begun with the Hispanic campus ministry in New Jersey. Journey Christian Fellowship, a multiethnic new-church plant seeking to serve the University of California-Los Angeles campus population continues to develop under the leadership of evangelist Charles Kim. A new campus ministry at the University of Calgary is actively recruiting a campus minister. This past year two more emerging campus leaders tested their mission-focused skills and calling (a part-time, internship model) by expanding the mission-focused reach of our campus ministries at Brock University and the University of Toronto.

Ongoing exploration and/or development toward new, refocused, and/or expanded campus ministry is currently underway at:

University of Calgary
Miami Area
Ottawa Area
New Jersey City University (Hispanic internship)

The regular program of activities for our campus ministries includes weekly Bible studies for students and faculty, one-on-one counseling, large group worship/teaching events, small group discussions, social activities, leadership formation, special lectures and retreats, and occasionally a Sunday student worship service on campus. Though many of these gatherings are small, some swell to include hundreds of students. For each event, the goal is both to move people toward their baptism (make disciples) and to spur people forth from their baptism (living for Jesus in every dimension of life).

- c. The campus ministry director consults with Christian Reformed Church campus ministries across North America, administers partnership assistance funding, develops ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshals denominational (and other) resources to further aid our campus ministries. Calvin College partners with CRHM-Campus Ministry to cosponsor an annual academic/mission-focused lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America. Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, the campus ministry director's office supports a campus ministry journal (*Footnotes*), annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The campus ministry director's office supports the CRCMA's ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America. Together we track campus ministry trends, explore campus ministry issues and concerns, and help set the course for our ongoing mission in higher education.

The generous commitment of prayer, volunteers, and funding support of local congregations, classes, and the denomination for this vital mission is deeply appreciated. The grace and wisdom of God has been poured out on individuals and institutions alike with life-changing results.

2. Partnering with Red Mesa schools and the Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation

Home Missions also assists the Red Mesa Christian Schools Association. In addition to its role on the foundation, the association seeks to establish and foster mutually beneficial programs of support (internal- and external-staff development, donor development, and so forth) for all of the Red Mesa schools. The association is currently led by a volunteer coordinator, Kathy Bosscher, the principal of Zuni Christian Mission School.

As the schools continue to renew and revise their mission-focused and educational goals for this new millennium, Home Missions is privileged to continue to journey with them in mission-focused partnerships that demonstrate declining denominational subsidies matched by increasing local ownership. A key initiative at present is the development of a renewed statement of understanding on the longer term partnership of CRHM and the Red Mesa schools.

D. Finance and advancement

1. Resources

a. Financial resources

Overall, gift income for Home Missions fell short of budget. Ministry share declined from the year before by \$48,000, but giving from churches' above-ministry share and from individuals helped to make up for the decline in ministry share. The excess of expenses over revenue was covered by using reserves from prior years.

b. Personnel

Home Missions notes with gratitude that along with a gifted, paid staff a number of volunteers continue their support of God's mission in the central office and with funded ministries.

2. Communications

More than seven hundred Christian Reformed churches included motivational material about Home Missions in their Easter services. Many of these same churches received a special offering for Home Missions at that time. More than six hundred churches celebrated Reformation Sunday by using Home Missions materials; many of them received an offering for Home Missions as well.

In January each year, Home Missions works with World Missions to promote "Pray to the Lord of the Harvest" where people across the denomination pray that God will provide missionary pastors to lead his outreach efforts.

Home Missions also provides speakers for the Women's Missionary Union tours. In Canada and the United States, we worked cooperatively with other agencies on *CRC Source*, *Prayer Guide*, and *Intermission*. In addition, we regularly communicate with our various audiences by means of the *Update* newsletter and *Gathering* magazine.

Home Missions maintains several web sites to help people get involved and pray for missions. They are:

www.crhm.org – Christian Reformed Home Missions
www.hmedc.org – Established Church Development
www.menslife.org – Men’s Life
www.coffeekbreakministries.org – Coffee Break
www.smallgroupministries.org – Small Groups
www.newchurchnet.com – New Church Development
www.minhisp.org – Ministerio Hispano

E. Evangelizing progress in 2002 and denominational growth

Numerical growth is one measurement of ministry. The following is offered as a stimulus for praise and thanksgiving.

By God’s grace, the Christian Reformed Church has grown through evangelism by 39,838 persons since the beginning of *Gathering God’s Growing Family* In 1988. In the 2002 reporting period, 2,634 persons were added through evangelism (compared with 2,563 persons in 2001). In the decade of the 1990s and so far in the 2000s an average of 2,700 persons were brought in through evangelism each year, compared with an average of 2,000 persons in the 1980s and 1,500 persons annually in the 1970s. Since 1989, new congregations accounted for 9,277 persons added through evangelism. In 2002, at least 670 people were added through evangelism in new and emerging churches (based on reports from 66 churches). In the 2002 reporting period, total net denominational growth was 542 persons (*Yearbook 2003*, p. 143).

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Alvern Gelder, Home Missions board president, and Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday and Reformation Day Sunday as significant opportunities to receive an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

C. That synod elect Mrs. Lynne Heyne, Rev. Jack Stulp, and Mr. Charles Brown to second terms as at-large delegates to the Board of Home Missions with expertise in finance, advancement, and intercultural relations respectively.

Mrs. Lynne Heyne is a member of Madison Square CRC who is credentialed and has served in public accounting. She resides in Byron Center, Michigan.

Rev. Jack Stulp, of Hudsonville, Michigan, is a retired CRC minister who has served Home Missions as board president and in church relations.

Mr. Charles Brown, a building contractor from Warrensville Heights, Ohio, is an elder in the East Side CRC, Cleveland, Ohio.

All three have given excellent service to the Board of Home Missions in their first terms.

Home Missions is blessed, privileged, and profoundly challenged in serving the Lord and the church through *Gathering*.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, executive director

I. Introduction

She's old, blind, lives alone, and waits each day for the sound of the three-wheeled bike. Each day the bike comes down this narrow street in Agrimonte, Cuba, bringing a nutritious hot meal to this woman and twenty-two others just like her. It is one of many practical outreaches of the CRC in Cuba. On another island called Leyte, part of the Philippines, Annie Lastra rides a bus for three hours to get to a remote mountain village. The people are waiting for her to preach and visit in this far-flung but vital outpost of the Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines. These churches may seem like autonomous islands of outreach in distant lands, but they are not. They are part of the global outreach of the Christian Reformed Church and each one is important. Christian Reformed World Missions has been a strong building and connecting force in places like these for over one hundred years now.

Since 1888, World Missions has worked to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God and to call people to repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to God in their personal lives and their societal relationships. World Missions has worked to build the church of Christ. World Missions serves in multiple partnerships to provide for the fullness of God's grace in a broken world and to bring glory to God. World Missions is very thankful that the support for Bringing Salvation to the Ends of the Earth is a vision that has gripped many. With a world population of over six billion people, that vision continues to challenge us and give us focus.

World Missions is the agency by which the CRC administers the joint world missions work of Christian Reformed churches (Church Order Art. 77). Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) seeks to fulfill the following mandate:

- A. Proclaim the Gospel of the growing kingdom of God.
- B. Call people of the entire world to repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to God in their personal lives and societal relations.
- C. Build the Church of Christ. Develop peoples who are gathered for worship, who train their own membership for leadership, and who are dedicated to service in and beyond the communities in which they live.
- D. Relieve suffering and minister to human needs through programs of Christian education and development, with the help of CRWRC and/or local diaconal organizations wherever possible.
- E. Encourage and enable the congregations of the CRCNA to call and commission missionaries and to provide cooperatively for their support.

(Missionary Manual, Section 109)

The tasks, however, are not ones to be done alone. Other agencies of the church have their church-given mandates. Many local CRC congregations have found opportunities to reach to the ends of the earth through short- and long-term outreach programs. In many of the far-flung reaches of the earth, World Missions joined company with Christian churches that are growing and developing their own programs of reaching the ends of the earth with the gospel. We have entered an exciting time, the task is one to be done in partnership with others. As a result, World Missions plans and implements its plans with a commitment to bring salvation to the ends of the earth in an effort characterized by partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation.

II. Looking back and looking ahead

Two stories are presented here to reflect the dynamic and growing branches of the work of the Christian Reformed Church around the world.

A. Cuba

“The youth of this country are starting to have problems.” It is important to understand the context so that the import of this statement can be grasped. The man saying this was a high-ranking communist official from the Cuban government. He was in Jaguey Grande talking to David Lee, president of the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba.

“We have noticed that the youth of your church are different. Can you help us?” Imagine the smile on our Lord’s face as this exchange took place. An anti-God official representing an atheistic government, going to the offices of a humble church man, and asking for help. “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth,” says the Lord (Ps. 46:10 NIV).

Cuba is a land of incongruities, and the CRC of Cuba is one of the biggest. Unhidden, unapologetic, yet knowledgeable in how to be representatives of the King in a land that chooses to forsake him, this church is making a difference. In Havana, for example, literally within sight of the capital, is a Christian Reformed Church. On Sunday morning, hymns of praise float down the street to the halls of power in one of the few remaining communist governments in the world.

The Cuban CRC is just over fifty years old now. Celebrations were scrubbed last year because a hurricane named Michelle barreled through Matanzas Province and did a lot of damage to churches and homes. The quiet, almost unnoticed celebration of that milestone is reflective of the relationship the Cuban CRC has with its bigger sister, the CRC in North America; quiet and almost unnoticed. However, the communist government is noticing. So are the people of Cuba. The church is growing!

B. Philippines

There are CRWM missionaries scattered across this great archipelago, but their roles are changing. When the CRC first sent missionaries there in the early 1960s, many went into church planting. Now Filipinos are doing that. They are leading established churches and teaching.

A hallmark of missionary success is to work one’s self out of a job. That is exactly what is happening. While there is still some missionary church-planting happening on a few islands, many missionaries are moving more into mentoring, discipleship, and leadership training. The CRCP (CRC of the Philippines) and CRWM are in talks to phase out the current role of missionaries by 2012, leaving the future open for other avenues of ministry in the Philippines.

C. Security

September 11, 2001, was a long time ago on the calendar, yet for an organization like CRWM, its implications are as fresh as ever. Security for our missionaries remains a high priority. Prayers, plans, talks, and contingency plans continue to ensure that CRWM is doing everything it can in this new era of terrorists’ deliberately targeting North Americans.

World Missions anticipates that for the foreseeable future greater attention to the assessment of short-term and long-term risks will be part of all CRWM

planning and operating. World Missions intends to explore and respond to opportunities for new or reinforced ministry in the aftermath of these terrible events.

CRWM is engaged in a significant revision of its long-range plan. This effort is being undertaken not only as a normal part of good planning but also in light of new opportunities for ministry at a time of financial challenge and of a steady decrease over the past decade in the number of long-term missionary positions.

Fiscal Year	Positions
FY92/93	116.5
FY94/95	115
FY96/97	106.5
FY98/99	95
FY00/01	99
FY02/03	87
FY03/04	81

If effective ministry is being done, a decrease in the number of long-term positions by itself may mean little. However, such a decrease is cause for concern in an agency that has long seen itself as entirely or primarily a missionary-sending agency. While the increase in short-term missionaries is exciting and appreciated, long-term missionaries are needed for long-term change.

III. Elements in partnership

A. *With the CRC*

Our plan and budget is built on the conviction that the most basic partnership exists with the congregations of the CRC. This plan calls for eighty-one long-term missionaries (plus their spouses), 162 partners, volunteers, interns, and associate missionaries, all of whom find support from the congregations in North America. This support is measured in many ways, all of which are vital to the ongoing ministries represented in the fields and projects across the world. Currently, 80 percent of all the CRCs give direct above-ministry share financial support to one or more missionaries. If measured by ministry shares, then it can be said that nearly 90 percent of CRCs financially support CRWM.

Our plan calls for a network of twenty-five regional representatives who span the continent. These work with an even greater network of local, church-related representatives, whose task finally is to keep the outreach ministries before the church. This year marks the fifteenth year that regional representatives have been in place.

Likewise, partnership is seen in the form of the classically designated representatives who serve on the World Missions Board under the direction of the synod of the CRC. The plan is finally reviewed by the CRC and judged as to its consistency with the vision of the denomination.

B. *With other agencies of the CRC*

Our plan reflects an increasingly positive and proactive partnering with the other CRC agencies. It contains program plans for joint efforts in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Central America, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe. Cooperations are being formed in Mexico, Cambodia, and

Bangladesh. These plans are coordinated at the field level and within the Ministries Administrative Council (MAC).

C. With churches overseas

In the past, church-planting ministries have included the establishment of CRC-like churches in many countries, especially within Latin America, Nigeria, and the Philippines. More recently, the strategies for the agency have shifted to a church-development strategy with the recognition of a maturing leadership in partner churches. Likewise, these partner churches have a growing vision for outreach. Particularly, the partner churches in Mexico and the CRCP will figure in the development of the new ministries within Mexico and in southeast Asia respectively. The church-planting and development work in Nigeria includes staffing from partner churches.

IV. Report on mission fields and projects

During the past year, World Missions gave support to twenty-nine Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which are attended by approximately two million people. It also contributed staff and grants to twenty other agencies and leadership-training institutions. World Missions' activities in specific mission fields are herein briefly described.

A. Africa

1. *Sierra Leone.* After twenty-one years of ministry, Paul and Mary Kortenhoven turned over leadership of Christian Extension Services and left Sierra Leone. They leave behind a national partner organization, twenty-five worshipping groups, and thousands who have been touched by the broad ministries that began as the CRC's "Hunger Project."
2. *Liberia.* Though civil war forced the evacuation of missionaries from Liberia in 1990, ministry has continued through grants to our partner organization. Translators completed work on the Bassa Bible and submitted it for publication. Our partner organization also gives encouraging reports on their theological education by extension and their health programs.
3. *Nigeria.* Since the Reformed Christian Church of Nigeria split from the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria thirty years ago, World Missions has prayed for and supported reconciliation. In September, the two denominations signed a joint communiqué forgiving each other and committing to go forward in love and brotherly coexistence. Work in new areas also progressed with the twelve organized churches in the eastern Kambari area taking significant steps toward denominational organization.
4. *Mali.* Each missionary now works with individuals or small groups of believers in village settings and in Bamako, the capital city. Eight baptisms in 2002 is the largest annual increase yet in this work among the nomadic, Muslim Fulbe.
5. *Guinea.* Team members participated in friendship evangelism, prison ministries, and Bible studies. Missionaries also shared the leadership of Pular worship in the towns of Labe and Dalaba. There are approximately one hundred known Christians among the Fulbe in Guinea. Broadcasts

over two local radio stations extend the witness to an estimated audience of three hundred thousand.

B. Asia

With its enormous population, wealth of culture, depth of history, and variety in its religious heritage and practices, Asia offers a tremendous challenge to, and opportunity for, the Christian church. Increasingly, Asians are not only “out there,” but they are our fellow CRC members as significant numbers of Asians settle in North America and join the CRC. It is CRWM’s honor to have been given a small but important role to play in the extension of God’s kingdom and his church in Asia and in partnership with Asian churches and peoples.

CRWM’s ministries in Asia are focused largely on Bangladesh, Cambodia, China/Taiwan, Guam/Micronesia, Japan, and the Philippines.

1. *Bangladesh.* We provide two faculty members to the College of Christian Theology in Bangladesh (CCTB) in order to enhance the development of Christian leadership in that country. Our personnel work closely with the CRWRC team and partners by providing theological grounding for, and training in, holistic ministries by churches and Christian agencies. We also hope to provide short-term assistance to the development of CCTB’s library.
2. *Cambodia.* We will focus on working under the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC), of which CRWRC-Cambodia is a member. Our work will include developing Christian leadership training and education ministries. Also expected is a study of additional ministry opportunities that we may become involved in later. We are particularly interested in partnering with the CRC in the Philippines in ministry in Cambodia. There may also be teaching opportunities at Phnom Penh Bible College. Short-term teaching positions for partners are also being planned.
3. *China/Taiwan.* CRWM ministries in China and Taiwan include many facets such as church-leadership development, organizational capacity building of churches and other Christian institutions, evangelism among university students and faculty, youth work development, and assistance in Calvin College’s off-campus program. The primary focuses are on Christian-leadership training in China and on Taiwan and evangelism in China.
4. *Guam/Micronesia.* We own and operate two outlets of Faith Bookstore on Guam. The stores provide a variety of literature needs for the Christian community throughout Micronesia. The Christian Education Enhancement program provides resources to Christian schools on the islands in terms of qualified teachers, curriculum design, and administrative inputs.
5. *Japan.* Our ministry focuses on planting churches in partnership with the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ). We are currently involved with eleven mission congregations. We work closely with The Back to God Hour’s Japanese ministries. We are also part owner of the Christian Academy of Japan (CAJ), a Christian school that many of our missionary children attend. We are expanding into involvement in youth ministries through the RCJ.
6. *The Philippines.* The focus in the Philippines is on Christian-leadership development, church organizational capacity building, and church-

planting ministries. We work mostly in partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines. We are also investing more and more in providing resources to the larger Asian community's need for leadership training and the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines' desire to develop its own mission program.

C. *Europe*

1. *France.* Through an agreement with the Faculte Libre De Theologie, we placed a professor at this seminary in Aix-en-Provence to teach practical theology and administer an extension-training program for African church leaders. Highlights for 2002 included training for the newly constituted Protestant Church of Algeria.
2. *Hungarian Ministries.* Leadership training, missions consultation, and placement of teachers in church-run schools has been CRWM's strategy in this field. The Reformed seminary in Sarospatak has now trained 140 pastors since it reopened after the communist period.
3. *Russia.* Our work is part of an interagency ministry effort. We have established three library-reading rooms that have more than three thousand registered users. One missionary also served as head of the theology department at Lithuania Christian College.

B. *Latin America*

1. *Costa Rica.* In Costa Rica, CRWM is supporting the development of the Evangelical University of Latin America. The university specializes in missiological courses on the university level but also can strengthen programs of theological education on all levels both within Costa Rica and in other Latin American countries. From the Evangelical University of Latin America it will be possible to carry on part of the ministry of CITE (Cooperative International Theological Education). CRWM also strengthens the small CRC of Costa Rica.
2. *Cuba.* The Cuban church showed its vitality in the way that it responded to Hurricane Michelle. The hurricane hit a direct blow on Jaguey Grande and neighboring towns, which are the centers of the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba. Quickly, the church was using material resources available to it to help members of the communities where they live. They also gave a clear testimony of the faith that enabled them to continue on. One of the major programs of the church is the Christian education department, which has been developed with the counsel of Winabelle Gritter.
3. *Dominican Republic.* The Haitian majority in the church is taking more and more responsibility for all parts of its church life, including theological education and diaconal ministries. The missionaries are supporting this growing maturity and are encouraging efforts to reach out to neighboring Dominicans with ministries of evangelism and church planting. The Christian schools have over three thousand students in twenty-one schools. Partner missionaries strengthen the Santiago Christian School.
4. *El Salvador.* Ruth Padilla DeBorst brings her ten years of experience in student ministries in Latin America to her new responsibilities as CRWM

missionary in El Salvador. Along with missionaries from CRWRC and The Back to God Hour, the country team has taken a new name, "Seeds of a New Creation." As a team, they wish to support the Reformed churches and other Christians to be signs of God's kingdom in El Salvador.

5. *Haiti*. CRWM and CRWRC continue working together as *Sous Espwa* ("source of hope"). CRWM works with its partner, the Christian Training Center, to develop educational programs and materials to help participants attain a higher level of spiritual, social, and professional maturity in their ministries to their churches and communities. CRWM also encourages a growing, maturing CRC in Haiti. Partner missionaries teach in Quisqueya Christian School.
6. *Honduras*. One of the strongest CRC churches in Latin America is found in many regions of Honduras. It has suffered external destruction by Hurricane Mitch as well as internal divisions, but through them all it has grown vigorously in numbers and spiritual maturity. CRWM supports the theological education programs and evangelism ministries of the church and with CRWRC promotes diaconal ministries. Partner missionaries strengthen Academia Los Pinares by their teaching.
7. *Mexico*. In Mexico, CRWM focuses on church planting and development with a heavy concentration on church-leadership development. In partnership with the Sunshine Community CRC in El Paso, Texas, and with CRHM and CRWRC, CRWM is developing a new ministry in the border city of Ciudad Juarez. Through grants and deployment of staff, CRWM supports leadership training and development of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Mexico and the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico. It also continues its support of a developing Christian school in Belize.
8. *Nicaragua*. CRWM has joined with CRWRC and Food for the Hungry to establish the Nehemiah Center. National staff members encourage Christian schools, evangelical churches, Christian-development organizations, and Christian businessmen to have a vibrant faith and to use that faith in transforming the communities where they live. Hundreds have received blessings from the programs of the Nehemiah Center. The small CRC churches of Nicaragua are also starting to grow. As partner missionary teachers and board members, the CRCNA has had a profound influence on the development of Nicaragua Christian Academy.

V. Ministry in Canada and in the United States of America

While World Missions' international plans are focused on field ministry, the plans of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada are focused on challenging the church to support a vision for worldwide missions.

Developing a strong, prayerful, financial and caring connection with the church and its missionaries and fields and/or countries is integral to achieving that vision. Through e-mail and other technology, contact between the missionary and the church is greatly enhanced.

There continues to be significant variation in the level of passion for international outreach among our church members. Many of the elderly continue to be very loyal and very mission minded. The younger generation tends to be more supportive of ministry that they can be directly involved

with; ministry that they perceive will make a difference. New avenues of partnering with regions and individuals and developing opportunities for ministry involvement are being explored to respond to that desire.

World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada continue to support each other through a joint-venture agreement. Both agencies use a network of regional and local representatives to make the needs and opportunities for ministry known and to nurture the church's passion for the lost and suffering of those outside our borders. These efforts are increasingly being conducted in collaboration with the other agencies and institutions of the denomination.

VI. Program report for recruitment and training

Training programs prepared approximately five long-term, fifty-five short-term, and thirty-two summer-mission-program participants.

	FY2001-2002 Actual	FY2002-2003 Plan	FY2003-2004 Plan
Long-term missionaries	99	87	81
Missionary spouses	<u>75</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>64</u>
TOTAL:	174	155	145
Partner missionaries	83	97	86
SMP volunteer	38	50	52
Other volunteers	22	18	8
Seminary interns	3	3	3
Associate missionaries	<u>21</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>13</u>
TOTAL:	167	189	162
GRAND TOTAL:	341	344	307

World Missions continues to need approximately US\$80,000 and Can\$125,000 to send and keep a long-term missionary family overseas for one year. About 45 percent of this support comes from denominational ministry shares. An average of eleven sending and supporting churches supply most of the other 55 percent through faith-promise and other above-ministry-share support. Individuals can also support missionaries directly rather than through their local churches. Short-term partner missionaries and summer-mission participants usually serve for one to two years and do not receive salaries from World Missions. They raise their own support (travel and living allowance) from churches and friends; support themselves; or, in the case of many partner missionaries, are supported by jobs in the countries to which they go.

All of World Missions' fields and projects and 96 percent of its three hundred missionaries are connected by way of the Internet to the office and to each other. This connection greatly increases the mission's capacity for communication and distribution of mission news.

The names and addresses of missionaries and regional representatives can be found on the back pages of the World Missions calendar. They are also listed in the Directory of Agencies and Committees in the CRC *Yearbook 2003* (pp. 624-28), as are the names of World Missions' administrators.

Each year World Missions pays tribute to missionaries and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In 2002, World Missions

honored the following for five to forty-five years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

Bruce and Joanne Adema	Philippines	10 years
Gary Bekker	Philippines, Assoc. Prof. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, USA Pastorate, Academic Dean-Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids Office	25 years
Dean and Sharla Broersma	Dominican Republic	5 years
Lois Craven	Hungarian Ministries	10 years
Jerry and Mary Cremer	Nigeria & Grand Rapids Office	35 years
Tom and Deb deRuiter	Mali	5 years
Wayne and Sandy De Young	Honduras, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Classical Home Missions, Mexico	25 years
Cecelia Drenth	Argentina, Grand Rapids Office, Costa Rica	35 years
Dave and Jan Dykgraaf	Nigeria	35 years
Robert and Patty Harris	NA Pastorate, Philippines	10 years
Paul and Mary Kortenhoven	Nigeria, NA Pastorate, Sierra Leone & Grand Rapids Office	30 years
Gregg Martin	Canada Pastorate, Costa Rica	5 years
Gene and Dawn Michelson	Mali	15 years
Alex and Renona Munro	Philippines, Eastern Europe	25 years
Ruth and Jim Padilla DeBorst	Ecuador, El Salvador	5 years
Henry and Ardell	Nigeria	5 years
	Persenaire-Hogeterp	
Tom and Michele Postema	Japan	5 years
Frank and Aria Sawyer	Puerto Rico, Honduras, Eastern Europe	20 years & 5 years (respectively)
Kurt and Vicki Selles	China Ministries	15 years
Louis Tamminga	NA pastorate, Pastor-Church Relations, "CRWRC/CRWM Pastor-to-Missionary"	45 years
Bill and Sandy Thornburg	Nigeria & Grand Rapids Office	15 years
Alan and Eileen van der Woerd	Mexico	10 years
Erick Westra	Philippines	5 years

VII. Collaboration with other CRCNA agencies

In the international outreach effort, World Missions collaborates with The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications/World Literature, CRWRC, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. Especially noteworthy have been the research efforts by all these agencies into new outreach in Latin America (Mexico) and southeast Asia. Calvin Seminary made a vital contribution in the orientation of new missionary candidates. All are working together in support of ministries in various parts of eastern Europe.

VIII. Governance and administration

The CRWM Joint International Committee held its annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 5-7, 2003. At that gathering, the Committees of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada met separately to attend to matters peculiar to the Canadian and the U.S. contexts. They met jointly to address the common task of governing and overseeing mission fields and projects. The executive committee meets jointly and separately in April 2003 and again in October 2003.

IX. Long-range plan and fiscal 2003-2004

World Missions' Long-Range Plan is available on request. This plan states our vision, mission, purpose, values, mission task, design of fields and projects, deployment guidelines and plans, strategic issues for effective mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRC. This plan is used to shape the annual plan and budget. As stated previously, we are currently

engaged in a significant review of the plan to find ways of integrating it more closely with that of the CRC.

The budget from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004, will be \$12,811,680. North American administrative and promotion expenses will be 13.6 percent of the budget. Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 2003—Financial and Business Supplement*.

X. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
17	2	2nd and 3rd quartiles
16	3	2nd and 3rd quartiles

XI. Recommendations

World Missions-Canada and World Missions-U.S.A. respectfully recommend the following:

A. That the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. Ed Visser; the president of World Missions-USA, Dr. John Van Schepen; and the World Missions executive director, Dr. Gary Bekker, be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and represent World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That the Board of Trustees and synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to pray for and take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Gary J. Bekker, executive director

I. Introduction

Confidence. Confidence is what led a group of deacons in the Christian Reformed Church in 1962 to start a diaconal agency called the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. They believed that God was calling them to help their neighbors around the world, and they were confident that by trusting in God and working together through CRWRC, they would be able to help eliminate hunger, overcome poverty, and share God's love with people everywhere.

Today, CRWRC continues to hold to the belief that God will use our organization to reach out to his children in need. Unfortunately, our confidence is sometimes challenged. The 2001-2002 year was one of those times. Throughout the year, we were faced with overwhelming obstacles. In Africa, HIV/AIDS killed thousands of people every day. In the United States, horrific terrorist attacks robbed us all of our feeling of security. Around the world, the gap between the rich and poor continued to grow and call us to become even more involved in ministry.

In the midst of these challenges, CRWRC fell US\$800,000 short of its revenue target for the year and had difficulty filling some crucial overseas positions. It seemed that we did more programming with less financial and human resources. We were stretched almost to the breaking point. Yet, we held to God's promises and endured in the faith that he would provide.

We were not disappointed. Donors responded very generously to the events of September 11 by giving US\$1.2 million to CRWRC programs. As a result, we were able to work with churches and community organizations in New York and New Jersey to develop a lasting response that was entirely different from anything we had ever done before. In other areas, God provided us with volunteers, work groups, staff expertise, and passionate partners to help us meet our programmatic goals. CRWRC is grateful for the way God has provided and for the opportunity we have had to share his love around the world this past year with people in need!

In total, we were able to help 367,752 people in 6,000 communities around the world. This was done through partnerships with 170 churches and nongovernment organizations in 30 countries. As we came alongside these organizations, we helped them reach out to people in need through programs of literacy, justice, health, diaconal training, agriculture, creation care, income-generation, small-business development, refugee resettlement, and self-sufficiency.

We were also able to respond to disasters in North America and around the world. Some of these disasters were acts of nature, which included drought in southern Africa, earthquakes in El Salvador, and tornadoes in the United States. Other disasters were the result of conflict and civil unrest. CRWRC responded to these, too, with conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. CRWRC is a peace-building organization and values peace building as an important part of its community development and transformation work in North America and around the world.

The prayers and financial support of the Christian Reformed Church make all of this possible. Through God's grace and your support, CRWRC has been

able to bring positive change—like improved health, reduced mortality, improved crop yields, higher levels of adult literacy, enhanced leadership skills, diversified income sources, and economic development—to communities around the world. Because our work is linked to churches at the community level, we are seeing stronger churches, increased discipleship, and a growing body of believers. Thank you for being part of this important ministry.

II. Board matters

Another important support to CRWRC's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to provide direction for CRWRC's ministry program and to encourage the vision of the organization as a whole.

The CRWRC governance structure is composed of representatives from each of the classes of the Christian Reformed Church and several members at large. The board is organized into two divisions—one for Canada and one for the United States. The officers for the respective boards are:

A. Officers of CRWRC-Canada

Ms. Margaret Spoelstra, president
Ms. Barbara Hoekstra, vice president
Ms. Anna Feddes, secretary
Ms. Shirley Vandenberg, treasurer
Mr. Jack Feenstra, vice all
Rev. John Koster, pastoral advisor

B. Officers of CRWRC-U.S.A.

Mr. Randy Kroll, president
Mr. Roy Zuidema, vice president
Mr. Greg Geels, secretary
Mr. Paul Wassink, treasurer

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

Terrorism, revenue shortfalls, and rumors of war are the background against which CRWRC carried out its work—but only the background! In the foreground is God's faithfulness; he is the King whose kingdom is peaceable and whose treasures are uncountable. CRWRC is rich in faithful partner organizations, competent and committed staff, growing numbers of dedicated volunteers, and faithful CRC supporters who pray and give. Through God's continued blessings such as these, CRWRC touched lives around the world.

The dynamic of Christian community development is big and powerful as we see it expressed in prophetic vision and in the reign of Jesus. It includes God's passion for justice and for the poor. It includes care of the environment and economic renewal. It includes caring for dying children; responding to crises such as war, storms, or HIV/AIDS; and advocating for just policies and systems at corporate and national levels. It includes helping the denomination that supports us to engage with these issues in a whole range of ways that results in a church that is empowered, compassionate, and energized about its mission.

CRWRC works to develop human communities that are places of safety, healing, growth, and transformation—places that hum and sing while showing more and more clearly what God has in mind for his children.

A. *Development regions*

1. Asia

In an environment where ethnic, religious, social, and political conflicts abound, CRWRC's Justice Education and Advocacy programs have initiated community peacemaking; influenced political reforms; and supported socially isolated women, children, and the landless. We are excited about the growing collaboration between World Relief and World Missions in many parts of Asia, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, and the Philippines. We are also excited about CRWRC's partnership in diaconal ministry with national Christian churches, which continues to be encouraging. While insecurity, terrorism, and political instabilities continue to constrain our community-development efforts in many places, CRWRC is pleased to report that our ministry has touched lives in Asia more than 111,000 times this past year through our community transformation programs in six countries. An additional 60,000 people have been reached through disaster response.

2. Eastern Europe

CRWRC's Eastern Europe ministry team, focused on Romania, is in a time of transition toward a more community-developmental emphasis with partners. This involves a shift from a program approach—with clinics and alcohol recovery ministry—to an approach that encourages partners to focus on the holistic transformation of poor communities. The team is committed to approaches that express their faith in Jesus and their desire to strengthen both Hungarian Reformed church ministries and ethnic Romanian ministries. They are also building a strong justice dimension into their work. CRWRC coordinates this work with other CRCNA agencies that are part of the Eastern Europe ministries council. During the past year, we touched lives 17,356 times through our programs in Eastern Europe, with 6,335 of them achieving successful results during that year.

3. East and Southern Africa

In East Africa and Southern Africa, we counted over 144,509 participants from 1,713 communities that CRWRC and its partners engaged in ministry during the 2001-2002 year. In this region, the struggle against the ravages of HIV/AIDS continues to be a significant factor in community development. Another significant factor affecting our ability to meet the growing demands for training and development of church leaders and Christian business leaders (linked with Partners for Christian Development), is resource mobilization—both local and external. A major famine in South Africa, Zambia, and Malawi has resulted in more volunteer and staff energies being directed toward relief activities. We praise God for all that has been accomplished and for the faithful prayer, volunteer, and financial support that has made it possible.

4. Latin America

CRWRC's Latin America ministry team has been a testing ground for promoting collaboration among all the CRCNA agencies. In July 2002, a new administrative structure was put in place to encourage and facilitate collaboration at the country team level. We look forward to the fruits of these efforts. After arduous disaster response projects in Nicaragua,

Honduras, and El Salvador, teams will continue to work with the committees and groups that were formed for reconstruction purposes. The region was able to work with twenty-three thousand people in a variety of programs. Although the vast majority of participants (almost nineteen thousand) were in the basic programs of health, income generation, agriculture, and literacy, we are excited about the new and growing activities in small-business development with Partners for Christian Development (PCD) and justice programs.

5. North America

The North America ministry team worked with over seventy church and community development partner organizations. The team helped these churches and community-development organizations understand and engage with the communities in which they are located. Deacons were mobilized, trained, and encouraged. Families and neighborhoods that are called “poor” were assisted to see and use their own gifts, energies, and skills. Everything is being made new—and the churches and the poor are at the table and enjoying the feast while designing and carrying out ways to include more folks in the party. All of this has resulted in transformed lives. Over 10,400 low-income families participated in programs that led to monitored and sustained change!

6. West Africa

The West Africa ministry team works in five countries, including Senegal where CRWRC’s HIV/AIDS programs were pioneered more than ten years ago! Political instability is a significant factor in West Africa, and the team in Sierra Leone faced some of the worst of it. Thank God for the work of the Kortenhovens in Sierra Leone and for the strong national team that is carrying on after Paul and Mary left. Conflict is a challenge in Nigeria, and peace building is a major issue for staff there as well. CRWRC had sixty-one thousand opportunities for the transformational touch in West Africa last year, in addition to disaster-relief service to thirty-seven thousand people.

B. Partners for Christian Development

In 1996, CRWRC helped birth and form an affiliate organization, Partners for Christian Development (PCD or Partners), that is a membership organization comprised of visionary Christian business and professional people. Its members want to make a serious and lasting impact on our world by bringing the unique skills and experience of business people into partnership with CRWRC in order to build healthy caring communities in Jesus’ name.

Partners envisions a world wherein the love of Jesus is expressed through business and everyone has the opportunity for meaningful, productive employment.

1. Partners for Christian Development works toward this vision by:

- a. Promoting, affirming, and celebrating business and entrepreneurship as an outstanding Christian calling that is vital for God’s kingdom to be fulfilled.
- b. Networking together with our members in order to better develop God’s resources and be faithful stewards of them.

- c. Providing opportunities for our members to become personally involved in creating jobs and economic opportunities for the poor.
2. These three thrusts result in specific programs:
 - a. Partners for Christian Development sponsors an annual national business conference and local dinner programs that motivate, encourage, and refresh business professionals in their calling.
 - b. Partners for Christian Development currently has 837 dues-paying and active members in nearly 72 business-building partnerships. These partnerships are built between North American business people and people in 19 countries where CRWRC is working. Last year, these partnerships raised \$1.4 million and served 12,000 people in need, offering them consultation, access to available markets and technology, capital, and encouragement.

We praise God for the way he is working in and moving among business people for his glory. He is truly bringing rich and poor together in ways that are transforming everyone.

C. Justice education, advocacy, and service learning

Who: We have seen over the years the importance of catalysts (people who create action) in communities. We are witnesses to how people, whose hearts have been opened by the Spirit, energize others to create change for their communities. We pray for catalysts to be present in all of our programs around the world.

Every regional ministry team has one CRWRC staff person whose responsibilities include working with his or her ministry team to analyze and prioritize the justice concerns in his or her region.

These Justice Education and Service Learning (JESL) coordinators are catalysts on their own teams and within the CRWRC.

What: Putting things right requires us to address structural issues and to advocate for the oppressed.

We work in human rights; land rights; and the rights of women, widows, children, the elderly, laborers, and immigrants. Our work also includes reconciliation, trauma healing, peace building, civic education, fair lending practices, and antiracism.

When: Isaiah 56:1 tells us to “maintain justice and do what is right.” CRWRC’s justice program was established in 1998 to respond to this call.

Our justice vision is to be a catalyst to influence people to shape a just world. Our justice mission is to join together in God’s work to put things right.

Where: In 2002-2003, we had 43 justice programs in 18 countries and 5 U.S. regions, serving 75,279 participants.

Our work in peace building is designed not only to end conflict but also to create the environment for change that leads to development. Development cannot happen in the context of war and insecurity. As communities make the pledge, one by one, to become safe communities, people are able to engage in productive work without fear on farms and in communities.

Both our truth and reconciliation and our trauma-healing work in Sierra Leone are bringing health back to people and communities. When people are traumatized, they have difficulty coping with daily life. They find it hard to provide leadership in their communities and stability in their homes. Additionally, mentally and spiritually healthy people can contribute to the rebuilding of a very damaged country and bring hope to their children. Trauma healing helps people become mentally and spiritually healthy so that they can work for the development of their communities.

Why: We see the issues of justice education, advocacy, and service learning as being directly connected with our ability to succeed in community-development work.

How: It is often said: “If you give me a fish, you have fed me for a day, if you teach me to fish, you have fed me for a lifetime.” Unfortunately, we have found that teaching people to fish is often not enough. The river may be diverted for a dam project and displace an entire community—as is happening in Laos. The water may be contaminated with arsenic poisoning—as is the case in Bangladesh. People’s land may be grabbed out of their hands—as is happening to indigenous communities in Ecuador.

Organization is key to CRWRC’s work. Along with teaching people to fish, we help them organize because a community that knows how to organize around its problems and hopes can continue to create the changes they need long after CRWRC and our partners are gone.

Organization works very well in CRWRC’s justice and technical areas. We have programs that organize and combine literacy training with civic education. Learning to read is an important step in helping a person to have enough self-esteem to speak out on his or her own behalf. Literacy training has become an important tool in our work for justice. Newfound skills of reading and studying the local laws has been a powerful act in many of the communities where we work to bring change and hope. When local people know the laws, they can stop others from grabbing land, and they can provide security for families to grow their own food. In return, literacy helps train catalysts—the who of justice education, advocacy, and service learning.

D. Disaster relief

Carried by the grace of God, and enjoying strong and growing support from the CRC and sister churches and organizations, CRWRC disaster relief was able to touch the lives of more disaster survivors than ever before. The background for our work is increasingly formed by what we call *complex emergencies*—places such as Afghanistan, Sudan, and Indonesia—where armed conflicts and natural disasters juxtaposed to threaten the lives of thousands.

The foreground of our work, however, is formed by the many people who responded faithfully and joyfully to God’s call to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.” These people and their churches have turned the needs of the world into an opportunity to demonstrate what it means to “display the work of God” in the lives of disaster survivors.

The following are a few examples of the many CRWRC relief projects we were involved in. Two years after a devastating earthquake, 358 families in El Salvador, who would otherwise have been out on the street, now live in simple,

safe, and clean houses. More than 100 volunteers from North America used their holidays to go to El Salvador and participate in this rebuilding project.

In Afghanistan, refugees received food, medicine, blankets, and tents to help them through the first winter away from their homes. Last fall and winter, thousands of tons of food were transported through Russia and Tadjikistan to feed 46,000 families in northern Afghanistan. During the following spring, CRWRC distributed seed and fertilizer to restart agriculture.

Working with the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia, CRWRC is providing food to more than 130,000 people during the present famine. These food distributions are accompanied by seeds and other agricultural inputs, which will assist the survivors in regaining their independence.

In Ethiopia, 3,700 metric tons of wheat will assist 41,000 drought survivors in food-for-work projects. The projects aim to significantly reduce their dependence during future calamities.

On the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia—an area of great religious strife—peace and reconciliation is being promoted as Christian and Muslim organizations work together to carry out a CRWRC/Canadian Foodgrains Bank seed distribution program.

More than 280,000 adults and children around the globe are receiving tangible proof of God's provision and love. Our projects in more than 11 countries total more than Can\$6 million.

In addition to these disaster response activities, CRWRC is increasing its capacity for long-term food security projects through partnership with the Foods Resource Bank (USA) and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Together we provide lasting assistance, benefiting participants for many years to come.

We are humbled by the growing number of organizations that have contributed to CRWRC projects: the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of Canada and the USA; the fellow members in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Foods Resource Bank; the Canadian International Development Agency; European churches and organizations, such as ZOA and the Reformed Church of the Netherlands; the CRC of Australia; and the Reformed Church of New Zealand.

In domestic disaster relief, the calamities in New York and Washington, D.C., presented CRWRC/Disaster Response Services with a new set of challenges. What happened on 9-11 had many organizations with much more experience asking, "What now?"

Since that fateful day, CRWRC/DRS has worked diligently with local churches and diaconal organizations to provide material, psychosocial, and spiritual help to the affected children, parents, church leaders, and other caregivers. Much remains to be done. Some of the effects of this disaster will be with us for many years.

At the same time, survivors of natural disasters continued to call for CRWRC's attention and assistance. Flood, tornado, and earthquake damage demanded a response. As a result, DRS teams conducted needs assessments in states such as Texas, Minnesota, West Virginia, and North Carolina. As of February 2003, building sites operate in Houston, Texas, and in Grifton, North Carolina. A total of 97 houses have been repaired and rebuilt. A total of 357 volunteers put in 68,500 hours of free labor.

We thank the Lord for his provision in sending us new staff members to replace those who went on to serve him in other positions and for the strength he gave to volunteers and staff during the transition—a strength that is renewed every morning; a strength that makes us soar like eagles.

E. Community services

1. ServiceLink United States

a. New initiatives

- Internship Program: Calvin College and CRWRC now have a formal internship program. Calvin College students working in the area of Third World development can spend a semester abroad with CRWRC in their senior years. This program is designed to help students gain practical development experience before graduation.
- More North American Opportunities: ServiceLink has actively begun to work with North American CRC partner organizations to create more work team opportunities within the United States. We are also working on creating more “family oriented” volunteer opportunities.
- Program HOPE! On December 16, 2002, 250 selected churches throughout the United States and Canada received invitations to participate in a new internship opportunity—Program HOPE! This thirty-month internship replaces CRWRC’s former Service and Training (S & T) Program and builds on the lessons that have been learned about helping young adults in their ministry calling. The program emphasizes “learning to serve.”

b. Marketing

- Churches: ServiceLink United States has begun to invite CRWRC supporting churches to participate in volunteer opportunities. Whenever possible, agency staff will meet with volunteers in person to provide orientation and debriefing.
- H.O.T. (Hot Opportunities Today) List: The electronic newsletter of volunteer opportunities now goes out to over one hundred U.S. individuals monthly, not including CRC staff. Beginning in February 2003, every U.S. church with an e-mail address will receive the newsletter. This list will provide congregations with a one-page summary of available opportunities.

c. Regional coordinators of volunteers (RCVs)

ServiceLink United States was blessed this year to have two RCVs who covered classes on the East Coast, the West Coast, and in the Midwest. Because of each RCVs’ personal involvement with each work team and/or individual interested in volunteering, inquiries about volunteering have almost doubled over the last six months. We are currently in prayer about an RCV for the West Coast.

d. Volunteer placement opportunities

There were over thirty different volunteer opportunities available this year. Next year we are anticipating the number of opportunities to grow

to over forty-five! About one-third of the volunteer opportunities are with CRWRC-related projects and programs.

e. ServiceLink U.S. totals

The following statistics represent volunteers and work teams that were placed through the ServiceLink U.S. office:

Total number of volunteers placed: 243

Total number of tours and work teams: 19

Total number of hours served: 14,551

2. ServiceLink-Canada

CRWRC-Canada is in its eighth year of being involved with ServiceLink, a program that links members of the CRC in Canada to various volunteer ministry opportunities both in North America and in countries overseas. An interesting statistic this year indicates that ServiceLink volunteers made a difference in the lives of others by sharing their love for Christ in as many as eighteen different countries, including Romania, Honduras, Belize, Uganda, South Africa, Nicaragua, Guam, Cuba, Guatemala, and Rwanda. A continued challenge has been to find more opportunities for different service projects, especially in Canada. The year 2004 will see a few more opportunities, including a special project for university students called, "A Week with Micah 6:8" to be hosted by All Nations CRC in Halifax.

Currently, there are ten regional coordinators of volunteers (RCVs) assisting the national coordinator and administrative assistant who together provide a one-stop-information-resource center to groups and individuals who wish to use their gifts and/or skills with any CRC agency or their partners in ministry. These coordinators promote volunteer opportunities and provide links for ministry in their own regions. We are still looking to recruit RCVs in Classes Toronto and B.C. South-East.

During the 2001-2002 year, 353 volunteers served with a combined total of 28,098 hours for ministries including CRWRC, World Missions, The Back to God Hour, Home Missions, Diaconal Ministries, Worldwide Christian Schools, and others. Of these, there were 319 new volunteers and 24 groups with approximately 287 members, giving of their time for service. The winter months were extremely busy with numerous groups and individuals wanting to serve in a variety of ways.

For the first six months of 2002-2003, ServiceLink has already facilitated the logistics for four groups, three of which have traveled to Guam to assist in the construction of Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church. Another fourteen or fifteen teams are leaving between January and March, including six youth groups.

We give thanks to God for his continued faithfulness in ServiceLink—for the volunteers that he provides and for the many hours that they give in his name. The staff and RCVs covet your prayers as they work in this ministry.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history

This table displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1995-2003 (projected).

CRWRC - CONSOLIDATED
REVENUE AND EXPENSE HISTORY/BUDGETS
(Including Disasters)

(B = Budget)

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03B
Revenue	9,290	11,056	11,113	13,613	13,344	13,661	12,471	11,630
Overseas	5,491	5,548	5,000	5,551	6,320	6,672	6,925	7,266
North America	1,165	1,005	872	1,143	1,313	1,511	1,446	1,539
Dis. Resp. Serv.	876	1,674	1,822	2,371	3,214	3,528	2,234	771
Resource Devel.	1,026	983	1,053	1,144	1,363	1,448	1,141	1,123
Administration	894	932	1,183	1,152	1,231	1,092	1,033	931
Total Expenses	9,452	10,142	9,930	11,361	13,441	14,251	12,779	11,630
Net rev./.(exp.)	(162)	914	1,183	2,252	(97)	(590)	(308)	-

B. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job Level	Number of Positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd quartile
16	1	1st quartile

C. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2003—Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Resource development

CRWRC received loyal support from our constituents in 2001-2002. We are grateful to God for the way people—and the resources needed to support them—were made available to carry out ministry on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

The largest percentage of CRWRC support (79 percent) comes from individuals and churches. Most of these supporters are affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church; however, individuals, schools, and congregations from outside of the CRC are becoming a larger part of our support base.

Other cooperating agencies continue to be important in the financial support of CRWRC. More than US\$1.6 million was donated by Partners for Christian Development (PCD), the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Dorcas Aid International, and ZOA Vluchtelingenzorg.

Government grants to CRWRC totaled US\$725,190, with most of this income coming from the Canada International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA has been a very significant and consistent source of program funding for over two decades.

Estate bequests and planned gifts are an increasingly important part of the resource base for CRWRC ministry. These gifts are placed in the Joseph Fund and are made available for programs over a seven-year period. As of June 30, 2002, the balance of the Joseph Fund was \$3,269,839. More than US\$856,284 was contributed to the 2001-2002 budget from this source.

In addition to raising financial resources, CRWRC strives to educate and involve our North American constituency to help bring them together with people in poverty. Last year, CRWRC did this by having staff and representatives from CRWRC's partner organizations visit North American churches and individuals to share about their work. We also provided opportunities for North Americans to visit overseas programs, attend meetings, and/or participate in work teams. These interchanges encourage better understanding, more informed prayer, and a greater commitment to the work of the church.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to any of the following: Mr. Randy Kroll, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Ms. Margaret Spoelstra, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andy Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada when CRWRC matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andy Ryskamp, CRWRC-U.S.A. director
Wayne deJong, CRWRC-Canada director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States; Canada has its own, similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold—primarily to members, classes, and churches of the CRCNA.

II. Board of directors

The terms of Mr. Curtis Witte and Mr. Arie Leegwater expire on June 30, 2003. Mr. Witte has served on the board for two terms. Mr. Leegwater has served for one term and is thus eligible for reappointment. The board requests synod to appoint two board members from the following nominees for terms as stated:

A. Position 1 - select one for a three-year term through June 2006

Mr. Ronald Baylor is a member of the Third Christian Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he has served as a deacon, and currently serves on the Adult Education Committee and Benefactor's Trust Fund Board. He has also served on the boards of the Kalamazoo Christian School Association; Calvin College Alumni Association; Pine Rest Christian Counseling Center, Kalamazoo; and the Kalamazoo County Bar Association. Mr. Baylor is a graduate of Calvin College and Wayne State University Law School. He is a principal with the law firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock, and Stone, PLC.

Mr. David Hasper is a member of the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan, where he has served as an elder and member of the pastoral care, finance, and strategic planning committees. Mr. Hasper is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Notre Dame Law School. He is a senior attorney with the firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock, and Stone, PLC.

B. Position 2 - ratify second-term appointment for a three-year term through June 2006

Mr. Arie Leegwater is a member of the Midland Park CRC, Midland Park, New Jersey, and has served as an elder and deacon. He is presently chairman of the board of the Atlantic Stewardship Bank and is a member of the Christian Health Care Center Board. He has served on the boards of the Eastern Christian School Association, Elim Christian School, and RACOM. Mr. Leegwater is a graduate of Calvin College and the Newark College of Engineering. He is a civil engineer and owner of Arie Leegwater Associates, a construction and consulting firm.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Ms. Diane Apol (2004), Rev. Julius Medenblik (2004), Mr. James Fredricks (2005), and Mr. Brian Seo (2005).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-nine states and in the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland,

Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable. Indiana was added this past year.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2002), a total of \$13,711,307 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to five years, and interest rates vary from 2.72 percent to 5.63 percent, with a time-weighted average of 5.25 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date, over three hundred requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; more than one hundred loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2002, a total of \$12,406,913 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2002, one loan was seriously delinquent and the default of another resulted in a charge of \$192,000 to the loan-loss reserve. The Loan Fund maintains this loan-loss reserve to cover events such as this, and the reserve is adequate to cover any other potential losses.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2000	2001	2002
Cash and equivalents	\$2,465,514	\$4,485,899	\$5,231,822
Loans and accounts receivable	\$11,099,786	\$12,148,118	\$12,453,501
Equipment & software, less depreciation	\$25,619	\$19,214	\$12,810
Total assets	\$13,590,919	\$16,653,231	\$17,698,133
Notes and accounts payable	\$9,835,018	\$12,763,511	\$13,711,307
Net assets	\$3,755,901	\$3,889,720	\$3,986,826
Total liabilities and net assets	\$13,590,919	\$16,653,231	\$17,698,133

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2002, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2002—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

A. The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.

B. Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.

C. An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowings of up to \$1,000,000. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Alice Damsteegt (60 percent of full-time), and Mr. Carl Gronsman, who also provides support to CRC Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

- A. That the Loan Fund's executive director, or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.
- B. That synod elect two board members from the nominees provided to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl A. Gronsman, executive director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement benefits as well as health, life, and disability insurance for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

Administration of these programs is handled jointly by the denomination's Office of Personnel and Office of Finance and Administration. The responsibilities of the Office of Personnel include communication, enrollment, and record keeping; the Office of Finance and Administration handles financial administration, accounting, control, and investment management.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet two to four times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed to address matters unique to the responsibilities of the U.S. or Canadian trustees. The U.S. Board of Pensions has five members and is chaired by Mr. Lloyd Bierma. Similarly, the Canadian Pension Trustees are five in number and are chaired by Rev. Jake Kuipers.

The responsibilities of the boards include long-term planning, benefit-related decision-making, and policy definition, as well as oversight of fund assets and investment returns. The U.S. and Canadian boards monitor the investment activities of the funds by means of regular reports from their money-management firms and by ongoing analysis of portfolio returns by professional measurement-and-performance consultants.

Oversight of the denomination's U.S. Consolidated Group Insurance was changed in 2001 from the U.S. Pension Trustees to the BOT. This change is discussed in the group insurance section of this report.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. *Ministers' pension plans*

The ministers' pension plans are "defined-benefit" plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined (by formula), and the funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations of the amounts needed. Defined-benefit plans place market and mortality risk with the plan and the sponsoring organization. Accordingly, when markets fall and if members live longer than expected, the plan and the sponsor pick up the cost. While the primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits, the plans also provide benefits to members who have experienced long-term disability, to the spouses of participants who die while in active ministry, and to the orphans of deceased members.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2002, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	U.S	Canada	Total
Active ministers	859	230	1,089
Retired ministers	377	103	480
Spouses and dependents	130	18	148
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	79	14	93
Total	1,445	365	1,810

Ordinarily, every three years independent actuaries are employed to do a valuation of the plans. The most recent actuarial valuation was performed as of June 30, 2000, and was needed to understand the cost of the changes to the plans approved by Synod in 2001 as well as contribution amounts for 2001, 2002, and 2003.

1. Basic assumptions and priorities

- a. The denomination and the plans are binational. In 1982, synod indicated that the church's total pension obligation to ministers and their dependents is an across-the-board denominational responsibility, requiring joint financing (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 50).
- b. The plans are to be administered on an actuarially sound basis. Synods 1969 and 1979 affirmed the concept of advance funding. "An actuarially sound plan is based on the principle that the cost of funding a pension for a person is incurred while one is actively employed. Therefore, an amount is set aside each year during one's career so that at retirement there will be sufficient monies to pay the pension benefits in accordance with the terms of the plan" (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 451).
- c. Synods, in their approval of the basic design of the plans, have endorsed the notion that all pastors retiring in a given year and having the same years of service should receive the same benefit regardless of differences in preretirement salaries.
- d. The value of housing, whether paid in cash or as a church-furnished home, is reflected in the design of the plans' benefit formula. This is accomplished by including housing in an income-replacement target that is comprised of the amounts paid by the denomination's plans and by governmental plans—the Social Security Administration in the United States and Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security in Canada. Retirement income from the plans and from governmental plans was targeted at 60 percent in 1992 and was increased to 70 percent in 1999. The plans' benefit formulation, currently 1.1 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service through December 31, 1984, and 1.46 percent for service thereafter, reflects these targets.
- e. The determination of the funded position of the plans, including the actuarial accrued liability, is based on several significant assumptions. These assumptions are reviewed and approved regularly by the U.S. and Canadian trustees and are based on historical data and expectations for future trends. Because pensions are based on the final average salary in the year of retirement, expectations concerning increases in salaries enter very significantly into the determination of the funded position of the plans.

- f. The trustees have placed high value on availability of information concerning the plans and the interest of each participant. The plans' communication activities include the following:
- Distribution of annual statements of estimated pension benefits to all active participants. Annual statements include an estimate of pension benefits based on actual years of credited service through the date of the statement and projected benefit amounts based on assumption of continued service to age 65. In addition, participants are furnished a plan brochure containing information regarding retirement and other benefits provided by the plans, examples of benefit calculations, and other information of interest to participants.
 - Summarized financial information concerning the plans is included in the annual *Agenda for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod*.
 - Classical treasurers are furnished with copies of the complete audited or reviewed financial statements of the denominations' agencies and institutions, including those of the benefit plans. These are available for examination by interested parties.
 - Representatives of the plans frequently are invited to make presentations to groups of members and classes. If possible, all such invitations are responded to affirmatively.
 - Finally, plan members and others have been invited by a variety of means to direct questions to the pension office. That office is able to furnish an informed response to nearly any question concerning the plans.

2. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in balanced portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines approved by synod in 1998, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and is regularly reviewed by the trustees. Their primary goal, set for them by the pension trustees, is to provide an above-average return and at the same time preserve principal.

In down markets, above-average returns are little comfort as portfolio balances decline and short-term funding becomes a challenge. However, on balance, it must be remembered that the plans are very long-term investors and the pension trustees have not attempted to "time the markets" with large moves in and out of equity positions spurred by timed changes in portfolio asset allocation. Such an approach to investing, although appealing at times, has been demonstrated to be distinctly unrewarding. Additionally, it must be remembered that, in significant part, the plans' long-term financial performance has made it possible to provide the level of current and future benefits.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of June 30, 2001, the actuarial liability totaled \$92,000,000 for the U.S. plan and \$29,200,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the cost of the changes approved by synod in 2001 and represent the obligations that the plans have to over eighteen hundred active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents. Another actuarial valuation will be performed as of June 30, 2003, with updated plan demographics and portfolio balances and will

provide recommended contribution amounts needed to fund the plans for the three years beginning in 2004.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2002	December 31, 2001
United States (U.S. \$)	\$77,517,000	\$90,765,000
Canada (Can. \$)	\$21,272,000	\$23,081,000

Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	2002	2001	2000	1999	5yrs	10yrs
Canada	-4.4%	-4.5%	-0.9%	13.6%	1.8%	7.0%
U.S.	-10.5%	-1.6%	1.0%	10.7%	2.2%	8.2%

Dividends, interest, and long-term appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings are used to provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to their active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries. As portfolio performance statistics indicate, the plans have participated in the upside of financial markets and have suffered from market declines witnessed in the last three years. On balance, the pension trustees are grateful for portfolio performance and are mindful of both the long-term nature of the plans' obligations and the corresponding long-term nature of its investment policies and objectives as well as its funding needs.

3. Changes to the plan—approved and proposed

In 1998, the pension trustees embarked on a review of the plans with an eye toward making them more valuable retirement vehicles, if possible. Given the size of the plans and the complexity of issues involved with plan design, the trustees obtained professional assistance from the attorneys and actuaries serving the plans and engaged in conversations with the churches, plan participants, and others. The results of this activity included recommendations for several enrichments to the benefit structure of the plans and a number of other changes, all of which was approved by the synods of 1999 and 2001.

Having completed, at least for the time being, the task of enriching and updating the Ministers' Pension Plans, the trustees turned their attention to issues of participation and funding as well as to certain other matters that were reasons for increasing concern. These matters were reviewed by the pension trustees and, following an initial review, were included in a mandate for a newly created design-planning review committee. This committee is comprised of the persons presently serving as the chair and vice-chair of the U.S. and Canadian pension trustees plus the director of finance and administration as an ex officio member.

While the work of the design-planning committee is expected to be ongoing, the trustees approved the first of its recommended changes. These, in turn, are presented to synod, as follows:

- a. That the plan be amended to include its current administrative rule concerning part-time service, as follows:

- 1) Timely registration and continuous service as conditions for enhanced disability, survivor, and orphan benefits (“enhanced benefits”) are considered satisfied by part-time service. This means that permanent removal of enhanced benefits that is associated with delayed registration and breaks in active participation in the plan is not triggered by approved, part-time service.
- 2) Enhanced benefits are not available to persons while they are serving less than full time in the ministry. A very important exception to this general rule is permanent disability that follows part-time service when such part-time service was made necessary by the very illness or injury that eventually resulted in full disability.
- 3) At the point a minister’s part-time service has ended and full-time service has begun, the enhanced benefits are reinstated.
- 4) For purposes of determining retirement benefits, the pension trustees may grant full-time credited service in return for payment of the full cost of participation. However, in these cases, the plan’s enhanced benefits would not be available even though full costs are paid.
- 5) While the record does not include any requests for credited service for less than half-time service, the trustees will not approve any arrangements involving less than half-time service.
- 6) Finally, the cost of partial credited service for part-time employment in capacities other than “first or only” in a parish setting or an “endorsed chaplain” will be such portion of the cost of full-time service as corresponds to the amount of part-time service actually worked.

This administrative rule was formulated and is now recommended to synod for inclusion in the plan itself for at least the following reasons:

- The plan documents do not refer to part-time service in its provisions concerning enhanced benefits.
- The plans do not refer to part-time service in any discussion of the need for timely registration and continuous participation in the plans as a condition for enhanced benefits.
- The section of the plan that deals with the determination of retirement benefits does include a provision for recognition of part-time service.
- The trustees have approved requests for recognition of part-time service with the understanding that the plan’s provisions for enhanced benefits apply in only limited, clearly defined cases.
- Although it is clear that the plan’s enhanced benefits provisions were not intended to follow part-time service, in recognition of the growing interest in part-time ministerial service, it would be wise to formalize the guidelines followed for this purpose.

Finally, it should be noted that certain of the proposed changes to the language of the plans will not be applicable after December 31, 2003, if the recommendations concerning disability benefits described in section c following are approved by synod.

- b. That the plan be amended to include its current administrative rule concerning reinstatement of “frozen” participants, as follows:

- 1) Any upgrading of a prior frozen interest in the plan will be conditioned on payment of associated costs. Such costs shall be equal to the difference between the value of the frozen interest and the value of any upgraded interest in the plan for the same period of service, determined as of the date that any frozen interest is upgraded as calculated by the actuaries serving the plan.

Any proposed upgrading of a prior frozen benefit shall be subject to the approval of the pension trustees. In no event shall there be any retroactive grant of credited service.

- 2) Notwithstanding the foregoing, when breaks in credited service are related to study leaves, approved sabbaticals, or other service during which time the pastor's ministerial credentials are retained, payment associated with any subsequent reinstatement as an active participant would not be expected, provided, however, that the break in credited service does not exceed two years. Any breaks in credited service in excess of two years, regardless of the reason or circumstance, would require payment.

In the event of nonpayment, any retirement benefit arising from credited service prior to the break would be determined by application of the final-average salary amount at the beginning of the break period and on other provisions of the plan existing at that time.

- 3) The effective date of the administrative rule (September 13, 2002) be affirmed as effective up to the date of synodical approval of this recommendation.

This administrative rule was formulated and is now being recommended to synod for inclusion in the plan itself for at least the following reasons:

- An active participant may terminate such participation for a variety of reasons. Generally, these include nonpayment of costs, participation in another plan, and deposition or resignation from the ministry in the CRC. When termination occurs, the participant's interest in the plan is fairly determined based on the provisions of the plan at the time of termination and on the final average salary amount applicable to the year in which the event of termination takes place.
- When an active participant reaches retirement, all credited service is included in a benefit formula that includes as one of its three factors the final average salary applicable to the year in which the minister retires. "All credited service" may encompass an interrupted pattern of service.

Some believe that if a frozen participant pays the cost of participation for as little as three months immediately prior to retirement several things would happen. The participant would become entitled to all enrichments approved by synods subsequent to being frozen. Additionally, such participants would be entitled to the use of the current final average salary in the determination of retirement benefits. However, it is clear that the result would be to unfairly manipulate the plan in a manner that would have an adverse effect on it and that would be contrary to the plan's obvious intent.

- Inasmuch as it is clear that the plan was not intended to be open to manipulation, and given the number of frozen participants and the possibility of misunderstandings regarding these matters, the pension trustees initiated an administrative rule with an effective date of September 13, 2002. The effective date is intended to apply to all reinstatements occurring on or after September 13, 2002. While the plan's administrative rule is intended to set aside the possibility of such manipulation, the pension trustees concluded that the plan should be amended such that the matter is specifically addressed within the plan itself.
- c. That the plan be amended so as to remove all provision for disability benefits presently included in the plan in favor of plan-provided, commercially available, disability insurance similar to what is presently provided for all full-time, nonordained employees of the denomination and its agencies. This change is to be effective January 1, 2004. A highly summarized explanation of benefits included in the proposed plan may be found in the appendix to this report.

The pension trustees have concluded that the plan's disability provisions are in need of significant revision for at least the following reasons:

- Disability comes in many forms and varies greatly in severity and duration. "Categories," or "classes," of disability range from partial to total, and from short-term to life-long. At present, the plans provide protections against long-term, total disability only. The other categories of disability are not covered although they present significant risks. The proposed plan would provide benefits beginning 180 days after the onset of disability for a far broader range of conditions than those covered by the current plan.
- As indicated, the proposed plan has a much less restrictive definition of disability than does the current plan. Currently, a pastor must be totally and permanently disabled to qualify for benefits, whereas under the proposed plan a pastor would be considered disabled if:
 - 1) The pastor is unable to perform the material duties of an ordained minister for the first two years of disability. (Thereafter, the pastor would receive benefits if unable to satisfy the requirements of any job for which the pastor's education, training, or experience would otherwise make him or her qualified.)
 - 2) Or, the pastor is unable to earn more than 80 percent of indexed predisability earnings due to injury or sickness.
- Late registration and interruptions in credited service have put some ministers outside of the plan's enhanced benefits provisions, including disability. The proposed plan would provide disability benefits to these ministers.
- At present, the plan looks to qualification by the Social Security Administration in the United States and the Canadian Pension Plan in Canada to establish the fact of disability. In other words, recognition of disability and the award of benefits under these governmental

programs mark the beginning date for payment of disability benefits by the plan.

Most believe that the use of an “outside” authority to make determinations of disability has served the plans and its participants well, and the pension trustees believe that the use of a commercial insurance carrier with a binational reputation for provision and administration of these protections also would serve well.

- The recommended change would remove the significant disparity between the protections presently offered nonordained and ordained employees of the denomination, its agencies, and its congregations. The disparity is readily illustrated within the ranks of World Missions employees. In a variety of settings around the globe, World Missions employs approximately eighty full-time, career missionaries of which half are ordained and the other half are not. These persons, in many cases working in the same fields and exposed to the same risks, have significantly different disability protections.
- At present, more highly compensated pastors have a relatively smaller portion of their predisability income replaced by the plan’s disability benefits. Conversely, pastors having lower earnings levels have a greater portion of their income replaced. It appears that on the lower end of the income curve, pastors may receive more income from disability benefits than earned while serving full-time in the ministry. The proposed change would replace 60 percent (up to a limit of \$5,000 per month) of the disabled person’s specific, predisability income, including any housing allowance or attributed value of church-owned housing.

Pension contributions are not made to the retirement plan for nonordained employees at the same time that disability benefits are paid. Similarly, under the proposed disability arrangements, pension costs would not be paid (and credited service for retirement purposes would not accrue) while disability benefits are being paid. This means that retirement benefits may be significantly less than those available under the plan’s current disability arrangements.

- The next actuarial valuation of the plans will be performed as of June 30, 2003, and will indicate contribution requirements for the years 2004, 2005, and 2006. Inasmuch as these reports will not be available until about September 1, 2003, we do not have definitive information of what these costs will be. However, the actuaries were asked for a preliminary projection of costs based on current portfolio values and plan provisions and participant demographics as of the most recent actuarial valuation. In addition, the actuaries were asked to calculate the portion of such projected costs associated with the plan’s disability provisions. We asked that the calculation be done “prospectively,” meaning that disability benefits currently paid to disabled participants under the plan’s present provisions would continue.

According to the actuaries, the annual cost of the plan’s disability provisions is estimated to be \$700,000 in the United States and \$171,000 in Canada. The annual costs of disability coverage indicated by two potential, qualified carriers are approximately \$145,000 in the United States and \$39,000 in Canada. These costs are determined by

application of a quoted percent of covered payroll (including housing) that is directly in line with the cost of purchasing such coverage for nonordained employees in the United States.

- Disability claims during the first year of the new coverage arrangements that are related to a pre-existing condition for which medical consultation or treatment was received during the three months immediately preceding the beginning date of the new arrangements will not be paid by the carrier. In these cases, coverage under the plan's "old" provisions will be available provided that the fact of disability is likewise established under the standards described in the "old" provisions. The intent of these transition protocols is that no one will be denied coverage due to any pre-existing condition.

- d. That all organized churches be required to pay church assessments determined at an amount per professing member age 18 and older, or, if greater, the direct costs of their "first or only" pastor's participation in the plan. For first or only pastors serving organized churches, the grant of credited service in the plan would be conditioned on timely payment of amounts billed. This change is to be effective January 1, 2004.

That church assessment amounts per active, professing member age 18 and over and the direct costs of participation continue to be determined annually by the pension trustees based on actuarial and other information available to them.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- For many years, the plan has required payment of the annual cost of participation as a condition for the grant of credited service to pastors serving in a variety of settings. These settings include service to emerging churches, to organized churches as "second" pastors, to denominational agencies, and to service in a variety of other settings as ordained ministers of the Word.
- Nonordained persons serving emerging churches, organized churches, and denominational agencies may participate in the Employee Retirement Plan provided that the full cost of participation is paid. Nonpayment of costs means nonparticipation in this plan and, in that respect, is the same as what is here proposed for ordained pastors serving as first or only pastors of organized churches.
- Presently, larger organized churches pay a subsidy for the benefit of smaller organized churches. For this purpose, the terms *larger* and *smaller* are used to distinguish between churches that have membership counts sufficient to cover the annual cost of membership in the plan by payment of church assessments and those that do not.

The ratio of smaller churches on the receiving end and larger churches on the paying end is approximately 2 to 1. Larger churches are becoming fewer in number, and smaller churches are increasing in number while, at the same time, the number of members in smaller churches is declining. A result is that fewer larger churches are required to significantly subsidize the retirement costs of pastors serving smaller churches.

The greater the amount of subsidy from larger to smaller churches, the greater the risk of larger churches' becoming dissatisfied and

unwilling to carry the load. Where the point of refusal might lie is open to question; however, the assumption that there is such a point is not.

- The decline in the financial markets in the last three years, the historically low interest rates on fixed income securities, and the increasing costs of providing retirement benefits requires consideration of other means of financing the cost of the plans. Continuation of past protocols for funding and subsidizing would push the cost of the plans to larger churches past the point where simple refusal to pay likely would become an unpleasant reality.

Under the recommended changed method for church assessments, payment of increased costs would continue for larger churches and a subsidy would still benefit smaller churches, but the increases for larger churches would be more modest and, the pension trustees believe, more acceptable.

- The proposed change would require employers (organized churches) to assume responsibility for payment of the retirement-related cost of employing an ordained minister. At present, such employers are responsible for all other costs of employment, including salaries, allowances, medical insurance, and employment-related taxes. As mentioned before, emerging churches are already responsible for payment of all employment-related costs, including the cost of retirement.
- The change in 1998 from ministry shares to church assessments was motivated, in part, to ensure more reliable funding for pension costs. However, a direct link between payment of costs by organized churches and the grant of credited service to ministers serving in these churches was never achieved. Accordingly, the plan lacks any direct means to ensure the collection of amounts billed to churches. In addition, there is an increasing level of concern that is related to granting organized status to churches having very small membership counts. The grant of organized status to churches with very small membership counts increases the burden of funding that others are required to pay.
- Church assessments are based on the number of professing members age 18 and older, less those deemed by churches to be "inactive." Since approval of the inactive membership class several years ago, the number of inactive members has grown such that it now comprises approximately 10 percent of all professing members age 18 and over.

In Canada, the number of members on which church assessment billings are based has decreased 5.2 percent from 1998, and in the United States the number has dropped 9.1 percent. The reality of a declining funding base, a prolonged decline in the securities markets, and increasing costs makes it very important that amounts billed for participation in the plan are paid and that tools needed to ensure payment are available.

4. Funding

Through December 31, 1997, the plans were funded by a combination of ministry shares and direct billings. Ministry shares paid for the pension costs of ministers serving organized churches (one pastor in cases of

churches having multiple-staff ministries). Synod 1997 approved a new method of funding the pension costs of all first or only pastors and chaplains. Under this method, pension costs associated with these pastors are funded by an assessment on each professing member of the denomination age 18 or older. The amount of the assessment for 2003 is \$22 per member in Canada and \$19 in the United States. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

Emerging churches and each other ministry that employs a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any capacity other than first or only pastor of an organized church or endorsed chaplain is required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. These costs are billed quarterly, \$1,075 (\$4,300 annual) in the United States and \$1,375 (\$5,500 annual) in Canada for 2003, and they cover the pension costs of approximately one-fifth of all active participants.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2004 will be determined following receipt of reports on actuarial valuations to be performed as of June 30, 2003. Costs for 2004 will be determined by the pension trustees in September 2003 and submitted to the BOT for consideration at its October meeting, with information released to the churches immediately following.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan on a quarterly basis by participating groups in an amount equal to 9 percent of the compensation of the unordained employees who are participants in the plan. Participants receive quarterly statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among eight investment alternatives in the United States and seven in Canada, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Bank One, N.A. Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants, by Clarica Life Insurance Company.

On December 31, 2002, the balances in these plans totaled \$14,159,000 in the United States and \$1,539,000 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 390 participants in the U.S. plan and 86 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada
Active	253	54
Inactive	137	32

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies. Currently there are 1,296 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 626 pastors and employees of local churches, 328 employ-

ees of denominational agencies, and 342 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan purchased through a major health-insurance provider. The coverage in Canada is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the United States, a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

In the United States, the plan has been significantly affected by increasing costs of health care and changes in systems available to self-insured plans for the administration of claims and for obtaining discounts through provider networks. During 2001, a change was made in the provider network and in the administration of claims. These changes were made necessary by a new and significant coverage gap in the plan's provider network and by a need to control the cost of the plan. In 2002, certain changes were made to the plan's eligibility provisions to protect the plan against the possibility of adverse selection. Primarily, the eligibility provisions changed the focus of participation from individuals to employee groups.

Premiums charged by the plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses. Due to constantly increasing costs of health-care services, it has been necessary to significantly increase premiums in each of the three years through 2001. In 2002, premiums were increased for retired participants in order to reduce the significant excess of claims over the premiums charged this group, while other premiums were held constant. In 2003, premiums were increased a modest (in this industry) 5 percent; retirees were increased by a greater amount in keeping with a policy of gradually bringing these premiums in line with their direct cost of claims for this segment of the plan's participant population.

The pension trustees asked the Board of Trustees to assume the governance responsibility for the medical plans in the United States and Canada by assigning such responsibility to its standing committee on compensation. The pension trustees made this request primarily based on their view that the oversight of the medical plans is more closely related to matters of compensation and employment than to those concerning retirement, which is the primary focus of the trustees. The requested change was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2001.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited financial statements of the plans, and of all of the agencies and institutions, are sent each year to the clerk of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, beginning in 1999, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the United States Board of Pensions and to Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2004 as housing allowance for

United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod approve the recommendations concerning changes in the design of the plans as set forth in Section III, A, 3 of this report.

D. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2003.

1. *Mr. Lloyd Bierma* is completing his second term of office and is willing to serve another term. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure his name is being submitted as a single nominee.

Mr. Bierma is a member of the First CRC of Sioux Center where he has served as council member and president of council. From 1985 to 1992, he served on the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and its investment advisory committee. In 1997, he began a new period of service as a pension trustee and now serves as the chairperson of the U.S. Pension Trustees. A practicing attorney, he has served on the boards of Sioux Center Christian School, Calvin College, and the Dordt College Foundation.

2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:

a. *Mr. James Clousing* has forty years of experience in employee benefit plan design, implementation, and administration. Up to his recent retirement, he served the Sara Lee Corporation as its executive director of world-wide employee benefit programs with particular emphasis on the corporation's benefit programs in North America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Mr. Clousing is a graduate of Calvin College. He is a member of Bethel CRC of Lansing, Illinois, where he served seven terms as a member of its council. He has served several terms as a member of the board of directors of Illiana Christian High School and two terms as a member of the Roseland Christian Ministries board of directors, including one term as president of the board. Currently, Mr. Clousing serves as an alternate member of the denomination's Board of Trustees.

b. *Mr. Ray Vander Weele* has thirty-five years experience in the academic and business worlds. His teaching career includes service at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Calvin College. For ten years ending in 1994, he was the executive director of the denominations Ministers' Pension Plan. In 2001, Mr. Vander Weele retired from Merrill Lynch where he served as a vice president and senior financial consultant.

Mr. Vander Weele has served on a variety of civic, professional, and church boards. These include service on the board of Bethany Christian Services, Christian Counseling Center, and the Barnabas Foundation Firstfruits Committee. He is a member of Shawnee Park CRC of Grand Rapids and has served several terms as an elder.

E. That synod elect one member to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2003.

1. *Rev. Jake Kuipers* is completing his first term of office and is eligible to serve a second term. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure his name is being submitted as a single nominee.

Rev. Kuipers is pastor of Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, Ontario. Prior to serving in Trenton, he served congregations in Sarnia, Bloomfield, and Brampton, Ontario. In 1999, *Rev. Kuipers* completed six years of service on the CRCNA Board of Trustees and in 2002 began another term of service on that board. He served on the board of Home Missions for five years in the 1980s and was a delegate to synod on five occasions. Currently, he serves as chairperson of the Canadian Pension Trustees.

Pensions and Insurance
Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance
and administration

Appendix Disability Summary

Eligibility	All active participants in the Ministers Pension Plans in the United States and Canada
Definition of Earning	Base earnings plus housing allowance or value of church owned housing
Gross Monthly Benefit	60% of earnings up to a maximum benefit of \$5,000
Minimum Benefit Guarantee	Greater of \$100 or 10% of gross monthly benefit
Elimination Period	180 Days
Maximum Benefit Duration	CPP and Social Security normal retirement age
Dual Definition of Disability	“Disability” or “disabled” means that an insured employee satisfies the occupation qualifier or the earnings qualifier as defined below. <u>Occupation Qualifier</u> 24-month own occupation, any occupation thereafter <u>Earnings Qualifier</u> Inability to earn more than 80% of indexed pre-disability earnings due to injury or sickness.
Zero Day Residual Provision	Total disability not required during elimination period to become eligible for benefits.
Work Incentive Benefit	Provided to an insured employee passing the earnings qualifier who is gainfully employed in a CNA-approved occupation. During the first 24 months, the benefit plus disability earnings will be capped at 100% of pre-disability salary. Following that, the benefit will be reduced by a portion of disability earnings.

Enhanced Work Incentive	<p>Provided to an insured employee passing the earnings qualifier who needs to acquire additional skills to return to gainful employment in a CNA-approved occupation.</p> <p>For the first 24 months while working in an approved occupation and fulfilling the written rehabilitation plan, the monthly benefit will not be reduced until disability earnings exceed predisability salary.</p>																						
Day Care Benefit	Provides a monthly benefit of up to \$350 per eligible child for day care expenses incurred by employees receiving the enhanced work incentive benefit.																						
Accumulation Provision	If an insured employee temporarily recovers and returns to work full-time for a period of less than one-half of the number of days in the elimination period, subject to a maximum of 90 days, CNA will treat the disability as continuous.																						
Worksite Modification	The greater of two times net monthly benefit or \$1,500.																						
Recurrent Disability	6 months																						
Survivor Income Benefit	6 months																						
Presumptive Disability Benefits	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Specific Loss</u></th> <th><u>Months Payable</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Loss of both hands</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of both feet</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of the entire sight of both eyes</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of one hand and one foot</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of one hand and the entire sight of one eye</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of one foot end the entire sight of one eye</td> <td>46 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of one hand</td> <td>23 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of one foot</td> <td>23 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of the entire sight of one eye</td> <td>15 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loss of the thumb and index finger of either hand</td> <td>12 Months</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Specific Loss</u>	<u>Months Payable</u>	Loss of both hands	46 Months	Loss of both feet	46 Months	Loss of the entire sight of both eyes	46 Months	Loss of one hand and one foot	46 Months	Loss of one hand and the entire sight of one eye	46 Months	Loss of one foot end the entire sight of one eye	46 Months	Loss of one hand	23 Months	Loss of one foot	23 Months	Loss of the entire sight of one eye	15 Months	Loss of the thumb and index finger of either hand	12 Months
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Mental Disorders	<p>24-month out-of-hospital limitation in the United States</p> <p>Statutory full coverage in Canada</p>																						
Substance Abuse Claims	<p>24-month limitation in the United States</p> <p>Statutory full coverage in Canada</p>																						
Self Reported Symptoms	Full coverage																						
Pre-existing Conditions	3/12 exclusion (see discussion of transition provisions)																						
Managed Rehabilitation	Included																						

Employee Catastrophic Disability Pays an additional monthly benefit of 10% up to a maximum equal to the base LTD maximum or \$5,000, whichever is less. This benefit is payable if the insured employee is unable to perform at least 2 of 6 activities of daily living, or is cognitively impaired. It is not subject to offset by deductible income sources. Maximum benefit duration is one year. The elimination period is equal to the monthly benefit elimination period, or 180 days, whichever is greater. Includes respite care, caregiver training, and emergency alert system benefits. (These benefits are not available in Connecticut. Caregiver respite benefit is not available in California.)

Ability Assist Services CNA in conjunction with Bensinger Dupont & Associates (BDA) offers a valuable package of assistance services for employees, including an interactive web site, 24-hour helpline, and up to 5 face-to-face counseling sessions if needed. CNA claimants and their families have emotional, legal, and financial counseling services available. The ability-assist program is available at no additional cost.

Exclusions Declared or undeclared war or acts of either suicide or self-inflicted injury or sickness. Commission or attempt to commit a felony incarceration.

I. Introduction

During the year 2002, the work of the Youth-Ministry Committee has been done in conjunction with two other bodies: the synodical committee examining the relationship between the Christian Reformed denomination and Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM) and the Integrated Ministry to Children and Youth Team. The work of these two bodies is leading to a reshaping of the denomination's children and youth ministry structures. The report of the committee examining CRC/DYM relationships recommends that the Youth-Ministry Committee be reconstituted as the Children and Youth Ministry Advisory Committee and that committee membership be appointed by the Board of Trustees.

Normally the Youth-Ministry Committee submits nominees for committee membership to synod, and synod elects new members as is necessary. Because the CRC/DYM report recommends a new committee structure with members appointed by the BOT, we request permission to suspend the normal appointment procedure pending synod discussion of the CRC/DYM report. Therefore, we have no nominees to submit at this time.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Dr. Syd Hielema.

B. That the three divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries-Cadets, GEMS, and Youth Unlimited-be placed on the recommended-causes list.

Youth-Ministry Committee
Syd Hielema, chairperson

Dynamic Youth Ministries: Youth Unlimited

Since 1919, Youth Unlimited has been committed to seeing the local church youth ministry succeed in reaching youth with the dynamic power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Youth Unlimited continually sees God's hand at work in empowering our efforts by equipping our programs with hundreds of Spirit-filled volunteers to bring the Word of Christ to our youth. With over fifteen hundred young people participating in the coming year's programs, our prayer is that they will be challenged to commit their lives to Christ.

SERVE, a program designed for youth to participate in week-long service projects, presents young people with the opportunity of putting their faith into action and spreading the message of hope offered by Christ. SERVE 2003 is based on the theme Tied to the Vine and has thirty-five sites throughout North America that are already being filled with over one thousand participants. In addition to these thirty-five sites, a project is being offered in Denver to youth with special needs. The Denver SERVE is a pilot project that will offer work tailored to the abilities of each participant.

Summit challenges participants to begin their spiritual journey, continue their journey, or improve their journey with the Father. This biannual event, is being held in five locations: Atlanta, Georgia; Wolfville, Nova Scotia; Chicago, Illinois; Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Vancouver, British Columbia. The theme for each week of praise and worship is Step by Step, led by speaker Jolene DeHeer and artists Peder Eide and Tessie Etie. This event is actively being promoted at a number of praise rallies in the United States hosted by Youth Unlimited.

Encounters is a leadership program designed to give youth an experience in a ministry atmosphere that will develop in them a sense of mission and calling. With sites throughout North America, Japan, China, Europe, and Russia, this program is designed to allow youth to have a personal encounter with God in a different community. This three-step program is designed for youth who have completed grade 10 and requires that applicants be committed Christians and professing members of their churches.

Compass 21 is a leadership development process designed to empower youth ministry teams in discovering a direction that is unique to a variety of ministry settings. Its goal is to develop youth ministry that is intentional, relational, transformational, and is equipped with exemplary youth leaders. As an outcome to these shared values, churches will gain youth ministry experiences that nurture, respond, and evangelize.

As part of Youth Unlimited's mission to equip youth leaders, a resource pack is being developed and is anticipated to be out by July 2003. This pack will include a collection of lessons, program ideas, and plans to equip a church youth ministry for a year.

To ensure a feeling of congruency among the many ministries of Youth Unlimited, an overarching theme has been developed for the 2004 programs. Youth Unlimited hopes to reveal God's Unlimited Power through the activities offered in 2004.

Youth Unlimited is a youth ministry of the Reformed faith. As a parachurch ministry, we offer services to all denominations, but churches rooted in the Reformed faith should be especially interested in the youth services offered. While we are encouraged by the increasing numbers of youth participating in Youth Unlimited programs, church contributions have decreased. Approximately 230 churches are involved with Youth Unlimited, 130 of which have committed to a partnership with us. We are currently staffed by four full-time employees, three part-time employees, and one volunteer. We ask for prayers that our ministry may continue to grow so that through God's grace we may reach youth with his faithful love. (For the registration process and updated information regarding our ministries, please see www.youthunlimited.org.)

Youth Unlimited

Barry Foster, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

God's guiding hand continues to enable GEMS Girls' Clubs (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) to reach more girls—girls within our churches and girls within the communities around our churches. GEMS continues to work

diligently to retool and stay abreast of the rapid changes in our culture, speaking to girls with the truth of Scripture in the language of today.

Some 21 new clubs were started in 2002 resulting in ever-increased opportunities to serve more girls and their families. In addition, more leaders received training in ministry than ever before. Nearly 3,000 of the 5,200 women currently serving as leaders in the ministry attended at least one of the more than 30 training events that took place last year, including local ACTS workshops, regional training conferences, and the annual counselor's convention.

Created to Worship has been the annual theme or spiritual emphasis in club. This study helped girls understand what worship is, why it is important, and that worship is more than a Sunday morning experience—that we are to worship God daily with our whole lives.

The third Get Connected! Camp for early teen girls is being planned for the summer of 2003. One hundred and eighty one girls from the United States and Canada will participate in this week-long, leadership development, camp experience. Due to our current inability to meet the demand for summer camp, GEMS is committed to expanding the camping component of our ministry and continues to look for property to develop into a year-round camp and leadership development center.

Year after year, the ministry develops new and culturally relevant curriculum and other resources to help girls grow in their relationship with Christ. A series of talksheets on inner and outer beauty for early teens, a course on leadership development for high school age girls serving in GEMS, and a curriculum for second to third graders about women of faith are new for 2002-2003.

GEMS Girls' Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Calvinist Cadet Corps

The biggest news in cadeting since last synod was the triennial international camporee. More than fifteen hundred men and boys camped in the shadow of the Canadian Rockies near Crowsnest Pass (west of Lethbridge, Alberta). It was the second largest international camporee since they began in 1966; the only one larger was held in nearly the same area six years ago. There seems to be something about the grandeur of the mountains that attracts the campers. There were a couple of new twists to the camporee this time. For one thing, younger boys were allowed to attend. The minimum age was lowered by six months, and there were some ten-year-olds. It did not seem to have any adverse effects in terms of camping skills or homesickness and will likely continue to be policy. The other difference this year was in the cooking. Previously, all food was cooked over an open fire. This time, campers were required (by local rulings) to cook their meals over propane stoves. It was simpler, but less "wilderness-style" than the organization is used to or desires. The Cadet Congress, meeting in January 2003, rejected a proposal to make propane cooking the norm for international camporees.

In other action, the Cadet Congress decided to develop two new merit badges for the Junior Cadet program (first through third grades) based on the Cadet code and verse. They also decided that the older Cadets (grades four

through six) will get two new merit badges: one in color theory, and one for off-road vehicles. The number of badges a boy can earn is now more than one hundred. Other decisions were to change the name of the Cadet magazine, which has been *Crusader* since 1958, and to investigate the feasibility of offering Cadet materials in the Spanish language. The move to change the name of *Crusader* came from a desire to disassociate with the Crusades of the eleventh century and beyond, which carry a negative connotation among some of the people that the Cadet ministry is trying to reach for Christ.

Finally, the Calvinist Cadet Corps celebrated fifty years of ministry last fall. Please join us in praising God for the opportunity to work with him in building his kingdom through this ministry.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes publication of denominationally related historical studies. The Committee's members are: Dr. Harry Boonstra, chair (2005), Rev. Michael De Vries (2003), Mrs. Janet Sheeres (2004), Dr. Robert Swierenga (2004), Dr. Richard Harms, (ex officio) secretary.

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. As archivist he serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College. Other staff include: Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Ms. Boukje Leegwater, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; student assistants Ms. Susan Potter, Ms. Nateisha De Cruz, and Ms. Linnelle Rooks; and volunteers Dr. Henry Ippel, Mr. Floyd Antonides, Rev. Henry DeMots, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Hendrick Harms, Ms. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Rev. Leonard Sweetman, and Mr. John Hiemstra.

III. Archival work during 2002

A. We maintained contact with all forty-seven classes via regional representatives in forty-two cases (the same number as last year although it is not that same five classes that are without a representative) and with the stated clerks of the remaining five.

B. Archival records from ninety CRCNA congregations (seven more than last year) were received, microfilmed, and returned. We also microfilmed the records of three Christian school organizations. The microfilm copies are stored in our vault and are available only with the written permission of the individual congregation or school. All eighty-three congregations in six classes (Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Hudson, Iaokota, Minnkota, and Thornapple Valley) that were scheduled to have their minutes microfilmed within the last ten years, have done so. Given the frequency that the committee hears of missing records, these congregations and classes are to be commended for their total participation in this important work.

C. Official classical minutes were received from forty-three classes (a decrease of four from last year). We have contacted each of the four stated clerks in the classes that did not send records to remind them of this task. In most cases, the change in stated clerks resulted in the lack of continuity. Anniversary materials were received from eleven Christian Reformed churches.

D. Minutes of eight churches that were organized before 1990 were microfilmed for the first time. The eight are Palo Alto CRC, Palo Alto, California; Cascade CRC, Marysville, Washington; Fellowship CRC, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Immanuel CRC, Orange City, Iowa; Covenant CRC, Appleton, Wisconsin; Community CRC, Richmond Hill, Ontario; Community CRC,

Wyoming, Michigan; and Providence CRC, Beamsville, Ontario. Last year two churches organized before 1980 had their official records microfilmed for the first time. All of the churches organized before 1980 have been personally contacted. Several have agreed to send official records to the Archives to be microfilmed. Four, Grangeville, Idaho; Parklane, Portland, Oregon; Trinity, Sparta, Michigan; and Exeter, Ontario, churches have decided not to have their official records microfilmed at this time. Most of the churches that have not sent records within the last decade also have been personally contacted. The following churches, organized prior to 1970, have not had their records microfilmed (year of organization in parentheses): Exeter, Ontario (1952); Farmington, New Mexico – Maranatha (1962); Fountain Valley, California – Fellowship Community (1967); Grangeville, Idaho (1927); Port Alberni, British Columbia – First (1951); Portland, Oregon – Oak Hills (1965); Portland, Oregon – Parklane (1959); Stony Plain, Alberta (1908); Tacoma, Washington – Community (1968); Toledo, Ohio – Community (1963); Yakima, Washington – Summitview (1969). The Archives has made and will continue to make concerted efforts to microfilm the official records of all churches that have not sent minutes within the last ten years.

E. We published the twenty-first newsletter, which was distributed to all regional representatives, stated clerks of classes, the Dutch American Historical Commission, relevant periodical editors, and other interested people in the denomination.

F. The denominational historical directory has been produced. It contains entries for the 2,751 individuals who have served as ordained ministers in the denomination, the more than 1,300 congregations and missions that are, or have been, part of the CRCNA, including chaplains, Back to God Hour staff, home missions personnel, foreign missions personnel, evangelists and specialized ministers, Calvin Theological Seminary faculty, and Calvin College administrative personnel and teaching faculty.

G. At the request of the seminary president and general secretary, we have converted the database of ordained ministers to a format accessible via the internet. The information is available at <http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcmd/index.htm>. We have also begun adding images of the individuals to that site. In total we have images for about 60 percent of the ministers. We have, however, completed images for those who are deceased or who have left the denomination's ordained ministry.

H. We completed organizing twenty-four additional cubic feet of seminary records. We organized seventy-nine cubic feet of denominational records, including correspondence from various *Banner* editors, from John Vander Ploeg through John Suk; World Missions files; general secretary files; and various regional groups (Dynamic Youth, Christian Reformed Conference Grounds, and so forth). We also organized fifteen additional cubic feet of college records. In addition, we arranged approximately thirty-five cubic feet of records from various Christian schools and other agencies related to the Dutch in North America.

I. We continued the translation project for early denominational and congregational minutes. Projects now underway include minutes of the CRC in

Luctor, Kansas; Central Avenue CRC Holland, Michigan; Manhattan, Montana CRC; and Classis Michigan, 1870-1892.

J. We contributed to the denomination's sesquicentennial planning committee, published the proceedings of the 2001 Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies conference, and served as members of the Dutch-American Historical Commission.

IV. Publications

Designing is under way for the denominational historical directory (see III, F above). Printing will be done by the denomination's Product Services. The committee has begun investigating other potential funding sources and is corresponding with potential authors for future books. The committee currently has one manuscript under consideration.

V. Recognition

A. The Committee acknowledges Rev. Harry Boonstra's acceptance of reappointment and thanks him for his willingness to serve.

B. We acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2002:

69 years	Richard H. Wezeman
68 years	Elco H. Oostendorp J. Jerry Pott
65 years	Henry De Mots
64 years	John Blankespoor Garrett D. Pars
63 years	Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma
62 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gerrit H. Polman Gysbert J. Rozenboom Garrett H. Vande Riet
61 years	John A. Botting Harold Dekker Nicholas B. Knoppers
60 years	Clarence Boomsma Edward Bossenbroek Remkes Kooistra Bastiaan Nederlof Dick J. Oostenink
55 years	Henry N. Erffmeyer Peter Ipema Carl G. Kromminga

Peter M. Macaskill
Issac W. Meuzelaar
Howard B. Spaan
Edward A. Van Baak

50 years

Harry G. Arnold
Jacob P. Boonstra
Peter W. Brouwer
Fred Bultman
Bernard Byma
Gerrit B. Dokter
Jerrien J. Gunnink
Hermam Hoelstra
Bassam M. Madany
John Morren
Bernard J. Niemeyer
Kenneth R. Slager
Samuel Ten Brink
Charles Terpstra
Gerald W. Van Den Berg
Theodore Verseput
Andrew Zylstra

C. The Committee also reports on the following anniversaries of congregational organization:

100 years

Manhattan, MT
Muskegon, MI – Bethany
Oaklawn, IL – Kedvale Ave.
Oskaloosa, IA – First
Sioux Center, IA – Lebanon
Volga, SD

75 years

Imlay City, MI

50 years

Acton, ON
Alliston, ON
Belleville, ON
Burlington, ON
Byron Center, MI – Second
Collingwood, ON
Edmonton, AB – Maranatha
Emo, ON
Evergreen Park, IL – Park Lane
Ferrysburg, MI – Ferrysburg Community
Forest, ON
Grand Rapids, MI – Riverside
Guelph, ON – First
Highland, IN – Second
Holland, MI – Park
Ingersoll, ON
Lacombe, AB – Bethel

	Long Beach, CA
	Medicine Hat, AB
	Muskegon, MI – Grace
	Orillia, ON – First
	Ottawa, ON – Calvin
	Toronto, ON – Rehoboth Fellowship
	Winnipeg, AB – Transcona
25 years	Albuquerque, NM – Fellowship
	Dallas, TX – Bethel
	Fullerton, CA – Orange Korean
	Kincardine, ON
	Leduc, AB – Ebenezer
	Lynden, WA – Sonlight Community
	Menno, SD – Peace
	Port Perry, ON – Hope
	Ripon, CA – Almond Valley
	Sioux Falls, SD – Shalom
	Waterloo, ON

VII. Reminders

A. We urge congregations that have or soon will observe anniversaries to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video tapes, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives. This is a convenient means for keeping a duplicate set of such materials in a secure location.

B. Of the 832 organized congregations, 654 (79 percent) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. Due to the ongoing and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee urges the remaining 172 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy that will be stored in an environmentally secure environment.

Due to the personal nature of the contents in some minutes that are duplicated, these microfilms are stored in a vault under absolute confidence. No one, including archives staff, former pastors, former council/consistory members, and others, will be allowed to look at these microfilms without the permission of the individual church council written on congregational letterhead and signed by either the president or vice-president of the council/consistory.

VIII. Recommendations

A. The committee requests that Janet Sheeres be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.

B. The committee recommends that Rev. Michael De Vries be reappointed to a second term as a member of the committee.

C. The committee asks that synod grant the committee the right to raise and retain funds for publication projects in a proposed Historical Series of the Christian Reformed Church. There is significant interest both from authors and readers in products that may come out of such a series and this approval will allow the committee to proceed.

D. The committee asks that synod urge congregations to continue sending copies of minutes to the Archives in order that existing gaps in the archival holdings may be filled. Further, we ask that all classes add the Archives to their mailing lists (surface or electronic) as the most expedient means to prevent gaps from occurring in the future. We also ask that synod remind the stated clerks of each classis that the records of discontinued ministries are to be deposited in the Archives.

E. Due to the invaluable historical and genealogical research potential, the committee recommends that synod have the congregations send noncurrent membership records to the archives.

Historical Committee

Harry Boonstra, chair

Michael De Vries

Janet Sheeres

Robert Swierenga

Richard Harms, secretary

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), along with the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and the Canadian ministries director, Rev. William C. Veenstra (members ex officio), with the years in which their terms expire are:

- From Canada: Ms. Louisa Bruinsma (2004); Mrs. Bertha Mook (2005); Rev. Richard T. Vander Vaart (2003); Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus (2005); Rev. Michael Winnowski, vice president (2003); Rev. Simon Wolfert (2004).
- From the United States: Dr. Lyle D. Bierma (2003); Rev. Jason Chen, president (2003); Rev. Michiel M. De Berdt (2002); Rev. Philip V. De Jonge (2004); Ms. Teresa Renkema (2004); Mr. Abraham Vreeke (2005).

The IRC has adopted the following *modus operandi*:

- That in electing officers for our binational IRC, the president be chosen from one country and the vice president from the other, with the understanding that the vice president will assume the office of president the following year.
- That the IRC meet three times each year—in November, February, and April.
- That the IRC (ordinarily) meet once each year in Burlington, Ontario, and twice each year in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations**A. Fraternal delegates**

The IRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the Christian Reformed Church in North America is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in America (RCA) meeting in Orange City, Iowa, June 8-14, 2002, Rev. Jason Chen.
2. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, June 20-22, 2002, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman.
3. To the fifty-seventh General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Japan, meeting in Kawagoe-shi, October 15-18, 2002, Rev. Jeong Gho.
4. To the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa), meeting in Pretoria, October 13-19, 2002, Dr. David H. Engelhard.
5. As fraternal observer to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), meeting in Columbus, Ohio, June 15-21, 2002, Dr. David H. Engelhard.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the IRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Dr. David H. Engelhard serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Rev. William C. Veenstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.
3. Rev. Michael Winnowski serves on the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the Canadian Council of Churches.
4. Dr. George Vandervelde serves as the IRC's observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches and on the Faith and Witness Commission of the Canadian Council of Churches. In both venues, he has been entrusted with important levels of leadership.
5. Dr. Lyle Bierma serves as the CRC member on the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

III. Multilateral relationships—ecumenical organizations

A. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

The twenty-eighth annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) was held in Flat Rock, North Carolina, on November 12-13, 2002. The CRCNA did not send any delegates to this year's meeting.

Subsequent to this meeting of NAPARC, the general secretary received a letter from Dr. Bruce Stewart who serves as the organization's secretary with the following announcement:

It really grieves me to have to be the one who is responsible to inform you officially that all of the churches in NAPARC voted in their synods and general assemblies to terminate your [CRCNA] membership in NAPARC, and that this vote was recorded at the 2002 meeting of NAPARC.

The IRC has reported yearly to synod regarding the process of suspension and termination. The CRCNA vigorously maintained until the end that it had not violated any of the constitutional provisions of NAPARC and that termination of our membership was not legitimate. The IRC wrestled for many years with the decision about remaining in NAPARC or resigning our membership. With the full knowledge of synod, the IRC has regularly argued that we belong in NAPARC and that if we are not to be members, it must be as the result of having our membership terminated rather than of our resigning. That painful moment has come, and the CRCNA, a founding member, is no longer welcome at the meetings of NAPARC. There seems to be no particularly appropriate way to receive this decision and react to it. If Synod 2003 wishes to declare an official response, the advisory committee dealing with this matter will so advise the body.

B. Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)

The IRC keeps in contact with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) through its REC News Exchange and through its general secretary, Dr. Richard van Houten, whose office is in Grand Rapids. Dr. van Houten met with the IRC in October 2002 and brought us up to date on the mission and work of REC.

C. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)

The CRC is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and is represented on its board by Rev. William Veenstra. The EFC, which is currently seeking a new president, focuses on bringing Christians together for greater impact in mission, ministry, and witness. It does so by working closely together for ministry empowerment and by working cooperatively to address government on current issues of interest and concern.

D. Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and is represented on its board by Rev. Michael Winnowski. The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has personnel on both commissions, and they strive to make our voice heard in matters relating to ecumenical relations and to broad concerns within our culture and world.

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton is the newly elected general secretary of the CCC and enters her role at a time when the long-term financial viability of the CCC needs to be addressed. Dr. Hamilton has been invited to attend Synod 2003 as an ecumenical observer.

E. National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)—United States

Dr. Leith Anderson of Minneapolis, Minnesota, continues as the interim president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The past eighteen months have been a time of restructuring for the NAE with the moving of its offices from California to Washington, D.C. Now the administrative offices and the governmental offices of NAE are housed together. NAE's yearly convention is scheduled to meet in the Minneapolis area on March 6-7, 2003, under the theme: Connecting Evangelicals for the Twenty-first Century. As in other years, the convention will be a time of stimulating presentations, enthusiastic worship, and organizational business.

F. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

Synod 2002 adopted a recommendation authorizing "the IRC to apply for CRCNA membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)" (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 485). Following synod, the application process began, and in September the CRCNA was informed that the executive committee of WARC had received the application favorably and that the CRCNA has gladly been received into membership.

The twenty-fourth General Council meeting of WARC will be held in Accra, Ghana, July 30 through August 13, 2004. The theme for the meeting is: That All May Have Life in Fullness. While CRC observers have attended council meetings in the past, this will be the first time that the CRC will be officially represented as a member church. The IRC has appointed Dr. David H. Engelhard, Mrs. Teresa Renkema, and Rev. William C. Veenstra as the delegates to attend the meeting in Accra.

G. Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC)

A delegation of Dr. Lyle Bierma, Mrs. Teresa Renkema, and Rev. William C. Veenstra attended the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC), one of six area councils of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting October 17-19, 2002, in Trinidad. This is the first time we attended CANAAC as members and not just as observers. The

meeting allowed for dialog between churches and for discussion about and preparation for the WARC General Council meeting in 2004.

IV. Bilateral relationships—international

A. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN/GKN)

Synod 2001 instructed the IRC to do one of the following in its report to Synod 2003:

1. To recommend restoration of full ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCN/GKN and the grounds for such restoration; or
 2. To provide synod with the reasons why full restoration of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCN/GKN would not be appropriate at this time.
- (Acts of Synod 2001, pp. 514-15)*

The IRC appointed a subcommittee to assist in preparing a report and recommendations for presentation to Synod 2003: Dr. Lyle D. Bierma, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Rev. Richard Vander Vaart. The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland have been integrally linked as churches since the 1890s when the GKN were formed. Intellectual, spiritual, and financial assistance flowed freely from the Netherlands to North America. Members felt at home in each other's churches. Sometimes the relationship has been referred to as "mother-daughter" and other times as "sister churches." This highlights the family connectedness that has existed in our relationship.

In the 1970s, the relationship between our churches experienced some strains and tensions. At first, the tensions were related to hermeneutics when the GKN gave endorsement to the document *God met Ons*. Later, the tensions increased when the GKN permitted gays and lesbians living in committed relationships to serve as office-bearers in their churches. The provisions of "ecclesiastical fellowship" were gradually reduced from six (full relationship) to two (partial relationship).

The most recent restriction of the relationship occurred at the synod of 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520), and, at the same synod, the Interchurch Relations Committee was mandated to intensify discussions with the GKN regarding issues that have troubled our relationship (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 707 and *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520). The results of the intensified discussions were reported to the synods of 1998, 1999, and 2000.

The issues identified as those troubling our relationship are: (1) Scripture and hermeneutics, (2) homosexuality, (3) mission to the Jews, (4) euthanasia, and (5) Christology and the Atonement. Each of these matters was discussed at some length with representatives of the GKN over the three-year period of our conversations. Reports on the conversations as well as some analysis of the GKN positions can be found in the following places:

Agenda for Synod 1995, pp. 225-44

Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 393-410

Acts of Synod 1997, p. 526

Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 300-307

Agenda for Synod 2000, pp. 203-11

Agenda for Synod 2001, pp. 220-21

These reports identify where the GKN has altered its position in a corrective way in recent years (e.g., their view of Scripture and hermeneutics), where they have retained their view in spite of CRC objections (e.g., their view of homophilia), and where they have addressed new concerns consistent with biblical and confessional teaching (e.g., Christology and the Atonement).

One significant factor affecting the GKN/CRC relationship is the unification and merger process (known as Samen op Weg/Together on the Way) that is taking place among the GKN, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK), and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk (ELK). The CRC has had a relationship with only one of the three denominations in the merger, and even though we are somewhat familiar with the other two denominations, they are not included in our ecumenical relationships. Recently this merger has come closer to being a finalized reality when the three synods agreed on a new name for the new church: Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). Currently, the new church is scheduled to inaugurate its new existence on January 1, 2004. While other factors may still affect this startup date, the Gerformeerde Kerken in Nederland/Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have a limited existence in the form that we have known them. "Ecclesiastical fellowship" exclusively with one of the parties to the merger is prohibited by the new church's Church Order (Bylaw 14, Art. 4, pt. 1). Beginning in 2004, any relationship with these churches will need to be a relationship with the whole Protestant Church in the Netherlands and not just with the GKN.

Considering the reality articulated in the previous paragraph, the IRC believes that now is not the time to alter our relationship with the GKN. To recommend the restoration of some aspects of fellowship for only a few months (that is until January 2004) would be unwise even if the synod were convinced that the reasons that led to the restrictions on our relationship were no longer valid. Furthermore, the IRC believes that seeking permission to enter into an altered relationship with the new church is premature. Therefore, the IRC recommends to synod that the current restricted relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN be retained until the GKN no longer exists as a separate denomination and the IRC has had opportunity to assess what new relationship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is appropriate.

B. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN)

In its reports to Synod 2001 and Synod 2002, the IRC made known that it was moving in the direction of establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN). Because the RCCN and the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria were engaged in serious conversations about reconciliation, the IRC was advised by many that it would be better to withhold its recommendation for ecclesiastical fellowship until such time that the reconciliation talks bore fruit and that the CRCN and the RCCN were able to work out their long-term differences. We are pleased that that time has come and that on March 1, 2003, a special ceremony of reconciliation commemorated the new relationship.

The following description from the publication, *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) provides summary information about the RCCN:

The church has its roots in the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria. . . . In 1973 a split occurred and the Reformed Church of Christ was established. It consists mainly of people of the Kuteb tribe. The church is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. In 1993 the church decided to change the name from Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) to Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN). Since 1973 the church has grown rapidly.

TM: **200,000** CM: **87,000** Congr: **50** PStations: **300** OrdM: **41** Eld: **500** Deac: **300** EvgHome **208** Mission: **ne** Women Ord: **no** Church Org: **Reformed (50 consistories, 10 classis, 1 synod)** Off/other Lang: **Kuteb, English, Hausa, Jukun, Tiv, Ichin** DoctrBL: **ApC, NicC, AthC, CDort, HeidC, WestConf** Infant or believer's baptism: **both** Frequency of the Lord's Supper: **4 times per year** Close relations with: **Ch of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv, Christian Reformed Church in North America, UCC (Nigeria), Ev. Refor. Church of Christ NatRel: RECON(1992), Christian Rural Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN) (1994), CAN(1991)** RegRel: **AACC (Probational 1994) IntlRel: REC(1996), WARC(1991)** TheolSchool: **Veenstra Bible College and Seminary (Lupwe, Taraba State)** Service infrastructure: **4 clinics, Apura social service, RCCN rural development, school of health, RCCN vocational school and training** Periodicals: **Apura**

The IRC recommends to synod that the CRCNA establish ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria and that all six provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship apply to this relationship.

Grounds:

1. The RCCN, with its roots in the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria, has a long, shared history of Reformed teaching and preaching in Nigeria and is a historical part of the CRCNA mission effort in Nigeria.
2. It has long been the desire of the RCCN to build a strong ecclesiastical fellowship with brothers and sisters of likeminded faith in the CRCNA.
3. It has been thirty years since the schism from the CRCN. Although in the past leaders from the CRCN have opposed the idea of the RCCN's being received into ecclesiastical fellowship, this is no longer the case. On September 10, 2002, the RCCN and the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) issued a communiqué that declared that "they had resolved to pursue peace and peaceful coexistence." Representatives from both denominations declared that they have forgiven each other and are reconciled. Not only have they resolved to "mend broken fences, but also to reject bitter pasts and move toward opening a new chapter in our lives as God's people."
4. The RCCN subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity and to the Westminster Standards. Church polity and governance structure include consistories, classes, and synod. Ecumenically the RCCN is a member of WARC, REC, RECON (the Reformed Ecumenical Council of Nigeria), and CRUDAN (Christian Rural Development Association of Nigeria).

C. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)

Since the early 1950s, the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) have maintained a very close relationship as churches with a missionary partnership and as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Three representatives of the RCJ were in North America during the first week in February to say "thank you" to the CRCNA for the long relationship. On Saturday, February 8, the delegation of Rev. Masao Kataoka, Rev. Yoshinobu Kazama, and Rev. Norio Nishibori visited with the Interchurch

Relations Committee to convey the greetings of their churches and express their heartfelt thankfulness for all the years of cooperation. In the course of the conversation, the delegation identified two important prayer concerns of their churches: a great need for more candidates for the ministry and the desire that their ministry to young people will bear much fruit.

D. Reformed churches in South Africa

1. Report of visit

In October 2002, the general secretary was sent as fraternal delegate to the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church. While in South Africa, he also met with representatives of five other Reformed denominations with whom the CRCNA has ecclesiastical fellowship:

Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
Reformed Church in Africa
Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Potchefstroom)
Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg)
Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

The report of the general secretary's visit is found in an appendix to this report of the IRC.

2. Belhar Confession

The general secretary of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) reiterated what he had told the IRC earlier, namely that URCSA was asking churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with it to study the Belhar Confession to determine what place that confession might take among the faith statements of the respective denominations. The IRC has received this oral invitation as an official request from the URCSA and has committed itself to review and study the Belhar with a view to making a recommendation to synod about its status sometime in the future.

The Belhar Confession was adopted by the churches that comprise the URCSA in the mid-1980s. Shortly thereafter, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) was asked to include the Belhar Confession in the listing of the Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution to which all member churches subscribe. After a review of the Belhar at that time, the CRC synod declared in 1990 that the Belhar "is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions" and that synod "has no objection to its inclusion in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution" (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625). The IRC will build on this foundation as it reviews the Belhar again.

V. Bilateral relationships—North America

A. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

The CRCNA maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with three churches in North America. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Fraternal delegates are exchanged with these churches on a regular basis. The CRCNA continues in ecclesiastical fellowship

with the ARPC even though it is one of the member denominations of NAPARC that has voted to terminate our membership in NAPARC. The ARPC has told us that the NAPARC decision does not affect our bilateral relationship.

B. Reformed Church in America (RCA)

Synod 2002 instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee to engage in dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The mandate is as follows:

That synod instruct the IRC, in consultation with appropriate agencies of the CRCNA to engage in a dialogue with the Commission on Christian Unity of the RCA, to ascertain how our ministry and mission throughout the world might be strengthened by greater cooperation between our two denominations and report its findings to Synod 2005.

(Acts of Synod 2002, p. 498)

The RCA's Commission on Christian Unity was also given a mandate by its synod in 2002 that reads as follows:

To instruct the Commission on Christian unity to enter into dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), exploring ways of moving toward greater unity between the CRC and the RCA in their ministry and mission, beginning with a discussion of the orderly exchange of ministers, and to report to the 2003 General Synod; and further, to encourage the agencies of the RCA to continue to expand their cooperative efforts with their CRC counterparts.

On December 11, 2002, representatives of both churches met in Chicago, Illinois. The RCA was represented by Rev. David Alexander, Rev. David Baak, Rev. Sue Damon, Dr. Doug Fromm, Rev. Sue Hodges, and Rev. Pedro Windsor. The CRC was represented by Dr. Lyle Bierma, Rev. Jason Chen, Rev. Philip De Jonge, Dr. David Engelhard, Ms. Teresa Renkema, Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, and Rev. William Veenstra. After opening devotions, the agenda for the day was reviewed and the following items were included: review of our respective mandates, overview of our respective ecumenical charters, identity of current and/or recent cooperative efforts between CRC and RCA agencies and congregations, discussion of the exchange of clergy between our two denominations, and discussion of the Belhar Confession (a confession of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa) and its potential place in our churches. This final item is on the agenda because the CRC and the RCA are both in ecclesiastical fellowship with URCSA and the synod of URCSA has asked its ecumenical partners to review Belhar and to include it among the faith statements of their churches.

At the conclusion of the meeting between the RCA and the CRC, some "next steps and ideas" were generated by those present. The IRC has endorsed in concept the direction of the conversation begun with the RCA including the following:

1. Continue the dialogue by meeting more than once a year and by retaining as many of the same delegates as is practical and/or possible.
2. Determine the necessary next steps that will allow our denominations to move toward the exchange of pastors. This will include an examination of the process for an exchange of pastors and an examination of what is currently happening in union churches (what agreements they have in place).

3. Examine the Belhar Confession together because the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) has requested both the RCA and the CRC to study and adopt the Belhar. It may be possible for our denominations to formulate a united statement of agreement on it. That would be a powerful statement to the URCSA.
4. Articulate where we are already cooperating (compile a list as complete as possible) and identify further areas where cooperation is possible.
5. Explore the question about obstacles—historical and current, theological and confessional, stereotypes and/or cultures—that do, and may, hinder seamless ministry.
6. Maintain good communication, involvement of constituencies, and publicity that celebrates present evidences of unity.
7. Invite new-idea people and enthusiastic vision casters to our meetings for consultation.
8. Each denomination will name the participants for this dialogue. By consensus, there will be four RCA delegates, four CRC delegates, and each denomination will have a staff person or ecumenical officer. Participants chosen will represent the diversities of our respective constituencies. Consultants from each church will be freely used.
9. Meetings will be held three to four times a year. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has invited us to use their building in Chicago. Grand Rapids may also be considered an alternate location periodically.

This report comes to synod as a “progress report” and it contains no recommendations for action at this time. The IRC has been asked to present a more complete report to Synod 2005.

C. *Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC)*

Synod 2001 gave the following mandate to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) regarding our relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC):

That synod instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to review, in consultation with representatives of the Protestant Reformed Churches, our denomination’s relationship with that denomination with a view to establishing a relationship of fellowship.

Grounds:

1. Although the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church share the same theological heritage, the two denominations have not had recent discussions to explore common areas of agreement or service.
2. Such a dialogue is in keeping with the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, III, B, 1, p. 249) and may be mutually beneficial.
(*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 481)

In a letter dated August 9, 2002, the IRC was informed that:

Synod 2002 of the Protestant Reformed Churches, having been informed of your [CRCNA] willingness to discuss the doctrinal and church polity issues involved in the controversy of 1924, has instructed our committee [i.e., Committee for Contact with Other Churches] to meet with you on these matters.

On Tuesday, November 19, a subcommittee of the CRC's Interchurch Relations Committee met with the Committee for Contact with Other Churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America in a meeting room at their seminary. Those representing the CRC were Dr. Lyle Bierma, Rev. Michiel De Berdt, Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Dr. David Holwerda, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra. Illness prevented Rev. Philip De Jonge from attending. Those representing the PRC were Mr. Norwin Brouwer, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Dekker, Prof. Russ Dykstra, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Mr. Sid Miedema, Jr., and Rev. Charles Terpstra.

After the delegates from each church had an opportunity to introduce themselves to each other, the leader of their delegation opened the meeting with a reading from Scripture (1 Tim. 3:14-16) and prayer. The CRC delegation was then given an opportunity to interpret the mandate it had received from Synod 2001. The PRC were interested in knowing particularly what the ultimate goal of our meetings might be. The goal of "establishing a relationship of fellowship" (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 481) was parsed to mean that the CRC and the PRC would have a more amicable relationship in the future as a result of a better understanding of each other. It was noted that our ecumenical charter allows for a category of "churches in dialogue" and that we thought our relationship might be regularized under that rubric. Although it was not mentioned at this point in the meeting, it was later said that the PRC does not carry on conversations with any church unless they think that organic union might be the result.

The PRC delegation wanted the CRC to know that it was unrealistic to think that they would change their position on any of the vital issues and differences between us such as common grace, the well-meant offer of the gospel, and the polity matters surrounding the suspension and/or deposition of their founding ministers in 1924. The CRC delegation assured them that we were no less realistic but that we had pursued the conversation on the basis of a foundation more substantial than just being realistic. The unity of the church is both a gift and a task, and we came to the conversation believing that Christ wants his church to be more unified. We also suggested that there may be ways to articulate the positions of 1924 in a manner that both churches would find acceptable and around which we could come closer together.

The PRC delegation had prepared a two-and-a-half page letter for the CRC delegation. They introduced the letter by informing us that, in their opinion, in the 1950s our two churches were very much alike and that at that time it might have been more realistic for us to think that we could have experienced greater fellowship together. Today they believe that the CRC's common-grace thinking has produced within it a world-and-life view that is so different from the PRC's view that the gap between us is too broad to bridge. Essentially, they think that nearly every major decision of the CRC since 1924 has been so laced with common-grace thinking that repentance and a massive reversal of synodical decisions would have to occur before meaningful conversation could continue. They requested that we ask synod to "repent of her departure from the truth of Scripture and the Reformed confessions begun in the adoption of the Three Points of common grace in 1924."

Before the meeting adjourned, some of the specifics of their prepared letter were discussed in an attempt to understand it better and to provide initial correction to some of the letter's false claims. The CRC delegation noted that

this letter seemed to be a discussion stopper and that there was not much room or reason to continue talking. They acknowledged that our conclusion seemed accurate but that they may be willing to continue the conversation in an attempt to more accurately understand CRC positions and thereby clarify or alter the allegations made in their letter.

Since the conclusion of the December meeting, our two delegations have continued written communication, and the PRC's most recent letter says that they are still discussing whether continuing conversation is possible. At its February 2003 meeting, the IRC received the report of its delegation and discussed the PRC letter that asks the CRC to repent. At the conclusion of its discussion of this matter, the IRC adopted the following decision:

A motion carries requesting the general secretary to correspond with the PRC to inform them that the call to repentance is not sufficiently well formulated for us to make recommendations to our synod at this time. IRC requests its subcommittee to take every opportunity to speak with and listen to representatives of the PRC and to engage in whatever mutual affirmation and admonition is possible.

(Minute IRC 03-012, b)

There may be more to report to synod by way of the supplementary report of the IRC, but, for now, we await the conclusion of the PRC's internal conversations about the possibility of additional talks with the CRC.

D. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA)

On September 30, 2002, the Christian Reformed Church in North America received a letter from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) in which the CRCNA was informed that the 2002 synod of the RPCNA adopted the following recommendation: "That the RPCNA terminate fraternal relations with the CRCNA."

Although the letter does not explicitly provide the reason for this decision, the IRC believes that this action is in line with RPCNA's decision to vote for the CRC's termination in NAPARC. Thus, this decision is likely grounded in their conviction that women ought not be permitted to hold the offices of minister of the Word and elder and that ecclesiastical fellowship with churches that permit such ordination is inappropriate. The IRC instructed the general secretary to send a letter of regret to RPCNA on behalf of the CRC regarding this matter.

VI. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

A. Heidleberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist

Synod 2002 received a lengthy report from the IRC entitled: "Report of the Interchurch Relations Committee Clarifying the Official Doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church Concerning the Mass" (see Agenda for Synod 2002, pp. 274-94). Synod adopted the following recommendations:

- 1) That synod receive the report as fulfillment of the mandate given by Synod 1998 to the IRC "to make an attempt to dialogue with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church to clarify the official doctrine of that church concerning the mass" (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 427).
- 2) That synod submit the report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops requesting their agreement that the report gives an accurate presentation of official Roman Catholic teaching regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist.

- 3) That synod ask the IRC, on the basis of the response received from the Roman Catholic bishops of Canada and the United States, to advise a future synod about any further action that may be needed regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- 4) That Synod ask the IRC, on the basis of the response received from the Roman Catholic bishops of Canada and the United States, to advise a future synod, no later than 2006, about the value of further dialogue between the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church.
- 5) That synod send this report (Appendix D, *Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 274-94.) to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and to the Reformed Ecumenical Council informing them of our study and inviting their response.
(*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 488-89)

Following synod, the report was sent to the Conference of Catholic Bishops in both the United States and Canada requesting what Synod 2002 asked. Letters of response have been received from both conferences in which the process followed by the CRC and the written document produced are highly acclaimed and applauded. Both conferences affirm that the report “is accurate in its presentation of official Roman Catholic teaching regarding the Eucharist.” In addition, the Canadian bishops have provided what they think would be a more nuanced expression in three areas. The subcommittee of the IRC that wrote the document has not yet met to consider the suggestions.

The Canadian bishops also informed us that they decided that “a copy of the CRC report along with a brief description of the dialogue process should be brought to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity when the CCCB President pays his annual visit to Rome this November.” No further correspondence has been received informing us of the response of Rome. If it comes before synod meets, the delegates will be so informed.

After receiving these very favorable responses from the bishops’ conferences, the IRC, in keeping with the decisions of Synod 2002, has asked the subcommittee that wrote the report to reconvene and to provide the IRC with recommendations “to advise a future synod about any further action that may be needed regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism” (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 489). It is hoped that recommendations will be ready for Synod 2004.

B. Catholic/Reformed Dialogue

Unknown to the IRC at the time it undertook its dialogue about Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 with the Roman Catholic Church, there was also a broader dialogue going on at the same time. The Catholic/Reformed Dialogue has been in existence for many years, and they have concluded six rounds of discussion. The most recent round of discussions produced a document entitled *Interchurch Families: Resources for Ecumenical Hope* that is jointly published (2002) by Westminster John Knox Press and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The CRC has received a letter of invitation to become a participant in the next sequence of discussions that will center on the areas of liturgy and sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. The letter says in part:

We are now looking forward to the seventh round of Catholic/Reformed dialogue. Enclosed is a proposal for that dialogue. There will be a planning meeting the fall of 2002 to finalize the focus and determine the participants to be invited. If all goes well the next round could begin in the spring of 2003.

I have been asked if I would write to you and inquire if the Christian Reformed Church would entertain an invitation to be a participant in the seventh round of the Catholic/Reformed dialogue.

A member of the IRC, Dr. Lyle Bierma, attended the fall planning session and provided the IRC with the information it needed to move forward on this matter. Inasmuch as the CRC's recent report on Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist is likely to play a foundational role in this round of discussions, it seemed quite natural that the CRC should look favorably on this invitation.

The IRC, therefore, recommends the following to Synod 2003:

That the CRC accept the invitation to participate in the Catholic/Reformed Dialogue in the United States regarding liturgy and the sacraments with emphasis on the Lord's Supper/Eucharist.

Ground: This invitation allows the CRC to continue its dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church that began with the discussion of Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 regarding the Mass and as reported to Synod 2002 (see also Acts of Synod 2002, p. 489, Recommendation 4 and synod's openness to further dialogue between the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church).

VII. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

Since the fall of 2001, church leaders from a wide spectrum of ecclesiastical traditions have been meeting to discuss and create a new kind of ecumenical organization that includes participants from all traditions at the same table. Currently, evangelicals only meet with other evangelicals, mainline leaders only meet with other mainline leaders, and the Roman Catholic leadership is not part of any of the current ecumenical organizations.

The third planning meeting was held in Pasadena, California, in January 2003. At that meeting, there was a good cross section of evangelicals, mainline, Orthodox, Pentecostals, and Roman Catholics. It was the consensus of those present that the time was right to launch the new organization and determine if the denominations represented at the planning sessions were actually interested in officially participating. The IRC has not yet considered the matter in depth and does not currently have a recommendation for synod. It is possible that a recommendation regarding participation will be included in the supplementary report to synod.

VIII. Nominations for membership

Rev. Richard Vander Vaart and Rev. Michael Winnowski (Canadian IRC members) are completing their first term and are eligible for reelection. The following have completed their terms and are not eligible for reelection: Dr. Lyle Bierma and Rev. Jason Chen (U.S. IRC members).

The following names are submitted to Synod 2003 as nominees for IRC membership:

A. Canadian nominees

Position 1

Rev. Richard Vander Vaart (incumbent nominee) is pastor of Wallaceburg CRC, Wallaceburg, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin

Theological Seminary. Rev. Vander Vaart has served on the Day of Encouragement Planning Committee. He currently serves as secretary of the Interchurch Relations Canadian subcommittee, as a volunteer for the Wallaceburg Youth Drop-in Centre, as secretary for the Wallaceburg and District Ministerial Association, and as mentor and church visitor.

Position 2

Rev. Michael Winnowski (incumbent nominee) is pastor of Waterloo CRC, Waterloo, Ontario. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the minister's retreat committee and the classical abuse response committee. He currently serves on the classical interim committee, on the Canadian Council of Churches as its vice president, and as vice president of the Interchurch Relations Committee—previously as its president.

B. U.S. nominees

Position 1

Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, is professor of systematic and philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is a graduate of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Yale University. He has served on the subcommittee to Study the Materials from the Reformed Churches of Australia re Christ's Descent into Hell and the subcommittee Clarifying the Official Doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church Concerning the Mass. Dr. Feenstra has served as deacon and elder. He currently serves on the Christian school board.

Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam, a member of Alger Park CRC, Grand Rapids, is assistant professor of historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is a graduate of Dordt College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Rylaarsdam has served on the Information Services Advisory Committee, Distance Education Committee, and the General Education Program Committee for Dordt College. He has also served on the worship committee and as an elder. He currently serves on the Dutch American Historical Commission and the Historical Resources Committee of Calvin Seminary.

Position 2

Rev. Christian Oh is pastor of Han-Bit Korean CRC, Rochester Hills, Michigan. He is a graduate of Chongshin University in Korea and is currently working toward an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as an intercultural adviser for the Home Missions Board and has served on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. He currently serves on the denominational review team.

Rev. Carlos Tapanes, pastor of the Emanuel Hispanic CRC, Wyoming, Michigan, is a graduate of Reformed Bible College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the classical home missions committee and as a member of the board of Roosevelt Park Community Ministries. He currently serves as member and president of the CRC Hispanic Task Force. He has been both an ethnic adviser to synod and a delegate to synod.

IX. Representation at synod

Rev. Jason Chen, president of the IRC, and Rev. Richard Vander Vaart have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 2003, along with other members as necessary.

X. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Jason Chen (president) and Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, along with other IRC members as necessary, be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the IRC are being discussed.

B. That synod declare that the current restricted relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN be retained until the new Protestant Church of the Netherlands has formally begun and the IRC has had time to assess what relationship is appropriate for the CRC to maintain with the new denomination.

C. That the CRCNA enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria with all six provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship applying to this relationship.

Grounds:

1. The RCCN, with its roots in the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria, has a long, shared history of Reformed teaching and preaching in Nigeria and is a historical part of the CRCNA mission effort in Nigeria.
2. It has long been the desire of the RCCN to build a strong ecclesiastical fellowship with brothers and sisters of likeminded faith in the CRCNA.
3. It has been thirty years since the schism from the CRCN. Although in the past leaders from the CRCN have opposed the idea of the RCCN being received into ecclesiastical fellowship, this is no longer the case. On September 10, 2002, the RCCN and the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) issued a communiqué that declared that “they had resolved to pursue peace and peaceful coexistence.” Representatives from both denominations declared that they have forgiven each other and are reconciled. Not only have they resolved to “mend broken fences, but also to reject bitter pasts and move toward opening a new chapter in our lives as God’s people.”
4. The RCCN subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity and to the Westminster Standards. Church polity and governance structure include consistories, classes, and synod. Ecumenically the RCCN is a member of WARC, REC, RECON (the Reformed Ecumenical Council of Nigeria), and CRUDAN (Christian Rural Development Association of Nigeria).

D. That the CRC accept the invitation to participate in the Catholic/Reformed Dialogue in the United States regarding liturgy and the sacraments with emphasis on the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist.

Ground: This invitation allows the CRC to continue its dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church that began with the discussion of Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 regarding the Mass and as reported to Synod 2002 (see also *Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 489, Recommendation 4 and synod’s openness to further dialogue between the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church).

E. That synod elect members for the IRC from the slate of nominees presented (see section VIII).

Appendix

Report of the General Secretary's Visit with South African Reformed Churches

An invitation to attend the quadrennial synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa) (DRC) in October 2002 was the impetus to schedule visits with the leaders of all the Reformed churches with whom the CRC has ecclesiastical fellowship in South Africa. Consideration was given to sending a larger delegation, but it was decided that the general secretary should travel alone in an attempt to keep costs manageable. The visit began in Cape Town and included stops in Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pietersburg, and Lipopo. All of the leaders graciously received me and in two places even opened their homes to my stay. The importance of these visits should not be exaggerated, but neither should they be underestimated. Building contacts and relationships with the current leadership of "sister" churches continues to be crucial for the strengthening of the Reformed faith worldwide.

The churches with whom the CRC has ecclesiastical fellowship in South Africa are:

- Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa) (DRC)
- Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA)
- Reformed Church in Africa (RCA)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Potchefstroom)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa – Midlands Synod (RCSA – Midlands)
- Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA)

Some of these churches and their ministries were visited locally in their settings (especially in Durban and in the area of Soutpansberg). Leaders from the other churches were contacted in connection with our overlapping visits at the DRC synod. The following report provides greater detail of the visits with the various church leaders.

I. Reformed Church in Africa

The Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) was formed in 1968 out of the Dutch Reformed Church. While the membership of the RCA is predominately Indian, it was not established to be a mono-ethnic denomination. Since 1968, it has grown to a denomination of fourteen organized congregations, several preaching stations, and approximately three thousand members.

The Christian Reformed Church established ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCA in 1982. For many years, contact between the RCA and the CRC had been neglected. During the sessions of the Reformed Ecumenical Council meetings in 2000 in Indonesia, the relationship was rekindled and the delegates from our two churches experienced a common bond and committed themselves to maintain a more vital relationship.

During the days of the visit, Rev. and Mrs. Victor Pillay opened their home to me and graciously introduced me to the work of their churches in the

Durban area. The RCA's primary focus in its mission work is to evangelize Hindus and Muslims who live within the Indian community of South Africa (about 1.5 million Indians in South Africa). In addition to their evangelization work, the RCA has undertaken relief efforts within some of the temporary settlements that have grown up around the Durban area. Their work includes providing lunches for children in one of the schools and enabling some of the women to learn skills to help support their families.

I had contact with three of the RCA ministers during my visit: Revs. Victor Pillay and Bennett Shunmugam in Durban, and Rev. Perold De Beer in Pretoria. They were warm and friendly toward the CRC and they, as well as all the others I met, expressed their deep and continuing appreciation for the CRC. There were no major issues that were raised in our conversations, but I did provide them with copies of a variety of CRC position statements as prepared in recent years.

II. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

During the days of the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, I met with Dr. James Buys, moderator of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). The URCSA began in 1994 as a union of the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa and of a majority of the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA). They have over 1.2 million members, with congregations throughout South Africa and in Namibia. In addition to the ecumenical creeds and the three forms of unity, the URCSA has also adopted the Confession of Belhar as one of its doctrinal documents.

In conversation with Dr. Buys as well as with the leaders of the other Reformed churches, it became very clear that the "unity process" has consumed their attention. The unity process began over four years ago, but the road they have traveled has been anything but smooth. Ever-new obstacles stall the process and keep their conversation and action from positive results. Those included in the conversations and process are the Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, the Reformed Church in Africa, and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The CRC has ecclesiastical fellowship with each of these denominations and, by that fact, becomes a friendly voice in the process.

The unity process has established three principles as foundational for continuing the conversation:

1. Each denomination must officially recognize the other denominations as Reformed churches.
2. Each denomination must recognize the ministers of the other denominations as eligible for call.
3. Each denomination must officially commit itself to the unity process.

There is great expectation that all of these principles will be adopted by the various denominations by March 1, 2003. As one might expect, the continuing adverse effects of apartheid also plague this process. Nonetheless, the hopeful signs evident in this process overshadow the obstacles that have slowed it down.

As noted above, the URCSA has adopted the Confession of Belhar as one of its doctrinal statements. In 1997, the synod of the URCSA adopted a motion to

ask its ecumenical partners to study the Belhar confession and determine if there is a place for that confession within their churches. The CRC never received an official request to undertake this study, but, during the conversation with Dr. Buys, he challenged us to begin review of that confession. The IRC will need to provide leadership and assist the synod in this matter.

The CRC did make an initial decision regarding Belhar in 1990 when it said that the Belhar Confession “is in harmony with ‘the Reformed faith as a body of truth’ articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades . . . ” (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625). Furthermore, synod declared that it had no objection to including Belhar “in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution” (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625). Synod 1990, however, did not say anything about the Belhar Confession’s status within the CRC itself, and that is the kind of decision that the URCSA would like the CRC to consider. The options are not infinite and probably fall into three possibilities: (1) adopt Belhar as a normative confession of the church like the Belgic Confession, (2) adopt Belhar as an honored statement of faith like “Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony” but grant it a lesser status than that of the confessions, or (3) reject any idea of receiving Belhar as one our own statements of faith.

The URCSA expressed its continuing gratitude for the cooperative deaconal work being done by their deacons together with CRWRC and the deaconal ministries of the Reformed Church in America. Mr. and Mrs. Lou Haveman are living and working in South Africa on behalf of CRWRC and Partners for Christian Development. The Havemans are well received among the churches and have worked from the beginning to train indigenous leadership to fill their positions when their service terminates in 2004.

Even as the CRC is asked to consider the Belhar Confession, we were informed that the URCSA and one of the Presbyterian denominations in South Africa have adopted “Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony” as one of their faith statements. In unexpected places and ways, the influence of the CRC manifests itself.

III. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa

On Tuesday, October 15, 2002, the general secretary of the REC (Dr. Richard van Houten) and I had a joint meeting with three representatives of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. We met with the Revs. M.J. Lebone, P.M. Ralepeli, and M.J. Ramolahleli.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) was formed as the merger of three separate Reformed denominations in 1963 with the oldest of the churches tracing its history to 1859 in the Cape area. Many of the congregations of the DRCA joined a new merger in 1994 when the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa was formed. About 150 congregations did not join the union in 1994 and continue as the DRCA (see *Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 222). Unfortunately, the ongoing relationship between the DRCA and the URCSA is very strained, and the continuing legal battles between the two churches is time consuming and relationship breaking. We were asked to remember both denominations in our prayers.

The debilitating legal battles revolve around church properties to which both the DRCA and URCSA think they should have title. They have tried to

share the buildings, but that has not worked very well. The DRCA denominational leaders are assisting the congregations in their attempts to retain or regain title to the buildings.

DRCA leaders feel as though they have too often been ignored in the unity-process discussions between the four Reformed denominations in South Africa. They have not adopted the Belhar Confession and think that the demands made regarding its place in a new united, Reformed denomination are stifling the unity process. These matters were also aired in the fraternal greetings of Rev. Lebone to the DRC synod.

These brothers related the tremendous need they have for additional ministers. Currently, they have seventy ministers and over 160 congregations and preaching stations. This past year they had no new graduates entering ministry. Great poverty within their churches prevents them from supporting students in their studies and also prevents the ministers from receiving adequate salaries to meet their financial needs. A request for financial assistance in theological education came through very clearly from these brothers as it has in the past from them and from many other churches worldwide. Prepared leadership for the next generation is one of the church's greatest challenges throughout the world.

IV. Reformed Churches of South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod)

The congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod) are located in the northern part of the country. The members of these churches are primarily from the Venda people. Currently they have nine congregations and each has preaching stations in several locations. Although each congregation has a minister, the extensive number of preaching stations and the distances that need to be traveled make it difficult to provide pastoral care for the members in a way that the ministers would like.

While visiting these churches, I stayed in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Erson Liphadzi and there experienced wonderful Christian hospitality. Rev. Liphadzi, who is a Th.M. graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, graciously introduced me to the congregations, pastors, and ministries of their synod. Their churches are committed to the cause of Christian day school education and support two schools—one with three hundred students and another with over seven hundred students. For postsecondary studies, they have established the Iyani Bible School. The battle for the hearts and minds of God's children is waged daily within these schools.

In addition to the schools, these churches have established the Takalani Children's Home for children abandoned by their parents—often at birth. This ministry has given many children hope and has provided the love and support that their families would not or could not give.

The Soutpansberg Community Development Organization (SCDO) is yet another ministry established by these churches. The SCDO began as a relief agency and has gradually included development efforts in its organization's mandate. The brochure that describes SCDO's work gives one the impression that it and CRWRC followed the same developmental processes and that they have hearts for the same kinds of diaconal activities.

In discussions with their ecumenical deputies (Rev. A.E. Liphadzi, Rev. M.S. Nefefe, and Rev. A. Mutavhatsindi) several matters were talked about, but central among them was the conflictual situation that has arisen between the

Soutpansberg Synod and the Potchefstroom Synod over the issue of theological education. [Note: These are two separate synods of the same denomination, but they have not held joint meetings or a general synod meeting for over a decade.] With the collapse of apartheid, the Hamanskraal seminary that was attended by blacks was closed and the students were integrated into the theological school at Potchefstroom (the seminary of the RCSA). Since 1994, the Curators at the seminary have had two members from the Soutpansberg Synod, two members from the Midlands Synod, and thirteen members from the Potchefstroom Synod. This imbalance favors the Afrikaners (13 whites) and works to the disadvantage of the blacks (4 only). In many matters, this imbalance is not a factor, but, in the appointment of new faculty, it has created a strained relationship that has led the Soutpansberg delegates to refuse to participate in the work of the Curatorium.

The conflict revolves around the subject of the appointment of a black professor to the seminary faculty. Two incidences were mentioned. The first situation was in 1998 when there was an opening in Old Testament studies. A minister of the Soutpansberg Synod was a leading nominee, but he did not receive the appointment. Just prior to the time when the appointment was to be made, this nominee delivered a speech at the seminary graduation in which he spoke openly about the difficulties that continue to exist between blacks and whites in the Potchefstroom setting. The reaction of the Curators (i.e., the white ones) was such that this man's appointment was rejected.

The second situation arose more recently when the Curators decided to appoint two black professors for a two- or three-year probationary term during which time these men would be able to complete their degree programs and prepare for their new roles. The Curators refer to this as "capacity building appointments." The difficulty arose in this process when the Curatorium did not honor the suggested nominees that the Soutpansberg Synod submitted and conducted its own search for nominees. This incident has created two difficulties: (1) the Soutpansberg Synod believes that it is not being treated with dignity or as an equal partner, and (2) the black minister from Soutpansberg who was appointed to the seminary faculty is now acting in contradiction to the expressed decisions of his synod.

In response to Potchefstroom's actions, the Soutpansberg Synod has begun making arrangements to have their students trained at the theological faculty of Pretoria University (one of the faculties of the Dutch Reformed Church). Where this will lead and how this will work out is not yet clear. The deputies did say, however, that they are getting considerable pressure from their members to get the issue of theological education worked out so that they can move on to other matters. The IRC and CRC will need to consider what appropriate avenue is open to us to intervene in this matter.

The Soutpansberg brothers referred to themselves as a "small church striving to do the mission of God." It was both embarrassing and delightful to hear them say that they "strive to be like the CRC." By this they meant that they want to engage in a wholistic ministry of word and deed and develop a Christian day school system that will build up believers, enhance the churches, and provide workers for the mission of God. They struggle with the renaissance of Africa and wonder about how they should be as a church in Africa today. The CRC, they believe, can help them by continuing to assist in educat-

ing their leaders. From them we can learn again and again that small churches can have a large vision.

V. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Potchefstroom Synod)

On Tuesday, October 15, 2002, the ecumenical deputies of the Reformed Churches in South Africa met with me at the home of Rev. Ben Fourie, where we enjoyed a wonderful meal on his spacious patio. Those present at the discussion were Dr. Neil Smits, chair; Rev. Ben Fourie; Dr. Henk Stoker; and Prof. Koos Vorster. The evening was informal, but the conversation was serious and substantive.

Among the issues discussed are the following:

A. *The categories of ecumenical relationships used by each church*

Their categories line up with those of the CRC in the following way:

CRC	RCSA
Ecclesiastical fellowship	Ecumenical unity
Corresponding fellowship	Ecumenical ties
Churches in dialogue	Ecumenical contacts

Copies of the CRC “Ecumenical Charter” were distributed to the deputies so that they can be better informed regarding our principles and practice.

B. *Joint efforts or cooperative mission opportunities*

It may be difficult to coordinate mission efforts because their missiological work is initiated at the congregational level and not centrally at the denominational level. Thus, there is no central cataloging of all the work they do. Because our yearly *Agenda for Synod* provides an overview of our work, I encouraged them to read that and think about areas where our work overlaps.

One place where we do overlap is in the area of the French language radio ministry. Rev. Kayayan (son of the former Back to God Hour minister) maintains a French language broadcast that some RCSA congregations support. When I reminded them of the CRC French broadcast, they seemed surprised and wondered about joint work. In addition, they were very interested in obtaining the English and French modules for ministerial preparation being developed by the CRC and used extensively now in Africa. I promised to send copies or to get them in touch with those preparing them.

C. *National multilateral relationships*

Mostly we talked about the CRC's relationship with NAPARC. They had heard that the CRC was removed from NAPARC because we had a wrong hermeneutic. I informed them that this had been alleged, but when challenged by the CRC that allegation or ground for our dismissal was dropped. This discussion led easily to an examination of two other issues they wanted to talk about.

D. *CRC views on women in office and homosexuality*

We moved from a discussion of hermeneutics to the two perspectives regarding women in office that the CRC has learned to live with and about which synod has said that they both “honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.” I directed their attention to the report re women in office in the

Agenda for Synod 2000 (and the web site where they can find it) and the biblical-exegetical defense of both positions.

Regarding homosexuality, I distributed a copy of our position from 1973 and the recently adopted report re Pastoral Care of Homosexual Members (2002). This booklet was received gladly because their churches are wrestling with the same issues and the same challenges for a pastoral approach.

E. The RCSA ecclesiastical organization and the relationship of their three synods (one white and two black)

I was informed that they are continuing the discussions as well as the process toward organizational unity. Various models for unity have been proposed, but none has yet been adopted. Obstacles to unification are (1) the language to be used at assembly meetings (English or Afrikaans) and (2) the type and scope of decisions that will be made at the proposed middle judicatories. Some have proposed that there be an English-speaking classis and an Afrikaans-speaking classis in each region. This is quite unacceptable to others.

The cooperative theological education agreement between the synods since 1994 is very fragile and may disintegrate in the near future. The strained relationship between the Soutpansberg Synod and the Curatorium of the theological school of Potchefstroom (see more about this in the report regarding the Soutpansberg visit) may also have serious consequences for the organizational unification process. The next six months are crucial in the discussion and planning stages. The synods have requested mediation assistance from the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands with whom they have had relations over the years. Participants from the respective synods speak positively about this process. Please pray for wholesome and positive results.

The Potchefstroom deputies informed me about the dispute over theological education between their synods. Because this conversation preceded my visit to Soutpansberg, I only had a one-dimensional perspective at the time we talked. Each side reports essentially the same facts but, seen through different eyes, one gets quite a different story. Time is required to sort through the two perspectives, but the CRC will not have the luxury of maintaining neutrality in an issue of this magnitude. Further discussion is required.

The RCSA-Potchefstroom Synod is meeting in January 2003. The deputies made a special plea that I attend that meeting to speak on behalf of the CRC. They did not say that they think that our relationship is fragile, but they led me to believe that it needs continual nurturing. I told them it was unlikely that I could return in January because we had budgetary constraints like they do.

VI. Dutch Reformed Church (South Africa)

During my visit to South Africa, the quadrennial synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) was held in Pretoria. In 2001, the CRCNA established ties of ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRC, and this was our first occasion to bring fraternal greetings to their synod as ecumenical partners. Expressions of gratitude for the CRC were frequent and occasionally effusive.

The synod opened on Sunday evening with a worship service in the sanctuary of the congregation (“the college church”) associated with the University of Pretoria. On Monday morning, the business of the assembly began by choosing new moderamen for the next four years: Dr. C.W. (Coenie)

Berger, moderator; Prof. Pieter Straus, assessor; Prof. Pieter Coertzen, actuary; and Rev. Cassie Carstens, scribe.

Relations between the DRC and other Reformed churches were discussed on the first day of synod. Both the CRCNA and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia were granted a new relationship with the DRC. At first, we were given the status of “gedeeltelike verhouding” which is like our “corresponding fellowship” (i.e., a partial relationship). When the ecumenical deputies were later asked about why that status and not “volle verhouding,” they were not really sure. The moderators discussed the matter and introduced a motion to reconsider the earlier decision. When the new vote was taken, the synod overwhelmingly voted to grant us the status of “volle verhouding” (i.e., full ecclesiastical fellowship).

This report cannot give a complete account of the synod’s actions but will try to sketch of a few of the topics considered. The synod’s discussion is fast paced and each delegate is regularly limited to about three minutes to present his or her arguments. Some of the topics discussed were:

A. Frequency of synod meetings

Currently, the General Synod meets every four years. They voted to meet every two years and to reduce the number of delegates.

B. The unification process with three other churches in the Dutch Reformed family

Some of the issues involved in this process can be found in the reports about the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, the Reformed Church in Africa, and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The synod debated the percentage of approval that would be necessary within each congregation before a merger would occur. This matter was tabled and only considered again after I left Pretoria.

C. Permission for elders to serve the Lord’s Supper under the supervision of the church council

This matter was referred back and will be taken up at a subsequent synod.

D. The role of grace and human responsibility in decisions of faith

Arminian ministries in South Africa have forced discussion of this issue with new urgency.

E. The authority of Scripture and the role of the Old Testament

As I followed the discussion, it seems as though the authority of the Bible has been challenged by more liberal elements in South Africa as well as from the side of the experientialists. The Reformed confessional position re the Old Testament was reaffirmed because some have been disparaging the Old Testament view of God and violence.

F. Homosexuality

There was general consensus that the DRC’s current position is too harsh and has within it too little grace and pastoral concern. The synod noted “with regret and sorrow that in the past the DRC had shared in the alienation of homosexuals from the church through its prejudice and unloving actions.” A new study was commissioned and will come to a subsequent synod.

The busyness of synod prevented extended discussions with the ecumenical deputies of the DRC. There was time for occasional brief talks, and I

provided them with copies of the recent “Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members” booklet, the “What It Means to Be Reformed” booklet, and the “Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist” study. Our relationship with the DRC deepens and strengthens each time we meet together. We are facing so many of the same challenges and issues, and if the barrier of distance were not between us, we would likely be able to enrich each other’s thinking and ministry immensely.

I. Brief overview

In 2002, the committee published twenty-seven sermons in three booklets of nine each. The committee served 146 churches by annual subscription. In addition, some sixteen churches availed themselves of a one-time number of back copies.

The work of making the sermons available on the internet by way of a link to the CRCNA web site (www.crcna.org) is in progress. The printed booklets will continue to be published until December 2004.

Subscription rates for 2004 will remain at \$65 (U.S.) and \$90 (Canadian). A limited number of back copies are available from the secretary/treasurer at half price.

Rev. Jack Westerhof, whose first term expires this year, has agreed to serve a second term.

The committee is composed of Rev.Hendrik P. Bruinsma (2004), chairman; Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof (2005), alternate; Rev. Jack Westerhof (2003); Rev. Ralph Koops (2005); Rev. John Zantingh (2005); and Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary/treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 2004 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.

B. That synod encourage the churches to subscribe to the service for the benefit of churches and individuals.

C. That synod approve the appointment of Rev. Jack Westerhof for a second term of three years.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Gerrit J. Bomhof, alternate
Hendrik P. Bruinsma, chairman
Ralph Koops
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary/treasurer
Jack Westerhof
John Zantingh

I. Background

The Sesquicentennial Committee was appointed by Synod 2001 with the following mandate:

That synod appoint a representative committee whose duty it will be to present to Synod 2004 a set of plans for a churchwide celebration of our sesquicentennial in 2007. The plans shall include a theme, programs, celebrations, publications, contests, and conferences that are suitable and significant for the occasion. An expanded budget along with possible funding sources will also be included in the proposal.

(Acts of Synod 2001, p. 453)

The committee is composed of the following members:

Rev. Moses Chung
Rev. Michael De Vries
Dr. David H. Engelhard
Dr. Richard Harms
Rev. Stanley Jim
Mrs. Darlene Meyering

Ms. Rebecca Rozeboom
Mrs. Cindy Vander Kodde
Mr. Nate Vander Stelt
Rev. Jack Vos
Rev. Norberto Wolf

Even though the mandated timeline suggests that the committee report in 2004, we have had many productive meetings and are ready to report in 2003. The following report presents many ideas and thoughts about how the CRC's one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary could be celebrated. Many of these ideas can be implemented over the next four years as financial resources become available. The committee is asking synod to endorse several recommendations that will enable it to continue its planning and implementing process.

II. Plans

After much discussion over several meetings, the committee identified a theme that it is asking synod to endorse. The suggested theme for the CRC's sesquicentennial is, *Grace Through Every Generation*. This theme is biblically based, covenantal, intergenerational in scope, and ethnically inclusive. The preposition *through* refers both to God's grace in each generation and to the grace demonstrated by us as believers. Believers are both grace recipients and grace bearers. Although the three-part subtheme of Remembering, Rejoicing, and Rededicating has not been added to the overall theme, these key ideas will be used in several ways during the course of the sesquicentennial. A second theme (*Love Unfailing*) was given serious consideration by the committee, but, in the final analysis, *Grace Through Every Generation* won the support of the committee.

Around the above theme and the three-part subtheme, the committee is proposing that three separate dates be designated for anniversary events. The date most associated with CRC beginnings is April 7, 1857. Because the Sunday closest to that date (April 8, 2007) is Easter Sunday that year, the committee thinks that it would be unwise to choose that day for a CRC anniversary celebration. Thus, the committee is proposing that April 22, 2007, be designated as Sesquicentennial Sunday and that all CRC congregations

participate in a common liturgy for that day as we celebrate Grace Through Every Generation.

Two other dates are also being proposed as appropriate Sundays for rejoicing and for rededicating ourselves and our churches in God's service. June 10, 2007, is the Sunday during the week of that year's synod and would serve as a wonderful day for congregations (or groups of congregations) not only to remember the work of synod but to come together and once again share a common liturgy as one way to express our continuing unity as the CRC. A large combined worship service (Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise and the Multiethnic Worship Service) is being planned for the De Vos Hall in Grand Rapids with an emphasis on Remembering and Rejoicing. The common liturgy prepared for this service could be used by other mass services throughout North America.

To conclude the series of celebrative events and to allow the churches an opportunity to rededicate themselves to ministry in their communities in North America and throughout the world, the committee is recommending that October 14, 2007, be designated as rededication Sunday. Just as Israel regularly had covenant renewal ceremonies, the committee believes that a unified rededication ceremony will allow the CRC to recommit itself to God's service while at the same time it remembers the significance of God's grace for its journey past, present, and future.

The committee has begun to lay the foundation for a scholarly conference that will explore various aspects of CRC history. Because much has been written about the first hundred years of our history, an attempt will be made to explore especially in depth the last fifty years of our life together. The identity of the CRC today has been influenced by many factors during the past fifty years. This scholarly conference will explore some of those factors. It will be held at Calvin College early in 2007 and will be designed in such a way that it can be repeated (probably in a restricted format) in other parts of the CRC during 2007.

Currently, plans are underway to produce a popular history of the CRC that will be affordable and readable by all. CRC Publications has assisted the committee in its thinking and is ready to oversee the project if synod endorses the general direction of the committee and when sufficient funding is available.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, the committee is working on the following ideas:

A. Creating a CD of selected songs from the diverse cultures within the CRC. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the Worship Institute of Calvin College.

B. Producing a *Stories of Faith* booklet written by CRC members throughout the denomination. The theme of the sesquicentennial (Grace Through Every Generation) will likely serve as the thematic thread of this book so that it will have a devotional quality to it.

C. Preparing worship aids for each of the three designated Sundays as well as a kit of ideas that can be used by young people in the planning of a worship service, possibly for the October 14 service.

D. Promoting various contests throughout the CRC. The committee anticipates sponsoring a hymn contest, a poetry contest, a worship-drama (four to

six minutes) contest, and a music contest. Hopefully these contests will encourage members to offer their best to the Lord and the church so that his name is praised and the congregations are enriched by these gifts of grace.

E. Promoting the idea of a freewill offering on October 14, 2007, that will provide funding for an internal gift (possibly for leadership training) and an external gift (possibly a deaconal project). The committee is open to suggestions regarding such memorial gifts.

Other activities have been discussed, but, as of now, no other major plans are being considered. The committee will report yearly to synod, and any new initiatives will be included in those reports.

III. Expenses

As one might expect, the committee's ability to determine expenses at this stage in the sesquicentennial's development is rather limited. We are trying to partner with as many CRC agencies and institutions as possible, although they cannot be expected to bear new costs without financial help. Some very general expenses that we have been able to discern are as follows:

Video(s)	\$15,000 – 20,000
Conferecing costs including satellite capabilities	15,000
CD production	20,000 – 25,000
<i>Stories of Faith</i>	20,000
Rental fees such as DeVos Hall, etc.	12,000 – 20,000
Bulletin covers and/or inserts	18,000 – 22,000
Popular history of CRC	20,000
Honoraria	2,000
Contest prizes	4,000
Committee expenses	3,500 per year

The committee is submitting a request to the CRC Foundation that it establish a special fund for retaining contributions raised for the sesquicentennial. The committee hopes that much of the funding can be raised over the next four years from private donors or freewill offerings. Nonetheless, the committee believes that a special \$1 ministry share for three years will be required to provide the financial basis the committee will need to carry on its work. This request is in keeping with the way synod funded the centennial events in 1957 when a ministry share of \$1.25 was approved. The \$1 ministry share request will be included with the unified budget presented to Synods 2004, 2005, and 2006. These monies will provide some funding for calendar years 2005, 2006, and 2007. The committee's yearly report will keep synod informed regarding funding—both the anticipated costs and the monies received.

IV. Recommendations

The Sesquicentennial Committee recommends

A. That synod approve the theme of Grace Through Every Generation as the theme of the CRC sesquicentennial in 2007 (see section II above).

B. That synod approve the dates of April 22, 2007; June 10, 2007; and October 14, 2007, as the dates for sesquicentennial worship services with emphasis on

the first date on remembering, on the second on rejoicing, and on the third on rededicating.

C. That synod permit a special \$1 ministry share allocation for some of the sesquicentennial expenses. This ministry share request would become part of the unified budget presented to Synod 2004 and would continue through 2007.

D. That synod give general endorsement to the ideas identified in this report and encourage the committee to provide further clarification and cost estimates in its yearly reports.

E. That synod retain the current committee with the understanding that several subcommittees will be formed to assist in accomplishing the various tasks.

Sesquicentennial Committee

Moses Chung

Michael De Vries

David H. Engelhard, chair

Richard Harms

Stanley Jim

Darlene Meyering

Rebecca Rozeboom

Cindy Vander Kodde

Nate Vander Stelt

Jack Vos

Norberto Wolf

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

Throughout last year, the Lord has blessed Dordt College by sending both challenges and opportunities. These challenges and opportunities have confirmed our calling as an academic institution, they have validated our mission of providing and developing serviceable insight for the people of God, and they have strengthened our commitment to reach into new areas and find new opportunities to serve Christ's kingdom now and in the future.

Two years ago, we were challenged to take an honest look at ourselves as an academic institution by preparing a self-study report for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. More than fifty faculty and staff and an additional fifty students rose to the challenge and prepared an extensive three-hundred-page self-study report entitled *Cultivating Lives of Service*. This past year, we received a confirmation of our academic excellence when the commission granted a ten-year continuation of Dordt College's general accreditation. In reading their report, we were encouraged by the complimentary comments made about the dedication and quality our faculty, staff, and students who are engaged in the enterprise of higher education at Dordt College.

We also received a wonderful validation from the constituency that we serve. We have always been dedicated to providing an education that recognizes the lordship of Christ in all areas of life, an education that sees God in every equation. However, we were really taken aback at the response we received from our constituency when we put forward the idea that we should have on campus a building that reflected our philosophy. We gratefully celebrated that response in October when we dedicated our new Campus Center to the glory of God. Not only did we celebrate the completion of the Campus Center, but we celebrated the completion of the fundraising campaign that went with it, an \$8 million campaign that surpassed its goal by \$174,000. The Dordt College constituency shared our vision, understood that our philosophy certainly could be reflected in circuits and shingles, and made it happen. The Campus Center combines, in one building, areas for study, leisure, eating, celebrations, counseling, spending time in prayer, teaching, learning, appreciating art, administration of the college, and much, much more. It creates areas where students, faculty, and staff can meet informally in a relaxing chair by a fire or more formally in a conference room or classroom.

We have also received a significant validation from an organization outside of our traditional constituency. In November, we were awarded a \$2 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to implement a Programs in Christian Vocation project. This project is a natural extension of our mission as a college. The cornerstone of the project is a first-term seminar that will help new students develop greater clarity about the relationship between their faith and their vocational choices and what it means to be "called" into lives of service. We are grateful to Lilly Endowment, Inc. for making this program possible.

The confirmation and validation that we received from our constituency and from those outside our constituency have helped to strengthen our commitment to reach into new areas and find new opportunities to serve Christ's kingdom now and in the future. This fall, we were confronted with an opportunity to purchase the only remaining farmland adjacent to the college

property. We made a commitment to purchase the property, nearly doubling the size of our campus and ensuring adequate space for the continued growth and development of Dordt College and its programs far into the future.

We also made a commitment to establish new programs this year and fulfilled our commitment by inaugurating programs in health sciences and computer networking. In addition to receiving a bachelor of health sciences degree, graduates from our program who pursue an RN, can also go on to get their bachelor of science in nursing degree from Briar Cliff University through an agreement signed between Dordt College and Briar Cliff in October 2002. Our new computer-networking program is a two-year associate-degree program meant specifically for students looking for careers as network administrators.

We have committed ourselves to keeping Dordt College affordable by increasing our scholarship programs significantly for next year's incoming freshmen. Distinguished scholars, those given the highest academic awards on campus, will receive \$9,000 next year, up from \$7,500. Other academic scholarships and activity grants will increase from \$500 to \$2,000 per year.

Finally, we have made a commitment to take a long and systematic look at Dordt College in order to strategically plan for its future. This strategic planning process has involved people who serve in a wide variety of roles on and off campus. Board members, faculty, staff, and students have filled out surveys and met in groups on campus. Local business and community leaders as well as leaders from other Christian organizations have given their input. Members of Dordt College's constituency from around the United States and Canada have filled out surveys and met in focus groups. The information gathered at these groups is being compiled and discussed as part of the strategic planning process. The process itself will be completed by the time the college is ready to celebrate its jubilee anniversary in 2004-2005. We are confident that as a result of this extensive strategic planning process, Dordt College will celebrate its jubilee with a renewed vision for its place in God's kingdom and will be poised to meet any new challenges and opportunities that the Lord will bring in the future. To him alone be all the glory.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) is a graduate school that provides creative, biblical, and thoughtful academic leadership to students and the wider Christian community. ICS is an affiliate member of the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto. In addition to its own master's degrees, ICS offers a Ph.D. in cooperation with the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Founded in 1967, this year ICS celebrated thirty-five years of Christian graduate education. ICS celebrates this milestone in a forward-looking and hopeful spirit

Based on a successful long-range planning process, in 2002 ICS launched a capital campaign that will help fund a vigorous program to distribute its academic resources globally, as well as funds for scholarships and endowments. *reGeneration: The Campaign for ICS* has a goal of \$5 million. The name reflects a regeneration of passion and vision, readying ICS for another thirty-five years of service

To make the most of our opportunities, ICS wants to invest in future students. The campaign goals include reaching out to a global audience through new media and forms of communication. The global distribution initiatives fall into two categories. One, the Faith and Learning Network will assist the development of Christian scholars by removing barriers of access to academic resources—especially for scholars from developing nations. The focus will be on Web-based access and distribution through electronic means and media. The other major thrust is distributed learning, through which ICS offers certain courses online or in locations removed from its Toronto base. Proceeds from the campaign will help to develop and standardize these ways of delivering courses. Other goals for the campaign include funding for two endowed chairs and increased scholarships and financial support for students.

At present, ICS has reached 25 percent of the campaign goal, including an early gift that allowed ICS to hire a staff person to begin working on the Faith and Learning Network project. We believe that under God's continued blessing the prospect of reaching the campaign goal is very good.

ICS continues to value the cooperation it experiences with many partners. In partnership with the National Institute for Christian Education (NICE) in Australia, ICS offers graduate-level courses to teachers across North America. Distributed learning techniques allow participants to access courses that are normally out of their reach. ICS is also an active member of the Association of Reformed Institutions of Higher Education (ARIHE) of which ICS president Harry Fernhout is the chair. ICS also continues its positive relationship with the Toronto School of Theology (TST), a federation of theological schools affiliated with the University of Toronto. In the past academic year, TST students took courses at ICS, ICS faculty participated in thesis supervision and oral exams for TST students, and ICS students took courses at TST schools.

ICS continues to explore new degree and certificate granting opportunities and has given approval to a proposal concerning the Institute's involvement in the development of a Christian Academic Studies Certificate (CASC) in partnership with the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE). ICS has also begun a process of review with Ontario's Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities with the intended

goal of expanded degree-granting power. ICS invites churches to pray for us as we pursue these opportunities.

This year, ICS was involved in an extensive search for two faculty members. Dr. Lambert Zuidervaart took up an appointment in philosophy in July 2002. Zuidervaart has a proven record as an academic, a teacher, and an administrator in Canada and the United States. He is a highly published scholar and has worked in the Philosophy Department at Calvin College in Grand Rapids for over twenty years, including many years as chair of that department. On January 1, 2003, Dr. Doug Blomberg began his appointment as the Institute's new senior member in philosophy of education. Blomberg relocated to Toronto from Australia where he served from 1996-2000 as principal and academic dean of the National Institute for Christian Education in Australia and was instrumental in setting up Australia's first senior Christian high school and inaugurated Christian teacher education there in 1979. ICS is delighted to be able to hire these experienced and knowledgeable faculty members.

God has richly blessed ICS with a spirit of unity and creativity as we carry out our institutional vision. God has also given us a very full agenda, one that fills us with joy and anticipation. Voluntary income makes up 75 percent of the ICS budget, and about 80 percent of that is provided by CRC members and churches. The faculty, staff, and students at ICS are grateful for the prayer and financial support coming from the Christian Reformed Church, and we continue to depend on your support.

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and students of The King's University College, I extend greetings to the delegates of Synod 2003.

As I write this report, we are just starting a new semester at King's and are excited about beginning a new year of service to our students and to the community in which we work. This year's enrollment, which averaged 625 over the two semesters, is up 11 percent over last year. Of interest is also the fact that our enrolment from CRC congregations increased about 25 percent as compared with last year. We thank God for the opportunity to provide Christian higher education to a growing number of students.

During the past eighteen months, the University College has been busy with a major accreditation review, carried out by Alberta's Private Colleges Accreditation Board. I am pleased to report that the final result was very positive. The accreditation of all our degree programs was reaffirmed, and the report of the external review team gave our institution a strong endorsement, especially in terms of its unique Christian mission. To quote some sentences from the report: "Built in a few decades, TKUC does a remarkable job serving the needs of students. An excellent faculty strongly committed to the mission of the institution plays an important role in academic decision making. . . . Students described King's as a caring place. . . . The integration of faith and learning permeates all they do. . . . Well-designed degree programs produce graduates who are accepted into graduate school, professional programs, and the labour force." The report made some helpful recommendations, which will serve to strengthen our institution as we continue to grow.

The growth mentioned above presents us with some challenges, as I have reported previously. We have run out of space and, with current strong growth, need to prepare for the future. A Campus Master Plan has been developed and approved, and as a first phase, we hope to build a new wing by 2004 or 2005 to increase the capacity of our campus to about one thousand students. Conceptual design work for this new wing, as well as for an additional residence, has begun. Our three-year *Growing to Serve* fund-raising campaign, which we launched in early 2002 with the goal to raise \$4 million for the expansion, has already reached the \$2.5 million mark in gifts and pledges. We are very grateful for the excellent support the campaign is receiving in our supporting community, and we will continue our work in this area for at least another year.

Our vice president of academics, Keith Ward, has announced his retirement, and we are actively searching for a replacement. This is a very important position of academic leadership in the institution. We continue to advertise this position, which will be open in July 2004.

King's provides Christian education to a growing number of CRC students, and in addition introduces numerous others to a Reformed perspective on life and our world. We continue to believe that we have a strategic role to play in the university system in western Canada. We feel supported in that mission by the denomination, and appreciate the support King's receives in the form of ministry shares from CRC congregations. This support helps keep tuition affordable for our students and also allows us to provide significant financial aid. We also thank you for your prayers and your continuing encouragement.

The King's University College
Henk Van Andel, president

We at Redeemer University College are amazed at how the Lord has blessed and prospered us in our mission of providing a Christian university education and promoting scholarship with a Reformed Christian basis. Having just celebrated our twentieth anniversary, we continue to enjoy explosive enrolment growth with over 760 students this year and 850 expected for 2003. Ontario's "double cohort" (a four- and five-year high school pattern graduating in one year) is part of this story; the larger story is the increasing interest in Christian university education that will push enrolment to over 1000 students by 2005. A recent article on Canadian university education by the Hudson Institute cited Redeemer as one of the two most prominent private liberal arts institutions in Canada.

Our students come primarily from Ontario but include all ten provinces, twelve U.S. states, and eight countries and represent some forty different denominational backgrounds and a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Christian Reformed students continue to account for one-half of our enrolment, with students of Reformed background making up 62 percent of the student body. The rest of our students come from evangelical and some mainline churches. Overall, this mix of students has contributed to a diverse campus community that is spiritually vibrant, respectful of diversity, and expressive of its unity in Jesus Christ. We look forward to hiring a full-time chaplain to work with students in their faith development.

Our growth is also making possible the hiring of additional faculty, bringing our full-time faculty to thirty-nine, and the mounting of new programs. Our environmental studies program is taking shape, and a horticultural management program will also be available in the near future, both with a strong liberal arts and sciences foundation. We are particularly excited about the establishment of the H. Evan Runner Chair in Philosophy, an endowed chair that will be filled this spring by a scholar-teacher in the tradition of the late Dr. Runner. We hope this new faculty member will inspire future generations of Christian leaders as Runner did at Calvin College.

Our faculty members continue to make meaningful contributions to scholarship both within the Christian community and in the broader academy. Translation work continues in the Dooyeweerd Centre, and work on a bibliographic database in faith and science, funded by the Templeton Foundation, is being conducted in the Pascal Centre. Faculty projects range from writing novels to recording CDs to researching Eastern Orthodoxy, quarks, and computer optics. This diversity of scholarly service adds to the richness of our campus learning environment.

Our next challenges are twofold. The first is the provincial accreditation of our teacher education program. The program is already recognized as leading to a Christian School Teachers Certificate. Gaining recognition from the Ontario College of Teachers and the B.Ed. degree will make Redeemer the first faith-based teacher's college in the history of the province of Ontario. We pray that the Lord will grant us this historic breakthrough in the coming year.

Our other challenge is a campus expansion campaign. We are mounting a \$15 million fundraising campaign to expand our academic facilities; add another residence hall; and make other improvements to our roads, parking,

and infrastructure. This will enable us to serve up to 1000 students and prepare our campus for future growth up to 1500 students.

As Redeemer becomes better known both locally and nationally, new opportunities for witness and cultural impact for the sake of Christ open up. Redeemer University College is always grateful for the support we receive from Christian Reformed churches and their members. May we be faithful to our mission to witness to the comprehensive claims of the gospel.

Redeemer University College
Justin D. Cooper, president

Reformed Bible College has been part of the history of the Christian Reformed Church for sixty-five years. The mission and evangelism outreach of the CRC was beginning to take root in the 1930s and people were looking for specific training to prepare them for the mission field or for lay ministry in North America. Even though circumstances and arguments made at the time did not lead the CRC synod to focus attention or resources on this type of educational preparation, there were many CRC pastors and church members who felt strongly about the need and organized an association to establish Reformed Bible Institute (RBI). The “Aim and Purpose” of RBI was (1) to train people for personal development in Bible and Reformed principles, (2) to train people to become spiritually equipped to work as a Christian in any profession, (3) to train people for lay leadership in the church, (4) to train people for teaching Bible in any setting, and (5) to train people as unordained missionaries and evangelists.

Today, the mission of RBC is to “equip students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and His world.” This is not much of a change in purpose, but there has certainly been a change in curriculum content over the years. RBC has grown to be a fully accredited college with ever-expanding programs in cross-cultural missions, evangelism, educational ministries, youth ministry, pre-seminary, and social work. Ten other programs of study carried out collaboratively with sister colleges (including Calvin) enable our students to gain “passport skills” that help gain them entrée into other countries for the purpose of witness. These programs range from nursing to education to business administration.

We are thrilled with the fact that increasing numbers of students are coming to RBC for the very purpose of this training. As it was sixty-five years ago, they come with a strong sense of call for full-time kingdom service, focused on active witness for Jesus Christ. Of the 277 students in 2003, 47 percent are from the Christian Reformed Church (22 percent RCA and 11 percent from other Reformed denominations). We have experienced significant program growth especially in the areas of youth ministry and social work. Graduates from the pre-sem track go on to attend a number of different seminaries though we do maintain a close and deeply appreciated relationship with Calvin Theological Seminary (where nineteen of our graduates are currently enrolled).

Significant activities at RBC this year include:

- Creation of a new five-year strategic plan
- Introduction of a new first-year-student course—Gateway
- Application for accreditation of our social-work program with the Council on Social Work Education
- Formulation of a new “form of subscription” for employees and trustees
- Review of the college name

We are grateful for the support and encouragement we have and continue to receive from the Christian Reformed Church. We are enthusiastic in responding by providing well-trained, well-educated, focused, and motivated people for work in the church. Above all, we are struck by the things we see God doing in the world today and are therefore motivated even more to excel

in service, training, and impact for the sake of his honor and glory. Our encouragement and prayers go with you as you live, minister, work, and pray toward the same end.

Reformed Bible College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

The past year has been filled with blessings for Trinity as we witnessed increased enrollment, new facilities, expanded programming, and new events. The college welcomed Interim President Dr. Anthony Diekema to serve a one-year term and facilitate a search for a new, permanent president by the end of the current academic year.

The Heritage Science Center was dedicated in September 2002 when an audience of more than four hundred Trinity Christian College friends, faculty, staff, and students gathered in the Ozinga Chapel. United States Representative Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.), the first research physicist elected to Congress, delivered the keynote address, which highlighted the significance of science in society, in the Christian faith, and at Trinity. The new Science Center is a 38,000 square-foot facility with nine laboratories and a greenhouse. This building will provide much-needed improvements and expanded space for the chemistry, biology, and physics programs, as well as additional computer classrooms. All of the funding for the \$8 million construction came from Trinity friends and supporters.

The second of two pipe organs has been installed in the Ozinga Chapel, with the other added in the summer of 2002. The entire Trinity community is thankful to God for blessing us with these important resources as we work together to build his kingdom.

The college presented the first Faith Engaged conference sponsored by the VanLunen Foundation in November 2002. The annual conference series addresses significant issues that confront Christians in relevant areas such as public affairs, medicine, the arts, economics, worship, the media, families, business, and education. The first conference featured two prominent speakers who examined the meaning of Christian citizenship through presentations and panel discussions over the course of two days. Dr. James Skillen, executive director of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D. C., and Dr. Marvin Olasky, professor of journalism at the University of Texas-Austin, editor of *WORLD* magazine, and author of the book *Compassionate Conservatism*, considered what it means for Christians to be engaged in public affairs and community service. Faith Engaged will look at the role of Christians and the media on November 7-8, 2003.

In the current academic year, Trinity is serving 867 traditional-aged students, 95 percent of whom are full-time students, with two-thirds residing in campus-provided housing. Because of enrollment growth and increasing demand for on-campus housing, Trinity purchased two apartment buildings in 2001 in nearby Crestwood and anticipates purchasing another off-campus multiunit residence this spring to meet our needs. This step has brought welcome relief from the housing shortage but also presents the challenge of offering quality student-life programming at a distance.

We have begun construction of a new student residence, Alumni Hall, with expected completion and occupancy in fall 2004. A proposed theater-art complex is on the drawing board for next year; the campus master plan had identified the location of this new building, along with recommendations for additional structures in the future. We praise God that, through the generous support of his people, Trinity has experienced such growth in facilities to serve

an increasing student population, and we are grateful for the continued recognition that synod gives to Trinity's contributions to the life and development of the greater Reformed Christian community.

The Trinity Adult Degree Completion Studies program (TRACS) currently serves 223 students, offering programs in organizational management, teacher education, and communication; all three programs are degree granting. The demand for teacher certification in particular has been especially acute in the Chicago area, and the number of enrollments in this program are challenging staff, facilities, and schedules to meet this need.

In September of 2002, Trinity began to offer adult degree programs in the south suburbs at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights. There are now two cohorts there, with a third one starting in June 2003. Plans are also underway to offer programs in downtown Chicago using the facilities of the Chicago Semester, a consortial program of the six Reformed colleges in the Midwest.

Trinity's Semester in Spain campus in Seville enrolls an additional forty to fifty students each semester, representing twenty-five different colleges and universities nationwide, mostly from Christian colleges. All of these programs combined bring the total student population to 1135, an all-time high.

The leading academic major continues to be in teacher education, which has attracted about one-third of all students this year, followed by business, nursing, and psychology. Trinity added a political science major in 2002 and is now home to the Center for Law and Culture. Majors in business communication and biology continue to appeal to students, and we anticipate an accredited bachelor of social work program to be completed within the next three years. We will also add five new positions to our faculty beginning in fall 2003.

The Cooper Career Center fulfills an important role by providing career counseling, internship placement, and alumni networking opportunities to help students match their talents and interests with appropriate career options. Our employment and graduate school placement report is filed six months after graduation. The numbers for spring 2002 graduates indicate that 118 completed all undergraduate degree requirements. Fourteen of those graduates went on to graduate school (12 percent). Of the remaining 104 graduates, 97 have been employed in their career area of choice, yielding a 93.2 percent placement in choice of career. This percentage compares to 96.9 percent in 2001, and 95 percent in 2000. Graduate school placement was 8 percent in 2001 and 5 percent in 2000.

Churches are an essential component in providing the faculty, facilities, programs, and services needed to support our mission of equipping students for lives of meaningful service. Over 60 percent of Trinity students come from families who are members of Reformed churches; 43 percent come from the CRC. During the last fiscal year, churches contributed \$154,341 in unrestricted gifts, nearly 11 percent of total annual unrestricted giving. We respectfully request that Synod continue to urge area classes to support faithfully the work of their regional Christian colleges.

Trinity continues to face the challenges of higher enrollments and the need for improved facilities, which increases the pressure to raise tuition. We are acutely aware of the concerns of middle-class families who envision their children attending an excellent Christian college in the Reformed tradition. Our fiscal stewardship includes provision for increased assistance directly to families with financial need. Trinity's commitment to provide quality educa-

tion at a reasonable cost goes hand in hand with efforts to expand our endowment, encourage controlled growth in student enrollments, and partner with friends whose gifts support our mission. We are committed to fiscal responsibility and careful planning as we strive to fulfill our mission of educating young people for leadership roles in church, education, business, professional vocations, and society.

The vision of Trinity is that we be a community of Christian scholarship committed to shaping lives and transforming culture. We are blessed to serve young people of Christian faith, charged to nourish them spiritually and prepare them intellectually for the glory of God. The campus community gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Christian Reformed Church and its members in sustaining us through prayers and gifts. We pray that our partnership may continue to flourish for the benefit of the kingdom of God.

Trinity Christian College
Anthony Diekema, interim president

STUDY COMMITTEES

I. Mandate and outline of report

Synod 1999 (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 578) appointed a study committee “consisting of pastors, theologians, scientists, and others to examine the biblical/theological/ethical issues raised by the increasing capabilities and recent discoveries in bioscience and genetic engineering: specifically to provide pastoral advice to the churches on issues such as in vitro fertilization, surrogate pregnancy, artificial insemination by donor, birth-control methods (RU-486, IUD), abortion in cases of rape and fetal deformity, harvesting of fetal tissue, and cloning, and report to Synod 2002.” (The committee requested and was granted a one-year extension to report to Synod 2003.)

In response to this mandate, we have prepared the following report. The report is organized as follows:

I. Mandate and outline of report

II. Foundations

- A. *Previous synodical decisions*
- B. *An introduction to the issues at hand*
- C. *Basic understandings of sexuality, marriage, and parenthood*
 - 1. Sexuality as a gift
 - 2. Sexual expression in marriage
 - 3. Sexuality: distortions of the way things ought to be
 - 4. Parenthood
- D. *Biblical foundations regarding infertility and the role of children in salvation history*
- E. *Moral and ethical foundations*
 - 1. The protection of all human life
 - 2. Interpreting synod’s decision in 1972
 - 3. The moral status of unimplanted human embryos
 - 4. Moral limits to research using human embryos
 - 5. Initial moral consideration of in vitro fertilization
 - 6. Additional considerations regarding IVF
 - 7. Moral considerations in cases of genetic defects
 - 8. Moral considerations in cases of rape

III. Guiding precepts resulting from these foundations

IV. Application of these precepts to the specific situations requested by Synod 1999

A. Application of the guiding precepts to issues of procreation

1. Applying the precepts to the methods of treating infertility
2. Applying the precepts to the avoidance of conception
3. Applying the precepts to the screening of embryos and pregnancies
4. Applying the precepts to avoiding implantation and ending pregnancies

B. Application of the guiding precepts to issues in research

1. Applying the precepts to fetal tissue transplantation
2. Applying the precepts to stem cells
3. Applying the precepts to human cloning
4. Applying the precepts to genetic engineering

V. Further recommendations

II. Foundations

A. Previous synodical decisions

Synod first addressed concerns about procreation in 1934 when Classis Grand Rapids East sent an overture to synod to address two questions:

1. whether it was “biblical that men and women were taught how to prevent conception;” and
2. whether it was “biblical for men and women to seek such information.”

They believed that this was an issue the church must address because:

- birth control was being practiced “without good reason for it” and “without asking God’s will”; and
- “people need to know how to handle such things.”

The committee responded in 1936 with “Report IX: Report of the Synodical Committee in re: Birth Control.” The initial report is very brief and takes up less than one page of the *Agenda for Synod 1936*. In summary, the committee did not want to make any “definite pronouncement, for fear that this would serve rather to confuse the issue, leading to false conclusions or to increasingly worse practices.”

Synod 1936, not content with this report, asked for a more helpful “testimony.” The testimony was produced by the members of the original committee who were present at synod, along with a few other people whose names are not mentioned in the *Acts of Synod*. It is listed in the *Acts of Synod 1936* as Article 176 (pp. 136-38).

The testimony adopted by synod concluded that “this is, in the last analysis, a distinctly personal matter, which husband and wife must settle in the presence of their God and in the light of the best medical advice—Christian medical advice—available.” Indeed, “living as we do in a world suffering from the ravages of sin, certain conditions and circumstances may demand of Christians that they forgo parenthood, or that the voluntary limiting of the number of their offspring becomes their duty before God.”

Synod 1936 said that marriage is about parenthood, and it is about companionship. To deny or limit parenthood by choice must only be done when “certain conditions and circumstances” are present.

We concur that marriage is about both procreation and companionship, and, in light of the principles laid out in 1936, we recommend that current practice in regard to birth control honor those principles. Birth control may be used in the context of marriage to delay pregnancy for a time in order to establish a stable marriage into which children can be welcomed. Birth control may also be used to stagger the time between pregnancies in order to benefit the health of the mother and the abilities of both parents to provide the best possible care for their children.

However, using birth control to prevent children altogether cuts against the procreative purpose of marriage. In such cases, we strongly encourage the husband and wife to consider whether their motivations are founded on a desire to glorify God with their lives, energy, money, and time, or if they are choosing not to have children for more self-serving ends. Child-rearing does involve significant sacrifice, but that is no reason to avoid it. Instead, investing in the life of a child and making the personal sacrifices necessary in order to do so can be viewed as a very tangible example of Christlike living. Couples who choose not to parent must be sure that their rationale for that decision comes out of a passionate desire to live as Christ would have them live. These thoughts are consistent with Synod 1936 and also take into consideration the reproductive technologies presently available. (See also section IV, A, 2 below on “Applying the precepts to the avoidance of conception.”)

In another synodical decision related to the issues addressed in this report, Synod 1972 gave direction on the issue of induced abortion. That decision condemned “the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death.” However, it allowed for induced abortion in order to save the life of the mother. The decision of that synod regarding the treatment of human life from conception on has been reaffirmed by later synods.

In light of the remarkable changes that have taken place since 1936 and 1972 in medical technology, it is fitting at this time for the CRC to look carefully at the theological and moral issues surrounding human procreation.

B. An introduction to the issues at hand

Before recent advances in biotechnology, human embryos were only created through sexual intercourse. Once conceived, these embryos were then allowed to flourish to their potential, be that growth into a child or death due to natural causes. (It is commonly thought that many embryos conceived during normal human procreation fail to thrive due to some abnormality in the embryo itself or due to the mother’s inability to host a pregnancy at that time.) The advances in reproductive technology, however, now allow us to create embryos outside of the womb. Eggs are harvested from the mother, sperm is collected from the father, and the genetic materials are combined in a petri dish in hopes of creating embryos (this process is known as in vitro fertilization, or IVF).

Many of us are aware of couples who have taken this step in an effort to become pregnant. They participate with the physician in an effort to create embryos that they intend to host in the mother’s womb and carry to term. Many of us know couples who have had a baby as a result of this process.

This seemingly simple procedure, however, has opened the door to many complications. If, for example, the couple’s genetic materials are used to create

fifteen embryos and they choose to implant three, they may host triplets. Bearing triplets would take a physical toll on the health of the mother, which is cause for concern. Additionally, if the triplets are all brought to term and delivered and the couple then decides that their triplets are the only children they are capable of hosting, what do they do with the twelve remaining embryos? Or, if the husband and wife are each carriers of a specific, life-threatening genetic disease, they can use the above procedure to sort through the embryos prior to implantation and then select only healthy embryos to implant (a process known as genetic screening). What does this procedure imply about the value of those diseased embryos? May a couple dispose of diseased embryos? May a couple choose only healthy embryos to implant? If so, which diseases are considered severe enough to warrant sorting through embryos even prior to implantation? If the diseased embryos are not wanted, what does that say about birthed children who are presently afflicted with the disease? Are they less wanted? And what is to prevent couples in the future from selecting only those embryos that have the genes for superior intelligence, or a certain height, or the hair color that they prefer?

There are still other issues. Stem cell research holds out significant promise for the treatment and cure of previously untreatable conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injury. Currently, the most plentiful source of stem cells is human embryos, and extracting the stem cells kills the embryo. Does the good of restored health justify the death of human embryos? (See also section IV, B below on "Application of the guiding precepts to issues in research.")

In a different area of concern, women and girls who have been raped may now be presented with the option of ingesting a "morning-after pill." This pill prevents an embryo (if one is conceived as a result of the rape) from implanting in the uterus, with the result that it dies after fertilization but before implantation. (See also section II, E below on "Moral and ethical foundations.")

It becomes quickly apparent that a core issue woven throughout all of these issues listed by Synod 1999 is: What is the moral status of a human embryo? What moral and civil protections do human embryos warrant? Do unimplanted embryos have a different moral status than implanted embryos? What do our answers to these questions imply for the use of various medical technologies?

C. Basic understandings of sexuality, marriage, and parenthood

Before we apply the precepts to the questions asked of us by Synod 1999, we present a framework for the discussion. Questions of surrogacy, fertility drugs, and other treatments of infertility as well as questions regarding conception and the screening of pregnancies must be presented within the context of proper understandings about sexuality, marriage, and parenthood.

With gratitude for the work of those who preceded us, we affirm the purposes of marriage to be companionship and procreation, as identified by Synod 1936. It is with this understanding of the purposes of marriage that we consider the areas of sexuality, marriage, and parenthood.

1. Sexuality as a gift

All of creation, including the creation of human beings, was a free gift, an expression of God's overflowing and gracious love. Our sexuality (maleness and femaleness) is a gift from God—it is the way God designed

us from the beginning as human beings. As image bearers of God, we are able to give ourselves to another in a gift of love. Our sexuality is one way to express our communal nature. When we give and receive love as male and female in the way God intended, we create a union and a loving communion of persons: a marriage and a family. Mirroring God's love and God's intentions for us, the sexual act itself has the character of a gift—a generous giving of oneself as a whole person. As an expression of self-giving love, it unites spouses in a relationship of deep intimacy: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24 NIV). Marital love is also marked by hospitality—becoming one with another, welcoming and graciously receiving the other. Here again, in the sexual act of spouses, we see a reflection of God's love revealed and made manifest in a beautiful and dramatic way.

It also needs to be stated that persons who are single are whole persons fully capable of this Christlike, self-giving love. Singleness can be a calling either for a life or for a season and may be embraced as a position that enables a uniquely focused communion with God or a particular form of service in his kingdom work. As modeled by Christ himself, self-giving love ranges much wider than the bounds of marriage, even if the sexual expression of that love is so bounded.

2. Sexual expression in marriage

It is God's design that sexual intercourse be a conjugal act (from the Latin *con-jugare*, “to join together”). Specifically, it is *the act* of joining a husband and wife together into “one flesh.” As such, it is only intended for married persons whose covenant faithfulness provides the context for their oneness. The conjugal act is meant to embody the marriage covenant. Because sexual intercourse is an act that unites two persons, relating them to each other in every dimension of their personhood and making them one in the most intimate way, its place is reserved for husband and wife in a lifelong covenant union.

In sexual expression and enjoyment, spouses are bonded together as they give and receive sexual pleasure. The joy and delight of sexual pleasure is spoken of beautifully in the Song of Songs and should be celebrated by the church as well. The conjugal act helps to achieve one of the purposes of marriage in that it allows husband and wife together to experience intimate companionship as they give and receive pleasure.

The conjugal act reflects another purpose of marriage in that it is also the act God has designed for the procreation of a new human person. For this reason also, God intended its place to be within a marital relationship where children can be fully welcomed and can flourish. Marriage is the proper setting for procreation because in it children can be recognized for what they truly are—gifts from God and an “incarnation” of the one-flesh unity of spouses—rather than being viewed as an unintended consequence of intercourse and an intruder into the relationship. As marriage is a relationship marked by impulses of generosity (love gives itself) and hospitality (love welcomes in), it is perfectly suited to welcoming children—in all their vulnerability and dependence and need for acceptance. Thus, sexual intercourse, as an act of love within marriage, is meant to help

achieve both of the purposes of marriage: intimate companionship and procreation.

In one sense, fruitfulness should be a mark of Christian love in all of us regardless of our marital status. We are all called to be fruitful. As in the new covenant wherein the *spiritual* children of Abraham were welcomed into the family of God, so Paul recommended dedicated singleness as providing a different opportunity for bearing fruit than marriage and enabling a special kind of oneness with God (1 Cor. 7).

Sexual intercourse is a powerful expression of interpersonal intimacy and oneness between persons, mirroring the divine communion of persons, and it is an act that has the potential to procreate a new human person.

3. Sexuality: distortions of the way things ought to be

In this broken world, we fall far from God's design for love and sexuality. Marriage is intended for intimacy and fruitfulness, but sin can create the profound alienation of spouses from each other. The desire or the ability to procreate can be lost. Sin and brokenness pervade our lives, our marriages, our sexuality.

Our sexuality, and the sexual act, encompass the whole person. Therefore, how we act and what we do with ourselves sexually is neither a matter of sheer biology nor is it spiritually irrelevant or morally neutral. We need to guard against a view of the body as only being an instrument that we can manipulate and use however we want. We confess that we "belong, body and soul . . . to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ." Popular culture tries to convince us that sex is merely a physical act and is about self-gratification. This is an all-too-common view that must be guarded against because it perverts our sexuality into selfish and dehumanizing behaviors that destroy life and love.

We recognize with sadness that inside the church as well as outside it, persons experience brokenness in their sexuality and its expression. Things are not often as God designed and intended them to be; sin and evil are around and within us. In some marriages, intense loneliness reigns instead of intimate union, vows of lifelong fidelity are broken or renounced, sexual intercourse is marred by violence, and relationships of trust are shattered by sexual abuse. These examples only touch the surface of our distortions of this great gift. We see other kinds of brokenness and suffering from the Fall as well: broken, disabled, or diseased bodies; the struggle of some with sexual ambiguities; the pain of infertility, miscarriage, and stillbirth. Suffering is deep and real; the cry for shalom rises from many hearts: Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Amid the clamor of sin and suffering around and within us, Christ assures us that for sexual sin and guilt there is forgiveness and renewal; that for disease and dysfunction there is healing, in part now and in completion in the world to come; and that when we walk through valleys of suffering, Christ himself bears our griefs and carries our sorrows.

The mercy of our God extends to heal both bodies and souls, and through the care of pastors, doctors, and others, broken bodies can be mended and broken souls can be restored. Often healing can come here on this earth, in part if not in whole. Through wise pastoral and psychological counsel, those who have borne the wounds of sin and evil in the area of

sexuality can experience hope, healing, and renewal. Through medical intervention, some couples who have struggled with infertility can conceive and bear children.

We give thanks that as baptized children of God we have been baptized into both Christ's death and his resurrection (Rom. 6:2-5), and we know that the healing we experience here is only a foretaste of what is to come. We confess that when Jesus returns, there will be no more sorrow or crying or pain, for the old order of things shall have passed away (Rev. 21:3, 4). Because of the gift of Jesus Christ—his life, death, resurrection, and ascension—we know that someday we shall be made new, body and soul, for life everlasting.

4. Parenthood

We have said that children are a gift of God. In Christ, too, we recognize God's gift of a child. In an age of "reproductive rights" and the "right" to have a child, we reclaim God's designs for parenthood. The desire for a child is indeed a natural and legitimate one, as our procreation images God's own creative work. Because God has adopted us as his children and grafted us onto the vine (Rom. 11), we image God when we adopt as well as when we become parents through biology. In fact, because adoption is a wonderful form of hospitality, it should be celebrated by Christians and not considered as a secondary or last-resort option.

Beyond giving birth or adopting, parents have the privilege and responsibility of welcoming children into families and nurturing and educating and discipling and loving them as the vulnerable among us. Children need parental hospitality and unconditional love in order to flourish. Being and becoming parents requires a strong trust in God's providence: As we are ultimately only cooperators with God in procreation, so our parenting falls within limits. Thus parenthood, even at its best, will always require unselfish, sacrificial love and an abundance of hope.

There are many wrong and sub-Christian ways for thinking of children. Too easily we lapse into thinking of children as "choice," "burden," "entitlement," "right," or "possession." Intentionally or not, too often they are treated as our products, our projects, or our possessions rather than as persons in their own rights. Sometimes infertile couples, in the effort to become pregnant are plagued with the idea of a child as a product. Infertility is a sad condition that causes immense grief to many. Nevertheless, Christians should remember that children are begotten, not made; that our wills are not sovereign; and that human life has eternal significance and dignity in God's eyes.

Infertility is a condition, not a disease, and persons can be infertile and yet be healthy. Persons who are struggling with infertility must be surrounded by those who will love and support them through this arduous journey and remind them that neither their worth in God's eyes nor their physical health is dependent upon the procreation of children.

Because of what God has revealed in Scripture, the church is uniquely positioned to bear witness to the truth about the deepest meaning and proper expression of sexuality, marriage, and parenting in a fallen world. The biblical themes of self-giving love (John 3:16), enjoyment of sexuality (Song of Songs), and hospitality for those in need and for children can help

us recognize what shalom in these areas would be and can call us to work for it in our daily lives.

D. Biblical foundations regarding infertility and the role of children in salvation history

The stories of women who struggled to conceive are told and retold throughout Scripture: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, the mother of Samson, as well as Hannah, and Elizabeth. Their stories are familiar to us because the offspring of these women either played a role in the continuity of the covenant line or served as leaders among the people of Israel. It is the place of barrenness in the continuity of the covenant line that we will address first.

All of the wives of the patriarchs had difficulty conceiving. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were all born after someone interceded and “God remembered” their mothers. This is a striking observation after God had promised Abram that his children would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5). Such an amazing promise to Abraham; yet for it to be fulfilled, God needed to act again and again in the lives of Abraham’s wife, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter-in-law.

This served to remind each generation that this was God’s action, God’s promise, and not something that he simply turned over to Abram and his descendants. God is the one who acted in order to fulfill his covenant promises.

There is an undercurrent of God’s mercy to barren women in many biblical stories. Hagar conceives and so looks on Sarah with contempt (Gen. 16:4). Thus, Isaac is more than a promise kept for Sarah. Leah and Rachel try to outdo one another in bearing children (Gen. 29:15-30:24). Thus, Joseph is not just another son for Jacob. Peninnah “used to provoke [Hannah] severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb” (1 Sam. 1:6 NRSV), but the Lord in mercy gave her Samuel. Childbearing is not only depicted as God’s fulfilling the covenant but also as a special blessing of the Lord to the parents. At the very least, in the ancient contexts, having a child was an important way to maintain or elevate one’s status. In the Old Testament times especially, children were understood to be proof of God’s blessing.

The idea that a child is God’s blessing can be most painful for women even today. Throughout Scripture, when women or their husbands pray for children, God remembers (e.g., Gen. 25:21), and they conceive. What is to be said to the woman today who does not conceive, even after prayer? Has God forgotten her? Is she not loved? It would be wrong but easy to conclude from some biblical stories that this is the case. It is the challenge for pastors, church members, infertility counselors, physicians, and others to remind women of the proper application of these biblical narratives.

In the context of the Old Testament, childbearing was a necessary fulfillment of the covenant. God had told the snake that the offspring of Eve would crush his head (Gen. 3:15). God told Abraham that “by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves” (Gen. 22:18 NRSV).

There is, however, an important change that occurs because of Jesus. He is the offspring promised to Abram (Gal. 3:16). Because of Jesus’ finished work, there is a new covenant, ending the covenant that attended primarily to biological bloodlines. In the old covenant, the community was formed by a woman’s bearing children who then received the mark of circumcision. The new covenant community is formed by way of evangelism and baptism. We

see this in the early church where the growth of the covenantal community occurs not primarily through procreation and circumcision but through evangelism and baptism.

In writing to Gentiles Paul says,

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise . . . when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law . . . so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Galatians 3:27-4:7 NRSV

Thus, in the New Testament, adoption into the family of God through Christ is the theological concept that supercedes procreation as the point of entry into the covenant. Paul speaks often about the adoption of people into the covenant of God (Rom. 8:23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5). Gentiles are welcomed in even though they are not biological descendants of Abraham, and they need not be circumcised because baptism is the sacrament that marks their entry into the covenant. The idea of infertility as a curse fades away in the light of this new covenant. The concept of adoption as blessing replaces it.

In summary, Old Testament accounts of barrenness are in large part tied into the old understanding of covenant. Thus, Christians must be careful when they draw conclusions about their own life situations from these very unique accounts of infertility. Specifically, Christians must understand that God's love is not demonstrated to them through their ability to procreate but through their union with Christ. They must not be led to understand their struggles with infertility as a curse of God or come to the belief that "God has forgotten" them.

Although we understand that there is no need for Christian couples to procreate in order to pass on the covenant, although we can nod our assent to the truth that the covenant has been fulfilled in the Christ Child, and although we rejoice in our spiritual adoption as the children of God and seek to pass on the good news through evangelism and celebrate God's promises in baptism, we also acknowledge that children are a blessing of the Lord (Ps. 127:3), and we grieve with those couples who long to bear children of their own and are unable to do so.

Thankfully, Scripture contains accounts of God's intervention in the lives of men and women for the continuity of the covenantal line. Scripture also contains accounts of women who longed to have children and in response to prayer—either theirs or someone else's—they conceived. Hannah (1 Sam. 1, 2), the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-17), and Elizabeth (Luke 1) are each examples of barren women who were blessed with a child after intercession was made on their behalf.

These passages remind us that God does hear and answer prayer, that God can reverse the infertile condition of women and men, and that God delights in responding to the cries of his people. However, we also know that our prayers are not always answered in the way we would like and that Scripture contains accounts of unanswered prayer as well (e.g., 2 Cor. 12:7). The calling and challenge for couples who long to conceive and do not is to truly surrender their wills and plans to God's. Often the quest to conceive can have negative

effects on a couple's spiritual life, on their connectedness with other couples in their extended families and church community, and on their marriage. The deep (and God-given) longing to bear a child can overshadow the rest of life, and the persistent grief that may result can exhaust a couple.

The calling of church members, pastors, office-bearers, physicians, and others is to acknowledge the grief that marks the lives of these couples and to walk with them through it. Often the church is the hardest place for such couples to be as they are surrounded by young families, pregnant women, and the regular celebration of the baptism of infants. Mother's Day and Father's Day are often celebrated in congregations without regard for those who long to be parents. Couples without children may be asked when they are going to have children, a deeply personal question that can cause great pain when asked casually and even more when asked judgmentally.

The biblical themes of self-giving love and hospitality come into play once again as the church is asked to make room for those who do not have children. Out of self-giving love, we are to enter into their pain, and, in our calling to be hospitable, to make a safe place for those who are hurting. In worship, in small groups, and in times of fellowship, we are called to sensitivity and awareness. In our roles as pastors, office-bearers, and brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to fervent prayer on their behalf.

These theological, biblical, and pastoral understandings must serve as the foundation for any discussion of procreation and the treatments of infertility.

E. Moral and ethical foundations

As Christians, we seek to know God's will in all matters and to conform our views and practices accordingly. The initial difficulty is understanding what God's will is for the issues that surround medical technology and the beginning of life. The Bible neither addresses these issues directly nor anticipates them. The history of moral reflection in and by the Reformed churches does not directly address many of these issues either.

As a consequence, we must be careful not to bind the consciences of God's people by placing on them anything that is not taught in Scripture. Nevertheless, these are serious issues of great moral weight, and for the church to offer no reflections on them leaves God's people without any guidance at all. Thus, we enter these considerations with considerable trepidation. We neither want to overstate our conclusions nor suggest that these are matters of moral indifference.

1. The protection of all human life

In 1972, synod condemned "the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 64). However, given that the present technology was not yet available, Synod 1972 was not addressing the issue of human embryos in vitro. Nevertheless, the fact that a human embryo is located outside of the womb does not count against its being a human life nor does it remove its moral protection from wanton and arbitrary destruction.

Synod's declaration in 1972 acknowledges that human embryos warrant moral protection, and we agree. The sixth commandment, "You shall not kill," protects the lives of human persons. Jesus explains this command in Matthew 5, making it clear that God intends by it not only to protect

persons from actual murder but also to protect each person from violence, anger, and murderous thoughts. The Heidelberg Catechism understands the sixth commandment to prohibit even belittling thoughts, words, looks, and gestures. By condemning all forms of violence, and even violent thoughts, we see how protected human life should be. If the protection described in the sixth commandment prohibits even thinking violent thoughts against human persons, then it would seem to prohibit actual violence toward human life in its earliest stages.

The fact that in some cases a beginning human life is located outside of the womb, as occurs in IVF, does not strip away from it the moral protection it deserves. The psalmist in Psalm 139:13-16 speaks personally of God's involvement in his life prior to birth: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body" (NIV). Each human person develops under the watchful eye of our Sovereign God. Human life at every stage of development warrants moral protection from wanton and arbitrary violence.

2. Interpreting synod's decision in 1972

According to Synod 1972, the only occasion when an induced abortion is an allowable option, is "when the life of the prospective mother is genuinely threatened by the continuation of the pregnancy." This exception is very important. It implies that the moral protections for a birthed person and those for an implanted embryo are different. We contend that an infant's life is absolutely protected and nothing justifies intentionally ending it. An infant's moral value is equal with her mother's. Neither may be killed in order to save the other.

One way of understanding synod's exception to abortion is to conclude that the situation before birth is different. Then the life of a fetus may be ended in order to save the life of the pregnant woman. If an implanted human embryo and her mother had the same moral value, synod could have concluded that we may end the life of the mother to save a fetus. From this we could deduce that a fetus is not absolutely protected from violence as is an infant.

A different way of interpreting synod's exception to abortion is to claim that because the fetus is threatening the life of the mother, it is seen as a threat, and therefore it is not innocent. However, this interpretation has a serious flaw. While it may be medically accurate to say that the life of the fetus can present a life-threatening condition for the mother, the fetus itself is *morally* inculpable. It is morally innocent because it cannot be a moral agent at all. In general, the truth is that if a morally innocent person happens to be a threat to another person, you may not deliberately kill either one. Imagine a case where a child with a deadly and contagious disease was an unavoidable threat to her siblings. Would we be morally justified in killing her because of the threat she poses? Clearly not. Similarly, if the fetus had the same moral protections as a birthed child, then any danger it innocently poses to the mother's life would not justify ending the life of the fetus. But when the fetus poses a threat to the life of the mother, it may be aborted. So, a child is absolutely protected from violence, while a fetus is not.

There are still other ways of understanding synod's exception. A prominent one invokes the so-called "principle of double effect." Some members of the committee preferred this way of reading synod's decision, but the majority did not find using this principle to explain synod's exception convincing.

So, our conclusion is that the decision of Synod 1972 to allow induced abortion in order to save the life of the mother is best interpreted by saying that preborn human fetuses do not have the full and absolute moral protections that born persons do. This conclusion comports well with Exodus 21:22-25 where a distinction is made between unintentionally causing a miscarriage and unintentionally causing the death of the mother-to-be. Unintentionally causing a miscarriage requires some compensation to the couple, but unintentionally causing the death of the mother-to-be is to be compensated life for life. This passage implies that in ancient Israel a fetus did not have the same *legal protections* as the mother-to-be. The allowance by Synod 1972 for induced abortions in order to save the life of the mother is consistent with the implications of this passage from Exodus.

We agree with synod's decision that it is morally permissible to kill an implanted embryo/fetus if that is necessary in order to save the life of the mother. Now an important question to ask is this: What moral protections does the unimplanted human embryo warrant? And what implications does that protection have for medical treatments and research?

3. The moral status of unimplanted human embryos

Due to developments in medical technology, human embryos can be created in medical laboratories. This means that another possible moral distinction must be considered. To address the issues requested of us by Synod 1999, we need to determine the moral differences (if any) between an *implanted* embryo/fetus and an *unimplanted* human embryo. This is a very difficult and complex issue, and not all thoughtful Christians agree.

We think there are basically two views that are consistent with the Reformed faith and previous decisions of synod. The first view is that there is no moral difference between an implanted embryo and an unimplanted one. Thus, human embryos in petri dishes or those cryopreserved are entitled to the same moral protections as a fetus. In fact, because unimplanted human embryos cannot threaten the life of the mother, on this view such embryos are even more protected. They have virtually the same moral status as a child. One outcome of holding such a view is that some of the medical technologies that synod asked us to consider (e.g., screening for genetic defects and selecting only healthy ones) are morally questionable because they involve causing the death of human embryos.

Another view is that unimplanted embryos have less moral protection than a fetus because they are at such an early stage of development and have not even successfully met a critical condition for continued development—implantation in a womb. This view notes that many embryos conceived normally fail to properly implant and so die. Implantation is a significant hurdle to overcome in human development. It is because of the difficulty of this that in IVF it is customary to insert multiple embryos into the womb. The expectation is that most will not successfully implant; the hope is that at least one will. What is most important to note is that prior to

implantation the embryo lacks the conditions required for life and continued development. This does not mean, however, that unimplanted human embryos are not precious and deserving of considerable moral protection. Rather, the view is that there are some medical technologies that are morally permitted even though they put unimplanted embryos at more risk of death than we would allow in the case of birthed persons. On this view, screening for genetic defects and selecting only healthy ones may be a morally permitted option, even though it is a technology that causes the death of human embryos.

The differences between these two views are not nearly as great as the differences between them and those views that treat human embryos as a mere resource for scientific research or a product whose use is completely subject to personal discretion. Both of the acceptable views hold to the idea that any living human embryo is at least a potential human person and as such is precious and deserving of considerable moral protection.

4. Moral limits to research using human embryos

The only reason that justifies an abortion is to save the life of the mother, that is, to prevent the loss of a human life—something that is a great good. Are there any so-called goods that would justify ending the life of an unimplanted human embryo? Obviously, an unimplanted embryo cannot be a threat to the life of a mother, but are there other goods that might justify violence to such an embryo? The use of stem cells from unimplanted human embryos seems to hold great promise for helping to treat or even cure very serious and disabling conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injuries, and other serious medical conditions. Are these goods of sufficient weight that they would justify the killing of embryos in order to obtain their stem cells?

This question would be more difficult to decide were it not that stem cells can be obtained from sources that do not require the deliberate destruction of human embryos. Some medical researchers say that the quality and quantity of such stem cells is not adequate. Even if this is so, human embryos, whether implanted or not, are human beings in the earliest stages of development and therefore should not be destroyed for research purposes. We applaud the progress that is being made in medical science to treat serious conditions and diseases, and we encourage continued research into the role stem cells may play in treatment. Such research should be done, however, with stem cells obtained from sources that do not involve the death of human embryos. Destroying human embryos as a source for stem cells is unjustified.

5. Initial moral consideration of in vitro fertilization

Another great good is having children. Is the possibility of having a child a good enough reason to destroy unimplanted embryos?

Unimplanted human embryos are produced in a process called in vitro fertilization or IVF. Most human embryos produced through IVF are done so in an effort for a couple to become pregnant and have a child. Eggs are surgically removed from a woman, then combined with sperm in vitro, and human embryos are produced. Some of these are then inserted into the woman with hopes that they will implant and she will become pregnant. The ones that do not implant die naturally. Sometimes more than one

inserted embryo successfully implants, and then the woman may bear multiples, such as twins or triplets. Sometimes a higher number of embryos implant (or a high number of embryos are created in utero as a result of fertility drugs), and the parents are faced with the choice of going ahead with a high-risk pregnancy or choosing to have some of the embryos terminated (a form of abortion called selective reduction). Synod 1972 prohibited such selective reduction unless the life of the mother was threatened. Embryos that are not inserted are frozen (cryopreserved) for later insertion. Some of those embryos that are frozen may fail to survive the thawing out. Others may be semipermanently frozen when the couple decides not to have any (more) children. Others could be “adopted” by another woman or couple. Still others may be donated or sold to scientists who use them in research.

These issues are varied and complex. The desire of a couple to have a child can be very strong. The process of IVF gives some hope of having a child and is often successful. Is the possibility of bearing a child such a great good that it justifies the death of some human embryos?

Here we need to remember the important moral distinction between *causing death* and *allowing to die*. For instance, in many cases when a terminally ill patient is near death, allowing him to die (that is, not using extraordinary means to keep him living) is morally permissible. However, causing that person’s death (euthanasia) is not morally permissible. Similarly, some medical procedures and research technologies using human embryos cause their death, while others allow some deaths but do not cause them. For example, extracting stem cells from human embryos causes their death. This is a deliberate outcome of the procedure. Other procedures may result in the death of some human embryos but do not intend it. In IVF, embryos die both from failure to implant and from failure to survive cryopreservation. Such embryos may die, but they are not killed. Indeed, the hope is that all such embryos would survive—that those inserted into the uterus would implant and that those “frozen” would be alive and available for future insertion. When the embryos inserted into the uterus fail to implant or they fail to survive cryopreservation, their deaths are not *caused*. There is a significant moral difference between extracting stem cells from an embryo and deliberately causing its death and attempting to transfer an embryo to a host that will enable it to flourish and having the embryo die in the transition.

We differentiate between those procedures that have as their goal the creation of human life with the intent to offer that life the environment it needs in order to flourish and those procedures that seek to use the human life as a means to an end without intending to host the life so that it can flourish to its potential. IVF, in order to have a child, for example, may involve the unintended death of embryos as some may not survive the transfer to the womb, some may not survive cryopreservation techniques used to preserve embryos until a host is available, and some may not survive even postimplantation in the womb. However, the goal of IVF is to offer a place of flourishing to every embryo so that each may achieve its potential. In contrast, stem cell and embryonic research seeks to use the embryo for scientific purposes and does not intend to host the embryo in a way that will allow it to flourish to its potential. These involve the intentional death of embryos. The research cannot be done without killing the embryos.

One can cause death in two ways: actively and passively. To actively cause death is to engage in an action that kills another. As we have already said, an example of this is the removal of stem cells from embryos. To passively cause death is to withhold the means necessary for continued life. An example of this occurs when human embryos are passed over during genetic screening and so are neither inserted into the uterus nor preserved. Such neglect causes their deaths passively. No one directly kills them, they are simply not given the possibility of living. Such treatment of human embryos is morally equivalent to killing them.

Each human embryo is a precious entity and deserving of our protection. Thus, we put forth the following guiding precept: With one possible exception, each unimplanted human embryo should be protected from any procedures that cause death (either actively or passively). (The one possible exception is in the case of rape, cf. below "Moral considerations in cases of rape.") This precept protects the unimplanted embryo from deliberate harm.

6. Additional considerations regarding IVF

In addition to risks and harms to the embryos, the moral considerations of using IVF in order to have a child extend to the couple as well. As in many reproductive and contraceptive technologies, IVF places high demands on the wife. IVF is a personally invasive procedure involving outpatient surgery to harvest the eggs prior to fertilization. When the fertilized eggs (now embryos) are transferred to the womb, more than one may implant; thus putting the wife at higher risk as she carries multiples. Additionally, while the effects of IVF and the medications used to support it (primarily hormonal interventions) are presently deemed relatively safe, the use of these medications and the use of this technology are still in their early stages, and we cannot know their long-term effects.

The psychological and physical costs to the mother's health and well being should be carefully considered before IVF is chosen. Whatever the couples' choice, they should make sure that the wife feels respected in her bodily and personal integrity and is given full voice in decisions regarding her body. As a further moral consideration, the normal process of procuring sperm for the IVF requires that the husband masturbate. Couples who may find masturbation morally objectionable should be aware of this when considering IVF.

In addition to the physical concerns for the wife, there can be psychological costs to the marriage relationship as well. Fewer than half of the couples who use IVF are able to achieve pregnancy. This means that couples who pursue IVF are very likely to face such issues as the difficulty of waiting and disappointment, combined with the potential for eventual failure to overcome infertility by this method; the unevenness of the burden borne by each spouse (analogous to complaints about certain forms of contraception); perhaps guilt if one spouse has lingering questions or an unquiet conscience about certain procedures; and so on. The psychological costs of fertility procedures should be carefully measured against the pain of living with infertility. Spouses should be sure they are of one mind in choosing IVF with its risks and benefits over other options such as adoption. Prior to choosing IVF, couples are encouraged to hear from other couples who have tried IVF with success, those who tried IVF without success, those who

have chosen to adopt, and those who have chosen to remain childless. Consulting others who can empathize with their situation and who can offer compassion and wisdom can be an important part of the decision-making process.

In addition to physical and psychological concerns, there are also financial issues that arise when considering IVF. One attempt with IVF may cost thousands of dollars, in some cases may not be covered by insurance, and does not guarantee a child. For many couples, more than one attempt is necessary to achieve pregnancy, and the costs can quickly multiply. Proceeding with a domestic adoption may involve comparable costs to a single IVF attempt and usually will result in the placement of a child with a couple. Couples should discuss ahead of time whether repeated attempts with IVF will preclude the financial possibility of adopting later, should IVF be unsuccessful. They should also consider whether repeated use of IVF is the best stewardship of their resources even if they do not intend to adopt.

The issue of stewardship applies not only to infertile couples but also to all who bear children. Using IVF or other forms of technology to conceive is not only expensive but a first-world privilege. This is a matter of distributive justice with respect to human and medical resources because IVF is elective and not a medically necessary procedure for maintaining one's health. Our suffering and our seeking out of the fastest and most favored means for relieving it can look very different when compared not to the other upper-middle-class family next door but to those living in most of the rest of the world. This is especially relevant when there are children in need of homes throughout the world and the costs of undergoing IVF may prevent couples from adopting such children.

Couples and those who support them need also be aware that there are spiritual issues that may be interwoven with many of these concerns. IVF can become our way to attempt to control a situation that is, in so many ways, out of our control. Regardless of the method of treating infertility, the conception of a child is still out of our hands. God is the one who allows egg and sperm to unite; he is the one who allows implantation, and we must relinquish our control. Couples need to humbly seek the leading of God in matters of begetting children and be willing to address any unhealthy seeking of control that may arise while treating infertility.

It may seem unfair to couples who are already suffering the pain of infertility that they have to make very difficult moral decisions in these less than ideal circumstances. As with the inadvertent creation of excess embryos, however, we believe that couples are better served when they have carefully and prayerfully weighed these moral considerations before attempting any procedure.

If a couple decides to try IVF, they should allow the creation of no more embryos than the number of children they are willing to bear, and they should not allow the screening of embryos to the end that some will never be given the opportunity to implant. Every human embryo procreated should be given the opportunity to flourish and develop.

7. Moral considerations in cases of genetic defects

It is possible to screen unimplanted human embryos for genetic defects, such as Down's Syndrome or sickle cell anemia. When an embryo is

determined to carry such a defect, then couples may decide not to have it inserted into the woman's womb. In this way, they can assure that any child they may have will not have such defects. While it may be readily admitted that children with such defects pose special challenges to parents, families, and society, we would never say that such persons do not deserve to live. Even in their embryonic stage, living human embryos with defects are precious and may not be killed or discarded. If each human embryo is allowed to flourish to its potential, then it is better for couples not to screen embryos in order to select which ones deserve a chance to live and which ones will be left to die. (This does not mean that correcting such defects through genetic engineering, if it becomes possible to do so, would be wrong. Below in section IV, A, 3 "Applying the precepts to the screening of embryos and pregnancies," we note that such engineering does not cause the death of an embryo.)

A harder case arises when an unimplanted human embryo is known to have a *serious* genetic defect, that is, a genetic defect that will result in a child who will suffer great physical pain his or her whole life or who will die very prematurely. When a couple knows that they are at some risk of having children with a serious genetic defect, they are able to choose to have their embryos screened prior to implantation. If embryos are determined to have such a defect, then the couple can decide that it will not be inserted in the woman. Embryos carrying serious genetic defects will be left to die or used for research.

To allow a child to be born who will suffer from the time of birth, or whose lifespan can only be expected to be a few years or less, seems almost cruel to the child and to the parents. There are thoughtful Christians who think that parents who know they are particularly at risk of having children with a serious genetic defect should be permitted to screen unimplanted embryos so as to avoid such suffering. Allowing such defective human embryos to die, or to remain cryopreserved forever, seems to some like a relatively small harm compared with the suffering involved in hosting and giving birth to them. Thus, some believe that screening for serious genetic defects and selecting only those embryos that have the best chance of resulting in a healthy infant are not only permissible but morally defensible on the grounds that the parents are seeking to prevent suffering for the child who would develop from a seriously genetically defective embryo.

Other thoughtful Christians, however, think that even such seriously defective embryos are precious and so must be protected from deliberate harm. Synod does not condone the abortion of a malformed fetus, and if we extend that protection to unimplanted embryos, then we ought not condone causing the death of a human embryo, however significant its genetic defects may be. If each human embryo is to be given an opportunity to flourish, then even defective embryos deserve their opportunity for life. Selecting against the genetically defective also raises moral concerns about our attitudes toward those who are born with such defects. Is our message to them that we would have preferred that they not be alive, that we would have prevented them if we could have, that while we love them we would never again want another like them?

Most of your committee members believe that each in-vitro created human embryo has the right to be hosted in a mother's womb and allowed to flourish to its potential, including those with serious genetic defects.

8. Moral considerations in cases of rape

Another hard decision may arise in cases of rape. The horror of rape to a woman is often compounded with the fear of pregnancy. Previously, by the time a woman knew she was pregnant as a result of the rape, the embryo was already implanted and growing, and her only choices were to continue the pregnancy or to induce an abortion. Now, however, a woman who has been raped has the option of taking a morning-after pill. The morning-after pill refers to medications that are given to affect the lining of the uterus, making the uterus very unlikely to accept implantation of the developing embryo. In order to prevent implantation of the embryo, the pill must be taken in the first several days after conception. (Similar medications given *after* implantation could cause the abortion of an implanted embryo and are not considered in that context to be morning-after pills but are abortifacients. RU-486 is an example of a medication that can be given postimplantation in order to induce the abortion of an implanted embryo or developing fetus.) (See also section IV, A, 2 "Applying the precepts to the avoidance of conception.")

Opinions differ on the morality of using a morning-after pill after a rape. The guiding precept developed above would imply that it is wrong to use a morning-after pill in the case of rape. Taking such a pill is intended to deliberately cause the death of an unimplanted human embryo—if there is one. Some on the committee accept this implication and conclude that a human embryo, even one conceived as a result of rape, has a right not to be killed. That an embryo has been formed without consent does not give us the right to kill it.

However, most of your committee members believe that we must be careful not to bind the consciences of those who will wrestle with this question. This is not to say that the majority condone the taking of a morning-after pill in the case of rape. Rather, the view is that there are two factors that make it difficult to make a pronouncement that such a choice is always wrong. First, taking a morning-after pill may or may not cause the death of an embryo because there is currently no immediate way to know whether fertilization has occurred as a result of the rape. So, taking the morning-after pill is not a straightforward case of killing an embryo. It does, however, signal a willingness to kill an embryo if one is present. Being willing to cause the death of an unimplanted human embryo is a serious moral matter. Second, rape is a violent act done against the will of the woman. The violence of rape and our ignorance regarding whether or not an embryo is or is not formed are the two factors that make it hard to say that taking the morning-after pill in such a case is always morally wrong. Because of this, most on the committee believe that the decision to take the so-called morning-after pill should only be made with prayerful consideration and with the emotional and spiritual support of other Christians. The event of rape itself is so traumatic that it is more than we can say to insist that a raped woman carry to term any possible embryo that may result.

We all agree that it would be wrong for a woman who has been raped to take an abortifacient after the implantation of an embryo. After an embryo has been implanted, it deserves the protections synod endorsed in 1972. We also all agree that if a woman who has been raped chooses to take a morning-after pill, she should be neither judged nor disciplined for her decision. There are too many ambiguities involved in such a case, and the incredible trauma she has already suffered requires Christian compassion, understanding, and support.

III. Guiding precepts resulting from these foundations

Many of the issues that Synod has asked us to consider are complicated and substantial and not easily sorted through. As a service to the church, our committee suggests the following precepts to guide us as we consider these issues:

A. We must not recommend rules that bind the conscience in disputable matters. To do so would violate personal Christian liberty. Instead, we should prescribe only where God's will is clear. Scripture is clear that every human life is created in the image of God and is precious to God. Scripture does not explicitly teach what moral protections the unimplanted human embryo deserves, although it is clear that as a unique human life it warrants significant protection.

B. Because human embryos deserve significant moral protections, creating human embryos in vitro is something that should be done only when every embryo so created will be given an opportunity to implant and develop into a child.

C. It is morally wrong to intentionally cause the death of a human embryo, whether implanted or not, except when it must be done to save the life of the mother.

D. It may not be morally wrong to ingest a morning-after pill in the case of rape due to the complexities of the situation, including the fact that it is often unclear if an embryo has been created as a result of the rape.

E. It is good for married couples to want to have children, and it is a blessing to have children, but there are limits to the lengths to which couples may go in order to have children. Infertility is a disorder in God's design for human procreation, and we may attempt to prevent or correct this but only through morally acceptable means.

F. Procreation should be kept within the context of a male-female, two parent, covenantal relationship of marriage.

IV. Application of these precepts to the specific situations requested by Synod 1999

A. *Application of the guiding precepts to issues of procreation*

Case Study: After years of attempting to conceive a child, Tom and Lisa undergo a thorough workup by fertility specialists. Tom provides a semen sample for analysis; his sperm count and func-

tion are in the low-but-normal range. Lisa undergoes months of regularly monitoring her metabolic and hormonal levels and ever-more-invasive testing of her ovarian and uterine cycles. This deeply personal and intimate portion of their lives and marriage is prodded and probed by caring, sensitive medical professionals, albeit strangers. Silently, Tom and Lisa each fear he or she may be the source of their inability to have a child. The doctors can find no single cause for their infertility and suspect it may be a combination of problems. They encourage Tom and Lisa to consider superovulation followed by in vitro fertilization. Should they? If they successfully harvest numerous eggs from Lisa, how many should they fertilize? How many embryos should they transfer to Lisa's uterus? What should they do with any excess embryos?

1. Applying the precepts to the methods of treating infertility

a. Treatments for infertility

Because of our strong commitment to life and to the imitation of God and because we seek to be agents of salt and light in God's world, the committee offers the following moral assessments of the various procedures available to assist in treating infertility.

As we assess these procedures, we want to remind both those couples who are struggling with infertility as well as those who minister to them that although infertility is a mark of the Fall and to treat infertility is a step toward redeeming this particular aspect of the Fall, our call toward sanctification hems us in from pursuing fertility at all costs. We must always remember that God is sovereign, that God is the author of life, and that in the treatment of infertility we partner with God. We do not, therefore, step outside of the parameters given by God as we seek to create life.

A person can be healthy while being infertile and can live a full and productive life. Because of this, we are not allowed to pursue fertility at all costs. Couples need to regularly assess their motives for pursuing the treatment of infertility. The move toward fertility must parallel a movement within the couple toward sanctification, that is, toward letting God work his will in their lives in an effort to make them holy. Fertility may never be pursued independently from a pursuit of the will of God. Additionally, couples need to be aware of the effects of these treatments on the couple. Many of the treatments are invasive medical procedures.

In light of our considerations above, we have reviewed the infertility procedures presently available and provide the following comments regarding them.

1) Sperm donation (nonhusband), egg donation (nonwife), and artificial insemination by donor (AID)

On the surface, anonymous sperm and egg donation and artificial insemination by donor appear to be altruistic acts of giving life. On further analysis, however, these procedures involve a number of concerns.

First, and most seriously, AID requires a third-party intrusion upon the marriage. Unlike IVF where the husband and wife are assisted in using their own genetic materials to procreate, AID necessitates replacing one of the marriage partners in the procreation process. One result of this may be that the parent who did not contribute genetic material to the child may feel that s/he is less connected to the child than s/he would have been had s/he been the biological parent. Thus, the marriage relationship and the parent-child relationships may suffer as a result of AID. (These relationships become even more complicated when couples consider using relatives as donors.) If procreation of a child was designed by God to be the offspring of an intimacy only found within marriage, then using a third party is a violation of God's design plan. Because of the fall into sin, sometimes things do not work the way God designed them. Then we are permitted, sometimes even obliged, to try to make things work that way again. We should not, however, violate or contradict God's plan and make a whole new plan of our own. Improving the fertility of a husband or a wife is trying to get things to where they should be; trying to have a baby by using an outside donor is a whole new plan.

One response to this line of reasoning is to note that it often happens that children in a household are biologically related to only one parent. This happens, for example, when a parent dies and the former spouse remarries. The children of the first marriage are adopted by the second spouse. However, the important difference in this sort of case is that no marriage was compromised by a third party. The first marriage ended at the death of one partner. The second marriage did not exist when the children were conceived and born. Taking them into the household of the second marriage fulfills the prior obligation of the living parent to care for offspring. This obligation can complicate the second marriage, but it does not compromise it.

Two more problems with AID can be mentioned. First, the donors of egg and sperm are involved in the act of procreation without any intent to care for that life once it is created. The child who is created often has no way of investigating his or her parental and genetic heritage. Many health issues are related to one's biological progenitors, and having one such progenitor remain anonymous may present health risks. Second, the donation of sperm or eggs also contributes to the commodification of human beings. Whether or not donors are paid for their "donation," the process itself contributes to the materialist idea that we simply are made up of parts that can be donated, bought, or sold, that we are not image bearers of God.

Nevertheless, some thoughtful Christians believe that, although the commodification of the building blocks of human life is always wrong, sperm or egg *donation* to infertile couples could be seen as prefertilization adoption. This does not seem to be immoral (unless the resultant child is not apprised of that fact.) Additionally, they stress that all donors should accompany their donations with all of their genetic information and are encouraged to disclose identifying

information as well so that the child may know as much of his or her origins as possible.

On the whole, however, AID raises serious questions and should be avoided.

2) Artificial insemination by husband (AIH) and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)

These procedures assist a married couple in the act of procreation within the womb of the wife. It is the assistance of procreation within the covenant of marriage. We judge that this is usually morally permissible. Some caution is warranted, however, because this, like many fertility treatments, intrudes upon the intimacy of human procreation. (*Note:* This procedure is often used in conjunction with fertility drugs.)

3) Fertility drugs

The use of fertility drugs alone may often result in superovulation, which can mean that the couple will conceive multiples. Bearing multiples places the mother at a higher risk while pregnant and may also place the couple in the morally problematic position of having to choose which embryos will be allowed to live and which will be terminated in order to promote health for the mother and for any embryos that may be brought to term. Parents also need to be aware that children who are born as part of multiple pregnancies are also at higher risk for birth defects and developmental problems. We advise that those couples who choose to use fertility drugs only do so with the utmost caution and with the full knowledge of the potential effects and the moral decisions they may have to face.

4) In vitro fertilization-embryo transfer (IVF-ET), gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT), and zygote intrafallopian transfer (ZIFT)

These procedures are morally permitted, as we have argued above, but only after a couple has considered the significant moral issues involved with the help of their physician (and pastor). Issues to consider include how many embryos will be created, whether each one will be given an opportunity to flourish and develop, and how the couple would proceed with a multiple pregnancy should several implant at the same time. As stated earlier, multiple pregnancies pose a risk to the health of the mother and may place the couple in a situation of having to choose between the health of the mother and the life of an embryo. Giving each embryo an opportunity to develop means that a couple should not produce more embryos than the number of children they would welcome.

5) Surrogate parenting

This would seem to be morally permissible because it does not intend any harm. It is still unwise, however, due to the many complications, legally and morally, that arise. Surrogate mothers may not wish to relinquish the child after birth, and children of such unions may have significant identity issues. If the surrogate also donates the egg, there are issues regarding the mother's understanding of her role as the mother of a child who is the result of her husband's sperm and

another woman's egg. Additionally, a surrogate may be hired by a couple who may choose to abort the pregnancy if later tests show problems with the developing child. The surrogate then may have little say about whether or not she must undergo an abortion. Due to the potential for complications, surrogacy is permitted but not recommended either for potential hosts or for potential parents.

b. Recommendations regarding the treatment of infertility

Knowing the complexities of the issue, and understanding the church's deep desire to protect and foster life, the committee recommends the following:

1) Couples

Couples who seek assistance in the creation of embryos should be very cautious in the number of embryos they allow to be created and implanted. Although there is significant expense involved in repeating in vitro fertilization if the first attempt fails, it is better to err on the side of caution: creating only the number of embryos a couple would be willing to host, and implanting only a number that would not risk the health of the mother nor place the couple in the situation of having to choose which implanted embryos are allowed to live and which are terminated (selective reduction). Couples should also be counseled to consider what they would do with an excessive number of embryos that they are not willing or able to host. These questions should be considered *prior* to any attempt at in vitro fertilization:

- a) Have we considered that the treatment of infertility may involve many invasive procedures at great expense?
- b) Have we considered what limits we will make on the expense of this process?
- c) Have we listed the benefits and concerns about infertility treatments?
- d) Have we considered alternative ways of creating a family, such as adoption (prenatal embryonic adoption or the adoption of a birthed child)?
- e) How far are we willing to go to ensure that we conceive and bear our own offspring? Are we ready to accept that we may never conceive?
- f) Have we placed in God's hands whether we have multiples in one pregnancy or give birth to an unhealthy child or never conceive?
- g) Are we willing to host all of the embryos that may be conceived through IVF?

2) Physicians

Physicians should seek the moral good in assisting a couple in these difficult circumstances, which means respecting the potential of each embryo and seeking to help each embryo flourish to its potential. Physicians should not seek to create more embryos than could possibly be hosted, or implant a number of embryos that, if all were to live, would create a health risk for the mother or make the couple face the difficult choice of whether to selectively reduce. A physician should ask:

- a) Have I anticipated the moral dilemmas (such as frozen embryos, need for selective reduction, screening of embryos) that a procedure may lead to, and have I made the patient fully aware of these dilemmas?
 - b) Have I made couples aware of the full extent of the cost in the course of recommending a course of treatment?
 - c) Have I committed to working within the limits outlined in this report?
- 3) Scientists
- Scientists and others should seek alternative ways to research disease rather than using human embryos. Stem cells are available from other sources. Great advances have been made, for example, in the use of umbilical cord cells, and these studies mimic the research and potential of research on embryos. Because there are significant moral questions involved in performing research on human embryos, we cannot condone the use of human embryos in medical research. Additionally, we advise persons who work in these fields to not be complicit in poor industry practices.
- 4) Philanthropists
- Philanthropists and others are encouraged to donate their resources to agencies and institutions that seek alternative ways to do this research rather than through the use of human embryos.
- 5) Pastors, elders, deacons, and all Christians
- Pastors, elders, deacons, and all Christians need to be aware of the complexities of these issues as they seek to counsel infertile couples, physicians, and scientists inside and outside of the Christian community. Understanding the moral issues at hand and the powerful way in which we imitate God through the creation of human embryos will assist all Christians in thoughtfully responding to the needs of those to whom they minister. We must also be aware of the attitude toward children that we bring into this discussion and respect children as gifts from God, whether they come into our lives through birth, through adoption, as part of our extended families, or as part of the family of God in the church.
- a) For church members: Are we/ Am I sensitive and supporting to couples who may be struggling with infertility?
 - b) For pastors
 - (1) Am I willing and prepared to raise these issues during premarital counseling?
 - (2) Have I educated myself well on the issues that couples in my congregation may be facing in regard to infertility?
 - (3) Am I encouraging my congregation to be sensitive to such couples, especially on holidays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and during home visitation?
 - (4) Am I including such issues in worship (sermons, congregational prayers) in a pastorally sensitive way?

2. Applying the precepts to the avoidance of conception

Case Study: Jill and Brian, in their early twenties, have dated for a few years and have just become engaged to be married in several months. They are remarkably compatible on most issues, including a desire to delay having children for several years after they are married. One prefers having four or five children; the other very much wants to limit the size of their family to two children. For the most part, they discuss this deeply personal issue privately, but they also seek advice from their most trusted friends. May they use contraceptives to delay childbearing and to limit the number of children they have? What contraceptives should they use? As a possible confidant, what advice would you give them?

a. Introduction

Consistent with past synodical decisions, there are sound biblical and theological reasons why conception may be intentionally avoided. In addition, there are social, economic, and psychological reasons why thoughtful Christian couples may seek to prevent pregnancy. A couple may not be able to support a (or an additional) child and may seek to avoid pregnancy because they understand the financial commitments involved. Other couples may limit the size of their family out of respect for the increasing global population or based on their own personal resources. Some women may have endured difficult pregnancies and along with their spouses choose not to become pregnant again due to the physical strain on their bodies.

There are varied reasons for wishing to avoid pregnancy and many of them are wise and fitting for Christians. However, couples must honestly address any motivation to avoid pregnancy that is based on selfish desires, such as a desire to accumulate more wealth or material goods or a desire to have more time for one's own interests. The decision to avoid pregnancy must be made prayerfully, with appropriate counsel sought from family members, pastors, and others.

In general, contraceptives interfere with the process of fertilization either by chemical or physical means. We need to be aware that the term *contraceptive* is used widely to describe both true *contraceptives* as well as *contraimplantives*. Using our definition of fertilization as occurring when sperm and egg unite (conception) and not when the fertilized egg implants in the uterine wall (implantation), we want to be very specific in our use of terms that prevent either conception or implantation.

The following chart may prove helpful:

Contraceptives (Those that prevent sperm and egg from uniting)	Contraceptive/ Contraimplantive	Contraimplantives (Those that prevent the fertilized egg from implanting in the uterine wall)
Oral contraceptives (birth control pills) *See below	Contraceptive implants (e.g., Norplant)	RU-486
Barrier methods (condom, diaphragm, etc.)	Depo-Prevera	Intra-uterine device
Spermicide		Morning-after pills
Natural family planning (avoiding sexual intercourse during ovulation)		
*The birth control pill typically functions as a contraceptive, but it includes a hormone with contraimplantive effects.		

b. Recommendations regarding the avoidance of conception

Couples who seek to avoid conception should do so only after prayerfully and thoughtfully weighing the reasons for their avoidance. As with all of life's choices, the decision to forgo parenting, even for a time, must be a decision that is made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with every attempt made to filter out the priorities of secular society, such as a desire for more material goods or an unwillingness to sacrifice one's own desires for the needs of another. *Contraceptives* may be used by Christian couples, but *contraimplantives* (those listed in the third column) present a moral problem because they, in effect, deny an existing embryo the opportunity to implant.

c. Questions for consideration when dealing with the avoidance of conception

1) For couples

- a) Do we know if this method of avoiding pregnancy is contraceptive or contraimplantive?
- b) Have we addressed the long-term physical effects of this method of avoiding conception?
- c) Have we considered the long-term relational affects of choosing this method of conception?
- d) Are our reasons for avoiding conception life-affirming and service-oriented rather than oriented toward personal status, wealth, or convenience?
- e) Have we considered that we may become pregnant in spite of attempting to avoid conception, and are we prepared to host an unplanned pregnancy?
- f) Have we made this decision jointly, and is each member satisfied with the decision reached?

- 2) Physicians who counsel women and couples should seek to prescribe only those methods that are true contraceptives and should seek to offer complete information about any method they prescribe.

- a) Have you made the couple aware of the mechanism of action (contraceptive or contraimplantive) of what you have prescribed?
 - b) Have you informed the couple of the effectiveness of the method you have prescribed?
- 3) Pastors who are engaged in premarital counseling should ask about a couple's plans for children, and, if the couple is seeking to forgo parenting for a time, should ask about their method for avoiding pregnancy. Pastors should seek to offer wise spiritual counsel on the decision to forgo parenting and should counsel against any method of avoiding conception that destroys an embryo.
- a) Am I willing to raise these issues during premarital counseling?
 - b) Have I educated myself so that I can offer wise advice on these issues to couples who seek my counsel?
3. Applying the precepts to the screening of embryos and pregnancies

Case Study 1: Philip and Mary have two children, a healthy eight-year-old boy and a four-year-old daughter with cystic fibrosis. Their daughter is doing fairly well, though she has been hospitalized for one to two weeks each year of her life. They would like to have another child but fear exhausting their emotional and financial resources if they were to have another child with cystic fibrosis—a one-in-four likelihood. They have recently learned that there is a new diagnostic test that can be performed two to three days after in vitro fertilization that can screen the eight-cell embryos for cystic fibrosis. Would it be wrong for them to choose to implant only the embryos shown to be healthy? Should they run the risk of bringing another child into the world with cystic fibrosis if they could prevent it? Should they pursue preimplantation genetic diagnosis? Why or why not?

Case Study 2: Rachel and Andrew are excitedly expecting their first child. Nearing the end of her first trimester, Rachel has already had two prenatal visits, both routine. At the last visit, however, the obstetrician-gynecologist advised her about taking the “triple test” (or undergoing maternal serum screening). He indicated it most often provided assurances that everything was progressing well but occasionally detected a possible birth defect. If the test raised concerns, she could undergo further testing to confirm the diagnosis. When she asked what kinds of birth defects, he told her it would detect the presence of Down's syndrome and several much more serious problems but again assured her that the likelihood of such problems were minimal. She and her husband, eager to do everything to assure they have a healthy child, agree to the testing. The test indicates unusual levels of α -fetoprotein, β -estriol, and chorionic gonadotropin hormone. The doctor suggests repeating the test and scheduling an ultrasound to further refine any diagnosis. The second screening test comes back positive too. The

ultrasound allows them to see their baby—movement of arms and fingers, legs and toes, and the beating heart. It also indicates an enlarged head. Increasingly alarmed, Rachel and Andrew are uncertain of their course of action, caught in a chain of events outside their understanding and control. Privately, they share the information with both sets of parents and their pastor who pray with them but are equally uncertain of the appropriate course of action to take. When their physician suggests that Rachel undergo chorionic villus sampling, they acquiesce. The test indicates their baby will have Down's syndrome. Should they have had all these tests performed? What now are their options?

a. Introduction

A significant part of Jesus' ministry on earth was a ministry of healing. As his disciples, we need to seek out methods that will bring about healing in the arena of procreation. Recent advances in reproductive technology have allowed us to detect illness or defects while a child is yet in the womb. Such information can lead to the greater likelihood of a healthier child, such as in the case of spina bifida, which can occasionally be treated through in utero surgery. However, the ability to screen a pregnancy for an illness or defect may also lead to a couple's choice to abort a pregnancy due to a found defect that could range from severe abnormality incompatible with life to a potentially much less severe problem such as Down's Syndrome.

Pregnancies can be screened in many different ways and are screened for many different reasons. To a limited extent, particular eggs and sperm or embryos can be selected even before a pregnancy is established through implantation (as discussed in section II, E, 7 "Moral considerations in cases of genetic defects"). Once a pregnancy is established, the developing embryo and fetus can be screened through a variety of tests, including the maternal serum screening (commonly known as the triple test), amniocentesis, and ultrasounds.

Part of our duty as image bearers of God and as disciples of Jesus the Healer must be to create an environment that will help life flourish to the best of its ability. When we screen a pregnancy, we must do so in order to create a place of flourishing for the life we are preparing to host. Much good can come from the screening of pregnancies. For example, if one or both of the parents are carriers of a genetic disease, the screening of their pregnancy allows the parents to determine whether their child is a carrier or sufferer of this genetic disease, and they can prepare accordingly. This is the usual purpose of preimplantive genetic diagnosis.

For couples who are not carriers of genetic disease, screening a pregnancy may enable parents and medical practitioners to prepare better for the birth of a newborn with special needs. For example, when hydrocephaly is detected early enough, it may be possible to surgically implant a cranial shunt that allows for normal brain development rather than the usual severely impaired development. In cases of Down's syndrome, pregnancy screening enables parents and health care practitioners to anticipate the birth of a newborn who may have heart or

gastric problems requiring special care, such as emergency surgery shortly after birth. Additionally, most pregnancy screening tests for genetic and developmental conditions come back negative, thus alleviating parental anxiety.

Such use of pregnancy screening may allow us to truly prepare to host the child given to us by God.

Unfortunately, the technology that can allow us to create and prepare a place of flourishing for a new life can also lead a couple to abort a pregnancy. Some couples may choose not to welcome a child with unique health needs into their lives, or others may simply not want a child of a certain sex. To the extent that screening tempts couples to consider letting embryos die or ending the life of a fetus, it is to be avoided.

b. Recommendations regarding the screening of pregnancies

Because of the abuse that can take place with the knowledge that pregnancy screening provides, *couples* should ascertain their reasons for the screening and what course of action they will consider in light of a positive or negative test. Couples need to also know that pregnancy screening tests vary in their accuracy; some contain risks to the mother and to the embryo or fetus. Couples should be fully aware of these factors in weighing their decisions whether to undergo screening, in interpreting the screening results, and in evaluating their options after screening.

1) For couples

- a) How can we best affirm life when we are faced with a difficult pregnancy? To whom can we go who shares our values and will understand our dilemma and will offer us advice and support?
- b) Why are we choosing to have this pregnancy screened? How are we expecting to use the information we gain from the screening?
- c) Are we prepared to welcome this child regardless of what the screening reveals?
- d) Do we recognize the risks and possible harm that may result from the screening?
- e) Are we aware that these tests may produce false positives and increase our anxiety?

2) Physicians should inform couples fully about the methods available and the risks involved. Additionally, physicians and other health care workers should encourage the couple to think carefully about the choices they would make if the tests resulted in concerns about the health of their developing child.

- a) Have you informed the couple of the risks inherent in certain types of screening?
- b) Do you encourage couples to welcome their child no matter what the screening reveals?

3) Pastors and churches should support couples who are experiencing a difficult pregnancy, remind them of the sanctity of life in all its stages, and help them as they prepare to host the child given them by God.

4. Applying the precepts to avoiding implantation and ending pregnancies

Case Study: After six years of trying to conceive a child, Mary and Robert began medical work-ups to identify the source of their infertility. Fertility specialists suspect that Mary is not ovulating and advise her to begin using fertility drugs. The doctors caution that fertility drugs in the doses she is being given occasionally—very rarely—may cause superovulation and recommend she undergo an ultrasound at the time of ovulation to determine whether and how many eggs may be maturing. Unfortunately, their insurance company refuses to cover any of the costs of the fertility treatments or prepregnancy diagnostic ultrasounds. On a tight personal budget, Mary and Robert decide to forgo the ultrasounds. They are elated when Mary becomes pregnant. At eight weeks of development, her obstetrician-gynecologist suspects a multiple pregnancy and recommends an ultrasound. The ultrasound indicates she is carrying sextuplets. Her physician advises them that such multiple pregnancies are dangerous to the mother as well as to the six developing babies and offers selective reduction as an option, encouraging them to consider reducing the pregnancy from six to three by terminating three of the embryos. Mary and Robert wonder: May they limit this pregnancy?

a. Introduction

Recent pharmaceutical technology has produced RU-486, a pill that can be taken at any time during a pregnancy in order to induce an abortion. This pill differs from a morning-after pill in that it works to expel an implanted embryo or fetus from the womb and can be taken at any point during gestation. (A morning-after pill seeks to prevent an embryo from implanting in the womb and is only effective during the seven days following intercourse.) Additionally, women carrying a high number of multiples in a single pregnancy are often given the option of selective reduction, whereby a needle is injected into the hearts of a certain number of embryos in order to allow the remaining embryos the best chance for health and life, while also intending to protect the health of the mother.

Synod 1972 defined induced abortion as “any action by which a human embryo or fetus is voluntarily and intentionally destroyed or removed from the mother’s womb at a time when it is not independently viable” (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 480). We agree with Synod 1972 that the implanted embryo is protected unless the life of the mother is at serious risk with the continuation of the pregnancy. Selective abortion is not morally permissible.

b. Recommendations regarding the ending of pregnancies

We live in a world marred by sin. Sin and evil permeate every aspect of our lives, including sexuality, conception, and pregnancy. Occasionally, a pregnancy ensues that threatens the life of the mother (e.g., ectopic pregnancies). In these difficult cases, the couple must

choose between the life of the mother and the life of the developing child. To terminate a pregnancy in order to save the life of the mother is morally permissible.

When a child has been conceived through an illicit and violent sexual act, the mother is placed in an extremely difficult situation. The presence of this pregnancy is a constant reminder of the horrors she has suffered, yet the child who may result from such a pregnancy is not to be blamed. Weighing the incredible complexity of this decision is a deeply personal issue, although it should not be done alone. A woman who has suffered in this way needs to understand that what has happened is not her fault and should be assured of the love of God and the church. In this incredibly complex situation, as was discussed more fully in section II, E, 8 “Moral considerations in case of rape,” the decision to take a morning-after pill before implantation cannot be condemned.

c. Questions for consideration when dealing with the ending of pregnancies

For women and couples:

- 1) How can I/we best affirm life when faced with an unplanned pregnancy? To whom can I/we go who shares our values and will understand our dilemma and will offer me/us advice and support?
- 2) Have I/we considered carrying this child to term?
- 3) For the caregiver in a rape situation: Would the offer of a morning-after pill lay an undue burden on the woman who has been raped?
- 4) Have I/we considered the possible emotional consequences that may result from taking the morning-after pill and possibly terminating a pregnancy?

B. Application of the guiding precepts to issues in research

Scientists have long realized that during the course of development organisms begin as a single cell with the potential to develop into a complete organism. As this cell multiplies, the progeny cells retain the complete genetic blueprints but gradually begin to specialize in a process known as differentiation. Some of the cells in early development are stem cells that retain the ability to differentiate into several different tissues or organs but not into all tissues and organs or an entire organism. These stem cells are found most abundantly in the embryo and early fetal stages of development, though some stem cells are found in blood from the placenta at the time of birth, and a few stem cells appear to remain remotely scattered throughout the bodies of adults. Preliminary evidence suggests that these stem cells, once derived, can be grown in culture, perhaps indefinitely. Realizing this, scientists have long wondered whether medicine might unlock the keys to differentiation, thus enabling physicians to use stem cells to grow new tissues or organs as replacements.

Scientists also came to recognize that young, immature nerve cells, placed in damaged areas of the nervous system, show evidence of forming new connections and restoring some facets of neural functioning. The prevailing sense based upon early experiments is that cells and tissues derived from embryos and fetuses are more easily transplanted with less concern for compatibility between donor and recipient than are cells and tissues donated from adults. (Should compatibility matching prove to be important in some instances, it will necessitate either genetic engineering of cultured stem cells,

derivation of a vast number of different stem cell lines, or an allocation system akin to the current organ transplantation system.)

1. Applying precepts to fetal tissue transplantation

a. Background

Fetal tissue transplantation uses cells and tissues derived from aborted and miscarried fetuses to treat a host of diseases from immunodeficiency in infants to Parkinson's disease in adults. Christians are rightfully concerned about whether using cells and tissues from aborted fetuses promotes or condones the evils of abortion. Or might the act of fetal tissue transplantation be separated from the act of abortion just as the act of organ donation is separated from an accident or murder by which the donor died?

In the secular cultural context of North America, many consider aborted fetuses to be nothing more than discarded tissue. Because of this, the use of fetal tissue to treat disease is interpreted by those holding to such a belief as a positive corollary to the painful personal experience of abortion.

In the United States, federal policies have attempted to separate the act of abortion from the act of using fetal tissue in a number of ways: informed consent is necessary for tissue to be donated following an abortion, institutions are not allowed to perform both elective abortions and fetal tissue transplantation, directed donations from one person to another are forbidden, and payments for fetal tissue are limited to the costs involved in deriving the tissues. Although these policies provide a modicum of safeguards, there are legitimate concerns whether these regulations are adequately monitored and enforced and whether a woman's decision between continuing or terminating a pregnancy might tip to the latter if she realizes her aborted fetus may be of therapeutic value to someone.

Furthermore, as demand for fetal tissue increases, attempts will be made to increase the distance between the act of abortion and the act of transplanting fetal tissue. In some cases, the tissue from one fetus is sufficient for several dozen patients but in other cases, such as in the treatment of Parkinson's disease, tissue from several fetuses is necessary for one patient.

From a secular perspective, it could be argued that the creation of fetuses for the purpose of tissue transplantation, which may soon be able to occur through the use of artificial wombs, is morally permissible in that it accomplishes a separation between abortion and the use of fetal tissue without the need for legislation. Many may argue that this would be a good way to use the thousands of embryos currently stored in fertility clinics: implant them in artificial wombs, allow them to develop to the stage necessary, and then harvest the tissue. However, because we believe that embryos themselves are to be protected, the idea of implanting them with the intent to kill them and harvest their tissue is horrific. Implanting embryos in artificial wombs may seem futuristic and unlikely; however, the current interest and research in the field of regenerative medicine is to develop new technologies to enhance the use

of fetal transplants, and, because this field of medicine is still emerging, it is not yet well regulated.

Because of the above, we would do well to define and promote a Christian perspective on fetal tissue transplantation, which begins by acknowledging that abortion is a grievous sin and that the use of tissue harvested from aborted fetuses for any purpose whatsoever is immoral. Also, the commodification of life through the creation of fetuses in artificial wombs for the purpose of harvesting fetal tissue is an abhorrent and repugnant devaluation of human life, never to be condoned by Christians.

Having said that, it is also true that the use of fetal tissue in and of itself for the purpose of enhancing someone else's life or health is not immoral by definition. In the same way that organ donation by parents of their deceased child can be a highly altruistic moral choice, so, too, the donation of the fetal tissue from a miscarried pregnancy or from a pregnancy that had to be terminated in order to save the life of the mother is a morally acceptable choice.

It then becomes incumbent upon the intended recipient of a fetal tissue transplant that he or she be informed of the source of the fetal tissue. The decision to forgo treatment by way of fetal tissue transplantation because the fetal tissue was taken from an aborted fetus may not be easy. Persons who are faced with such a decision need the support and prayer of the Christian community as they seek to honor God with their decision. They need to be reminded that as is true with any moral decision made in the name of Jesus Christ, God will not leave us without comfort and blessing when we act obediently in the face of a difficult choice.

b. Recommendations regarding fetal tissue transplantation

We believe that members of the Christian community should be most reticent to support fetal tissue transplantation unless there is strong evidence and good reason to believe it in no way contributed to the act of abortion and no alternatives exist. Persons considering fetal tissue transplantation should be fully informed of the experimental nature of these therapies, thoroughly investigate how any fetal tissues are procured, and exhaust all reasonable alternatives. We would urge researchers and clinicians to make it a priority to pursue alternatives that avoid abortion. In most instances, we believe Christians will willingly forgo these procedures, recognizing that the possibility of alleviating the suffering associated with these conditions and diseases is to accept a measure of evil as well.

2. Applying the precepts to stem cells

a. Background

There is considerable hope that stem cells, particularly pluripotent cells, will be able to provide treatments, perhaps cures, for some serious diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, heart disease, kidney failure, and other serious conditions. Embryos provide the best source of these stem cells; however, acquiring stem cells from embryos causes embryonic death and therefore is to be avoided. Stem cells can also be acquired from nonembryonic sources, and, as this does not involve embryonic death and does involve the potential for aiding healing and relieving

suffering, we recommend that this is the method to be used and pursued by researchers.

b. Recommendations regarding stem cell research

As with fetal tissue transplantation, our advice on stem cell research and treatments stops short of being an absolute prohibition. Stem cell research may proceed provided that the stem cells are derived from nonembryonic cells. Our inherently high regard for human life, even in its earliest stages of development, precludes our support of the creation of embryos for the purpose of research or therapy. Earlier in this report, we have urged procreative restraint with in vitro fertilization to avoid the creation of excess embryos, and if that advice is carefully followed, there will be very few “leftover” embryos.

However, neither the lack of a host nor the hoped-for cures justify the deliberate destruction of human life. Human embryos should be given the opportunity to survive and grow to their potential. They should not be used as if they are nothing more than human tissue. Some argue that there are far more embryos than willing hosts, so we should use the leftover embryos for the greatest good possible, that is, stem-cell donation. This argument is troubling in two ways. First, it is morally offensive that healthy human embryos are considered leftover. A couple using IVF should not produce any more embryos than the number of children they would be willing to host and rear, were all the embryos implanted and brought to term. Second, because an embryo has no host does not justify killing it for research. Healthy human embryos should never be deliberately destroyed or discarded.

c. Options for the use of remaining embryos

Two decades of moral laxness have produced a significant number (more than one million worldwide by one estimate) of human embryos currently stored frozen in fertility clinics for which there are only four options.

The first option, and one that we heartily support and encourage, is an adoptionlike procedure for the frozen embryos. Couples who have remaining frozen embryos could provide them to infertile couples desiring to have children. If the biological parents are unable or unwilling to provide an opportunity for development themselves, this is the next best option that most fully seeks the best interests of an embryo. The three remaining options are all morally unacceptable: leaving the embryos frozen indefinitely, donating the embryos for research or therapeutic purposes, or disposing of the embryos.

We strongly encourage researchers and clinicians to seek alternative sources for stem cells other than remaining embryos and aborted fetuses. We especially encourage efforts to derive and cultivate stem cells from adults or to genetically engineer animal embryonic stem cells to produce tissues and organs that function in humans with less risk of immunological rejection. We also reiterate our twofold call for fertility clinics to voluntarily establish and rigorously follow protocols designed to preclude the creation of excess embryos and for governmental agencies to create and faithfully monitor regulations to preclude the creation of excess embryos in fertility clinics.

3. Applying the precepts to human cloning

In cloning, a human egg is removed from a woman and the egg's nucleus replaced with the nucleus of a somatic cell taken from the egg donor or from another person (the cell can be taken from a person's cheek for example). With the help of an electrical impulse, the nucleus and egg fuse and begin to grow into an embryo.

In *therapeutic* cloning, the embryo is grown to the stage where stem cells are removable (four to seven days) thereby destroying the embryo, and the stem cells are cultivated to form the tissue needed for regenerating or replacing diseased tissue in the body (such as bone marrow cells). The stem cells from the cloned embryo may even be used to grow a whole new organ (a kidney, for example). One advantage of this procedure is that because it uses the patient's own DNA (in the nucleus), tissue rejection is greatly minimized or even eliminated. However, this procedure requires the destruction of a human embryo, an embryo that was created and/or used for the sole purpose of the production of other human tissue. Therefore, according to the principle(s) forbidding the instrumentalization and destruction of human embryos outlined earlier in this report, therapeutic cloning is morally unacceptable despite its possible benefits.

In *reproductive* cloning, on the other hand, the embryo is placed in a womb and allowed to develop into a child; a child who is a genetically identical human being of the nucleus donor (i.e., a twin). A cloned person would be a full human person in the same way as a sexually procreated twin. Because reproductive cloning does not involve the destruction of human embryos, the objections to it are not as simple and straightforward as the objection to therapeutic cloning. Many object to reproductive cloning on the grounds that it is selfish to want to produce another human being exactly like oneself; that cloning human beings is to create others in our own image or to place undue burdens on them of our expectations of how they will develop. We must be aware of the pride involved in wanting another person in this world who is our genetic match and who has been brought about through our efforts. Others worry that this treads too near the dangers of some human beings' having absolute control over the production of life and over the life of others, perhaps leading to a two-tiered society of unequals. Even governments recognize the problems in cloning. There are laws in the United States and Canada that explicitly prohibit federally funded research on the cloning of humans.

While these arguments have some weight, the most decisive consideration against reproductive cloning is that this new human being is not the product of the union of male and female, husband and wife. A child produced by reproductive cloning does not have both a mother and a father, each contributing mutually to its procreation. IVF is still sexual reproduction in which a mother and a father both contribute a gamete (egg from the mother, sperm from the father) to the procreation of new life. By contrast, reproductive cloning is asexual *production* (as opposed to *procreation*) of a new person from a single parent. There is no longer any possibility of the new life coming to be *from two parents, male and female*, much less parents joined as spouses in marriage. This is a case of reproduction in which conception is severed from the marriage relationship and the union between male and female. In IVF, we have stipulated that it be engaged in

by married couples only, but the fact that it remains a two-parent procedure at least gives it the biological grounding for this possibility, while cloning by its very nature precludes it.

Even if a couple who considers cloning has the same intentions as a couple trying to conceive through IVF (for example), the means by which they seek reproduction severs the link between them: one becomes a parent of the child; one does not. It is this severance of reproduction from a two-parent beginning, in which both male and female contribute a part of themselves to the process of procreating new life, that makes it morally objectionable.

4. Applying the precepts to genetic engineering

a. Background

Genetic engineering in general refers to the addition and/or subtraction and/or replacement of genes. Genes determine the traits and characteristics of an organism, so genetic engineering results in altered traits and characteristics. This is already commonly practiced in agriculture; for example, to produce soybeans that are more disease resistant or corn with bigger ears; it is also used to produce cows that give more milk and hogs that have larger hams. So widespread is the use of genetic engineering in food production that it has been said that it would be difficult to find any product at a grocery store that has not been affected at some level by genetic engineering.

At this point in human history, the genetic engineering of plants and animals appears to have been of substantial benefit to humanity by increasing the amount of food available. This benefit is not without some attendant risks, however. Altering the genes of plants and animals seems to result in some immediate good, but the long-term effects are not yet clear. In general, the risks parallel at a microscopic level what can happen macroscopically to an ecosystem. For example, changing the balance in an ecosystem by introducing a nonindigenous species to control some problem may result in an even greater problem—one that may not develop for several generations. In food production, one significant risk arises because of the steady reduction in the number of varieties of any crop planted. Farmers plant only a few of the most successful varieties, and if any of these were to become susceptible to some disease or insect, a much greater portion of the total harvest would be vulnerable. In spite of this and other potential risks, genetic engineering is not in principle significantly different from the older practice of breeding plants and animals in order to enhance certain traits and characteristics or produce hybrid breeds. The current technology simply makes this strategy more efficient.

b. Human genetic engineering

Our primary focus is not with genetic engineering in general, it is with the possibility of genetically engineering human persons. By making two distinctions, we can distinguish four different categories of human genetic engineering. The first distinction is between therapeutic and enhancement changes. This is not a conceptually perfect distinction because there can be disagreement about whether altering some trait or

characteristic is therapeutic (that is, repairs some defect) or whether it is an enhancement (that is, changes some normally occurring and functional trait or characteristic into some preferred trait or characteristic). This issue can be seen in a simple, hypothetical case. If we genetically altered an embryo so that the future adult would be taller, is that an enhancement? What if without such genetic engineering the adult would only be forty inches tall? When, if ever, is shortness a defect? Much has been made of the fact that this distinction between therapy and enhancement is blurry. The difference between undoing the evil effects of the Fall (therapy) and trying to make better what is already good (enhancement) is not always an easy one to make. However, while in some cases it may not be clear whether altering the genes is therapeutic or enhancement, there are plenty of cases where it is very clear. Genetically engineering so that a child will not have cystic fibrosis or Down's syndrome is clearly therapeutic, while altering an embryo to insure he will not have his father's nose is clearly enhancement. A second distinction is between those genetic alterations that would be passed on to the next generation (germ cell) and those that are limited to an individual (somatic). In general, genetic changes that would be passed down from generation to generation take on a greater moral seriousness than those that affect a single individual. With these two distinctions in hand, we can distinguish four categories of human genetic engineering: somatic therapy, germ cell therapy, somatic enhancement, germ cell enhancement.

The hard question regarding human genetic engineering is this: When are we imitating God in the best sense, such as curing disease, and when are we playing God in the worst sense, such as creating people in our image, or in the image we would like them to be?

There are three moral cases that arise with human genetic engineering. The first case, which involves the fewest moral questions is somatic therapy—cases where only a single individual is altered to repair some clear genetic defect. Early in 2002, a two-year-old girl in Jerusalem was cured of severe combined immunodeficiency disease, also known as SCIDs or “bubble boy disease,” through gene therapy. In her case, the disease was caused by a gene flaw that prevented the production of an enzyme necessary for her immune system. The treatment required injecting her own bone marrow stem cells altered to contain the missing enzyme gene. This kind of medical intervention is a wonderful blessing. The moral issue is more complicated when future generations will be affected; nevertheless, those that remove some clear genetic defect for future generations also appear to be blessings. One caution is that in order to bring about these genetic therapies, that is, to obtain the needed genetic material, one should not violate the guideline that human embryos ought not to be killed.

The second case, in contrast with clear cases of therapeutic intervention, is seeking gene therapy for a clear case of enhancement, whether somatic or germ cell. This is morally questionable. It is these cases where those seeking medical intervention and their doctors are in the most danger of using valuable technological resources for purely selfish ends. In addition, making value judgments about which *healthy* traits and

characteristics are acceptable/preferred and which are not is a very dangerous choice. It is eugenics in the worst sense and would naturally lead to additional discrimination against those who lack the acceptable/preferred traits and characteristics. Perhaps if parents commonly chose the traits and characteristics of a child, then those parents who have a child who fails to meet the social standards of the hour would have social sanctions leveled at them. Parents could be blamed for having children who place burdens on society. For these reasons, genetic engineering for what is clearly an enhancement ought to be illegal. We would strongly advise against anyone's, particularly Christians', seeking enhancement through genetic engineering.

In the third kind of case, where it is not fully clear whether the genetic intervention is an enhancement or a therapy, it must be left to Christian doctors and those considering treatment to prayerfully seek God's will for their situations. Because, however, there are such serious moral issues with enhancement, the therapeutic value of the proposed genetic intervention should be as clear as possible.

V. Recommendations

On the basis of the report, our committee submits the following recommendations:

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Calvin P. Van Reken, chair, and to Rev. Mary S. Hulst, reporter.
- B. That synod accept this report as a significant guide, based on biblical and Reformed perspectives, for giving pastoral advice in the moral complexities surrounding the life issues raised by bioscience and genetic engineering.
- C. That synod adopt the following guiding precepts as a basis for pastoral advice in the arena of life issues:
 1. We must not recommend rules that bind the conscience in disputable matters. To do so would violate personal Christian liberty. Instead, we should prescribe only where God's will is clear. Scripture is clear that every human life is created in the image of God and is precious to God. Scripture does not explicitly teach what moral protections the unimplanted human embryo deserves, although it is clear that as a unique human life it warrants significant protection.
 2. Because human embryos deserve significant moral protections, creating human embryos in vitro is something that should be done only when every embryo so created will be given an opportunity to implant and develop into a child.
 3. It is morally wrong to intentionally cause the death of a human embryo, whether implanted or not, except when it must be done to save the life of the mother.
 4. The ingestion of a morning-after pill after a rape cannot always be judged morally impermissible due to the complexities of the situation, including the fact that it is often unclear if an embryo has been created as a result of the rape.

5. It is good for married couples to want to have children, and it is a blessing to have children, but there are limits to the lengths to which couples may go in order to have children. Infertility is a disorder in God's design for human procreation, and we may attempt to prevent or correct this but only through morally acceptable means.

6. Procreation should be kept within the context of male-female, two parent, covenantal relationship of marriage.

D. That synod recommend this report to the churches for study and reflection on these important life issues.

E. That synod encourage members to engage governmental agencies regarding the pursuit of policies that are consistent with the perspectives outlined in the report.

F. That synod dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised
by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering

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I. Executive summary

Our committee was appointed by Synod 2000 to examine, clarify, and reaffirm for our times the expectation described in Church Order Article 71 that office-bearers support and encourage Christian education. Much has

changed in our society and culture, our church, and the area of education since the last synodical statement on Christian education in 1955.

Our report begins by considering the social and cultural changes in the last fifty years, including the growth of secularism, individualism, materialism, and moral relativism. All of these spiritual and moral forces are encouraged by the “alternative curricula” of the popular mass media. In addition, the remarkable advances in information technology (the Internet) hold promise for both good and ill. Their influence and power cannot be ignored.

Aggressive secularism in its pursuit of the naked public square presents a particular challenge to the Reformed vision of discipleship and Christian education. The Reformed faith is very definitely a *public* faith and is antithetically opposed to secularism’s program of privatizing religion and denuding public life of Christian signs and symbols. Secularization has directly affected public education in North America through a deliberate program of de-Christianization (prayer in schools, the literary canon, sex education, and so forth). As a result, many Christian parents, also from traditions not known for their emphasis on Christian day school education, seek alternatives to public education in “private” Christian schools, charter schools, as well as home-schools. Unlike 1955 when parents essentially faced only two options—public schools or Christian schools—many choices are available today.

In this situation, it is crucial that the vision of distinctively Reformed Christian education, a vision emphasizing the cosmic rule of Christ, remain clear in both church and school. Church and school need each other. The church needs leaders who are educated in the Reformed vision, and the schools need the support and encouragement of pulpits that proclaim the full counsel of God—the sovereign reign of Christ over test tubes and laptops as well as piety and worship.

The CRC, too, has changed since 1955. It is more diverse in ethnicity, in worship, and in understanding the Christian life of discipleship. This diversity, it must be said emphatically, is not to be carelessly identified with a loss of Reformed identity in the CRC—Dutch ethnic identity yes; confessional identity, no. The Reformed faith with its covenant and kingdom emphasis is not the property of any single tribe; it is the gospel itself in all its fullness for all peoples.

At the same time, the loss of homogeneity in the CRC does mean that commitment to Christian day school education cannot be taken for granted as the expected thing. Instead, a positive and compelling vision that will attract many outside the CRC as well as within must be set forth and that is what our report is intended to do. While we should point to the long history of the CRC’s support (at a denominational, synodical level) for Christian day school education, the mere fact of that history is not persuasive to those whose history it is not. A fresh reaffirmation is needed.

To make such a reaffirmation, our committee proposes that the traditional theological grounds for Christian education, namely covenant and kingdom, remain key building blocks for the affirmation of Christian education. Covenant is a biblical term for underscoring the promises of God to us and our children and the corresponding responsibilities that parents and the broader Christian community accept to nurture children in the faith. The *content* of that education in school, as well as proclamation in the pulpit, must be the announcement of God’s reign, the kingdom of God.

Together, covenant and kingdom form the narrative of God's plan of salvation history—Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. This is the narrative that gives meaning to all reality for Christians, and it is the story of God and his people that our evangelistic efforts seek to bring others into. Thus mission and/or evangelism serves as an additional theological ground for Christian education by reminding us that mission and/or evangelism are not at odds with Christian education but that they belong together. Christian education for discipleship is an essential part of our Lord's Great Commission to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20.

Our report concludes by suggesting guidelines for implementing church support for Christian day school education that we regard as the obligation of the entire covenant community—not just parents. Both the vows of the parents and that of the congregation are solemn promises, and we may not take them lightly. Though we do not propose recommending any specific plan, we do set forth the key guidelines that congregations can use and adapt to their particular circumstances. Within the basic guidelines, it was our goal to encourage flexibility in application. Finally, we propose a revision of Church Order Article 71 to more adequately reflect the new circumstances in which we affirm and support Christian education.

II. Introduction

A. *Appointment*

Synod 2001 appointed the Committee to Study Christian Day School Education in response to several overtures and a communication from various classes.

B. *Mandate*

The mandate of the committee was adopted virtually unchanged from the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and reads as follows:

That synod appoint a study committee with the mandate to study the support for distinctively Reformed Christian day schools by the Christian Reformed denomination and its local congregations, to solicit input from local congregations, and to report to Synod 2003. The study will specifically include:

- a. The biblical, theological, and confessional bases for Christian day schools;
- b. The responsibility of a congregation in relation to its promise made at baptism;
- c. Other means by which the Christian Reformed denomination and the local congregations can concretely fulfill this baptismal vow.

Grounds:

- a. The Christian Reformed Church synod has not reaffirmed its commitment to Christian day school education since 1955. Since 1955, significant changes have occurred culturally, ethnically, and demographically in our society.
- b. Unique challenges face congregational members because of rising tuition costs.
- c. Diversities of income hold the potential for creating tension within a congregation around the issue of Christian day schools.
- d. New members brought into a congregation may find it a challenge to enroll their children in Christian day schools.
- e. This study will help congregations fulfill church Order Article 71 regarding Christian day school education.

(*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 447)

C. *Analysis of mandate*

An analysis of the mandate with its three points and its grounds indicate that the study ought to:

1. Provide a biblical and confessional rationale as to why the CRC denomination and its local congregations should continue to support Christian day schools or why such support is no longer warranted.
2. Clarify the relationship between a congregation's baptismal vow and its support for Christian day schools or for parents who send their children to Christian day schools.
3. Take into account cultural, ethnic, and demographic changes in our society and the CRC since 1955.
4. Consider the ramifications of rising tuition costs to parents as well as wider diversities of income among church members. This leads to a consideration of what financial supports for Christian day schools a church ought to consider.
5. Consider how the church should promote Christian education. This includes recovering the vision and rekindling the passion of CRC members and orienting new members who are not familiar with the church's traditional support for Christian day schools.
6. Provide advice to the church, not the Christian day school. Nevertheless, the deliberate inclusion of the term *Reformed* as an adjective describing the Christian day school (the inclusion of this term was debated on the floor of synod and left in by motion) raises the question of what criteria if any a Christian day school should meet in order for the CRC to consider it for support.
7. Consider how the issue of parents who homeschool their children should be considered by the church.

D. *Renewed vision*

The language given in our synodical mandate to provide the "biblical, theological and confessional bases for Christian day schools" was the occasion for considerable discussion by our committee. We understand this instruction not as a requirement to provide specific proof texts for Christian day schools from either Scripture or the Three Forms of Unity but to direct us in a more general way to an ecclesiastical rather than a sociological or strictly practical/financial study. In other words, we seek to provide a rationale for Christian education that flows naturally from a biblically and confessionally informed Reformed worldview and vision of Christian discipleship.

Our argument, in sum, is that the nurture of children in the believing community is a covenantal responsibility of both the parents and the larger community. Though some parents do homeschool their children, the necessity of a formal, institutional day school education remains for the community as a whole. In that case, covenantal demands point to a school that fully shares the faith commitments of parents and the Christian community. Furthermore, the Reformed conviction about the kingdom of God and Christ's lordship over all creation requires education that honors Christ's lordship. That, in sum, is the

biblical, Reformed confessional, theological vision that flows from the Reformed understanding of Scripture (see *Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 63-89). We took it as our task to make a renewed affirmation of that vision for our times.

One additional point of clarification should be made here. The traditional emphasis in the Christian Reformed Church on the covenant as the ground for Christian day school education has two inseparable but still distinct components. Failure to note that distinction will result in confusion about our committee's mandate and conclusions. The baptism of children is, in the Reformed tradition, rooted in covenant. The baptismal vow made *by parents* is undeniably rooted in the covenant, and there is no debate about the responsibility thus accepted by parents to nurture their children in the faith. Historically, for the CRC and for many Reformed Christian parents today, the implication of this covenant belief and commitment means Christian day school education.

However, as we shall demonstrate in section IV, B of our report, the CRC as a denomination has, through its synods, also repeatedly affirmed the *communal*, covenantal character of Christian nurture of covenant youth. This communal, covenantal dimension of infant baptism is made explicit in the CRC liturgical form for infant baptism when the congregation is asked: "Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive these children in love, pray for them, help instruct them in the faith, and encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers?"

What the congregational vow undoubtedly primarily has in mind is the faith nurture of children that takes place within the institutional church (Sunday school, catechism, youth groups). There are good reasons, however, for understanding this vow as extending to Christian day school education.

1. In the Reformed understanding of Christ's lordship, faith and discipleship cannot be dualistically separated into two areas: the church and the rest of life.
2. As we shall demonstrate later in this report, faith nurture as well as leadership development in the Reformed community inseparably links church and school together.
3. That this has always been the understanding of Reformed convictions about the implications of the covenant is clear from Church Order Article 71, which instructs councils to see to it that good Christian day school education is provided for the church's youth "according to the demands of the covenant." (See section IV, B of this report.)

In the committee's view, the heart of our mandate is to restate for our church the present and future role of Church Order Article 71—what the congregation's vow at baptism means, how this translates into today's culture, and the conditions that are current in our church. Our task is not to set out the "legalities" of Article 71 but to articulate a renewed vision of the reason we have it.

E. Work of the committee

1. Meetings: September 28–29, 2001; December 14–15, 2001; February 15–16, 2002; April 26–27, 2002; June 21–22, 2002; August 24, 2002

2. Materials consulted: Reports on guidelines for Education Funding Plans for the CRC in the United States and Canada prepared by Deloitte & Touche (Appendices D-1 - D-3)
3. Survey
 - a. Councils (Appendix A)
 - b. Pastors (Appendix B)
4. Presentations: December 14–15, 2001: Deloitte & Touche Representatives; Covenant Plan Representatives

III. Christian Education in today's world

B. *Why a new report?*

The mandate given to our committee makes reference to the last CRC synodical statement on Christian education in 1955 and gives as one of the grounds why a new report is necessary along with the observation that much has changed since then. One of the first tasks of our committee was to attempt a summary of the cultural, social, ecclesiastical, and educational changes of the last fifty years. In section 1 of this section, we consider changes in the *world context* within which Christian education must operate; and in section 2, we consider some changes in the Christian Reformed Church in the last half century. Section 3 examines some significant changes within the field of education itself, and section 4 concludes by summarizing the variety of choices and challenges facing CRC members as a result of these changes.

1. A changed world

To observe that North American culture and society have undergone major changes since 1955 is to state the obvious. Our concern here is less with these changes in themselves than with their impact on Christian schools and the Christian Reformed Church, neither of which exist in a cultural or social vacuum. Reformed Christians do not consider cultural involvement as an evil to be avoided but accept the calling to discern what is good and what is evil in culture. In addition, Reformed Christians believe that Christians have callings to serve Christ the Lord in the arena of culture also. Such a conviction of cultural vocation implies that the Christian role is not to be a passive consumer of the world's culture but an active transforming influence for good in the societies where our Lord has placed us. The world's charms are seductive, however, and we must honestly face the possibility that our churches and schools may have been subtly influenced and transformed by the idols of our culture into their deforming images. To the extent that contemporary idols such as materialism, consumerism, and hedonism gain footholds in our faith communities, we may see declining commitment to and support for Reformed Christian day schools.

In 1955, the nurturing of CRC children was done basically by our churches, homes, and Christian schools—a pattern often referred to as a “three-legged stool.” However, there was always another “leg”—the mass media and popular culture. Though less noticeable in 1955, some fifty years later the mass media has become a dominant influence in our society. As a result, according to Neil Postman, our children are now educated by two dominant curricula: the “first curriculum” of the *school* and the alternative

curriculum of the mass media, particularly television (*Teaching as a Conserving Activity*, chs. 3, 4). For Christian parents, this is a matter of great concern because the mass media tip over the “nurture stool”; thus unbalancing the home, the school, and the church legs by their overwhelming presence that promotes a quite different set of values. The problem is exacerbated by modern computer technology. While the Internet as a major source of accessing information for today’s students is a blessing, it also makes available a Pandora’s box of material that is subversive and hostile to the Christian faith and its moral commitments.

Increasingly, even non-Christian observers of the mass media note that they are not neutral but have their own biases and even religious commitments. In many ways, the popular culture spread by North American mass media promotes ideas and values hostile to commitments of Christian morality. In a word, our society is being pressured to become more and more secular by persistent attempts to remove religion from the public square and relegate it to the private sphere. We and our children are offered the tantalizing idols of secularism such as individualism, consumerism, hedonism, rationalism, and relativism. Christianity in particular is treated with hostility because it is judged to be exclusive, divisive, and thus hateful. The religious ideology of secularism directly clashes with the Reformed conviction that Christ is Lord of all. Because that conviction is one of the essential grounds for the practice of Christian day schools, secularism presents a major threat to Christian education at all levels.

This intensified drive for secularization represents a significant social and cultural shift since 1955, and this change can clearly be seen in the public schools of Canada and the United States. Public education has become aggressively and increasingly secular in the last forty years. If it was possible in the blissful years of the 1950s to make a case that the public schools of Canada and the United States still had vestiges of Christianity left in them thanks to practices such as daily prayer and Christmas pageants, this is definitely no longer true in the twenty-first century. A series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions concerning the First Amendment and changing mores and laws in Canada have had the effect of making the public school free of religion—at least free of the Christian religion.

In fact, of course, the public school is not religiously neutral. At the same time that public Christian voices are being silenced as “hateful,” efforts to provide alternatives to public education such as charter schools and vouchers are fiercely opposed by powerful lobbying groups. In addition to the teachers’ unions, interest groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans for the Separation of Church and State, and People for the American Way employ inflammatory rhetoric and quickly resort to litigation in their zeal to exclude even the most trivial instance of Christianity in public schools. Not only does there exist a climate of hostility toward the Christian faith, the legitimate and laudable educational goal of multi-culturalism is often used as a cover to introduce pagan and New Age spiritualities such as the deification of mother earth (Gaia) to promote social causes such as environmentalism. When we add to this list the aggressive promotion of a program for sexual liberation, both heterosexual and homosexual, it is clear that the dominant moral tone of public education is strongly at odds with Christian morality. We must point out here that we

are necessarily painting with a broad brush and that while there is ample evidence to warrant the preceding characterization, we do not suggest that *all* public schools *everywhere*, much less *all* public school teachers, are advocates of anti-Christian pagan secularism and sexual liberation. Nonetheless, as a *general* rule, it does not seem to us as controversial to contend that the North American public school is a far more dangerous place spiritually in 2002 than it was in 1955.

In this world where the secularizing pressures to limit our faith commitments and expression to a private sphere are overwhelming, Reformed Christianity in particular is threatened at its core. The Reformed faith is cosmic in its scope and public in its expression; Christ is Lord of every domain of our society and culture, and retreating from this broad vision into a private faith is to exchange Reformed Christianity for something much less. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to maintain the commitment to and enthusiasm for distinctively Reformed Christian day school education. At the same time, when the church faces such pressures, it needs Reformed Christian education all the more. It is hard to imagine the CRC's developing future leaders who are committed to the Reformed faith in its cosmic vision without Reformed Christian education from kindergarten to college. The complexity and challenges of our modern (some refer to it as postmodern) world demand well-rounded and well-trained Reformed Christians who can be a transforming influence in the world. From a human standpoint, the very future of the CRC *as a Reformed Church*, preparing a new generation of Christian disciples committed to a cosmic vision of Christ's lordship, may depend on how successful we are at maintaining flourishing Reformed Christian schools at all levels.

It is important at this point that we avoid undue alarm. Anxiety about potential future calamities in the kingdom of Christ is not a good or sufficient reason to embrace the cause of Christian education. The desire for and support of Christian education is born out of faith and is an expression of positive, confident, joyful obedience. If we believe that Christ is indeed Lord of all, we must not exempt the CRC from his reign. To put it even more starkly, the future of Christ's kingdom does not depend on the survival of the CRC. Nonetheless, it is in the CRC that the Lord has placed us and has entrusted to our stewardship a vision of Christian discipleship that has been a blessing and can continue to be a blessing to North American society. It is thus in the spirit of our committee's synodical mandate that we call the CRC to reaffirm and renew that Reformed vision, a vision that sees Christ as Lord of all, including our educational institutions.

At this point it is worth noting that a commitment to Christian schools and Christian education actually has a quasi-confessional status in the Christian Reformed Church. "Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony" states this explicitly in paragraph 50:

In education we seek to acknowledge the Lord
by promoting schools and teaching
in which the light of his Word shines in all learning,
where students, of whatever ability,
are treated as persons who bear God's image
and have a place in his plan.

This contemporary testimony thus commits us as a denomination to an inclusive view of Christian day school education where no child of the covenant community is left out for any reason, and the education of all the church's children is a responsibility of the whole community.

That this commitment to Christian schooling is a pressing urgency of *our* time is underscored by the study version of "Our World Belongs to God" in its commentary on paragraph 50:

Nowhere is the growing secular spirit of our society more evident than in our educational institutions. For at all levels of learning secular humanism has become the dominant philosophy in public education. . . . In this time of educational ferment we must be firm in our commitment to Christian education as we within the Reformed tradition have come to understand it. In school life we must discern the religious roots of the prevailing secular spirit. . . . The basic problem is the wholesale replacement of a Judeo-Christian worldview by the religious worldview of secular humanism. As churches we repent of our failure to protest this robbery of our heritage in such a strategic area. We pledge our active intercession for reformation in school and society. We dedicate ourselves to promoting Christian education which follows the biblical principles seen within the Reformed tradition. (pp. 80, 81)

We suggested above that the CRC has a vested interest in Reformed Christian day schools if it is to retain its own Reformed identity. Conversely, if Reformed Christian education is to flourish, the church must repay the favor and support Reformed day schools. It is here that the spirit of secularism threatens both church and school at a different level. If the vision of Christ's lordship over society, culture, and education diminishes in either church or school, the other's Reformed identity is also threatened. Church and school are in a symbiotic relationship, and their successes and fortunes are closely linked. If the vision for the Reformed worldview fades in our communities, we, too, become vulnerable to the seductions of secularism and are tempted to privatize our faith. Not only do we then run the risk of becoming confused about what a Christian education from a Reformed perspective is all about, we also become increasingly susceptible to the temptations of a materialist and consumerist culture.

The first point we wish to make is that a loss of Reformed self-consciousness in our communities will likely also result in diminished allegiance to Christian day schools. For one thing, they are no longer in competition only with public education. Political trends increasingly favor parental choice in education and offer hope for greater justice in educational funding. Our committee lauds all efforts to increase choice and enhance educational opportunity. These efforts are fully in the spirit of Church Order Article 71 as well as previous CRC synodical pronouncements that place the primary responsibility for educating children on parents.

However, a caution must also be sounded because increased choice requires an informed "consumer." The last word in the previous sentence illustrates the problem perfectly. In a culture and society driven by materialist and consumerist ideals, it is also possible that we begin to treat church and school as simply one more consumer product and make choices not on sound biblical, theologically informed preferences but on less important ones. The greater availability of choice demands enhanced discernment on the part of Christian parents who need to be able to make discriminating decisions when faced with all the various options available. To provide just

a few examples: How does one distinguish between a school that only puts a layer of Christian-values icing on a secular-curricular cake and one that truly integrates the Christian narrative into the entire curriculum? How does one tell apart schools that actually succeed in such integration from those that only add piety in the form of worship exercises to an otherwise indifferent or even secular curriculum? How does one determine if a school absolutizes academic excellence, athletics, or social activism at the expense of a balanced, integrated Christian curriculum for all children? Finally, what are the differences between Christian schools' and charter schools' emphasizing traditional family values? Similar sorts of questions must be asked about homeschooling curricula and organizations. Christian Reformed parents face so many more choices in education today than they did in 1955. For this reason we believe that it may be more important for CRC parents today to have an informed framework for understanding Reformed Christian education (see sections IV, A and B below) than it was in the more homogenous CRC communities of 1955 and earlier.

There is an additional dimension to the lure of consumerism. Most Christian schools have a good reputation for academic excellence. At a time when academic excellence is a precious commodity, there is a risk that Christian education will become a consumer preference for the wrong reason. We have no intention of disparaging academic excellence, but parents should not choose Christian education merely because it gives a good return on their financial investment (i.e., entrance into a good university and a high-paying profession). Such motives undermine the very goal of a Reformed Christian education, namely that the school exists to prepare *all students of whatever ability* (CT, paragraph 50) for kingdom service, which may or may not be financially rewarding or judged as successful by worldly standards. One of the truths that a good Christian education seeks to instill in students is that success and monetary return is not the first priority for Christian discipleship. We should not be sanguine about the seductive lure of such consumerism. While increasing costs of education may cause financial hardship for some, the general affluence of most CRC communities today does raise the question of whether Christian education is simply one more consumer choice in competition with a new car, a motor home, expensive vacations, or a summer cottage. Under these circumstances and values, it will be difficult if not impossible to maintain the vision for and commitment to a community of belief and its counter-cultural witness as a signpost of Christ's kingdom.

It is necessary to repeat here a previous warning: We should not live in fear of possible stormy clouds on future horizons and be paralyzed in our acts of faithful obedience to our Lord. At the same time, it would also be a breach of trust for us to become indifferent to potential drift away from the ideals of Reformed Christian education. The threat of drift is real, and it should be as much a matter of concern to the church as it is to the school. The long and clear history of educational institutions that have fallen from the Christian ideals of their founding, with many even repudiating the Christian faith altogether, shows the close connection between the health of the school and the involvement of the church. This is especially true for church-affiliated colleges such as the relationship between Calvin College and the CRC.

The story of the secularization of American universities is well chronicled (G. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*; James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light*). As important as the stories of decline is the account given by Robert Benne's recent book, *Quality with Soul*, which is an account of the schools that have *resisted* to some degree or other the siren calls of secularization. Benne's story demonstrates that resistance to the spirit of the age, especially to the process of secularization in the school and privatization of faith in public life, requires the close cooperation of church and school.

As Benne examines the common factors that help a school maintain its Christian vision and practice and not succumb to secularization, the main one is keeping close links with the sponsoring church and upholding its distinctive confessional identity. Thus, when a Lutheran school loses its *Lutheran* identity it will most likely eventually lose its Christian identity as well. For a school to remain *Christian* and not secularize, it is important that it keep its Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Anabaptist, or Reformed identity. Putting it negatively, Benne describes the process of secularization thus: "first, making education 'non-sectarian' by identifying with a general, generic Christianity; then by an appeal to spiritual and moral ideals of a vaguely religious or patriotic cast; and finally by the exclusion of specifically Christian religious values and practices in the name of allegedly universal intellectual, moral and democratic qualities." The lesson from history is thus clear: If we want to keep our Reformed Christian schools authentically Christian, it is important that they stay Reformed. The Reformed Christian school needs a healthy Reformed Church for the sake of its own health—and vice versa.

It is important to make clear at this point that the close faith relationship between a Reformed Christian school and a Reformed church does not mean a church-operated school. School and church retain their own distinct identity and governance autonomy. Nonetheless a mutual regard for each other's religious identity is not only appropriate but necessary. In particular, both church and school bear mutual accountability for maintaining the confessional integrity of each. Here, too, it is worth noting the common pattern of drift that Benne catalogs in the process of school secularization. It begins with eliminating the tradition's distinct worship practices (chapel is generic, then optional, then cut out altogether) and codes of conduct. In an attempt to make the school less "sectarian" and distinct, efforts are intensified to recruit students and teachers who do not identify with the tradition. The result is likely to be a decline in support from the sponsoring denomination. Because decline in students and funds must be made up somehow, the school works even harder at recruiting "outsiders" to the tradition, which then erodes support even further.

The portrait Benne paints describes the process by which a school loses its distinctive religious identity, then loses its Christian identity, and then becomes secular. We cannot avoid facing the reality of drift away from the core vision of our tradition or be sanguine about the possibility that our Reformed Christian schools at all levels are also threatened by the forces of secularism. Because the confession that Jesus is Lord over all of life is a key conviction of the Reformed tradition, both the Reformed school and the Christian Reformed Church will need to be proactive in affirming and passing on to future generations the value of such a Reformed vision and identity.

Finally, we cannot adequately describe our cultural context without using the word *postmodern*. Though postmodernism, by its very nature, is infuriatingly difficult to pin down, its dominant notion is the refusal to acknowledge any objective truth. No single narrative, and for sure not the biblical one, has more validity than any other one. In fact, according to postmodernism, there are no large narratives that provide meaning across different cultures; it is all a matter of one's perspective, of finding the truth of one's own story. Instead of Enlightenment confidence about our knowledge and optimism about the human future, post-Enlightenment thought is characterized by a hopeless, centerless pessimism. Truth is judged to be unattainable, values are all relative, and we are consigned to choosing all things for ourselves. This attitude is pervasive and powerful in contemporary North American society. It is also, so Christian conviction and experience teach us, a dangerous attitude—one that potentially threatens our very freedom and openness as a people. Christian resistance to this postmodern danger would seem to be an obligation to our Lord and to our fellow American and Canadian citizens.

However, our communities themselves are not unaffected by this new relativism. When a culture through its mass media emphasizes maximizing personal feelings, then decision-making based on personal commitment or religious duty is minimized, as Charles Colson has noted, in favor of a therapeutic mindset in which being happy rather than holy is *the* ultimate religious goal. It is not surprising then that many relationships based on love, trust, devotion, and commitment break down. The rate of divorce in Christian communities is practically the same as that of the society around us. Not only does this affect the way in which we conduct Christian education but so much of the school's and the church's energy then goes into healing the broken situations arising from the self-centered, hedonist, consumerist values of our world. We risk becoming so self-absorbed by our own hurts that we fail to see the larger spiritual conflicts of our day. The relevance of a Reformed Christian education with kingdom vision may not be apparent to some and may seem to others as irrelevant and the financial sacrifice as poor stewardship. Furthermore the pressure of relativism pushes our young people toward moral and religious pluralism. The ideal of tolerance is powerful.

In conclusion, much has changed since 1955 in the cultural water in which we swim as Reformed Christians in North America. Increased secularization worships the creature rather than the creator, and idols replace the Lord in the hearts, minds, and imaginations of our youth. Postmodernism nips at the heels of these idols only to replace them with other godless ones. The mass media leg of the nurturing stool has taken on cancerous characteristics as it infects and infests our churches, homes, and schools. In this context, it seems to us that Reformed Christian education is as, if not more, critical than ever. As much of North American public education continues to deteriorate professionally and scholastically, Reformed Christian day schools can play a significant cultural role in our society by using the light of God's Word to shine in all areas of learning so that students of various abilities are treated respectfully as God's image bearers who have their place in God's plans as the narrative of God and his people continues until the Consummation.

2. Changes in the Christian Reformed Church

Not only have our culture and society changed since 1955, and undoubtedly the CRC along with them, but our church has also changed from within. This change can be summed up in one word—diversity. In 1955 a visitor from Vancouver, British Columbia, who attended worship in Midland Park, New Jersey, would immediately feel at home with the order and style of worship. There was a standard and recognizable liturgy, and every congregation sang from the red *Psalter Hymnal*. 'Tis so no longer. Liturgies can vary greatly from congregation to congregation and overhead projectors often replace the *Psalter Hymnal*. In addition, most CRC congregations, with some exceptions, notably in what is now Classis Red Mesa, were monochromatically white and primarily ethnically Dutch. Here, too, things are no longer what they used to be, and our committee here reiterates the observation and endorses the conclusion of the 1996 synodical study committee report “Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God” that the growing ethnic and racial diversity of Canada and the United States presents “a truly exciting challenge for the CRCNA, which in God’s sovereign grace is already becoming a diverse, multiracial, and multiethnic family of God” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218). In the remainder of this section in our report, we will first address the area of worship, particularly preaching, and second the challenges of our increased diversity.

It is not the task of our committee to determine or assess the extent to which the preaching from our CRC pulpits has changed over the last forty years, but we can make a case for the sort of preaching that nurtures the commitment of CRC members to Christian education. In keeping with the Reformed kingdom vision described in the previous section of this report, we endorse preaching that proclaims the relevance of the Good News to all areas of life; preaching that courageously exposes the secular idols of our age, the idols of the opposing kingdom. Such preaching is critical and requires a strong narrative sense of the Bible’s history of redemption, insight into the story of our secular culture, and the prophetic ability to relate the one to the other. Specific sermons about Christian education may be less important than the type of preaching we have been describing—preaching that centers on the lordship of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. That is the sort of preaching that equips CRC congregations with the biblical wisdom and discernment required to deal with the many complex issues involved in Christian education in our contemporary secular world.

This kind of preaching is hard to maintain in the cultural context described in the previous section. When faith is privatized and individualized, then congregations may desire messages that massage their feelings instead of messages that confront the idols with which they are becoming increasingly comfortable. That a growing sector of North American evangelical preaching tends toward such therapeutic goals rather than truth or holiness has been compellingly demonstrated by David Wells in his books *No Place for Truth* and *God in the Wasteland*. It would be a mistake to assume that these same influences have not affected CRC pulpits as well. What we do have is anecdotal evidence encountered by our committee members, particularly from the testimony of Christian school teachers, that the Christian Reformed pulpit is too often silent or muted in its support for Christian education. If so, then it is even more urgent that CRC preaching

be powerfully directed at proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ and releasing us from our captivity to the age's fashions and idols.

Of the present age's idols, perhaps none appeals to the old Adam in us as does North American individualism. Individualism comes to expression in church life as localism or congregationalism as the allegiance and support of individual members and local churches turns away from denominational ministries to local ones. Especially where denominational offices are at some distance from them, local congregations feel less and less involved in the denomination's churchwide ministries. This trend is noticeable in the CRC with decreasing support for ministry shares during a decade of remarkable and increasing prosperity. The independent spirit of congregationalism may also have made a significant contribution to the loss of CRC membership over the last decade. Along with controversial agenda items such as women in ecclesiastical office, which has created unhappiness, a general sense of alienation from denominational ministries contributes to a climate in which breaking old bonds of ecclesiastical fellowship and forging new ones seems relatively painless.

In such an ecclesiastical context, synod must be sensitive about issuing any "top down" imperatives about how parents should educate their children. Such pronouncements might well be received as an imposition on their Christian liberty (see section III, A, 4). At the same time, all CRC church members and particularly office-bearers must also keep in mind the vision of Christian education's being available for all the church's children—a vision reflected in the Church Order Article 71: "The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant." As synod considers our report, it will need to keep this complexity in mind.

The preceding caution about Christian liberty may be one of the reasons for the muting of CRC pulpits on the subject of Christian education. There may, however, also be another reason. Some pastors and church members believe that explicit calls from the pulpit to support Christian education run the risk of offending new members who have no experience with Christian education. We celebrate the diversity that has blossomed in our denomination since 1955. The increases include Christians from other cultures, Christians new to the faith, and Christians from other denominations. Therefore, there are many more members of the CRC today than in 1955 who did not grow up nurtured in the Reformed world-and-life view and its entailments, including our denomination's commitment to Christian education. For that reason, this is not a time for the CRC to mute its voice in support of Christian education but to raise the volume. In our new circumstances, it is all the more imperative that we articulate for this generation, in refreshingly new ways, the gift of our Reformed story and its cosmic vision of Christ's rule over all things. If we wish to remain a confessionally Reformed church, we cannot shy away from this grand story. We must not relegate our commitment to Christ to a small private sphere of life but must insist on a full-orbed cultural and public discipleship. Christian day school education, which fills in the cultural education of children in areas where churches and families cannot, is thus an integral part of the Christian community's

discipleship training for service in Christ's kingdom. To remain true to ourselves as a Reformed denomination, we need to give ourselves permission to tell the whole Reformed story both to those who are new to our denomination and to those who already cherish it. Reformed Christian day schools are an integral part of that story.

Here, we again remind synod and the CRC of the close, symbiotic relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and Reformed Christian day schools. As a confessional church in a voluntarist North American church environment that is not hospitable to confessional denominations, the CRC faces the same struggles for identity and survival that other confessional bodies (e.g., Lutheran) do. North American evangelical Christianity is pragmatic and sectarian (in contrast to the more "established" church life of Europe). Doctrine and theological reflection take a decided second place to revival strategies that nurture church growth. It is in such situations that therapeutic emphases triumph over truth and faithfulness. Not only is being happy more important than being faithful to the truth, being happy is also more important than being holy. A church that prizes truth and faithfulness to a rich confessional tradition does not have an easy time maintaining its identity as a confessional church in North America.

It is precisely here that Reformed Christian schools provide the CRC with support and additional resources for maintaining its Reformed identity. Reformed Christian schools shape the world-and-life view of students who go on to become ordained or lay leaders in CRC churches, the sort of leaders who understand the Reformed vision; who practice it in their families, vocations, and civic life; and who will insist on preaching and worship that nurtures commitment to and love for the Reformed faith. This means concretely that Christian Reformed pastors must themselves be educated in a Reformed worldview framework. Preferably, this would be an education that extends from kindergarten to seminary, an education that grounds pastors in the cosmic, catholic vision of Christ's rule over every square inch of creation, the hallmark of a Reformed vision of the kingdom of God.

Here we need to address a sensitive potential misunderstanding and objection. There is a chance that the previous two paragraphs will be read as saying something to the effect: "Be careful who you let in and especially to whom you give leadership positions in the CRC. Leadership positions should only be given to lifelong members of the CRC who have been inculturated through participation in all the right CRC institutions." We understand why such an interpretation *could be* inferred from the preceding and recognize that in today's climate there may even be some who will construe our position as exclusive or perhaps even racist. Most emphatically this is not what we are suggesting. We value and affirm the growing racial and ethnic diversity of our denomination. At the same time, we do those who join us as well as our heritage a disservice if we fail clearly and vigorously to proclaim, celebrate, and bear joyful witness to the great and grand vision of Reformed Christianity. If this becomes problematic, we must face the question of whether the CRC wants to remain a confessionally Reformed church. We believe that the CRC and Reformed Christian education need each other and should support each other in their common commitment to Christ's rule over all things, including culture and society. The Reformed faith is under pressure in North America, and faithful

resistance to the spirit of the age makes it imperative that church and school sing from the same score. Only when pulpits enthusiastically and clearly proclaim the good news that Christ is King will our communities gladly and generously support Christian education. Only if Christian schools remain true to that vision will they produce the kind of lay as well as ordained leaders the CRC needs now and in the future.

Reflection about developments since 1955 leads us to conclude that the partnership between the CRC and Christian day schools has changed significantly in those years. In 1955, in most CRC communities, the constituents of church and school were nearly identical. That allowed for both church and school to legitimately assume certain things about each other. That is no longer possible. Not only does the CRC membership include those with little experience and understanding of the CRC's commitment to Christian education, but the Christian schools themselves include parents with little background or understanding of the Reformed world-and-life view. This presents us with new challenges as well as opportunities to reaffirm our confession and to renew our commitment.

The opportunities are a wonderful chance to bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education to the many other Christians who are increasingly opting for some kind of Christian education. With the growth of non-Reformed Christian schools, Christian Reformed parents face many new choices that were unknown and even unavailable fifty years ago. Here the close relationship between church and school again asserts itself. As CRC parents face increasing numbers of choices, it is imperative that CRC church leaders provide pastoral guidance to such parents by clearly, vigorously, and enthusiastically proclaiming the cosmic vision of the Reformed faith. Not all Christian schools are alike. Reformed Christians should be able to recognize the shortcomings of a school that only adds piety and chapel to an otherwise secular curriculum. They should also know and be able to articulate the difference between Reformed Christian schools and charter schools that emphasize traditional family values but lack a broader Christian perspective in all subject matters. In our increasingly complex world, it is important that CRC congregations are guided by God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessional and theological heritage. The urgency of our times requires this. A decreased level of support for Christian education in CRC pulpits would be an unhealthy sign of a loss of Reformed identity and diminished allegiance to the Reformed confessions. The church and the school stand together in mutual support of a Reformed witness to our world.

In summary, all of these changes in culture, society, and the CRC require nothing different from what we have always been called by the Lord to do as a church. We do, however, have an obligation to do so in new ways—taking new and different circumstances into account with renewed vigor. We now go on to consider the vexing matter of *choice*.

3. New options in education

From its early history, the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination has strongly encouraged and supported Christian day schools (see section IV, B below). These schools developed over time from parish schools to parental, society-governed institutions. The content of education also

evolved over time from a concern to maintain the Reformed confessional heritage by maintaining the Dutch language to a desire to Americanize and eventually to provide students with a Reformed world-and-life perspective in order to be effective kingdom workers in God's world. Over the past one hundred years, members of the Christian Reformed Church have established hundreds of Christian day schools throughout North America. During this time, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has time and again reaffirmed its full commitment as a denomination to Reformed Christian day school education (see section IV, B), the last time in 1955.

Since synod's 1955 statement, perhaps the biggest change in education is the wide range of choices available to parents and their children. For most of those years prior to 1955 the choice was simple: either the local public school or a Christian school. Today, while state and provincial governments continue to mandate education for children from approximately five years old to youth in their teens, many governments have allowed for more choice by parents as they comply with mandatory education at this age level. The various choices can be categorized as follows:

- a. Government schools—schools most commonly known as public schools and controlled by state or provincial governments.
- b. Charter schools—schools permitted to operate with individual, corporate, or government ownership, funded by state or provincial governments, with permission to educate in nontraditional ways.
- c. Alternative public schools—Christian schools that function within the structures of a public school board (e.g., Edmonton, Alberta). *Note:* The United States parallel is magnet schools.
- d. Private or independent schools—schools controlled and governed by a society of supporters (parents and others) or by a founder and followers of a certain philosophy of education.
- e. Parochial schools—schools operated and controlled by a denomination or an independent church.
- f. Homeschools—schools wherein one or both parents teach the children, usually in the home.
- g. Virtual schools—systems of education that can be purchased using the World Wide Web.

What is the reason for this explosion of choices since 1955 when the choice was simple and twofold? It seems to us indisputable that we are seeing a continually growing dissatisfaction with public school education. The reasons for this are likely as varied as the parents who choose educational alternatives for their children, but patterns of dissent can be observed. In the decade of the 1970s, a political awakening took place among conservative evangelical Christians, which led eventually to the formation of the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. In addition to abortion on demand, legally sanctioned by the 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, the protesters joined in their critique of public school education. The abolition of prayer in school by the Court's decision, the teaching of

naturalistic evolution, and the moral relativism of most sex education programs, in particular, fueled this evangelical passion and political activism. The Moral Majority and its successor, The Christian Coalition, worked hard to effect change in public school education, notably by endorsing conservative candidates for local school boards. The rhetoric of “culture wars” became a rallying cry for progressives as well as for conservatives (see James Hunter, *Culture Wars*).

This conservative political activity did meet with some success, but the educational system did not budge in any significant way. Consequently, alternative Christian schools, many of them directly run by evangelical churches, increased in number as well as size. As importantly, homeschooling became a significant and nationally noticed phenomenon. At the same time, other school critics also commented on what they observed as the declining quality of public school education, among other things calling attention to size. Classrooms were judged to be too large, and pleas for additional funding to reduce class size became one of the persistent items on the political agenda of teachers and school administrators. Large schools, particularly high schools of several thousands of students, created problems of attendance management and behavior control. With a perceived decline in academic standards; use of the schools to promote a progressivist social agenda; growing violence; school shootings, such as Columbine; drug use; and other behavioral problem in public schools, the clamor of voices calling for the need to increase competition for public schools grew louder. As a result, alternatives *within* publicly funded education itself, such as charter schools, flourished in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Christian citizens are obliged to take serious notice of the situation in public school education. Our commitment to Reformed Christian schools is never to be taken as a ground for indifference to the education of all children in our communities and nation. So, if there is a decline in public education, we must actively concern ourselves with it. As with God’s people of old, even in captivity, we must “seek the peace and the prosperity of the city” where God has brought us. We who are not in captivity but live in freedom have an even greater opportunity and responsibility. So then, what can we say about the state of public school education in North America?

We must observe, first of all, that ours is not the first generation to raise serious questions about the state of public education. Long before the Presidential Commission’s report “A Nation at Risk” or Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, several waves of concerned lament about the state of North American schools received national attention. Consistent complaints about the poor state of learning, inadequate funding and poor buildings, the need for better training, and working conditions for teachers have been commonplace. Canadians and Americans prize education highly, and the failure of public schools to live up to high expectations may simply be a permanent fixture of our public life. At the same time, educator Diane Ravitch points out that present complaints about education exist even though the sought reforms of previous generations have been fulfilled. Certification of teachers who are expected to have college degrees, education programs in universities, teacher’s unions, increased government funding for education, a less rigid curriculum in favor of more elective

courses and fewer required courses, and standardized testing were all trumpeted as solutions to existing problems in the schools. As these “reforms” were achieved, they introduced new problems, and the pendulum swung back to previous ideas and ideals. Schools were “opened” in response to a perceived rigidity only to result in declining academic achievement that triggered a “back-to-the-basics” movement. The results of the many reforms sought and implemented, says Ravitch, “has hardly been equal to the hopes invested.” She concludes: “Paradoxically, the achievements of the recent past seem to have exhausted the usually ready stock of prescriptions for school reform and to have raised once again the most basic questions of educational purpose” (*The Schools We Deserve*, pp. 28-29).

The preceding comments urge upon us great caution in assessing the current state of public education in Canada and the United States. Perhaps it is safe to say, however, that Ravitch’s concluding phrase “basic questions of educational purpose” is the key. If it is true that the beginning of North American public education in the nineteenth century had as its basic purpose the enculturation of all children, but especially those of immigrant newcomers, into the ideals of Canadian and American citizenship—how to become a “good” Canadian or American—this ideal is no longer viable. In both countries, a single notion of what it means to be a good American or Canadian is itself being questioned. A relentless relativism resists the straitjacket of one monolithic, Eurocentric, white, Christian national ideal in favor of a pluralist one that exalts minority perspectives over those of the traditional majority culture. Whether this is a good or a bad thing is not nearly as important as the fact itself. One single, monolithic national ideal may be unrecoverable in our pluralist societies, and, with its disappearance, the rationale and possibility of a *common* public school that does justice to all minorities as well as to the majority becomes impossible. If there is a crisis in North American public education, it is an identity crisis with competing visions striving for influence and control.

When this social and cultural reality is combined with the inefficiency of public education compared to that of private schools, it is not difficult to see why various plans to expand *affordable* choices for the poorest of our citizens should be seen as a matter of justice. Who could possibly be opposed to schools that are superior in quality, are freely chosen by parents, and can educate a child for one-half the average cost of per-child tax money spent on public schools?

The answer to the preceding question is somewhat rhetorical. In fact, though there are indeed many choices available to parents, financial considerations make the choice very difficult for some parents. What is most troubling about the matter of finances is that the disparity between those who can and those who cannot afford to pay increasing tuition costs may in some cases fall out along racial lines. When the potent mixture of poverty, class, and race come together, there is a real potential for tragic and painful conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ. Such conflict and disunity is one of the most serious impediments to the gospel message. Our committee therefore wishes to remind synod that denominational efforts to help all CRC members to be able to send their children to a Reformed Christian day school is one of the real tests of our commitment to become a

more diverse church by dealing directly with matters of injustice and inequity (see Recommendation H).

In order to help synod come to an informed decision about what it should say in its advice to the churches concerning the matter of finances, it is important to know what the current situation is in terms of government funding. In Canada, particularly in the western provinces, the provincial governments contribute to the education of all children by contributing half or more of the cost of education for parents who choose independent (not governed by publicly elected boards) schools. Recently Ontario passed a measure that will grant a tax credit to parents who choose independent schools for their children.

In the United States, the wall erected between church and government has prevented almost all government support for the education of children whose parents enroll them in nonpublic (the term of choice in the United States with the same meaning as “independent” in Canada) schools. Some parents benefit from funds for special needs’ students or from funds for poor families. Some states provide “ancillary services” such as transportation, some textbooks, technical equipment, and social services. Recently a few states have adopted small tax credit programs that provide scholarships for students attending nonpublic schools. The constitutional legitimacy of certain voucher programs was affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2002 when it upheld the constitutionality of the Cleveland, Ohio, voucher program. The closest relationship between Reformed Christian schools and the government is in Alberta. The most visible example is the Edmonton Society for Christian education. For three years, this Reformed Christian school society, founded by CRC members with a strong Dutch ethnic similarity, has contracted with the Edmonton Public Schools as an alternative school within the public school governance. The Edmonton Christian School receives full funding from the city, its principal is appointed by the public-school superintendent, and all of its teachers have joined the Alberta public school teachers’ union. The contract allows, even encourages, the Edmonton Christian School Society to choose its own teachers and to carry out its clearly Christian mission.

From the preceding overview, we can see that some progress has been made in providing a more just way of funding Christian day schools. There is, however, still a long way to go, and synod should take note of the inequities that still remain. Our concluding recommendations, K and L, ask synod and the CRC once again (as synod did in 1975 [see Appendix C]) to endorse a strong plea for greater educational justice in North America. Disparity among CRC parents’ ability to pay for a Christian day school education makes it difficult for CRC congregations and members to continue strongly supporting Reformed Christian schools. Our report addresses some of these concerns in greater detail in the next section of our report.

4. Choices and challenges

When the multiplication of choices in education (section III, A, 3) is combined with observations about the changes in the CRC (section III, A, 2), we must take note of new challenges to CRC members. There are numerous CRC members who teach or are otherwise involved in public education from elementary school to university level. The Reformed

understanding of Christ's lordship means that we honor the desire to be ambassadors of the kingdom in public education, as difficult as that may be. The intention of parents to be a witness and a blessing in public education must also not be overlooked.

The committee recognizes that these are complex and intensely personal choices facing CRC members. Furthermore, the church must not infringe on the Christian freedom of the believer (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.19) by requiring one and only one path of Christian discipleship. The intention to be a public witness to Christ in education can take different forms.

What must not be forgotten, however, is that the CRC's traditional commitment to Christian day school education is not in the first place an individual matter but a covenantal communal matter. Our committee therefore believes that synod should both acknowledge and honor the legitimate diversity and individual choices of CRC members and, with equal conviction, hold before the church the communal commitment to institutions of Christian education. In addition to what we have already said about homeschooling, we would also call attention to the following issues.

In the previous subsection (III, A, 3) we noted some of the reasons why many parents are demanding greater choice in education. For Christians, this must never become simply a personal selfish matter ("let me have *my* share of tax money") but an issue of justice. One of the chief objectives of broad-based support for Reformed Christian education is to afford opportunity for parents who find the cost prohibitive to still provide a quality Christian education for their children. It is unjust to have Christian day school education available only for the well-to-do.

The issue of public justice in education also has a broader dimension. The resistance to choice in education has the effect of creating a monopoly for state-controlled education. When alternatives to a public school monopoly are prohibitive (not to mention prohibited!) the very foundations of liberty and pluralism are threatened. The history of Reformed Christian education in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century is instructive here. As secular government authorities emptied day schools of all explicit religious teaching, orthodox Reformed believers attempted to start their own schools. While the law permitted such independent schools, bureaucratic obstacles as well as cost made establishing such schools very difficult. Abraham Kuyper's crusade for educational justice was not only out of concern for the children of Reformed Christian parents but a matter of broader justice and religious freedom in the Dutch nation (see John Bolt, *A Free Church: A Holy Nation*, chap. 7). Kuyper realized that Christian schools, as free and voluntary institutions, provided a necessary counterweight to an intrusive state, particularly a secular state seeking to control the education of all children. The very existence of Christian schools stands as a witness to the lordship of Christ and as a testimony to freedom and public justice. As we consider the importance of Christian day school education, this must not be forgotten.

Finally, on this point, it must also be pointed out that Christian learning is itself a communal activity. This is more obviously true at the college and university levels where Christians in similar academic disciplines pool knowledge and resources in order to provide Christian perspective.

However, it is also true of education issues at other levels, for example, matters of pedagogy. So, while we honor the variety of choices made by CRC members in terms of their desire to honor Christ in education, we would also insist that institutional Christian day school education is an essential component of our communal responsibility as Reformed people.

5. Conclusion

When we consider together the changes in education—the changes we noted in our culture, in our society and church, and in the variety of choices made by Christian Reformed Church members, our committee is convinced of the need, perhaps now more than ever, for Reformed Christian day school education. We as a committee urge the synod of the Christian Reformed Church to re-emphasize to CRC members the promise and need of Christian education at all levels. (See Recommendations C-F.) As we have suggested and will expand in greater detail later in our report, such a commitment implies that the denomination through its synod provide local congregations with guidance about funding, enrollment, and promotion of Christian education “so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17, NRSV; see Recommendation G). Having considered in broad strokes the *context* within which Christian education takes place, we now examine more specifically the current state of support for Reformed Christian day schools.

B. Rethinking support for Christian schools

Within the broad Christian school movement, the Christian schools organized by Dutch Reformed immigrants have always had a close association with the Christian Reformed Church. From its denominational beginnings in the 1850s and through the large waves of immigrants into the United States in the 1880s and into Canada after the Second World War, these immigrant groups typically formed a church almost immediately. Next, these same groups formed Christian day schools. Though some of the earliest schools were parochial, well before the turn of the century a new model, inspired by Abraham Kuyper, took hold. Christian Reformed groups formed societies or associations to elect school boards to govern the schools. The society members were often the same people who were members of the church, but the two institutions were governed differently.

Although some parents may have thought of the schools as protection agencies for their children against the secular influences of the general culture, the philosophy statements of these Reformed Christian schools typically reflected a Calvinistic and Kuyperian purpose for the schools. These were not just schools “of the Bible,” in the sense of pious practices of prayer and Bible reading; they sought to teach a worldview, a way of seeing all of life through “the spectacles of Scripture” (Calvin). These schools promised to help children learn in principle and practice the cultural mandate, to steward all of creation in Christ’s name, and to bring the rule of Christ to bear in all of culture. “The Earth Is the Lord’s, and the Fullness Thereof” was the theme song.

Throughout the history of Reformed Christian schools, CRC members who chose public schools for their children have claimed that the CRC’s aim for God’s people to be “salt and light” in the world extends to their children’s being witnesses for Christ in the public schools. These parents believed they were fulfilling the covenantal promises of Deuteronomy 6 through the

Christian education they provided at home and in their church. These parents also claimed that public schools employed many Christian teachers who could guide their children when conflicting worldview claims drew their attention in school. Some parents also argued that they wanted their children to learn alongside children with different ethnic and racial backgrounds rather than with mainly “Dutch kids” in the local Christian schools.

Today the CRC is more racially and ethnically diverse than it has ever been before. Christian schools are too. Some Christian schools, whose enrollments were nearly 100 percent CRC members’ children, now have fewer than 10 percent CRC children. Even in the communities that are still dominated by Dutch surnames, the parents who support the Christian school may represent many ethnic traditions and church affiliations. In large cities, the older Reformed Christian schools often retain governance in the hands of a minority of Reformed Christians while serving a majority of parents who want Christian education for their children but define that education as practice in piety, or moral values, or a safe environment in an unsafe culture. Now, too, some Reformed Christian schools are considering enrolling children whose parents are not Christian but who desire a Christian education for their children.

Today, too, ecclesiastical cousins such as the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) are forming Christian schools across the United States. These schools are often parochial and clearly Reformed in perspective. As a denomination, the PCA has not emphasized Christian day schooling as has the CRC in its history. Susan Wise Bauer (*Heirs of the Covenant*) emphasizes the covenantal basis for Christian education but practically illustrates it by the church’s Sunday ministry and homeschooling, passing off Christian schools as a third alternative for those who have the means for it.

In the new millennium, the students within the Reformed Christian schools (most having membership in Christian Schools International, a support agency to these schools since 1920) come from many denominations and from independent community churches. Still, the number of children from ethnic and racial minority groups within the schools is certainly less than in the public schools nearby. Minority members of the CRC testify that their children do not always feel at home in the Reformed Christian schools; not charging overt racism but noting that the overwhelming majority of students still is Anglo. To many minority Christians, Reformed Christian schools still *seem* ethnically exclusive even if the schools make overt efforts to be inclusive.

The church and school must address all perceptions that create barriers to full inclusion of *all* members or students. It is not a sufficient or even appropriate response to say that these perceptions are wrong and should be corrected. Our concern in this report is the seeming decline in full support of Christian day school education within our CRC congregations. Finances have been cited as one reason for this decline, and our committee was given the assignment to seek out denominational ways of addressing the problems arising from the growing cost of Christian education. If there are perceptions that Reformed Christian schools are exclusive—whether true or not—the church is duty bound to address this barrier as well. We must do what we can to change perceptions by helping to change the reality that gives rise to the perception, not to demand that the perceptions be altered.

Are Reformed Christian day schools exclusive? Are they islands of ethnicity that make it difficult to learn that the world is multiethnic and Christ’s kingdom

is inclusive? They are certainly not exclusive in intent. Many welcome ethnic minorities and include “honoring cultural diversity” as a major goal of the school, even testing for it. Most Reformed Christian schools now have a service component in their curricula that teaches students to care for people unlike themselves, to seek justice and restoration within a broken and unjust world. In addition, there are Christian school districts, such as the Grand Rapids Christian School Association, that make a conscious effort to hire qualified minority persons and in addition provide scholarships for those who cannot afford tuition. While these scholarships are not intended only for or restricted to minority students, the demographic realities of the larger Grand Rapids urban area do bring about that effect. Synod should encourage congregations and groups of churches to initiate similar creative approaches that target students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools.

The objection that Christian schools erect barriers to becoming a more inclusive church has also been raised from a different angle. Questions are raised about whether church support for Christian day schools is a barrier to outreach by suggesting that Christian education is an essential ingredient of Reformed Christian discipleship. Does such an expectation ask new believers and members to accept a standard for membership that exceeds biblical and confessional requirements? Does the prominence of Christian education within our CRC communities create a psychological barrier for new converts or transfers from other denominations who do not have such an expectation as part of their own history? In addition, a concern for evangelistic outreach also gives rise to another concern—the issue of stewardship and priorities. Evangelistic outreach and a passion for the lost is said by some to be of greater importance for servant-stewardship than only serving “our own” children. The validity of this perception has been carefully studied by CRC home missionary Rev. David Snapper (see section IV, A below). It is his conclusion that rather than being a hindrance to church growth, the presence of a CSI school nearby is a key predictor of whether a new CRC church plant will be successful.

The relationship between evangelism and Christian day school education, however, should not be determined solely by pragmatic considerations. Our vision for Christian education is *theologically* grounded, and the relationship between evangelism and Christian education also requires theological attention. It requires, in other words, theological reflection on the relationship among covenant, Christian education, and the church’s mission.

The church of Jesus Christ has been given a commission by its Lord to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20 NIV). It should be noted that this command is issued by the one to whom has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth.” The church’s mission, therefore, is framed by the narrative of God’s covenant and kingdom. The royal authority given to Christ is the fruit of his finished work. As the apostle Paul says about himself, he was “called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendent of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:1-4 NIV).

What this means is that the commission given to the church by our Lord is not simply or only a royal proclamation of God's kingdom that fulfills the covenant promises of the Old Testament. Rather, kingdom and covenant remain the foundation of *today's* gospel mission; the church's message of salvation still has covenant and kingdom as its content, a content that can be summarized something like this: Faithful to his covenantal promises to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1-3), God himself became incarnate in Jesus the Messiah who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation, and ascended to send the Holy Spirit to empower the church for its mission. As the church acts in obedience to its Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes a participant in the grand narrative history of salvation. It does so as the undeserving recipient of divine grace (election) and as an active agent in God's work of redemption as human history unfolds. In other words, fully recognizing that all salvation history is centered in Jesus the Christ, his visible presence in our world today is via his body, the church. The human Jesus is not with us but ascended (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 18). Yet he indwells his temple-church through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19). The church is Christ's *bodily* presence on earth.

Covenant and kingdom, therefore, are inseparable. Together they create the frame of a narrative that spans the ages—the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. The church's mission is to tell that story to the world and, through word and deed, to invite others into the continuing narrative of redemption and consummation. God's covenant promises give that narrative a depth of assurance. For those who put their trust in God's covenantal promises in Christ, the story has a happy—no, a glorious!—ending: Eternal life in full fellowship with God in a new heaven and new earth where there is no suffering, pain, death, mourning, or tears. This confident hope in the certain glory of the salvation narrative's outcome is a necessary encouragement for the church's pilgrimage in the dramatic unfolding of that narrative. The ground of Christian hope is a confidence in the covenantal promises *because* Christ's royal power and authority make it clear that he is not only *willing* to save (as his voluntary suffering and death make clear) but also *able* to save. Our loving Father *is* Almighty God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9).

When we see that covenant and kingdom (God's promises and his reign) are the foundation stones for the church's mission, it also becomes clear that this mission is directly tied to that of the Christian school. To pick up the obvious point first, covenant and kingdom are also the traditional grounds that the Christian Reformed Church in its synodical pronouncements, as well as through the promotional efforts of the schools themselves, uses to build the case for Christian education. When covenant children are baptized, parents and congregation make vows promising to take an active interest in the nurture not only of the child being baptized but also of all the church's children. Covenant is a shorthand way of accounting for God's faithfulness in the narrative of redemption, the history of salvation. In the case of Christian day school education, this covenantal perspective is linked with and complemented by the perspective of kingdom theology. Christian parents who acknowledge the lordship of Christ will desire to have their children taught this same vision. Jesus Christ is Lord of all creation and thus also of learning—he claims it all as his own and his lordship is the framework of meaning by which all knowledge is measured. From a Reformed point of view, covenant

and kingdom are the two divine realities that form the basis for and the content of all Christian education. As the CRC's "Our World Belongs to God," puts it (paragraph 50): "In education we seek to acknowledge the Lord by promoting schools and teaching in which the light of his Word shines in all learning, where students, of whatever ability, are treated as persons who bear God's image and have a place in his plan."

If we accept this as true, then there can be no conflict between our commitment as Reformed Christians to both missions and/or evangelism and Christian education; at least not if we are rooted in divine covenantal promises and accept Christ's royal authority. Missions and Christian education have identical foundations; to separate them and be forced to choose one over the other cuts the interwoven strands of Christian discipleship. Together, in their own distinctive ways, church and school seek to draw the sinful and lost human beings away from the life-scripts that lead to death and into the covenantal narrative of God's kingdom, a story that reaches its conclusion in glorious eternal life.

All this can be said in a slightly different way, focusing more on some practical questions about how the church can carry out its mission. The church's mission is to bring lost people to Christ and to nurture them in a life of Christian discipleship. A Reformed vision of discipleship is full-orbed; it acknowledges the reality of calling in all vocations not just the gospel ministry. It was in this spirit that when Synod 1997 adopted a new Vision and Mission statement for the church it set forth the following goal under the rubric of kingdom extension:

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earth keeping, racial relationships, etc.).

(Agenda for Synod 1997, p. 61)

This goal flows from a thoroughly Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship. It also requires training for church leaders, a training that can only be done through Christian education in Christian schools. The "official" church (institute) does not have the mandate or the resources to teach disciples of Christ the fine points of earth-keeping or global political strategy. To import these teaching goals into the church's education program runs the risk of politicizing the church. A different, Kuyperian, understanding of the call to be obedient to Christ's lordship in all of life acknowledges that the church's nurture of Christian faith and discipleship must be global in its scope because the gospel is wide. At the same time, the church also realizes the limits of its specific mission and acknowledges that it needs the Christian school for its own mission, particularly in training successive generations for effective leadership in the church that is committed to the Reformed faith. However, the church needs the school to equip its members for broader kingdom service in the wide range of human vocations. It is the school, not the church that prepares Christians for discipleship in politics, science, art, medicine, and law. The church has no mandate or competence to teach mathematics or economics; the school does. Reciprocally, the school needs Reformed churches that will proclaim this cosmic vision of Christian discipleship and support the school with its prayers and its offerings.

The perception that evangelism and discipleship are separate goals in the church is therefore a false dichotomy in our judgment. Being forced to choose one over the other overlooks the missiological significance of the school itself as a public testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ. It is precisely this global vision of Christ's kingdom that attracts many evangelicals to the Reformed faith and to Reformed Christian schools. In addition, many Reformed Christian schools have as part of their mission statement that children will learn to become "responsible disciples of Christ." The Reformed Christian schools have served the Christian Reformed Church as the agency the church uses to teach its children what discipleship means, what faith in Christ has to do with the world, and what following the Lord means to extend his rule in the world. Prior to the time when Christian Reformed churches had full-time, trained youth ministers, and still today in places where youth ministry is done by volunteers on an ad hoc basis, the Christian school functions as a very effective youth group.

We must still face the troubling questions raised earlier in this section. No one will deny that racial injustice, snobbery, elitism, selfishness, and materialism afflict Reformed Christian school communities, as they do the CRC itself. Also, the disparity in income in the CRC, sometimes within the same congregation, is perhaps greater now than thirty years ago. In addition, the CRC now includes congregations that are ethnically diverse and congregations that are predominantly one ethnic or racial minority. Add to these disparities the different foci in alternative Christian schools, e.g., one school emphasizing personal piety and character development while another centers its purpose on students' learning and putting into practice a Reformed worldview, and we can see that CRC parents face an array of challenging and sometimes painful choices. It was in recognition of the need of guidance for members of the CRC that our committee was appointed by synod.

However, it is not the matter of choice as much as the inequities among CRC parents' ability to pay tuition for Reformed Christian schools that threatens the continuation of strong churchwide support for Reformed Christian schools. Furthermore, the trend for invested parents to pay a higher percentage of the cost of Christian education has decreased the percentage of CRC parents using these schools. When the CRC last endorsed Christian day school education in the 1950s, the parents paid less than two-thirds of the total cost with the nonvested parents of the churches covering one-third of the cost. Today most Reformed Christian schools expect more than 90 percent of their revenue from tuition. In Canada, most schools charge tuition by *family*, with the same charge for parents with one participating child as with five or more. In the United States, many schools now charge tuition by the child. That means that with a yearly tuition of \$3,500 per child on the average, the one-child family only pays that amount while the four-child family pays four times that amount.

As the CRC looks to the future (assuming that it will endorse anew the covenantal ideal that the whole church will use every means available to educate its children in the truth) to fulfill the congregation's vows at baptism, the CRC must consider specific means of financial help so that *all* the church's children may learn a Reformed Christian pattern of discipleship in the home, church, and Christian day school. What kind of just means should the CRC endorse? It seems to us that the following features ought to be part of any plan

that a congregation chooses to provide financial assistance so that all its children have the possibility of receiving a Reformed Christian education:

- Provide access for every covenant school-age child, no matter the financial ability of his parents.
- Include Christian day school support as an essential part of the church's general budget, just as it does line items for youth ministry, pastors' salaries, and evangelism.
- Teach all members that financially supporting Christian day school education is part of the covenantal vow made by the congregation when the church's children are baptized.
- Encourage all parents to make use of Reformed Christian schools.
- Provide financial support to all children, regardless of the parents' need, and encourage all members to be the stewards of their resources for all of the church's ministries. Decide the amount of support for every child based on the cost of education in local Reformed Christian schools and the ability of the whole congregation to pay. (See Recommendations F-H.)

At this point, we also need to consider the new (since 1955) phenomenon of homeschooling. Synod 1955 did not even consider this possibility. It simply stated as a self-evident truth that "formal schooling as we know it today has become a necessity in the complex society of the modern day. Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task." The synodical statement goes on to link parents' entrusting their covenant obligations to others by appealing to the traditional baptismal liturgy that states "and cause them to be instructed therein. . . ." Still, today some CRC parents believe that the best way to carry out their covenantal obligations is to instruct them at home. Certainly the CRC must respect the choices these parents make to conduct schooling of the heart and mind at home, with themselves as the prime teachers. The church ought to support them with prayer and with encouragement to teach a Reformed view of the world. Where Christian day schools are available, the church needs to encourage a spirit of good will and cooperation between those who homeschool and those who send their children to Christian day schools. Where no Christian day school exists, parents should be encouraged to work toward establishing one, and, in the meanwhile, the church has a responsibility to be supportive of parents who homeschool.

However, in the same way that parents who send their children to a Christian day school have a covenantal obligation to be supportive of those who homeschool, so should homeschoolers support Christian day school education. Christian education of all the children in a congregation is a communal task. The church's first responsibility is to see to it that it is possible for all the church's children to receive a Reformed education in a Christian school. We believe that in a school children see a Christian worldview from different angles, test that worldview in a safe place, and learn from others the nuances of practicing that faith in a fallen world. Learning in a Christian school in a broader community than the home helps children both broaden and deepen their understanding while also giving them both the opportunity and the responsibility to give their learning to others. Learning the truth in community underscores the covenantal promise made by the congregation at

the baptism of every child to contribute to every child's education, when we say together, "we do, God helping us."

Here we also call on CRC members who support Reformed Christian day schools to listen carefully to the reasons parents give for homeschooling. In addition to the commitment of such parents to accept full responsibility for their children's upbringing, there are often elements of protest targeted at specific local schools. To take communal covenantal accountability seriously, Christian school supporters, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members need to pay attention to the concerns and critique expressed by brothers and sisters in Christ. Honoring diversity does not mean silent criticism but involves speaking the truth in love. Here, too, we see how integrally the communal life of the congregation is tied to the education of its children in the home, the church, and also in the formal education of the daily classroom.

No system for decreasing the financial injustice of access to Reformed Christian schools will on its own make either the church or the school more ethnically or racially diverse. However, if the CRC provides financial assistance to all the church's children so that they can receive a full-orbed Christian worldview education, it will demonstrate that the vows the congregation makes at baptism are real and really essential for the CRC to carry out its mission in the world, to extend the rule of Christ through the Christian education of its children in all three agencies of faith nurture—home, church, and Christian school.

C. Surveys

With the assistance of Dr. Rodger Rice, former director of the Calvin College Center for Social Research, our committee prepared two survey questionnaires, one for CRC councils and another for CRC pastors. A detailed executive summary of each survey can be found in Appendices A and B. The complete survey data will be available to the synodical advisory committee that considers this report. In this section of our report, we will highlight some of the features of the surveys that were striking to the committee.

First a few observations about the survey process. The surveys were sent to all *active* pastors in the CRC and to all councils of organized and emerging churches. The return rate for the pastor's survey was 57 percent (493/864) and for the council survey 66 percent (655/989). The committee is grateful for the cooperation of pastors and councils for this good rate of return. All forty-seven classes were represented in the survey as well as a good range of differently sized churches, though there was a small over-representation, when compared with denominational statistics, of churches in the 301-600 member range as well as an under-representation of small churches (1-150 members). We also need to caution that the exact figures in the survey summaries are still only the *perceptions* of the respondents and not hard data. We shall first consider the council survey and then the pastors' survey.

The council survey indicates an encouragingly high level of committed support for Christian day school education. Churches are believed to have positive relationships with their local Christian schools (94 percent), are largely united in their support for it (71 percent), and a high percentage report pulpit support (79 percent) and strong elder support (73 percent) for Christian schooling. In addition, 75 percent say that their church encourages its young people to attend a Christian college.

At the same time, there are contradictory results that are less encouraging. Notwithstanding the high level of encouragement to young people to attend a Christian college, the estimated median percentage of students who actually do attend one is reported as only 23 percent. If this figure is correct, we consider this a matter of concern, especially when combined with the estimated mean figure of 60 percent of children attending Christian day schools. The latter figure was estimated to be 67 percent fifteen years ago and suggests a decline in support for Christian education. What we can say with confidence, therefore, is that the churches report that only one-half of their children attend a Christian day school. Furthermore, of the churches that report that their children attend a Christian school, 31 percent report that none of their children attend a Reformed Christian school. As a committee, we wonder if these data reflect a growing lack of awareness of Reformed identity and concern about Reformed identity with all its implications for Christian discipleship. If so, this is a trend that has profound implications for the future membership and leadership of the Christian Reformed Church.

There are other conflicting signals in the survey data. Although a high percentage of councils report that they support Christian education and even 77 percent say they encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools, 75 percent also say that office-bearers are not necessarily expected to send their children to Christian schools. What is of special concern to us is the high percentage (63 percent) of councils who disagree that the baptismal vows require parents to send their children to Christian schools and who also disagree that the baptismal vow implies congregational financial support for parents of school age children. In effect, this means that Church Order Article 71 is effectively disregarded by 75 percent of our churches.

When it comes to the promotion and financial support of Christian day school education, the results defy easy characterization or pattern. It is not clear to the churches who has the primary responsibility for promoting Christian education. Financial support is the most commonly cited means of promotion, though 29 percent of the churches report providing no financial support. Where financial assistance is provided it is based on need and given after a review of family finances. We judge that while there is support for Christian education in our churches there is little creative or coordinated promotion or planning for congregational financial support. Here we also need to report that financial need is the most commonly (71 percent) cited reason by parents for not sending children to a Christian school.

Though the results of the pastors' survey show some variations with the council survey, the general perception of their church's relationship to Christian education is very similar. Pastors, too, report a high level of support for Christian education, a good working relationship between church and school, and significant unity in their churches in support of Christian education. Pastors also indicate that there is a lack of coordinated strategy for promoting and financially supporting Christian education. Finally, pastors also give the cost of tuition as the chief reason why some parents do not send their children to Christian schools. Nonetheless, conflicts and contradictions are found in the pastors' survey as well.

First, we note a key difference with the council survey. While 75 percent of the councils report that there is no expectation that office-bearers send their children to Christian day schools, 63 percent of pastors report that they are

expected to send their children. This is an interesting difference, but the reason is quite apparent: Pastors experience pressure to send their children even when councils do not explicitly require it.

For the committee, the question that concerns us the most is Q. 9h in which 69 percent of pastors disagree that baptismal vows by parents require them to send their children to Christian day schools. Perhaps the word *require* is the stumbling block here. If the question were formulated something like: "Is sending children to a Christian day school a legitimate implication of the baptismal vow?" perhaps the figures would have been different. Still the fact remains that 63 percent of councils and 69 percent of pastors who responded disagree with the traditional CRC understanding that the baptismal vow is necessarily linked to Christian day school education.

Here again there is also countervailing positive response. In response to the question about the arguments and reasons pastors give to promote Christian education (Q. 10) some 160 gave "worldview issues" as a primary reason and used phrases such as "Lordship of Christ over all areas of life," "Reformed perspective," "integration of faith and learning," "cultural mandate," and "Kuyperian worldview." Some 100 did relate Christian education to baptismal vows and the responsibility of parents to fulfill their covenantal obligations. This indicates that covenant and kingdom remain key elements in the theological grounding of Christian education for Christian Reformed pastors. It may also indicate a shift in that kingdom emphases are slightly more prominent than covenantal ones.

Our final comment deals with a troubling issue in our CRC communities. At the same time that ethnic and racial minorities in the CRC raise concerns about not being fully included in our Reformed Christian schools (see above) both the council survey (87 percent) and the pastors' survey (68 percent) report that the ethnic minority members of their churches feel comfortable attending Christian day schools. Whatever the reality, perceptions clearly differ. It is a Christian imperative that all CRC members, including ethnic minority members, carefully examine their perceptions. At the same time, the burden is on the majority culture in the CRC to do all that is in its power to make our communities welcome and safe places that encourage diversity (see Recommendation H).

IV. The Reformed faith and Christian education

A. Biblical-theological foundations for Christian education

The last time a Christian Reformed synod dealt with the matter of Christian day school education by way of a study committee report (in 1955), it adopted a statement of principles that included a *reason for* as well as suggestions concerning the *content* of Reformed education. Because these *grounds* and *content* are as important today as they were then and because the 1955 statement in our judgment remains valid for us today, we begin by highlighting the key ideas from the passages cited in the previous section of our report.

According to the report, the primary responsibility for educating children of the church community rests with the parents (Deut. 6; Ps. 78). This obligation is placed upon parents by the covenantal promises they make when they present their children for baptism:

Children born of Christian parents are members of the Church of Christ. . . . In the providence of God they have been placed in covenantal relationship to Christ and their education must be in keeping with this relationship. It must be education in Christ. . . . A covenantal relationship demands a covenantal education.

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 197)

The divine covenant is not made with solitary individuals or even individual families but with the entire body of believers, with the *people of God*. The church community thus also has responsibilities. This begins with discipling parents to encourage them in remaining true to the vows they made when their children were baptized. The church must also provide active support for the education that it encourages its members to receive:

Since the Christian school is the only agency that can provide a Christian education for the youth of the church, the church is duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199)

It is here that synod introduces what we today refer to as contextualization. The circumstances of the present time determined by historical developments must be taken into account. For synod, this meant that, while parents retain the primary responsibility for their children's education, the complexity of modern society makes it impossible for them to do it by themselves. Though the school as an institution cannot be said to arise from a divine mandate (as for example marriage and family are) and is instead a historical, culturally dependent institution, synod believed that schools were necessary "in the complex society of the modern day." Concretely, in synod's judgment, this meant that

Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task. This is recognized in the Form for the Baptism of Infants in these words: ". . . and cause them to be instructed therein."

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199)

The preceding quote, with its oblique reference to the "cultural mandate" of Genesis 1:28, provides a hint about the synod's address to the curricular *content* of a Reformed Christian education. All areas of human life are to be included in the purview of a Christian education; all culture is potentially open to obedient Christian discipleship. This cultural mandate, however, must be understood within the frame of Christ as Lord over all:

The subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools must present a medium, a milieu, in which the covenant child's life in Christ can develop to its fullness in all areas of life. No area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and his Christ for the covenant child. It is for this reason that the Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency to make Christ-like life effective in the totality of life for every covenant child.

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199)

In sum then, considering the brief account given above along with the historical overview of CRC denominational support for Christian day school education (in section IV, B below), it is apparent that the Reformed conviction about God's *covenant* with his people, especially signified in infant baptism, has consistently been the *primary ground* for the CRC's commitment to Christian education.

What is particularly valuable about the 1955 report is the way in which it blends the traditionally strong Reformed emphasis on covenant with another characteristic Reformed doctrine, the kingdom of God. This emphasis on the lordship of Christ over all things not only provides additional support in providing solid doctrinal reasons for Christian education, it also links up with its *content*. Because Christ is Lord of all things and education is an integral part of our social and cultural world, he must also be Lord of the school. This requires Christian schools. This education, however, must be *in Christ* and must be conducted in such a manner as to acknowledge that Christ is Lord, that “no area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and his Christ for the covenant child” (*Acts of Synod 1955*, p. 199). So then, as we consider the last statement made by the CRC synod about Christian education in 1955, we see that it rests on two theological pillars—the *covenant* and the *kingdom* of God and, as we saw in section III, C above, these two realities are inextricably joined together in God’s mission plan for all creation.

We need now to consider whether these familiar and much-loved staple doctrines of the Reformed faith are still adequate bases for supporting the task of Christian education today. It is unarguable that they are still *necessary*; we must consider whether they remain *sufficient*. In recent years, the CRC has been appropriately challenged to become more mission-minded and diverse, to reach out beyond the confines of its historically Dutch ethnic community and engage the larger world with the gospel of the kingdom. To draw the contrast most sharply using the distinctions drawn above, we could say that while a covenantal emphasis seems to focus attention on “our own children” (with *our* confusingly taken as ethnically *ours* as well as confessionally *ours*), the emphasis on missions and evangelism focuses the church’s and the school’s attention to outsiders. Stated differently, it could also be formulated in terms of setting the “mission mandate” of Matthew 28:19-20 (“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . .”) over against the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28, with the former having a decided priority over the latter. Missions and evangelism would then be understood as *more* important than Christian education.

Our committee considers this line of thinking to be neither correct nor very helpful. While a case can be made that our rationale for Christian education must go beyond what we have historically understood it to be in the Christian Reformed church, particularly in paying attention to outreach and diversity, setting missions in opposition to covenant and kingdom is both a theological and a practical mistake.

When we diminish the importance of nurturing covenant children, we slight the Lord to whom they belong. Children of the faith community are integral members of the flock and are loved by the Good Shepherd, loved to the point of his laying down his life for them (John 10). It is a mistake to set missions and/or evangelism over against the ongoing discipling of Christ’s sheep and lambs. As our Lord reminded his disciples in one of his postresurrection appearances, while we are fishing (for men), we must also feed the flock (John 21). Where obedience to either one of these two mandates for the church is inadequate, God’s people need to be prodded to greater faithfulness. Renewed obedience in one area should not be at the expense of another important task. Our obligation as a church to evangelize and to educate is not an either/or but a both/and. Here we would remind synod once more of our

earlier observation that Christian schools have been an important avenue by which leaders have been formed whose public witness has been a blessing to the world as well as to our church.

In the second place, the claim that Christian schools impede evangelistic efforts ignores the school's own important missiological significance. Christian Reformed folk have more than a century of experience in Christian education, education that stretches from kindergarten to postbaccalaureate graduate education. At a time when evangelicals in North America are establishing a rather remarkable number of Christian alternatives to public school education, often without adequate theological or philosophical foundations (see Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*), Reformed Christians have a solemn obligation to the kingdom of Christ to share the insights of this rich legacy of practice and reflection. As we think about the Christian schools initiated and supported by Christian Reformed folk and the importance of the CRC's Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary to the "Opening of the Evangelical Mind" (Alan Wolfe, *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2000), we would not be wrong in considering Christian education as the CRC's great gift to North American evangelical Christianity. We who are the legatees of that rich heritage have a divine calling to be its responsible stewards.

Third, Christian schools also function evangelistically in another way. In a thorough study of CRC new church plants between 1970 and 1990, CRC home missionary David Snapper concluded that a key factor for predicting a successful church plant (defined as growth beyond 200 members) was the proximity of a CSI Christian day school (summary in "Unfulfilled Expectations of Church Growth," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 [1996]: 481). This ought not to surprise us because Christian education is integrally bound to Reformed confessional and theological identity as well as a Reformed worldview.

In conclusion, while we judge it to be a mistake to set evangelism and/or missions *over against* Christian education, we do endorse adding Matthew 28:19-20 and the Great Commission to covenant and kingdom as doctrinal-theological pillars for Christian day school education. We also need to point out here that Christian schools are no *substitute* for active evangelism and community outreach. Rather, a Christian school ought to be seen as an essential component in the church's responsibility to disciple the nations.

With all these additional theological and practical matters, is there a different way of conceptualizing the grounds for and content of Christian education? Can we incorporate covenant, kingdom, and mission as well as other elements into a unified theologically defined concept? We suggest the notion of narrative as a possibility for such an integration. Narrative has been proposed as one way of conceiving the framework for the curricular content of Christian education (see CSI publication, *The Christian Story and the Christian School*) and is a biblically based frame for integrating the covenantal obligations of parents and the Christian community, the worldview dimension of the kingdom of God, and the lordship of Jesus Christ as well as the missionary call of the Great Commission. We shall first consider this latter, broad role of narrative.

Narrative or story is an alternative way of speaking about covenant. As CSI's new Bible curriculum summarizes it, the Bible is "The Story of God and His People." John Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with this covenantal assertion: "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves."

Analogously, we can say that the whole narrative of Scripture, or the history of salvation, has two essential participants—God and his people. The plot of this story is the plot of providential history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. This C-F-R-C narrative structure of course also has profound worldview implications (see Cornelius Plantinga’s recent rationale for a Reformed Christian college education, *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* [Eerdmans, 2002] and Albert Wolters’, *Creation Regained* [Eerdmans, 1985]), but, before it is an *idea*, it is a *reality* that gives Christians their identity. What does it mean to be a Christian? A Christian is a member of the covenantal people of God; all of us together are pilgrims on the way to the New Jerusalem (Hebrews 11). God’s covenant people today participate in the plot of the divinely governed narrative that began with creation and identifies us today as those who live in the in-between-times, after the first and prior to the second coming of Christ. This narrative sense of identity, it hardly needs saying, as a counter-cultural force is a crucial ingredient in the struggle of the kingdom of God with the idols of the day. What a narratively shaped Christian education should do is encourage God’s covenantal people who live in two different narratives—that of the city of God and that of the earthly city—to a life of discipleship in which the values of the city of God dominate. Good Christian education presents an alternative narrative to the narratives of popular culture and the mass media discussed in section 2 of this report.

In terms of curricular content for Christian schools, thinking narratively helps Christian educators rise above some of the tensions and difficulties that have arisen in the Christian school movement. The covenantal emphasis is susceptible (though it is not intrinsically so determined) to a separationist model of Christian education. Christian education is then regarded as for *our* children, our children who need to be protected from the “world.” When combined with pietism (to be distinguished from appropriate piety), the school takes on a fundamentalist tone, defensive and anti-intellectual, withdrawn from many of the big issues of the broader community. Here the school takes on a role as a primarily evangelistic institution, an integral part of the church’s broad calling to “save” our children. Here, somewhat ironically, the misuse of the covenant conviction blends with the evangelistic concern mentioned earlier in this section of the report.

On the other extreme, an overemphasis on the lordship of Christ or on the kingdom of God can also lead to excess. Some versions of kingdom theology are triumphalistic, finding in the efforts of churches and Christians a post-millennial hope that *we* will bring about the kingdom of God through our rigorous moral efforts. In its worldview form, an emphasis on the *vision* or *perspective* of the kingdom can lead to a kind of intellectualism in which Christian ideas and the development of a Christian mind is the one and only goal of Christian education. Our committee is not eager to join in the chorus of anti-intellectualism all too prevalent in our time and in our communities, but it is important to insist that developing a Christian perspective on every school subject while a necessary component of a good Christian education is not a sufficient criterion. The risk here is that Christian academic excellence fosters an elitism that becomes indifferent to other elements of Christian discipleship and citizenship. We can be grateful for the reputation for academic excellence enjoyed by most CSI schools. However, as we face the idols of our day (see section III, A) there is a real danger that we begin to define the *raison d’être* of

Christian schools in terms of such academic excellence. This danger is heightened by the deplorable state of far too much public school education in North America. In such a climate, it becomes easy to celebrate the Christian school for its *achievement*, especially achievement that is recognized by the world, whether it be in academics or athletics. When such worldly affirmations of success become too important for us, Christian education loses its soul.

Here, too, a narrative framing of “success” provides a quite different vision for Christian schools. Of course God asks that we use our minds and bodies in such a way that we magnify him through the gifts he has given to us. Lack of discipline, laziness, and indifference must be spiritually confronted. In the final analysis, however, success within the frame of the Christian story is quite different from that of the world. Christians, also in their assessment of schools, should measure success in terms of good done in and for the kingdom of Christ. The values of the kingdom are the inverse of those exalted in the world. In those terms, Mother Teresa was a greater success than billionaire Howard Hughes. This is a fundamental message that must be clearly taught and learned in the Christian school. The goal of Christian education is to prepare our children and young people to participate in and contribute to the plot of God’s providential narrative. It would be a loss for the kingdom of God if our Christian schools produced many business executives, doctors, bankers, and lawyers but no inner-city pastors, missionaries, or advocates for the poor and hungry. This is indeed something that a school’s teachers and students must *know*; it is also something they must learn to *do*. The Christian life of faith, as the apostle James reminds us, is not only a matter of believing but also a matter of working. All this must be shaped by the grand covenantal narrative of God and his people, a people called to be kingdom citizens under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

B. The CRC and support for Christian education

Throughout its history, the CRC has consistently supported the cause of Christian day schools. Church Order Article 71 places the responsibility for supporting Christian education in the hands of all church councils:

Christian Schools: The Council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian Schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.¹

Similarly, according to Church Order Article 41, each council is to be asked, among other things, at each classis meeting, “Does the council diligently promote the cause of Christian education from elementary school through institutions of high learning?”² According to Synod 1936,

the expression “support the cause of Christian schools” means that it is the duty of the council to use every proper means to the end that a Christian school may be established where it does not exist and to give whole hearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools and a measure of financial help in case of need.

(*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 36-37)³

¹See D.H. Engelhard and L. J. Hofman, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (2001 version), 391.

²See Engelhard and Hofman, *Manual*, 234

³Cited by Engelhard and Hofman, *Manual*, 391.

The remainder of this section of our report provides an overview of the CRC's commitment to support Christian education financially as well as morally.

Only a few years after the establishment of the CRC in 1857, the vision of Christian education was firmly in place. Synod 1870 declared its strong commitment to the *duty* that every congregation do its utmost to see to it that Christian education was available for its children:

Primary education is discussed with [the firmly expressed conviction by all present] that the school is the [nursery of and for] the Church. It is [therefore] the duty of [each congregation to see to it that they establish a free school], and if this be impossible, [to do everything in their power to achieve education that is both Reformed and in the Dutch language.] This the Assembly impresses on Consistories and Churches.

(Acts of Synod 1870, Art. 36)

We call synod's attention here to three features of this declaration still relevant to our times. First, the close relationship between church and school is expressed in the intimate terms of family life: "the school is [the nursery of and for] the Church." Second, the education offered is to be *free*. Third, the education provided is to be distinctively Reformed.

Schools of course require teachers, and it is noteworthy that only one year later (1871) the broadest assembly of the CRC not only supported the *idea* of common teacher training but apparently was committed to denomination-wide financial support for such a venture.

Classis Michigan proposes that teachers be trained for work in our schools from our own Reformed group. This idea is explained further by the Rev. VanderWerp. The need for this brings about a long discussion, and all agree that this is a pressing question. The Assembly decides that they should look for a good leader, and they find that a Mr. H. Baron seems to have the necessary qualifications. The Assembly is thus keeping him in mind.

(Acts of Synod 1871, Art. 21)

From subsequent minutes of the annual CRC general assembly, it appears that a denomination-wide coordinated effort for teacher education was proving difficult to achieve. In 1872, the matter was referred back to congregations (and a different person was recommended for the instructional post than had been announced in the previous year):

Art. 21. (p. 134) of the previous Session is brought up for discussion, which deals with training of teachers from our own Church group. The discussion and the decision: Congregations shall have this problem referred to them and give it their careful attention. A Mr. F. Winterberg is recommended for this.

(Acts of Synod 1872, Art. 10)

The following year (1873), the general assembly reaffirmed its strong commitment to establishing Christian schools and established a denomination-wide accountability for congregations to implement this by requiring each congregation to report on its efforts at the next session.

Return to Art. 10 concerning Primary Education. A discussion on this, with the result that the need of free Chr. Ref. Schools be strongly recommended to the Congregations, and that the Congregations take steps to bring such schools into being. Also each Congregation is to report at the next Session what has been accomplished by it along these lines. Sunday Schools shall also be organized in all the Churches.

(Acts of Synod 1873, Art. 8)

From the reports given at the 1874 assembly, it is apparent that progress in establishing Christian schools was slow. The assembly vigorously reaffirmed (“insists in the strongest way possible”) the commitment to Christian day school education. The expansion of the mandate of Sunday schools to include reading instruction (“as a last resort”) should also be noted.

Article 8 of the previous Minutes is first brought up for discussion. This deals with Primary Christian Education, and that in free institutions, as well as training in our Sunday Schools. The President inquires if the Congregations have made any progress along that line. It appears that in Grand Rapids there is such a day school, but other Congregations state that little progress has been made as yet, although most Congregations do have Sunday Schools. Since the Assembly is thoroughly convinced that there is a need of free Christian Schools, it insists in the strongest possible way that they be brought into being and fostered. In those Congregations where it is impossible at this time to have such educational instruction, it is permitted to teach Reading in the Sunday Schools, but only as a last resort.

(*Acts of Synod 1874*, Art. 10)

The suggestion of the assembly over several years that congregations unable to establish schools ought to teach reading in the Sunday school ran into an unexpected obstacle. When the 1875 assembly discussed the progress of Christian education in the denomination, it first had to come to terms with an objection from the Grand Rapids congregation—such education on the Sabbath would be a violation of the fourth commandment. In response to the objection “the Assembly judges that instruction given in such a way is not a transgression of the fourth commandment” (*Acts of Synod 1875*, Art. 4). The president of synod explained that the unique circumstances of the church in question made some instruction in spelling, reading, and Holland language instruction necessary and that this would “be carried on only as a last resort” (*Acts of Synod 1875*, Art. 4). The assembly received reports from seventeen congregations with mixed results indicated. The president of synod

encourages the delegates to be diligent, and that in those areas where there has been no teaching in the Holland language a beginning can be made in a very small way by acquiring a Classroom as a place for teachers and teaching, for, after all, with the blessing of the Lord, this project is bound to succeed. In general it appears that some progress had been made since the previous session in the establishment of schools, and one hopes that the desired ends may be reached under God’s guidance and with his blessing, as in the case in the Netherlands.

(*Acts of Synod 1875*, Art. 4)

After six years of discussion and committed resolutions, the responsibility for financial support of local Christian schools was placed in the hands of each congregation by the assembly of 1876 (the assembly that also gave the green light for establishing Calvin Theological Seminary). The assembly did, however, commit denominational funds (via the church magazine *DeWachter*) to promoting Christian education.

Section three of the Agenda is now up for discussion. The Assembly takes up the consideration of the establishment of a fund for Reformed Holland Schools. After much discussion over this matter, the following is decided upon: That in each Church a receptacle be placed, or by means of “penny societies” a collection of monies be made. The last part, concerning the school matter at Cleveland mentioned in the Agenda, is sanctioned, namely that articles be written repeatedly and inserted in the “*Wachter*” expressing the needs of Christian church schools

and instruction in the Holland Language. Many of the delegates promise to use their talents for the benefit of the Editor and for educating the public.

(Acts of Synod 1876, Art. 47)

Four years later, Synod 1880 again discussed the matter of encouraging and supporting Christian education, but the resolution seems less principled and more attuned to the issue of Americanization.

The question is raised if any means can be put into practice to advance primary Christian education. It is stated that it would be very desirable to have Christian Schools where both Holland and English are taught, so that our children need not be ashamed of their education. The State sanctions such schools.

(Acts of Synod 1880, Art. 62)

The enthusiasm of synodical gatherings for Christian education appears not to have been contagious as the following resolution by the 1881 assembly shows.

The final matter of the Agenda is discussed: The Synod returns to the previous ruling of the Synod of 1880, in the matter of education, and the best methods of fostering Holland Christian Education. After an earnest consideration of this matter: Since the parents, on the whole, do not see the need of Holland Christian Education, (to the best of their ability) the delegates promise to insert Articles in the Church publication the "Wachter" periodically under the caption "Holland Christian Education," to prepare families for same, and to return to a discussion of this question at a later date. Where it is possible to obtain such instruction for the Children at this time, every effort should be made to support and foster such.

(Acts of Synod 1881, Art. 56)

Synod's resolve, however, remained firm, and once again the church's periodical was designated to continue its role as cheerleader for Christian education.

A significant turn in the Christian education discussion took place in 1892. Synod received the following requests:

- a) From Classis Hudson: What can the Synod do to stimulate an interest in the Holland Christian Reformed Church in America in regard toward Christian Schools?
- b) From the Consistory of Roseland (Chicago): The Synod impress upon our Congregations, especially the largest and the wealthiest the need for the establishment of Christian Schools.

(Acts of Synod 1892, Art. 22)

Synod apparently now had a standing denominational Committee on Christian Education. Its report to Synod 1892 was accepted and includes the following three recommendations.

The Committee on Christian Education presents its report which is accepted by the Synod.

- a) The Synod calls the attention of the Ministers and of the Consistories to take to heart, with all their strength and their gifts, the support and the construction of Christian Schools.
- b) The Synod recommends the organization of Christian School Societies for the purpose of fostering Christian Education.
- c) When these Societies come into being, the Synod will give them its moral support. The Society is to be organized with the Name "The Society for the Advancement of Christian Education on Reformed Principles."

(Acts of Synod 1892, Art. 23)

This decision is significant in that the *content* of Christian education is now less focused on the Dutch language and the Reformed confessional tradition and

more on Reformed worldview (“Reformed principles”). This Kuyperian emphasis on a Reformed world-and-life view was strengthened and elaborated in the following declaration of Synod 1898:

Not a general, but a specifically Reformed instruction is the requirement for our children. Indeed, no educational system is satisfactory, but the acknowledgment of the necessity of regeneration, and additionally the acknowledgment of the covenant relationship in which God has placed our children, are the principles from which education must proceed.

Christian education according to Reformed principles is the incontrovertible duty of Reformed Christians. All ministers and elders must labor to the utmost of their power in the promotion of Christian education wherever and whenever possible.

The grounds for these declarations are: (1) God’s Word requires that children be trained in the fear and admonition of the Lord. (2) Parents at the time of the baptism of the children have promised before the Lord and the congregation to do this. (3) There may be no separation between civil, social and religious life, education, and nurture. (4) Christian education promotes the honor of our King who has been given all dominion in heaven and on earth, including the realms of education and nurture.

(*Acts of Synod 1898*, p. 38)⁴

The statement of 1898 represents a conclusion to three decades of discussion in the CRC about Christian education. The issue does not feature prominently in synodical discussions again until the 1930s. However, we need to take note of a significant change in Church Order Article 21 (now Art. 71) on Christian education. The original church order of Dort (1618-19) reads as follows: “Everywhere consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters, who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism.” This wording assumed a close link among the state, the church, and schools. However, the situation in the United States with its clear separation of church and state presented the church with a new challenge, to encourage the establishment of free, parent-controlled Christian day schools. Accordingly, Synod 1914 altered Church Order Article 21 to read: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” Finally the revised Church Order of 1965, in the renumbered article 71, shifted the focus to the “members of the congregation.”

The consistory shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.

Aside from the Church Order change in 1914, synodical discussion of Christian education was insignificant until 1934 when Classis Sioux Center asked Synod 1934 to interpret the question pertaining to Christian Schools as found under Church Order Article 41 (see *Acts of Synod 1934*, p. 137). Three questions were asked. They were:

1. Which schools are meant?
2. What does the expression “support the Christian Schools” signify?
3. What is classis to do about it if in its judgment a consistory does not support such schools according to its ability?

⁴Cited by Engelhard and Hofman, *Manual*, 391.

As to the first question, synod is asked to express itself whether *schools* refers to the primary schools or to technical and professional schools.

As to the second question, synod is requested to state whether a consistory is duty-bound to further the cause of Christian education by doing all in its power to bring into existence and to support a Christian school in a locality accessible to the children of the congregation or whether the question is satisfactorily answered when a consistory states that it supports Christian educational institutions.

A committee was appointed by Synod 1934 to help provide answers to the questions raised re Church Order Article 41 and the meaning of *schools*. Synod 1936 received the report of this committee and adopted the following declaration:

Synod declare[s] that it is in full accord with the answers given by the Committee of 1934. It is convinced that the answers are of vital importance to the life of the Church. "Schools" in article 41 is identical with "schools" mentioned in Article 21, that is, free Christian schools, supported by the parents. Our Church stands committed to the cause of Christian education in every unit of our educational system. Consistories, therefore, are to do all in their power to bring about the erection and to promote the growth of Christian schools. To take offerings for the cause while no attempt is made to establish a Christian school does not satisfy the requirements of Article 41 and 21. Consistories who do not put forth whole-hearted endeavors to bring about the erection and maintenance of Christian Schools should be admonished until they repent of their failure to do all they can.

Accordingly, Synod answers the questions of Classis Sioux Center in the following manner:

(a) The term "schools" in the phrase "The cause of Christian Schools" in Article 41 refers to the Christian primary and grammar and high schools (or Academies) where the bulk of our children get their general school education as distinguished from technical and professional schools, while the college would fall under the question of Article 41 in the measure in which it might become the common instrument of a general education.

(b) The expression "support the cause of Christian Schools" means that it is the duty of the consistory to use every proper means to the end that a Christian School may be established where it does not exist (Article 21), and to give whole-hearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools and a measure of financial help in case of need.

(c) If, in the judgment of Classis, a Consistory does not support the cause of Christian Schools, Classis should continue earnestly to admonish such a consistory publicly in its classical meeting and privately through the church visitors until it truly repents.

(Acts of Synod 1936, pp. 36-37)

To wrap up this survey, it should be noted that Synods 1951 and 1953 affirmed two different sets of "principles of Christian Education" and recommended them to the members of the church for study. The 1951 affirmation concerned nine principles that had been adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1949 (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 44). A study committee appointed to study these principles (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 45) reported to Synod 1953 with a reshaped statement of five principles:

1. Believing parents are called of God to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord.

2. Parents may enlist the aid of others in the task of educating their children, but the responsibility for this education continues with the parents and is nontransferable.
3. Catechetical instruction is a particular ministration of the Word instituted by the Church for covenant children.
4. Education in the way of the Covenant includes the whole of the child's nurture as well as the development of his talents for God's glory.
5. Christian Education must foster the development of the principles of Christ in every area of life (see *Acts of Synod 1953*, pp. 507-9).

Synod 1953 judged that further cultural and analytic study of the RES principles was needed and appointed a new study committee that reported in 1955 (*Acts of Synod 1955*, pp. 193-200). The 1955 report called attention to a "desperate" crises in education in its "failure to achieve mastery of the fundamentals of human knowledge; and the absence of biblical truth as normative for thinking and acting, generally know as Secularism" (*Acts of Synod 1955*, pp. 194-95). The report responded directly to this perceived crisis:

In the face of an educational situation that is becoming daily more desperate, the church's testimony must be unmistakably clear. The Christian church, true to the God Who has revealed Himself both in His general and special revelation, is called upon to interpret all of human endeavor in terms of this revelation. Only education founded on the Word of God can overcome the impasse in educational theory and practice associated with the concept of modern education. Christian education has the true goal, the true standard, and the true motivation. The true goal is the forming of personality as image of God. The true standard is the truth of God's Word. The true motivation is the "new obedience" which is the obedience of faith.

The Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency that can make Christian education effective in the totality of life. Meanwhile the Christian Reformed Church considers the family the foundation of all educational effort and charges the parents, on the basis of the covenant promise and mandate, with full educational responsibility. And she employs catechesis to instruct the youth of the church in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

In view of her great interest in education it is well that the Christian Reformed Church periodically reaffirm her position concerning education and express herself in a way which is relevant to the problems and issues of the day. In keeping with its mandate, therefore, your committee submits the following declaration of principles, based on holy Writ in its normative, directive, and mandatory character as summarized for us in the three forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches.

(Acts of Synod 1955, pp. 195-96)

The report went on to draft seven basic commitments in Christian education including the following important covenantal ground:

Children born of Christian parents are members of the Church of Christ. They are children of the promise. God calls them His own. (Gen. 17:7; Mark 10:16; Acts 2:39). In the providence of God they have been placed in covenantal relationship to Christ and their education must be in keeping with this relationship. It must be education in Christ. Secular education divorces an area of life of the child in Christ from Christ Himself. Christian education is education in Christ for those who are in God's providence placed in relationship to Christ. *A covenantal relationship demands a covenantal education.*

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 197; emphasis added)

While the primary responsibility for education rests upon the parents, the church also has a responsibility thanks to the covenant and the lordship of Christ over all things. This responsibility has a flexibility in that it must be applied differently in changed historical circumstances. The report also appealed to a new ground found in the liturgical form for infant baptism:

The family and the church are institutions called into being by divine mandate. This cannot be said of the modern school. It is a product of human civilization, and therefore a social institution. Formal schooling as we know it today has become a necessity in the complex society of the modern day. Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon other to assist them in their task. *This is recognized in the Form for the Baptism of Infants in these words, “. . . and cause them to be instructed therein.”* (emphasis added)

The subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools must present a medium, a milieu, in which the covenant child’s life in Christ can develop to its fullness in all areas of living. No area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and His Christ for the covenant child. *It is for this reason that the Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency to make the Christ-like life effective in the totality of life for every covenant child.* (emphasis added)

The church is obligated to see to it that parents as members of the church fulfill their promise made at the baptism of their children. *Since the Christian school is the only agency that can provide a Christian education for the youth of the church, the church is duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.*

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 199; emphasis added)

In conclusion, we note that the Christian Reformed Church from the beginning has clearly and consistently endorsed and supported the cause of Christian day school education. On several occasions, it has even voiced support for broad denominational financial support as well as congregational financial support for the cause. There is clear precedent for similar endorsement today.

V. A Vision for the future

A. Implementing the vision

In the previous two sections of this report, we considered the biblical-theological reasons why the CRC has historically as a denomination strongly supported Christian day school education. Consistently, as CRC synods wrestled with this question, the church followed the lead of the Dordt-based church order (now article 71) and appealed to responsibilities of both parents and community as grounded in the biblical reality of the covenant. The baptismal vow, so CRC synods affirmed and reaffirmed, places upon parents and the congregation a sacred obligation to bring up the church’s children “according to the demands of the covenant.” Because, in recent years, the congregation has also customarily taken a public vow to do so, it is fair to conclude that the entire church community has a covenantal stake in and obligation to Christian day school education.

Thanks to the influence of Abraham Kuyper and Dutch Neo-Calvinism on the CRC, Christian education received an additional theological ground—the kingdom of God. Because Christ is Lord over the entire cosmos, and formal education is necessary preparation for a life of discipleship in God’s world, Christ must also be Lord of the school. This emphasis on the kingdom of God also influences the content of Christian day school education. As the 1955

report stated: “no area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and his Christ for the covenant child.”

We also observed that though covenant and kingdom remain essential pillars for grounding Christian day school education, they are no longer sufficient. Without betraying its covenantal and royal kingdom vision, the CRC has also been challenged to reach out beyond itself to the lost of our world and in so doing stretch itself to become more diverse. Consequently, so we contended in earlier sections of this report, *evangelism* or *mission* should be a third theological ground for the CRC as a denomination that supports Christian day school education. No less than our baptismal vow of commitment to the children of our church family, Christian education is also an integral part of the evangelistic and discipling ministry of a church that is committed to the Reformed faith.

We concluded by suggesting that an eschatological emphasis on the grand narrative of salvation history, on God’s redemptive plan to renew all things in Christ, brings all three themes together. The task of a Reformed Christian day school is to nurture children in a Reformed Christian worldview so that they can be active participants in and contributors to the plot of God’s providential narrative. To state that in different words: The task of a Christian day school is to equip students for their roles as citizens of God’s kingdom. Hence, we judge this conclusion to be obvious: Christian day school education is an essential ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

In addition to providing biblical-theological reasons for this conclusion, we have also shown (in the previous section of this report) that this denominational commitment to Christian education is not a radically new idea. Practically from the beginning of its now nearly one hundred and fifty year history, CRC synods have repeatedly and consistently been ardent proponents and supporters of Christian day schools. However, during the course of that history the burden of financing these schools and this education has increasingly moved away from church support to parental tuition. Now, we propose returning to the earlier pattern; though we recognize that we must do so in a way that meets the needs of our far different age. While the matter of financing is no small matter today, considering the growing costs of Christian day school education, we wish to emphasize that finances are not the first and primary reason for returning to the older vision of active church support. The fundamental reason is a biblical-confessional one. Christian day school education is an essential component of our Reformed witness. For the CRC to be true to its Reformed vision of discipleship in our complex and sometimes hostile world, it will need leaders who are committed to this vision and skilled in its implementation in the many areas and various vocations of our modern world.

In support of this perspective, we once again call the church and synod’s attention to the CRC’s Vision and Mission Statement, approved by Synod 1997 (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630). Under the rubric of “Kingdom Extension” synod adopted the following goal:

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God’s claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships etc.).

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 61)

This goal flows from a thoroughly Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship; “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” (Abraham Kuyper). It seems clear to our committee that it is impossible to achieve such a goal without a significant role for Christian day school education. It seems to us an impossible task without them. So then, there are sound and compelling biblical-theological reasons, a well-established historical precedent, and a current commitment to a Reformed vision of discipleship that support the idea of active church (i.e., denominational and congregational) support for Christian day school education. (As an aside, we also note that with the growing secularization and deterioration of public schools, a close identification with Christian education may be a drawing card for evangelism and church growth, especially in our efforts to demonstrate solidarity with the poor and promote diversity. At the very least, it provides golden opportunities for clear testimony to the character and heart of Reformed Christianity.)

How would such a commitment work out in practice? The implications of a covenantal, communal commitment to Christian education directly involve matters of Christian stewardship. If the nurture of our children is a common concern, then financial support should also be a common concern. This is particularly true for families with lower incomes and for whom the growing cost of Christian school tuition is burdensome. It seems to us that a common concern is also a matter of common support, a matter of community stewardship. This is not a new idea; most CRC churches that are closely linked to community Christian schools already have some form of church support for those who need assistance in paying tuition for their children. Such assistance ranges from considering it as a matter of diaconal benevolence to commitments on the part of the church to the school that promise full tuition payment for all the congregation’s children in Christian schools.

There are two problematic issues with our current system. First, treating community support for Christian education as a matter of benevolence is potentially demeaning—it amounts to asking for a handout. We contend that our confessional and historical practice as a denomination imply that community support for Christian day school is a matter of stewardship and not a matter of benevolence. Communal obligation is not a matter of charity but a matter of financial commitment by the entire body. The other problem is the lack of consistency among our churches that results in considerable confusion, especially but not only with respect to the tax laws of both Canada and the United States. Hence, we propose the outlines of a model plan that can be used by all congregations and is sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs of specific congregations.

Beginning with the fundamental principle that the Christian education of a congregation is a common responsibility and thus a matter of stewardship, we propose that support for Christian day schools become a part of every congregation’s annual budget. We do not recommend a particular plan because churches need flexibility to develop plans that take into account their local circumstances and the legal and tax situations that apply to them. Churches can choose to support an amount that reflects their local situation and circumstances in both church and school. Flexibility also means that a number of churches could create a common fund through a ministry shares type of plan to support members who send their children to Christian day schools.

As a church develops its plan, it should take the following steps:

1. The congregation should engage in a self-study, accompanied by a study of the biblical requirements of covenant responsibility as well as stewardship. Only if a congregation is clearly committed to sharing the cost of Christian education should a church continue with subsequent steps.
2. On the basis of stewardship discussions and presuming a clear commitment, develop a specific plan and decide at what level the congregation will support Christian day school education (e.g., 100 percent, 80 percent, 50 percent, 25 percent, 10 percent), and place it on the church's general budget. This report and its appendixes can serve as a guide for the church's use. In addition, congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting their plans.
3. The church issues charitable receipts to all its members based on each person's *total* contribution (i.e., no separation of the funds for Christian education).

The legal and tax situations in the United States and Canada are different, with more flexibility in the United States. Some churches have used a "covenant plan" whereby the church pays up to 100 percent of the tuition for children of the congregation. The church is legally able to provide a full receipt for contributions to the church if the plan is in compliance with IRS ruling 83-104. The plan must be structured in such a way that there is no existence of *quid pro quo*. The appendixes contain a report from Deloitte and Touche that describes the features of such a plan.

B. Church Order Article 71

The relevant article of the Church Order that deals explicitly with Christian education (Article 71) presently reads as follows:

The Council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian Schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.⁵

When the final revisions of the current church order were approved, the phenomenon of homeschooling was not a considered option. Today it is, and that makes the current wording of Article 71 problematic. Taken at face value, this article might seem to be opposed to homeschooling. If so, does that imply elders should admonish and correct CRC parents who decide to homeschool? Our committee does not think so. We do not believe that a synod has the right to issue such decrees. It is important to recognize that the framework in which the current article was drafted assumed only two real options: a Christian or a public school. How does the reality of homeschooling affect the concerns of Church Order Article 71?

Our committee suggests that we consider two abiding principles in the tradition of this church order article, going back all the way to the Synod of Dordt. (1) The consistory/council of each church should do what it can to ensure the availability of good Christian education for all children of the

⁵Engelhard and Hofman, *Manual*, 391.

church. Whether the means by which consistories achieve this is by “seeing to it” that “there are good schoolmasters” (Dordt), “good Christian schools” (Church Order revision, 1914), or by “encouraging the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools” (Church Order revision, 1965) is not as important as the underlying principle: An important part of the task of those whose office requires them to shepherd and rule the flock of Christ is that they promote good Christian education for all the children in the church. From our vantage point, we cannot see why this should rule out the means of homeschooling for parents who in good conscience make that choice and provide a “good Christian education” for their children. (2) The church, through its office-bearers, has a vested interest in the *content* of the education its children receive. Through all the changes in this Church Order article, the one consistent theme is that the education must be good: good schoolmasters and good schools. In view of these considerations, our committee proposes the following rewording of Church Order Article 71:

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools where the Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall urge parents to have their children educated in accord with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

In our judgment, this revision preserves and in fact even strengthens the concern for actively supporting good Christian education for all the church’s children. By specifying the distinctive content of a good Christian school, the revision removes the possibility of a subjective judgment on what is good Christian education and provides councils with clear criteria by which a Christian day school or a home school can be assessed. It also has the advantage of flexibility, which is a key criterion for promoting diversity.

VI. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Dan Vander Ark (chair) and Dr. John Bolt (reporter) for the discussion of this report.
- B. That synod give thanks to God for the blessing of more than a century of Reformed Christian education provided by CRCNA members and for the many dedicated parents, teachers, administrators, and supporters who have labored faithfully and sacrificially during this time.
- C. That synod reaffirm the Christian Reformed Church’s commitment to and promotion of Christian day school education from the elementary level through college and university.
- D. That synod reaffirm that the Reformed emphasis on the covenant and the kingdom of God are foundational for Reformed Christian schools and affirm anew that mission and/or evangelism is an additional foundational block for Reformed Christian schools.

Grounds:

1. Covenant, kingdom, and mission together form the narrative of God’s plan of salvation history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation.

2. “Our World Belongs to God” publicly professes that education is part of “the mission of God’s people” (paragraph 50).
3. This is consistent with the decision of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to adopt a strategy that includes “Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program” (BOT Minute 2592.3).

E. That synod request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to develop a plan by which all CRC agencies will implement the denominational strategy of including “Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program” (BOT Minute 2592.3).

Grounds:

1. Reformed Christian day school education is important for equipping a leadership for the CRC that is committed to the Reformed faith.
2. With the explosion of alternative Christian schools and homeschooling as protest against the secularization of public schools, the Reformed tradition’s long practice of successful Christian education is an integral part of our Reformed kingdom witness and mission to our fellow citizens; it is our distinctive contribution to the growth of God’s kingdom in North America. (See Recommendation D above.)

F. That synod declare that Christian day school education is a communal, church responsibility and not only a parental obligation. Communal responsibility includes church financial support that permits all children in the Christian Reformed Church to benefit from Reformed Christian schooling.

G. That synod urge CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. Congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting such plans.

Note: This report and its appendices can serve as a guide for congregational use, recognizing that all plans need to be adjusted to meet local needs.

Grounds:

1. A covenantal intergenerational financial support plan for the Christian day school education of all the children in a congregation is a fitting response to the vow made by the congregation when a child is baptized.
2. This flows naturally from the mutual stewardship and accountability that characterizes healthy congregations.
3. Financial difficulty should not be a barrier that prevents church members from sending their children to a Christian day school.

H. That synod encourage CRC congregations and groups of churches (e.g., a classis) to initiate creative approaches for providing financial support to students who will contribute to a greater and richer diversity in Christian schools (in economic status, class, race, ethnicity).

Grounds:

1. This is consistent with the CRC’s commitment to greater diversity as reflected in synod’s adoption of the study committee report, “The Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God.”

2. Financial difficulty is one of the most frequently given reasons for not sending children to Christian day schools and financial need is disproportionately a greater problem in many racial and ethnic minority communities.

I. That synod request CRC Publications, in cooperation with Christian school organizations, to develop materials that promote the vision of covenant, kingdom, and mission and thus equip churches to effectively promote Christian schools.

J. That synod request CRC Publications to provide the following educational materials for use by the churches:

1. Material for new member orientation that includes, among other things, the position of the CRCNA on Christian day schools.
2. Diaconal training material to help churches in preparing and implementing plans for the communal financing of Christian schooling.

K. That synod instruct the general secretary of the CRCNA to send official correspondence to the President of the United States and to the Congress of the United States calling the government of the United States to enact legislation that makes education choice without financial penalty available for all parents with school-age children. Similar letters are to be sent by the Canadian Director of Ministries to the Canadian Provincial governments where appropriate.

Grounds:

1. There is ample precedent for synod to make official resolutions (re “church burning,” *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 542) or to direct official correspondence to appropriate governments and their leaders (re “abortion,” *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 528; “partial birth abortions,” *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 608).
2. Such a communication is consistent with the historic CRC position on funding for Christian day schools. A specific precedent was set in 1975 when synod sent a lengthy communication to the President of the United States pleading the same case. (A copy of the 1975 letter is provided in Appendix C.)
3. Educational choice is a matter of social justice. CRC members who have the resources are able to provide a Christian day school education for their children. It is the poor who suffer the most from poor public schools and who lack the means to provide alternatives for their children.
4. With the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2002 declaring that the Cleveland, Ohio, voucher plan is constitutional and an administration that favors school choice, the time is ripe for encouraging the United States government to act on this matter.
5. The CRC as a whole should follow the lead of the Canadian churches in addressing the government on this matter. Because the situation in Canada is different from the United States (education is exclusively a provincial matter and some provinces do grant some aid to Christian schools), communicating with the provincial authorities is more complicated and should be handled by the Canadian denominational office.

L. That synod encourage CRC members to make the matter of school choice and educational justice a matter of priority for prayer and action.

Grounds: See Grounds 3, 4, and 5 in Recommendation K above.

M. That synod recommend to the churches the following reworded Article 71 of the Church Order:

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools where the Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

Grounds:

1. Christian Reformed parents today have many more educational choices available to them than they did fifty years ago. The revision of Article 71 provides needed guidance to councils and parents about the educational vision and curricular content of Reformed Christian education in establishing and maintaining Reformed Christian day schools as well as for other choices such as homeschools or charter schools.
2. On the basis of surveys (see section III, C of this report), there appears to be an erosion of support for Article 71 of the Church Order. The present wording assumes that a clear understood consensus exists in the CRC with respect to Reformed confessional identity as well as its implications for Christian education. This assumption cannot be made today. The rewording both clarifies what is meant by Reformed Christian education and allows for flexibility in its implementation.
3. It is important that the Church Order articulate clearly the content and scope of the education that is desired for its present and future leadership and continuing membership. The CRC's Reformed character, its membership, and its potential to evangelize and grow as a *Reformed church* is linked to the flourishing of distinctive Reformed Christian education at all levels from elementary through university.

N. That synod urge pastors and councils to encourage the young people of their churches to attend Reformed Christian institutions of higher learning whenever possible.

Grounds:

1. Our survey of pastors and councils suggests that the percentage of CRC young people who attend Christian colleges is perilously low. If so, this has profound implications for the future membership of the CRC. Studies (such as Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul*) suggest that an erosion of distinct confessional identity in college-level education has a noticeable negative effect on the church's retaining its educated young people and future leaders.
2. The number of CRC young people attending college and university today is far greater than it was in 1955. A college education is as important today as a completed high school education may have been in 1955. In 1936, synod had the foresight to include high schools in its definition of Christian day school education, in spite of the fact that the "median years of school completed" for the adult population in the United States

at that time was only about 8.5 years (U.S. Census Bureau). We should show equivalent foresight today when the vast majority of our Christian school graduates are going on to college.

3. In the CRC's mission and vision statement, many of the areas listed call for "deeper understanding." That demands college-level study (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630).
4. It is important that the Church Order articulate clearly the content and scope of the education that is desired for its present and future leadership and continuing membership. The CRC's Reformed character, its membership, and its potential to evangelize and grow as a Reformed church is linked to the flourishing of distinctive Reformed Christian education at all levels from elementary through university.
5. Although blessed beyond measure by their Christian education, many eighteen-year-olds are simply not at a point where they are able to fully understand, embrace, or articulate why Christian education is both essential for them personally and essential to the CRC. We need our colleges to carry on this task.

O. That synod commend this report with its appendices to the churches for study, reflection, and guidance regarding Reformed Christian education at all levels and that synod encourage councils, congregations, and classes to arrange for meetings in which the issues of this report can be discussed.

P. That synod declare the work of the committee completed.

Committee to Study Christian
Day School Education

John Bolt, reporter
David Engelhard (ex officio)
Karen Gerritsma
Sharon Jim
James Jones
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Appendix A Council Survey

Survey Process

All *councils* of organized and emerging churches were invited to return a completed questionnaire. The General Secretary's office managed the mailing of the survey. A cover letter, together with the questionnaire, was sent to the "Clerk of Council." Six hundred fifty-five church councils are represented by their returned questionnaire in this survey of 989 churches; the return rate is 66%. First mailing of the questionnaire went out in January, and a second mailing to nonresponding councils was sent in February. April 10, 2002, was the date the last questionnaire was received and included in the data set. All 47 classes are represented among the returned questionnaires.

Note: In many cases, the data presented reflect only the personal estimates or perceptions of the people completing the survey.

Results

The tables of this report are based on the 655 returned questionnaires. Tables are named by the questions as they appear in the questionnaire. Results of each question are summarized in the order they appear in the questionnaire. Percentages are usually taken from the "valid percent" column of the tables. Median average is the estimated value at which 50% of the churches fall below and 50% above (the "cumulative percent" column can be used to find the median category in which the median value falls). Median average was used in this report except in Q.1-Q.4 where the mean average was considered to be more accurate.

In an attempt to be as accurate as possible, the results in Q.1-Q.4 below have been adjusted to reflect the fact that: (1) different churches have different numbers of school-aged children, and (2) the size distribution of churches that returned questionnaires was slightly different from the size distribution of churches in the denomination.

School Information

Q.1. The mean average number of school-age children (K-12) per congregation is 61. Only 2% or 20 congregations report having no school-age children.

Q.2. What percentage of these school-age children attends a Christian day school? The mean average among the churches is 60% (59% in the U.S. and 62% in Canada). Eleven percent of the churches report no children in Christian day schools.

Q.3. Council representatives were asked to estimate the percentage of school-aged children attending Christian schools fifteen years ago. Obviously this estimate is subject to error from several sources, including the knowledge of the respondent, the possibility that some churches are less than fifteen years old, and changes in the size and number of children in the churches. Nevertheless, if 15% of the churches that didn't exist fifteen years ago are dropped from our sample, and it is assumed that the number of school-aged children in each of the remaining churches remained more-or-less the same over this period, the mean average percentage estimate of school-aged children in Christian schools fifteen years ago is 67% (68% in the United States and 65% in Canada). Comparing these percentages with those in Q.2 gives an *estimated* drop of 9 percentage points in the United States and 3 percentage points in Canada.

Q.4. Of the children attending Christian day schools, what percentage is attending Reformed, Christian schools? The mean average is 78%. Therefore, 47% of school-aged children attend Reformed Christian schools (78% of the 60% who attend Christian day schools). Thirty-one percent of the churches report no children attending Reformed Christian day schools.

Q.5. The median average number of school-age children in each church who are being homeschooled is 2. There were no homeschooled children in 47% of the churches. Among the 53% of the churches who report children being homeschooled, the median average number is 10 or less.

Q.6 & Q.6a. Ninety-seven percent of the churches are in locations where a Christian day school is available (although we did not ask specifically about what grade levels were available). Seventy-eight percent of the churches are near a Reformed, Christian school.

Promoting Christian Day Schools

Q.7a-e. Who in the churches takes primary responsibility for promoting Christian schools? The most common answer is that this responsibility is not defined in the church (39%). Among other possible answers, the next most common is council (28% say this), then pastor(s) (12%), followed by Christian school finance committee (9%) and the education or Christian education committee (7%). Eleven percent of the churches report some “other” person or group takes on this responsibility.

Q.8a-e. Financial support (74%) is the most commonly used method by churches to promote the local Christian school(s). Next is distribution of school literature (53%), then preaching (45%) and personal visits (19%). Fourteen percent of the churches say certain other methods are used as well.

Q.9. Are office-bearers or staff (e.g., pastor, elder, deacon) expected to send their children to Christian day schools? Seventy-five percent of the churches say no; 25% say yes.

Q.10a. Seventy-seven percent of the churches say (strongly agree or agree) that their councils diligently encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools.

Q.10b. Ninety-four percent of the churches say they have a good working relationship with the local Christian day school(s).

Q.10c. Seventy-one percent of the churches say their congregations are united in their support of Christian day schools.

Q.10d. Seventy-six percent say their classis responsibly inquires of them whether or not they diligently promote the cause of Christian education at all levels.

Q.10e. Eighty-seven percent of the churches say ethnic minority members of their church feel comfortable attending Christian day school. Fifty-one percent of the churches say this situation doesn't apply to them.

Q.10f. Seventy-nine percent of them report that their pastor(s) strongly supports Christian education from the pulpit through prayer and preaching.

Q.10g. Seventy-three percent say their elders strongly support Christian education through prayer, conversation, and family visiting.

Q.10h. Sixty-three percent of the churches disagree that baptism vows by parents requires them to provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.10i. Sixty-three percent of them disagree that baptism vows by the congregation require the church to provide financial assistance so that parents can provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.10j. Seventy-five percent say their church encourages its young people to attend a Christian college.

Financial Support of Christian Day Schools

Q.11. What percentage of families that send their children to Christian day schools receives financial support from their church? Among 39% of the churches, none of the families receive financial support, and among 33%, less than 25% of the families do. The median average among all reporting churches is 8% of the families receive financial support.

Q.12a-e. How is financial need determined by those churches giving financial assistance? In response to this question, 29% of the churches say they do not provide financial support. Among the churches, the most commonly used method is determining need by reviewing the family's financial records (36%), followed by giving whatever a family requests (12%), then giving the same amount to everyone (9%) and providing full tuition cost (6%). Twenty-five percent of the churches wrote in “other” methods used to determine financial need.

Q.13a-e. What means for raising monies have been used by the churches? The most commonly used method is offerings (60%), followed by general budget (16%), then pledge giving (13%), and the Covenant Giving Plan (a.k.a. the Kuyer's Plan or the Milwaukee Plan) (9%). Eighteen percent wrote in “other” methods used to raise monies.

Q.14 & Q.14a. What is the average tuition per child of the local Christian school(s)? In the United States, median average tuition per child by school level is as follows: elementary school, \$3,787; middle school, \$4,101; and high school, \$4,685. In Canada, median average tuition per child is: elementary school, \$6,023; middle school, \$5,000 (note: in many locations in Canada, Christian schools charge a per-family tuition and there is no middle school but K-8 is combined); and high school, \$6,461.

Q.15a-e. What reason do parents most often give for not sending their children to Christian schools? The most common reason is cost of tuition (71%). The next most common reason is wanting to be a witness in public school (16%), followed by too far to travel (12%) and lack of cultural/ethnic sensitivity (3%). Twenty-one percent supplied "other" reasons.

Q.16. How has the church benefited from the Christian day school(s)? Two benefits were requested. 65% of the churches wrote in two or more benefits, 19% wrote in one, and 17% checked that their church has received no benefits.

Supporting Christian Higher Education

Q.17. What percentage of college and university students from the churches attends a Reformed Christian institution of higher education? Median average is 23%. Thirteen percent of the churches say none attend.

Q.18. Twelve percent of the churches say they provide financial support for Christian college tuition. *Note:* Some checked yes and wrote in "indirectly, through ministry shares."

Q.19. How has the church benefited from Reformed Christian colleges? Two benefits were requested. Fifty-three percent of the churches wrote in two or more benefits, 29% wrote in one, and 19% checked that their church has received no benefits.

About the Responding Churches

Q.20. Who are the people who completed the questionnaire? By position, the largest percentage of the questionnaires was completed by the clerk or assistant clerk (46%) of the church council. Next most common position is minister/pastor, other minister/pastor/professional staff, evangelist, or church planter/missionary pastor (18% combined). (Note: there is some overlap of respondents to the council and pastor surveys. We can still conclude, nevertheless, that the two surveys express the voice of different populations.) Eight percent of respondents to the council survey are elders or chairs of the elders (team); 5% are presidents, vice presidents, or chairs of council; 5% are administrative assistants, office administrators, secretaries, or financial assistants; and 3% are deacons or chairs/secretaries of deacons. One percent is completed by councils. Fourteen percent are completed by others.

Q.21. What is the country of location of the churches? Seventy-four percent are located in the United States and 26% in Canada.

Q.22. What is the average yearly income of member households in the churches? Median average in the United States is \$44,074 and in Canada \$47,173 (for these estimates, responses to Q.22 were sorted by nation).

Q.23. What is the type of area in which the churches are located? Twenty percent of the churches are located in a large city (750,000 or more population) or its suburbs, 19% in a medium-sized city (150,000-749,000 population) or its suburbs, 14% in a small city (50,000-149,000), 12% in a large town (10,000-49,000), 24% in a small town (less than 10,000), and 10% in open country and/or farming area.

Appendix B Pastor Survey

Survey Process

All *active pastors* were invited to return a completed questionnaire. The general secretary's office managed the mailing of the survey. A cover letter, together with the questionnaire, was sent to each pastor. Four hundred ninety-three pastors are represented by their returned questionnaire in this survey of 864 active pastors; the return rate is 57%. The first and only mailing of the questionnaire went out in January. April 10, 2002, was the date the last questionnaire was received and included in the data set. All 47 classes are represented among the returned questionnaires.

Note: The data presented reflect the personal estimates or perceptions of the pastor completing the survey.

Results

The tables of this report are based on the 493 returned questionnaires. Tables are named by the questions as they appear in the questionnaire. Results of each question are summarized in the order they appear in the questionnaire. Percentages are usually taken from the "valid percent" column of the tables. Median average is the estimated value at which 50% of the pastors fall below and 50% above (the "cumulative percent" column can be used to find the median category in which the median value falls).

School Information

Q.1. How many school age children (K-12) do pastors have at home? Forty-seven percent say they have no school age children at home. Median average number of school age children at home for all pastors is less than one (0.3, if you can imagine this). Among the 53% who say they have school age children at home, the median average number is 1.7 children.

Q.2. Do pastors send their school age children to Christian day schools? Forty-six percent say they have no school age children at home. Forty-five percent say yes and 10% say no (two saying because there is no Christian school for them and one saying because they home-school). Among only those pastors with school age children, 82% send their children to Christian day schools and 18% do not.

Q.3. In past years, did the pastors send their school age children to Christian day schools? Thirteen percent say they had no school age children at home then. Eighty-one percent say yes they did and 6% say no. Among only those pastors who had school age children then, 94% say they sent their children then and 6% say no they didn't.

Q.4. Sixty-three percent of the pastors say their church expects them to send their children to Christian day schools and 34% say they do not expect them. About 2% say not sure or something like "yes and no; some do and some don't."

Q.5. Do churches have policies to provide its pastors with special compensation assistance so that their children can attend Christian day schools? Sixteen percent report yes, 83% no, and 1% not sure.

Promoting Christian Day Schools

Q.6a-e. Who in the pastors' churches takes primary responsibility for promoting Christian schools? The most common answer is that this responsibility is not defined in the church (44%). Among other possible answers, the next most common is pastor(s) (20% say this), then council (19%), followed by Christian school finance committee (15%) and the education or Christian education committee (2%). Eleven percent of the pastors report some "other" person or group takes on this responsibility.

Q.7. Responding to this open-ended question, pastors describe in their own words what they do to nurture and maintain a good working relationship with their local Christian day schools. Ninety-three percent describe their activities; the comments of 7% seem to indicate no activity.

Q.8. What issues regarding Christian day schools affect the way pastors preach about and/or promote them in their congregations? Responding to this open-ended question, 92% give comments that seem to identify the issues, and the comments of 8% seem to indicate there are no issues.

Q.9a. Eighty-one percent of the pastors say (strongly agree or agree) they diligently encourage parents to have their children instructed in Christian day schools.

Q.9b. Ninety-four percent of the pastors say they have a good working relationship with the local Christian day school(s).

Q.9c. Sixty-three percent of the pastors say their congregations are united in their support of Christian day schools.

Q.9d. Fifty-eight percent say their classis responsibly inquires of their churches whether they diligently promoted the cause of Christian education at all levels.

Q.9e. Sixty-eight percent of the pastors say ethnic minority members of their church feel comfortable attending Christian day school. Forty-six percent of the pastors say this situation doesn't apply to their church.

Q.9f. Sixty-nine percent of the pastors report that they strongly support Christian education from the pulpit through prayer and preaching.

Q.9g. Fifty-seven percent say their elders strongly support Christian education through prayer, conversation, and family visiting.

Q.9h. Sixty-nine percent of the pastors disagree that baptism vows by parents requires them to provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.9i. Forty-six percent of them disagree that baptism vows by the congregation require the church to provide financial assistance so that parents can provide a Christian day school education for their children.

Q.9j. Ninety-five percent say they encourage the church's young people to attend a Christian college.

Q.10. In supporting and promoting Christian day schools in their congregations, what arguments and reasons do pastors use, in preaching and teaching, to convince parents of the importance of sending their children to Christian day schools? Ninety-two percent of the pastors give reasons and 8% do not in their written comments.

Q.10a. If they do not support or promote Christian day schools in their congregations, what arguments and reasons have convinced the pastors of this position? This does not apply to 65% of the pastors. Among the pastors who wrote comments, 98% seem to include reasons and 2% do not.

Q.11a-e. What reason do parents most often give for not sending their children to Christian schools? The most common reason is cost of tuition (70%). Next most common reason is wanting to be a witness in public school (25%), followed by too far to travel (9%) and lack of cultural/ethnic sensitivity (7%). Twenty-eight percent supplied "other" reasons.

Q.12. How has the church benefited from the Christian day school(s)? Two benefits were requested. Seventy-two percent of the pastors wrote in two or more benefits, 17% wrote in one, and 11% checked that their church has received no benefits.

Supporting Christian Higher Education

Q.13a-e. What means do pastors use to encourage the young people of their church to attend a Christian college? Eleven percent say they don't encourage them to attend. The most common mean that pastors use is working with their youth group (46%), followed by doing career counseling (18%), then bringing in college representatives (11%) and writing letters to young people (7%). Fifty-four percent give other means, such as one-on-one informal meetings.

Q.14. What percentage of college and university students from the churches attends a Reformed Christian institution of higher education? Median average is 33%. Nine percent of the pastors say none attend from their church.

Q.15. How has the church benefited from Reformed Christian colleges? Two benefits were requested. Sixty-six percent of the pastors wrote in two or more benefits, 21% wrote in one, and 12% checked that their church has received no benefits.

About the Responding Pastors

Q.16a-e. What schools have the pastors attended? Seventy-seven percent say they attended a Christian elementary school, 61% attended a Christian middle school, 63% a Christian high school, 92% a Christian college, and 99% a seminary. Less than 1% had attended none of them.

Q.17. Who are the people who completed the questionnaire? By position, the largest percentage of the questionnaires was completed by a lead, sole, or senior minister/pastor (88%).

Q.18. What is the country of location of the pastors' congregation? Seventy-six percent are located in the United States and 24% in Canada.

Appendix C

Statement Sent to the President of the United States in 1975

We, the members of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, respectfully call to your attention the injustice which now prevails in the financing of education in the United States and earnestly urge you to do all within your power as President of the United States to remedy this situation so that justice may prevail in this country and freedom in a pluralistic society be promoted.

Education is compulsory in the United States at the elementary and secondary levels. We do not debate this position but do note that it is based on the premise that an educated citizenry is vital to the welfare of society and that, consequently, citizens must be compelled to go to school for a stipulated period of their lives. Education is compulsory, in other words, because it promotes the general welfare of society. We believe it is an unassailable position that children attending non-state schools meet the compulsory education requirements of the state, and by attending school they are serving the public purpose of providing an educated citizenry.

Not only is education compulsory, it is also always religiously or philosophically oriented, regardless of the school one might attend. One might appeal to philosophers and theologians to support this position but he need not, for he can go to public school educators to support it.

Thus, the National Education Association has said:

The development of moral and spiritual values is basic to all other educational objectives. Education uninspired by moral and spiritual values is directionless. . . . That educational purposes rest on moral and spiritual values has been generally recognized in the public school system. The Educational Policies Commission has previously declared: 'Every statement of educational purposes including this one, depends upon the judgement of some person or group as to what is good and what is bad, what is true and what is false, what is ugly and what is beautiful, what is valuable and what is worthless in the conduct of human affairs.'

(National Education Association, Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools, 1951, p. 7)

Whether or not one is persuaded that all education is philosophically or religiously oriented in a formal sense is not crucial, however, for the very concept of a pluralistic society implies the existence of different ideals and values to which the citizens are committed. Surely, it is inconceivable that the American society of close to two hundred and twenty million people will all have the same views on education.

So now we find this situation: society compels her youthful citizens to attend school but it will provide financial support only if they attend state owned, operated, and controlled schools. Parents have the right, protected by the Supreme Court of the United States in the 1925 *Pierce* case (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 1925) to send their children to non-state schools, yet when they exercise this right they are deprived of all public educational benefits. In other words, we exact a price for the exercise of freedom.

Liberty at a price—this is not liberty. This is the suppression of liberty. A genuinely free society cannot impose on its citizens any philosophic or religious creed as a condition for receiving the benefits of public legislation. To do so would be to ask one to violate his conscience and religious convictions. It also places the government in a position to control the thought and belief of the people. In the field of education the government, in effect, says "accept the state view of education or give up your right to the educational tax dollar." This is unjust and can only result in a diminution of freedom and the destruction of a genuinely pluralistic society.

In taking this position we are not unmindful of the principle of the separation of church and state; rightly interpreted, we are ardent supporters of the principle. Indeed, we respectfully note that the Christian Reformed Church was founded more than a hundred years ago by immigrants from the Netherlands who left their homeland because they were deeply disturbed by the existence of a state-established church. We, the children of these immigrants, are equally disturbed by the existence of a state-established philosophy of education in the United States. It is because we are disturbed that we feel compelled to address you with this petition.

Appendix D

Guidelines for Congregational Financial Plans (Reports from Deloitte & Touche)

What follows are the reports provided to our committee by the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche. Appendix D-1 is the Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States) provided to our committee on August 19, 2002; Appendix D-2 is the full, extended report as provided on April 1, 2002 (United States); Appendix D-3 is the report provided by Deloitte & Touche (Canada) to the committee on October 10, 2002.

Note: In addition to consulting these reports, each congregation should obtain professional legal and accounting advice in drawing up their plan.

Appendix D-1: Technical Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States)

Appendix D-2: Full Report (United States)

Appendix D-3: Report (Canada)

Appendix D-1: Technical Memorandum/Executive Summary (United States)

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Memo

**Deloitte
& Touche**

Date: August 19, 2002

To: The Files

From: Mary E. Rauschenberg
Scott L. Hirsch
Erica A. Lazzo

Subject: Charitable Receipting Requirements for a Church Providing Direct Support of Members' Children's Christian Education

This memorandum is a summary discussion and is limited to the described facts. It is not intended to be a formal opinion of tax consequences, and, thus, may not contain a full description of all the facts or a complete exposition and analysis of all relevant tax authorities. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this memorandum are based on our understanding of the facts, assumptions, information, and documents referenced herein and current tax laws and published tax authorities in effect as of the date of this memorandum, which are subject to change. If the facts and assumptions are incorrect or change or the tax laws change, the conclusions and recommendations would likewise be subject to change. Deloitte & Touche LLP assumes no obligation to update the memorandum for any future changes in tax law, regulations, or other interpretations and does not intend to do so. Unless otherwise specified, all section references are to the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 ("IRC") or the regulations thereunder, both as amended through the date of this memorandum.

This memorandum is not binding on the IRS or the courts and should not be considered a representation, warranty, or guarantee that the IRS or the courts will concur with our conclusions. Only the specific tax issues and tax consequences described herein are covered by this memorandum; no other federal, state, or local laws of any kind were considered and are beyond the scope of this memorandum.

FACTS

The Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is a Protestant denomination of about 950 churches and 280,000 members in North America. One of the primary tenets of CRC theology is Christian education. Christian day schools, organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches, serve the CRC and other conservative Protestant denominations. However, control of the schools is often vested with CRC congregation members. Over the years, the CRC churches have maintained a close relationship with the Christian day schools. As part of this relationship, the CRC churches have provided financial assistance to the schools. This assistance includes Sunday collections and fundraisers that appeal to all members of the CRC congregations. However, the majority of the funding for CRC sponsored Christian day schools

Deloitte
Touche
Tohmatsu

comes from tuition. Some CRC churches pay the tuition for all members' children. Other CRC churches provide no tuition assistance to their members' children. The CRC has not adopted a uniform methodology for use by its churches in determining whether and/or how to fund the Christian education of their members' children.

Recently, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee") whose purpose is to determine whether the denomination should reaffirm its theological support of Christian education (this was last done in the 1950's). It is our understanding that The Committee has concluded that the CRC ought to reaffirm this support. As part of its mandate, the Committee is developing a recommendation for the funding of the Christian education of CRC members' children that the individual congregations may adopt.

The CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. At a child's baptism, the entire congregation makes an oral commitment to support the Christian education of that child. The Committee will recommend that the CRC churches assume responsibility for funding at least a portion of its members' children's education, to fulfill the congregation's obligation to support the Christian education of CRC youth. It will recommend that individual CRC churches pay part or all of the tuition for its members' children enrolled in the Christian day schools directly from its general operating budget. The funding of the tuition of the congregation's children will one of the programs the church sponsors each year. The churches will not solicit or require specific contributions from members with school age children. There will be no additional pressure to give placed on these members. Instead, the funding of the education of the congregation's children should be part of the church's general obligations, funded through operating budget, the same as other programs sponsored by the church. The CRC expects that its members will practice the principles of Christian stewardship. The principle is the belief that those who have been blessed with extraordinary resources are expected to donate not only more dollars to the church, but probably a higher percentage of their income than those who have less financial capacity. In other words, of those to whom much has been given, much is expected.

ISSUE

Assuming the CRC churches adopt the committee's recommendation, should the charitable receipts issued by the CRC churches include a quid pro quo for the value of the education subsidy provided to members' children?

CONCLUSION

If a CRC church adopts the committee's recommendation, the CRC church does not need to disclose quid pro quo in the charitable receipts issued to members who have no children receiving subsidized education. Additionally, the CRC church arguably should not need to disclose any quid pro quo in the charitable receipts issued to members whose children receive subsidized education. It is possible that based upon the facts of a given church, the IRS could question this treatment.

This conclusion was reached based upon certain key criteria being in existence and the lack of certain other key criteria as follows:

QUID PRO QUO ANALYSIS

FACTS AND ACTIONS INDICATE QUID PRO QUO DOES NOT EXIST	FACTS AND ACTIONS THAT WOULD INDICATE QUID PRO QUO EXISTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A congregation formally resolves that funding part or all of its member's children's tuition is an obligation of the church. This obligation is assumed as a general obligation of the church. • Payments of tuition to the Christian day schools are made from each CRC church's general operating funds. The school bills the church directly. • The portion of tuition subsidized by the church becomes a church liability. If the church is not able to pay, this liability does not revert to the parent. • Any portion of tuition not subsidized by the church is paid by the parent directly to the school. • Church member contributions are based upon each member's conscience and ability to pay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRC churches solicit and/or require specific contributions from members with children in any way that is different from other members. • A church requests, orally or written, that the families with children in school give their tuition savings to the church. • A church creates a separate education fund for support of the Christian schools, and/or sets aside specific contributions from families with children in school that go directly to the school. • A church creates the expectation, whether documented or implicit, that its members with children are expected to contribute more money to the church than other members. • A church creates any documentation, promotional material, or correspondence that specifically allocates the cost of the school to only the members with children in the school.

DISCUSSION

The general rules for charitable contribution deductions are codified within Internal Revenue Code Section (IRC §)170. IRC §170(f)(8) requires that to be deductible, any contribution in excess of \$250 must be substantiated with a contemporaneous written acknowledgement from the donee organization. The acknowledgement must contain the following:

1. The amount of cash contributed or a description (but not value) of any property contributed;
2. A statement disclosing whether the donee organization provided any goods or services in exchange for the contributed money or property; and
3. A description and good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services provided in exchange for contributions, or a statement that the contributions were made in exchange for intangible religious benefit. Intangible religious benefit is defined as any intangible religious benefit that is provided by

an organization organized exclusively for religious purposes and which is generally not sold in a commercial transaction outside the donative context.

The acknowledgement must also be contemporaneous, which means that the acknowledgement must be received by the donor before the earlier of the due date of the donor's tax return or the date the donor files the tax return.

Thus, every member who makes a contribution greater than \$250 to a CRC Church is required to receive a receipt in order to claim a charitable contribution deduction on his or her individual tax return. In order to issue the receipt, the church must determine whether the member has received quid pro quo. In the case of CRC members with no children enrolled in Christian day schools, it would appear they receive no tuition benefit and, therefore, no quid pro quo. This conclusion is not as clear in the case of the members with children enrolled in the Christian day schools and whose tuition is subsidized by the church. Several cases and rulings over the past few decades have examined the issue of the deductibility of contributions to a church that funds education of the contributor's children. In other words, whether the tuition benefit was deemed to be quid pro quo. The cases and rulings are discussed below along with an analysis of their application to CRC's facts.

In *Haak vs. U.S.*¹, members of a Christian Reformed Church made payments to the church and deducted them as charitable contributions. The church then paid the taxpayer's children's tuition to a Christian day school. The IRS disallowed a portion of the taxpayer's contributions to the church as non-deductible tuition expenses. The District court upheld the IRS's position, stating that if a transfer is made with the expectation of receiving a benefit, and such benefit is received, that transfer is not a charitable contribution. In this case, the church engaged in specific actions that indicated that the taxpayers were making these contributions to the church in lieu of paying tuition. The church sent members "Guidelines for Contributions" twice a year. These "Guidelines" broke down the per-family costs to the church for various church expenses such as tuition, school building expense, etc. This cost was then broken into weekly contributions for each family. Additionally, four times per year, the Consistory sent church members a letter indicating the financial obligations assumed by the church for each family and what the family's contribution had been. The amounts of education cost varied for each family based on how many children were enrolled in the school. Families with no children in the school were not allocated any of this cost. Though no legal obligation existed between the families and the church, these communications between the church and the families led the court to conclude that the church expected the parents to fund the cost of their children's tuition. Likewise, it concluded that the parents had an expectation of receiving education for their children in exchange for the contributions.

The CRC's proposal expects all members to give what they can afford to support the church, without any extra burden or pressure borne by those families with children in school. The key factor behind the CRC's proposal is the entire congregation's support of Christian education for the children of the church, not the redirecting of the funds paid by families for the schooling of their children.

In *Fausner v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,² the plaintiff, Donald W. Fausner, made payments to his church and claimed these as deductible charitable donations on his tax return. However, the checks were endorsed for deposit by the parochial school his children were attending. The IRS deemed these

¹ 451 F. Supp. 1087

² T.C. Memo 1971-277

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Date: August 19, 2002

payments tuition payments and the Tax Court agreed with the IRS's position. *Fausner* clearly does not apply to the CRC proposal. Under the CRC proposal, contributions by members are made directly to the general fund of the church. The church, as part of its ministry will fund some or all of its members' children's tuition to Christian day schools.

In *Winters v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,³ the church had established a particular fund to support its related schools. From this fund it paid tuition for its members' children who attended Christian day school. The parents were encouraged to sign pledge cards indicating the amount of contribution they expected to make to the education fund. However, they were not required to contribute in order for the fund to pay their children's tuition. Tax Court disallowed the taxpayers charitable deduction and the Court of Appeals affirmed this decision.

The CRC recommendation is distinguishable from *Winters*. All payments to the schools will be made from the church's general fund. Parents will not be encouraged to give more than other congregation members. All congregation members will be encouraged to give as much as they can afford and their conscience dictates.

In *Dejong v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*,⁴ a tax-exempt corporation was organized solely to maintain a school in which students could obtain religious as well as general instruction. No tuition was charged, parents of the students were encouraged to contribute to the school. No written or oral agreements existed documenting the amounts that the parents would give. However, the parents and school had the mutual understanding that those families that could afford to contribute to the school would contribute at a minimum the cost of educating their children. Thus, the Tax Court ruled that the payments to the school were not deductible and the Appellate Court affirmed that decision. The recommendation is distinguishable from *Dejong*.

Revenue Ruling 83-104⁵ states the position of the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") regarding the deductibility of contributions made by parents who have children enrolled in private school. The revenue ruling holds that to be deductible, the payments must be made voluntarily and with no expectation of obtaining a corresponding benefit. It is very important that the contribution must not be made pursuant to a plan (express or implied) to convert nondeductible tuition expenses into charitable contributions, and that the receipt of the schooling benefits not be dependent on the making of the payment.

Revenue Ruling 83-104 explains six examples where the donee organization operates a private school that is an organization described in IRC §170. The donor is a parent of a child who attends the school and makes a contribution to the organization. The sixth example described is of a church that operates a school providing secular and religious education that is attended by children of parents who are members and nonmembers of the church. The church receives contributions from all its members, which are placed in its general operating fund and used to support all church activities. Most members of the church do not have children in the school and a major portion of the churches expenses (supported by the general fund) are attributable to its non-school functions. The church solicits contributions from church members with children in the school in the same manner as members without children in the school. No members with children in the school are asked to donate an amount equivalent to the cost of tuition or asked to sign a

³ 468 F.2d. 778

⁴ 309 F.2d 373

⁵ 1983-2 CB 46

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pledge to secure future donations. Also, most contributors to the church were not parents of children enrolled in the school. The IRS concluded that the parent-member's contributions to the church were deductible because, among other factors, most contributors were not parents, and parent-members did not contribute more than other members did.

The CRC recommendation should follow the treatment in the sixth example from Revenue Ruling 83-104. The CRC is upholding one of the basic tenets of its denomination, the importance of the Christian education. The CRC congregations will fund Christian education consistent with each of the congregation's other programs. Additionally, it is expected that more established members of the congregation will donate more than the younger members, because of their typically stronger financial position. If this trend holds true, it strengthens the argument for similarity to Revenue Ruling 83-104.

Private Letter Ruling ("PLR") 9004030 clarified the issue of the deductibility of certain contributions to a church made by parents of students enrolled in a Christian day school. In this ruling, the practice of the church was to pay the tuition of all children of member families that are enrolled in its school. Many members of this church follow the practice of tithing or very generous giving. In this particular case, there was a considerable imbalance of donations in favor of families with children in the school. The church requested that families benefiting from this tuition support increase their contributions in the amount that they would otherwise pay as tuition. There was no formal arrangement between the church and the school. The school held the parents responsible for the tuition payments.

IRS stated in PLR 9004030, although no single factor is determinative, it took into consideration a combination of several of the following factors to indicate that a payment was not a charitable contribution:

- The absence of a significant tuition charge
- Substantial or unusual pressure to contribute applied to parents of children attending the school
- Contribution appeals made as part of the admissions or enrollment process
- The absence of contributions by people other than parents of children attending the school
- Other factors suggesting that a contribution policy has been created as a means of avoiding the characterization of payments as tuition

In the situation described in the PLR, parents were entirely relieved of paying tuition out of their own pockets. Parents were also aware that the church would be unable to continue paying tuition expenses without large contributions from the parents. The records of the church also show that the contributions of parents increased or decreased as the number of children enrolled in the school changed. The contributions of parents of students drop off significantly in the summer months when the school was not in session. IRS concluded one purpose of the plan was tax avoidance; enabling parents to deduct as charitable contributions their previously nondeductible tuition payments. The IRS identified these factors as the reasons the payments to the church should be characterized as non-deductible tuition payments than deductible charitable contributions.

The CRC recommendation is distinguishable from the PLR because each CRC congregation will assume the responsibility of increased giving to support the members' children's tuition to the Christian schools. The proposal calls for all members of the congregation to give what they can to the church to support all

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programs of the church. The churches will not suggest that the parents of students enrolled in the schools give more to the church while their children are in school. The CRC's focus on support of Christian education as a responsibility of the entire congregation differentiates it from PLR 9004030.

Mary E. Rauschenberg
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Appendix D-2: Full Report (United States)

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

April 1, 2002

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Presented by:

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Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

1 Scope of project

We understand that one of the tenets of the Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is the support of a Christian education for the children of its members. The CRC support of Christian education historically has been strong and remains so today. One way this support is demonstrated is through the support of Christian day schools. Concurrent with our project, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee"). The Committee's mandate includes the study of the CRC's financial support for Christian day schooling.

As we understand it, there are currently a number of practices being used to support the day schools. These practices vary from a congregation sponsoring and funding tuition for children of members from special collections but no direct support of member's children's tuition to support of a member's child's tuition where there is a family need. There does not appear to be any single model that is used consistently by a majority of the Churches.

One of the goals of the Committee is to develop a recommended model for use by the CRC congregations that wish to fund Christian education for their congregation's children. The recommended model will provide an education funding that meshes well with and implements CRC doctrines.

Our role during the project included the following:

- Compiling background information regarding how other organizations (i.e. the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church) fund their elementary and secondary schools;
- Participating in visits to CRC sponsored schools to learn the background regarding current funding practices;
- Providing advice on tax and other business implications of the proposed model;
- Preparing a report with our recommendations to the Committee at the completion of the project; and
- Preparing a technical memorandum discussing the tax implications of the proposed funding model.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

2 Executive Summary

Throughout the CRC's history, it has supported Christian education for its youth through Christian day schools. Its strong belief in the importance of Christian education is one of the key factors that resulted of the formation of the CRC denomination in the mid-1800s. Even today, CRC congregations reaffirm their dedication to the Christian education of their children at the baptism of every child in a congregation, by orally committing to supporting the Christian education of that child. Beyond that, its church order says that the church will "diligently encourage" its members to establish and maintain good Christian schools and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools. Clearly, the CRC has included Christian education as a fundamental part of the church's ministry.

However, changes in the economics of sending children to Christian day school have forced the CRC to review its views regarding Christian education. Specifically, younger families are having difficulty with the financial burden of funding a Christian education for their children. Some of these families are choosing not to send their children to Christian schools or are even leaving the CRC denomination. The CRC must find a way to support its families with children while addressing the concerns of families without children and without causing significant cutbacks in other congregation programs.

To achieve these objectives, the Committee recommends that each CRC congregation fund a percentage of the Christian day school tuition for its member children as part of the general ministry of the church. The percentage will be determined by each congregation based upon the economics of the particular church and the level of need of its member families. By providing flexibility in the model, all CRC congregations can adopt some form of economic support for Christian education.

If the CRC adopts the Committee's proposal, the CRC churches should not need to treat the value of a child's education as quid pro quo for the children's parents. This conclusion is based upon very specific criteria that are discussed later in the report and the attached technical memorandum.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

3 Procedures

During November, December and January, we visited the following individuals and organizations:

- Mr. Ronald Holwerda – Lansing Christian School;
- Mr. Peter Boonstra – Illiana Christian High School;
- Mr. Scott Helming – Trinity Evangelical Church and School;
- Rev. Cal Hoogendorn – Bethel Christian Reformed Church;
- Mr. Wayne Schneider – Milwaukee Catholic Archdiocese;
- Mr. Bob Freymark – Lutheran Schools – Missouri Synod;
- Mr. Robert Buikema – Brookfield Christian School; and
- Mr. Clifford Buelow – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) College.

Our meetings focused on gathering the following information:

1. What are the denomination's core beliefs regarding education and schools?
2. How are the schools organized? What is their relationship with the associated church(es)?
3. Do the schools admit students from other denominations?
4. What are the primary sources of financial support for the school?
5. Does the school or denomination offer any financial aid or support to its students' families?

We gathered additional information relating to the CRC's beliefs and support of Christian education through various books, pamphlets and our discussions with CRC church members.

Christian Reformed Church
Recommended Education Funding Model

4 Practices of the CRC, Catholic Church, and Lutheran Church

Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod WELS)
1. What is the denomination's core beliefs regarding Christian education and Christian schools?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian education of CRC children is an important tenet of the CRC denomination. • In an essay written by John Bolt, entitled "The CRC and Support for Christian Education," Mr. Bolt presents the history of the CRC's support of Christian education and convincing arguments for continued CRC support of Christian schools. • The emphasis on Christian day school education is deeply woven into the fabric of the CRC as a denomination. • CRC officials, when visiting local congregations, always ask if the congregation has been promoting Christian day school education to its members. • At a baby's baptism, the entire CRC congregation verbally makes the commitment to help instruct the baby in the Christian faith. • Christian education is actively promoted in CRC congregations. Christian education is often the subject of Pastors' sermons. • Though the support for Christian education is strong throughout the entire community, because of the financial burden more families are choosing not to send their children to Christian day schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Catholic Church supports Christian education as part of the general ministry of its parishes. • As a general rule, education is not a specific focus in sermons or through the traditions of the Catholic mass. • Families send their children to Catholic schools based upon their desire for a Catholic education and ability to finance the education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LCMS feels that the Lutheran education of its children is the responsibility of the entire congregation. • Generally, LCMS pastors support Lutheran education and schools through the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They send their children to the schools; • They support Lutheran education during their prayers in services; • They speak generally in support of the schools; and • They may touch on Lutheran education during their sermons. • The LCMS supports and encourages Lutheran education, but does not pressure its members to send their children to the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are a fundamental component of a WELS parish. • Pastors do not specifically promote the WELS schools during services. However, when a new family joins a WELS parish, the family is visited by the pastor, school principal, and appropriate teachers to encourage sending the children to the WELS school.
2. How are the schools organized? What is their relationship with the church?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian day schools are organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches. They do not have any overlapping board members. The church and the schools are legally independent. • Typically, the majority of the board of a Christian day school consists of CRC members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic elementary schools are a part of the ministry of their related parish. They are not separate legal entities. • Catholic high schools are typically sponsored by several parishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCMS schools are part of the ministry of their related parish. As a general rule, they are not separate legal entities. • High schools may be sponsored by several parishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WELS schools are part of the ministry of their related parish. As a general rule, they are not separate legal entities. • High schools may be sponsored by several parishes.

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Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod WELS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schools are typically associated with one or more CRC churches in the geographic area. The churches whose members' children attend the schools generally provide financial support to the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Catholic parish that does not have its own school may associate itself with another parish's school. 		
3. Do the schools admit students from other denominations?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian day schools admit children from any denominations as long as their values and beliefs coincide with the Christian values and curriculum of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic schools admit students from other denominations. The families of the students must accept that their children will receive a Catholic education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCMS schools will admit students from outside the parish, as long as the families of those children are willing to actively participate in all activities of the school, including religious activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELS schools will admit students from other denominations.
4. What are the primary sources of funding for the school?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of Christian day school funding is through tuition. Christian day schools receive some funding through alternate sources such as special collections from the associated churches and in some cases funding from a related foundation. Depending on the school and the associated churches, the families are personally responsible for tuition. Some congregations, such as the Brookfield CRC, fund 100% of its members' children's Christian day school tuition from the church's general fund. Other congregations, such as the Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois, fund none of the children's tuition. There are variations in between depending upon the congregation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic schools used to be 100% funded by the parish. Due to changing cost structure and other economic pressures, most schools now charge tuition. Catholic schools are included as part of the ministry of the related parish, and thus the operating expenses for the schools are part of the annual budget for the related parish. As a general rule, a parish pays part of the costs of the schools and tuition paid by the families of children enrolled in the school funds the remainder of the budget. Non-parish member children pay a higher tuition than parish member children. In addition to church funds and tuition, parishes often sponsor fundraisers for the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCMS schools are part of the parish. Thus, all expenses for the schools are part of the ministry of the parish and are funded by the parish. Generally, the LCMS churches encourage overall giving from their members, part of which will be used to fund the school. The LCMS schools charge tuition to the families enrolling students in the schools. Typically, the tuition is less for parish members' children. LCMS parishes also sponsor fundraisers and special collections to assist in the funding of the schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WELS schools are part of the parish. Thus, all expenses for the schools are part of the ministry of the parish and are funded by the parish. As a general rule, WELS schools do not charge tuition to their parish members' children. WELS churches rely on special offerings from the congregation when the church budget falls short (because of school issues or other issues). WELS high schools charge tuition to all students. WELS members' children's tuition is subsidized by their congregation.
5. Does the school offer any financial aid or support to its students' families?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, the Christian day schools associated with CRC congregations do not provide financial aid directly to students' families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial aid is handled on a case by case basis between the families and the parish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LCMS will not refuse any child admission to their schools for financial reasons. The LCMS parish will fund the child's education if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WELS schools provide financial aid to high school students.

Christian Reformed Church
Recommended Education Funding Model

Christian Reformed Church	Catholic Church	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS)	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod WELS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools provide minimal tuition subsidies for CRC members based upon contributions from the school foundation or other sources. • Though the Christian day schools associated with CRC congregations do not provide direct financial aid, they are willing to assist families to request aid from their individual churches. 			

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

5 Recommended Education Funding Model

A. Recommendation

Determining the most effective method of funding religious education has been an issue for the Christian denominations sponsoring schools for many years. As noted above, the Catholic Church and Lutheran synods have funded or subsidized their schools through the general ministry of the church for a number of years. However, changes in society over the years have necessitated the Catholics and Lutherans to reform their models for supporting and funding education. Recently, the same has become true for the CRC.

The CRC has supported Christian day schools since the denomination was founded in the mid-1800s. In an essay written by Professor John Bolt, entitled "The CRC and Support for Christian Education," Professor Bolt describes the CRC's long history of involvement with Christian day schools. The importance of sponsoring a Christian education for its youth is one of the core values and beliefs that caused the formation of the CRC originally. The CRC has remained committed to supporting Christian education for its youth throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. Even today, an entire CRC congregation, at the baptism of a member's child, orally reaffirms its commitment to assist with the Christian nurturing of the child in the church and beyond. However, changes within the CRC brought on by changes in American society have caused the CRC to carefully review its theological and economic views on the support of Christian education both within the church and in Christian day schools.

The Committee is directly addressing the theological perspective of the CRC's continued support of Christian education and Christian day schools. The purpose of this report is to supplement that report with a discussion of the economic and financial issues facing the CRC's support of Christian education and to make a recommendation for the funding of Christian education going forward.

The economic diversity within the CRC is one issue currently affecting the support of Christian education. CRC congregations strongly encourage their members to send their children to Christian day school. Many of these congregations do not provide financial support thus placing a significant financial burden upon these families. Depending on a family's economic situation, and the number of school age children, a family may or may not be able to afford the cost of sending a child or children to a Christian day school. As the costs of education increase, the burden upon these families has continued to increase. Young families with numerous children especially feel the financial impact of sending children to Christian schools. In some cases, young families have left CRC congregations because they could not afford Christian day school education for their children and felt too much pressure from the congregation on the importance of a Christian education for their children. The future of the CRC is its children. It is important to the denomination that its children are raised with the CRC religious worldview. If families cannot afford Christian education for their children, the CRC will begin to see its future endangered as its children are educated in schools that do not focus on the same religious values taught to students in Christian day schools. The danger of losing the support of these children indicates that the CRC needs to assist its members with children in the financing of Christian day school education.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

However, the overall financial well being of the congregations and their traditions need to be considered. If a congregation has not funded Christian education in the past, its other programs may be impacted by the demands on the church budget that a commitment to fund the tuition of its members' children education will create. The congregation members, especially those without children, may not be satisfied with promoting Christian day school education at the expense of the congregation's other programs. Based upon the general consensus of support for Christian day school education, it will be necessary for a broad segment of the congregation members to accept an additional financial commitment. If all of the members share the cost, the burden is spread among the entire Christian community in each church or group of churches. The effect will be to relieve some of the financial stress placed upon the younger families – a key issue raised during the course of the study.

Therefore, the recommendation of an education funding model must balance the concerns of the younger families, older members, and the financial well being of the congregations. Additionally, the economic and social diversity amongst the CRC congregations will impact the recommended education funding model. The model must include enough flexibility to meet the needs of the CRC's diverse group of congregations, or it will not serve the purpose for which it has been created.

To meet these objectives, we recommend that each CRC congregation fund a percentage (up to 100%) of the Christian day school tuition for its member children as part of the general ministry of the church. The percentage will be determined based upon the congregation's commitment to Christian education and the financial resources of each church. Additionally, the model will allow a church to determine what level of financial commitment it would like the individual families to maintain to ensure they are committed to Christian education. This model will provide enough flexibility to each congregation to determine how significant of a commitment it wants to make to Christian education. At the same time, it affirms the CRC's overall commitment to provide some financial relief to its families with fewer financial resources.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

6 Summary of Tax Implications of Recommended Education Funding Model

A. Summary of Tax Implications

If the CRC adopts the Committee's proposal, the CRC churches should not be required to report the value of a child's education as a quid pro quo to the members with children enrolled in the Christian day schools. Thus, the members' charitable donations may be deductible as charitable contributions pursuant to IRC §170. Revenue Ruling 83-104 provides guidance that states, under the proper facts, contributions to a church with children that attend a related school are deductible. To support this conclusion, the CRC and CRC churches need to monitor their actions to engage in the "Do's" listed below and avoid the "Don't's" listed below. The CRC should establish its program in a way that the facts closely resemble example six of Revenue Ruling 83-104 and that avoids the negative facts established in court cases and other IRS rulings. If the IRS were to challenge this position it would likely argue that parents with children receiving tuition benefits received quid pro quo in return for their contributions to the church. If the IRS were successful in this argument, the CRC church could be penalized for failing to properly disclose a quid pro quo contribution to its members. In addition, the contributions of individual members would likely be disallowed up to the subsidized amount. The attached technical memorandum (Exhibit 1) discusses the tax implications of the recommendation in more detail.

B. Do's

The following list summarizes facts and actions that support the members' position that the contributions to the church should be treated as charitable contributions and that there is no reportable quid pro quo:

- The congregation should formally resolve that funding part or all of its members' children's tuition is an obligation of the church. This obligation should be assumed as a general obligation of the church.
- Payments of tuition to the Christian day schools should be made from each CRC church's general operating funds. The school should bill the church directly.
- The portion of the tuition subsidized by the church becomes a church liability. If the church is unable to pay, the liability should not revert to the parent.
- Any portion of tuition not paid by the church should be paid by the parent directly to the school.
- Church members will contribute in accordance with the principles of stewardship as articulated within the CRC. The concept is if individuals accept the premise that they are not owners of the material blessings entrusted to them by God, but only stewards charged with the responsibility of using these gifts for kingdom purposes, then they will contribute in accordance with their financial abilities and their understanding of Christian stewardship.

Christian Reformed Church

Recommended Education Funding Model

C. Don'ts

The following list summarized actions and facts that the IRS may rely upon to argue that members' contributions are in actuality non-deductible tuition payments:

- The CRC congregations should not solicit nor require specific contributions from members with children in any way that is different from other members of the congregation
- A church should not request, orally or written, that the families with children in school give their tuition savings to the church.
- A church should not create a separate education fund for support of the Christian schools, nor set aside specific contributions from families with children in school to go directly to the schools.
- A church should not create the expectation, whether documented or implicit, that its members with children are expected to contribute more money to the church than other congregation members.
- A church should not create any documentation, promotional material, or correspondence that specifically allocates the cost of the school to only the members with children in the school.

Appendix D-3: Report (Canada)

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Memo

Date: October 10, 2002
To: The Files
From: Tony Ancimer, Michael Lepore, Lisa Pallisco
Subject: Funding of Christian Day Schools

FACTS

The Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") is a Protestant denomination of about 950 churches and 280,000 members in North America, including 243 churches and 82,000 members in Canada. One of the primary tenets of CRC theology is Christian education. Christian day schools, organized as separate legal entities from CRC churches, serve students and families who are members of the CRC and other denominations. Over the years, the CRC churches have maintained a close relationship with the Christian day schools. As part of this relationship, the CRC churches have provided financial assistance to the schools. This assistance includes Sunday collections and fundraisers that appeal to all members of the CRC congregations. However, significant sources of funding for CRC sponsored Christian day schools include tuition and government subsidies. The CRC has not adopted a uniform methodology for use by its churches in determining whether and/or how to fund the Christian education of their members' children.

Recently, the CRC Synod 2000 appointed a committee to study Christian day school education ("the Committee") whose purpose is to determine whether the denomination should reaffirm its theological support of Christian education (this was last done in the 1950's). The Committee has concluded that the CRC ought to reaffirm this support. As part of its mandate, the Committee has developed a recommendation for the funding of the Christian education of CRC members' children that the individual congregations may adopt.

The CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. At a child's baptism, the entire congregation makes an oral commitment to support the Christian education of that child. In order to fulfill the congregation's obligation to support the Christian education of CRC youth, the Committee looked at various models for funding Christian day schools, including one model where all of the tuition for students attending day school is paid by the church. The Committee's final recommendation was for CRC church councils to develop and promote plans for congregational financial support of Reformed Christian day school education. The Committee recommended that the CRC church councils seek professional legal, tax, and accounting advice when drafting such plans.

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ISSUE

If CRC churches develop a plan that provides direct financial support to Christian schools and, as a result, the children of CRC members are provided with some subsidy for day school education, will contributions to the church by the parishioners be considered “gifts” for which a charitable receipt can be issued, thus enabling the parishioners to claim a tax credit?

CONCLUSION

If a CRC church adopts the model whereby tuition for students attending Christian day school is paid, in whole or in part, by the church the whole amount of the contributions made to the church by parents with children that receive a tuition subsidy would likely not be considered “gifts”, because these parents would be receiving consideration, in the form of the Christian education of their children, in return for their contributions. Therefore, no charitable receipt should be issued with respect to these contributions. This is supported by both case law and CCRA interpretations. It should be noted that it is the whole donation that is made by a parent that would be deemed not to be a gift. Therefore, where a parent donates an amount that is in excess of any tuition subsidy received by their children, it is the whole amount of the donation that does not qualify for a tax credit and not just the portion equal to the subsidy.

Donations by members who do not have children receiving a subsidized education should qualify as a gift, since they will not be receiving any form of consideration in return for their contribution. However, there is a risk that the CCRA could disagree with this conclusion with respect to donations made by members that are related to children attending the day school; i.e., donations by grandparents or siblings.

Therefore, the model that has been recommended for funding the Christian education of members’ children in the United States is not an ideal structure for Canada. There are other options available for funding the schools that may produce a more advantageous tax result for the donors. If desirable, these options could be explored.

DISCUSSION

Registered Charity

A registered charity is an independent body, resident in Canada, which has been registered as a “charitable organization”, a “public foundation” or a “private foundation”. A charitable organization is generally characterized as an initiator of charitable activities and is typically responsible for administering charitable programs through its own representatives. A public foundation on the other hand, funds the charitable activities of other registered organizations. Lastly, a private foundation can behave in the manner of either an organization or a foundation, the distinguishing characteristic is the degree to which it is privately controlled or funded. It is our understanding that both the individual CRC churches and the associated CRC schools are registered as charitable organizations.

Registered charities are exempt from taxation on their income and are entitled to issue donation receipts that entitle their recipients to a tax credit or a tax deduction. Gifts to registered charities qualify for tax credits if an individual makes the gift¹. The tax credit is a non-refundable and non-transferable federal tax credit that is deductible against regular income tax otherwise payable. The deduction from income tax

¹ A gift made by a corporation may qualify for a tax deduction. However, only the rules applicable to gifts made by an individual are discussed in this memo.

otherwise payable is calculated by applying the lowest federal income tax rate for the year (currently 16%) to the lesser of \$200 and the individual's total gift for the year. The tax credit for individual gifts in excess of \$200 is calculated using the highest federal income tax rate (currently 29%). Charitable gifts also qualify for a provincial tax credit that is available to offset provincial income tax that would otherwise be payable. Provincial tax credits vary from province to province. In Ontario, the tax credit is 6.2% of the first \$200 in donations, and 11.16% for donations in excess of \$200.

Gifts

As discussed above, in order to qualify for a tax credit, a contribution by an individual to a registered charity must be classified as a "gift" and the donor must receive an official charitable receipt. There is no definition of gift in the *Income Tax Act* (the "Act"). Therefore, courts applying the provisions of the Act dealing with credits for gifts apply the common law definition of the term. The common law definition is stated in *Friedberg v. MNR*:²

a gift is a voluntary transfer of property owned by a donor to a donee, in return for which no benefit or consideration flows to the donor.

CCRA's position on the meaning of "gift" is set out in Interpretation Bulletin 110R3 "Gifts and Official Donation Receipts". IT-110R3 defines a gift as follows:

A gift ... is a voluntary transfer of property without valuable consideration. Generally, a gift is made if all three of the conditions listed below are satisfied:

- (a) some property – usually cash – is transferred by a donor to a registered charity
- (b) the transfer is voluntary; and
- (c) the transfer is made without expectation of return. No benefit of any kind may be provided to the donor or to anyone designated by the donor, except where the benefit is of nominal value.³

In document number 9901985 "Tuition Fees and Gifts", CCRA provides further commentary on what it considers a gift by stating that:

"any obligation, contractual, moral or otherwise, on the donor would cause the transfer to lose its status as a gift. In order to be a gift, the transfer of property must be made without conditions, from a detached and disinterested generosity, out of affection, respect, charity or like impulse, and not made from the constraining forces of any moral or legal duty."

CCRA's definition of a gift is generally supported by the jurisprudence. The only difficult element of the definition is the prohibition against consideration being received by the donor. Several court cases over the past few decades have examined the issue of "consideration" with respect to contributions to a registered charity. The most important of these cases are discussed below together with an analysis of their application to CRC's facts.

² 89 DTC 5115; [1989] 1 CTC 274 (FCTD) varied 92 DTC 6031; 1992 1 CTC 1, (FCA)

³ A benefit is considered to have a nominal value where the fair market value does not exceed the lesser of \$50 or 10% of the amount of the gift. A benefit is not considered to have nominal value where its fair market value cannot be determined.

In *Woolner v. The Attorney General of Canada*⁴, the Federal Court of Appeal found that donations to a church were not gifts. The taxpayers, who were members of the First Mennonite Church, made contributions to the church and received charitable donations receipts in exchange. The members could designate that part of their donations to the church were to be used to provide students of Mennonite school with bursaries. The Student Aid Committee of the church had determined that as policy matter every student who was member or child of a member of church that applied for bursary should receive one. Thus no student was denied enrolment at the school for failure to pay tuition fees. A very small percentage of the church congregation, all of whom were parents of children who obtained bursaries, donated a large part of the money contributed to the fund out of which the bursaries were paid. The court felt that the taxpayers made their contributions to the church with the anticipation that their children would be provided with a bursary. While a parent could theoretically not pay any money to the church for their child to receive a bursary, all parents would also presumably understand that if each and every parent refused to donate money to the church, there would be insufficient money available to provide students with bursaries. Further, a report by the Student Aid Committee stated that: "It is assumed that the student and/or parents will contribute as much as they are able to the fund." Thus, despite the fact that the contributions were voluntary, they were made with the anticipation of benefit or advantage of material nature; that benefit being the bursary for their children. Therefore, the donations were not gifts and the donors could not claim a tax credit.

The CRC proposal, like the First Mennonite Church, expects all members to give what they can afford to support the church, without any extra burden or pressure borne by those families with children in the school. All congregation members will be encouraged to give as much as they can afford and their conscience dictates. The recommendation is slightly distinguishable from *Woolner*, since all payments to the school will be made from the church's general fund. Thus, unlike the First Mennonite Church, parents would not designate that part of their donations to the church are to be used to provide students with bursaries. This distinguishing aspect however is arguably not overly significant. The classification of a donation to a registered charity as a gift hinges on the expectation of return. The fact that the donations are technically voluntary in nature would not impact this analysis. If CRC parishioners anticipate that, in return for their contributions to the church, their children would be provided with a Christian education, they have received consideration and their donations would not qualify as a gift. The consideration received does not have to be material in nature. If parents consider they have a primary duty to provide their children with a Christian education in a separate Christian school, and that this obligation is discharged by donations to the church, then the parents will have received consideration in the form of a release from their moral obligation. Thus, where there is a moral obligation involved, the courts have found that there is a *per se quid pro quo*. This could be true irrespective of whether parents are explicitly compelled to donate funds to the church or whether their donations were donated to the general fund or designated for student bursaries.

In *MNR v. Zandstra*⁵, the taxpayers treated \$200 per family of the total sum paid to their children's school (which was a registered charitable organization) as tuition fees and the balance as a gift. CCRA argued that \$200 per child attending the school should be treated as tuition fees and the balance as a gift. The court upheld CCRA's position, even after accepting that the payments to the school were voluntary and not pursuant to a contractual obligation. The court found that it was clear from the evidence presented that the parents had a primary duty to their own children to provide them with a Christian education in a separate Christian school and that this obligation was discharged by payments made to the school. Therefore, the parents received consideration, i.e. the Christian education of their children, in return for

⁴ *Woolner v. MNR* (1999), 99 DTC 5722; 2000 1 CTC 35 (FCA)

⁵ *MNR v Zandstra*, 74 DTC 6416; [1974] CTC 503

their payments to the school, and thus these payments were not considered gifts. The Zandstra case cannot be materially distinguished from the CRC proposal. CRC views the Christian education of youth as fundamental to its religious beliefs. Thus, CRC parishioners could be seen as having a moral duty to provide their children with a Christian education. This duty is fulfilled through donations to the church, which could be used to partially or fully fund the education of their children attending the schools. Once again, the courts found that a release from a moral obligation was sufficient to deem payments made to the church not to be gifts.

In the *Queen v. McBurney*⁶, the taxpayer paid amounts to three Christian religious schools attended by his children. Each school was a non-profit organization and a registered charity. Parents were requested to make financial contributions but no child was turned away because of financial hardship. CCRA took the position that the payments were on account of tuition fees and not gifts. Accordingly, they disallowed the deductions claimed by the taxpayer. The Federal Court of Appeal sided with CCRA and found that the payments were not gifts. The court determined that the taxpayer made payments "in pursuance of his perceived Christian duty to ensure his children received the kind of education these schools provided." Therefore, the court could not accept the argument that, since the parents were under no legal obligation to contribute, the payments should be considered as gifts. It further stated that:

The securing of the kind of education a parent desired for his/her child and the makings of the payments went hand in hand. Both grew out of the same sense of personal obligation, as a Christian parent, to ensure that for his/her child received a Christian education and, and in return, to pay money to the operating organizations according to... their means.

Therefore, the payments were not considered gifts. The facts in the *McBurney* case are similar to the CRC proposal. It would therefore be very difficult to argue that the CRC members' do not, at the very least, have a moral duty to ensure that their children receive a Christian education and that this duty is fulfilled through donations made to the church. As discussed above, once a moral obligation exists on the part of the donor, the transfer loses its status as a gift.

Donations to Secular and Religious Schools

As discussed above, tuition fees paid to an educational institution in Canada are not considered gifts; they are fees for value. As such, official receipts designated for charitable donations may not be issued for such tuition fees, even where the educational institution itself is a registered Canadian charitable organization. There are two exceptions to this general rule where a portion or the entire amount paid to an educational institution may be considered a gift. The two special circumstances are for schools that teach religion exclusively and those that operate in a dual capacity providing both secular and religious education. These exceptions are outlined by CCRA in Information Circular 75-23 "tuition fees and charitable donations paid to privately supported secular and religious schools". Further, it should be noted that, as a result of the *Woolner*⁷ case, these exceptions are now part of Canadian law and are not merely administrative concessions.

If a school teaches religion exclusively and is a registered Canadian charitable organization, payments for students attending the school are not considered to be tuition fees. This is due to the fact that receiving religious education for one's children is not viewed by CCRA as receiving consideration even through this

⁶ *Queen v. McBurney*, 85 DTC 5433; [1985] 2 CTC 214

⁷ *Woolner v. MNR* (1999), 99 DTC 5722; 2000 1 CTC 35 (FCA)

may be viewed as inconsistent with the above noted cases. Official charitable donation receipts may be issued for payments made to these schools.

If a school is operating in a dual capacity providing both secular and religious education, charitable donation receipts may be issued for the portion of the amount paid to attend the school relating to religious education. Currently, there are two methods of calculating the portion of donations that relates to religious education depending on how the school maintains its accounting records.

The most favorable treatment is received where a school segregates the cost of operating the secular portion of the school and the cost of providing religious training. The net cost of operating the secular portion of the school is to be prorated over the number of pupils enrolled during the school year to determine a "cost per pupil" for the secular training. An official receipt can be issued for that portion of a payment, which is in excess of the pro-rated "cost-per-pupil".

If the school cannot separate the cost of operating the secular portion of the school and the cost of providing religious training, a donation receipt can be issued for that part of the payment that is in excess of the net operating "cost per pupil" of the whole school for a school year.

The full contribution to such a school by a person who is neither the parent nor guardian of a pupil attending the school should qualify as a gift for which an official receipt can be issued.

- c: Peter Borgdorf, Christian Reformed Church Foundation
Scott L. Hirsch, Erica A. Lazzo, Mary E. Rauschenberg, D&T Chicago

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATION

Overture 1: Adopt a Study Report on Restorative Justice

Classis B.C. North-West overtures synod:

1. To adopt Classis B.C. North-West's study report on "Restorative Justice" (see Appendix) for the purpose of:
 - a. Raising awareness of restorative justice in local congregations, classes, synod, and its agencies.
 - b. Addressing society with the dire need for an alternative approach to and ministry in crime prevention and justice.

Ground: The ongoing urgency of this important societal issue needs to be addressed to and by our entire denomination.

2. To direct CRC Publications to explore and develop restorative justice curriculum material and resources and to make them available to the churches for awareness raising and education.

Ground: There is need for Reformed curriculum material for the churches to consider. Most existing studies, though important, are resources coming from other perspectives.

3. To encourage all classes to participate in educational awareness programs and that denomination-wide networking be facilitated for individuals and professionals working and serving in criminal justice related settings.
4. To request that regular reports be made to synod and all classes on the progress of restorative justice activities and projects in the denomination through the appropriate denominational channels.

Ground: There is need for a consistent educational awareness-raising effort in all the churches, and, for this to be consistent and thorough, there must be effective mutual collaboration and communication.

5. To endorse and underscore restorative justice as a biblical perspective, applied specifically to address the harm done by crime in our communities and countries.
6. To encourage the facilitation of restorative justice through active participation of church members in existing programs and services in their communities in order to witness to society by seeking reparation, restoration, and

reconciliation to the extent that this is possible, with the goal of restoring community shalom.

Ground: There is a need to respond to community brokenness, crime, and interpersonal violations within our society. We must seek reparation and reconciliation between the offender and the victim as demonstrated through Jesus Christ for an alternative to the current practice of retribution and punishment.

Classis B.C. North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

Appendix

Study Committee Report on Restorative Justice from Classis B.C. North-West

I. Background and mandate

At its October 16-17, 2001, session, Classis B.C. North-West adopted the Vancouver First Christian Reformed Church overture to study the matter of restorative justice. A committee was appointed to deal with this issue. The mandate given to the committee is as follows:

Classis B.C. North-West appoints a committee to:

A. “Study the biblical concept of restorative justice that will witness to society for the purpose of:

1. Responding to community brokenness, crime, and interpersonal violations within our communities and society;
2. Seeking reparation, restoration, and reconciliation between the offender and the victim as demonstrated to us through Jesus Christ, as an alternative to the current practice of retribution and punishment.

B. Report its findings to the March 2002 session of classis.

C. Submit the study committee report to Synod 2002 for the purpose of:

1. Raising awareness of restorative justice in the local congregation, in classis, in synod, and in its agencies;
2. Addressing society with the dire need for an alternative approach and ministry in crime prevention and justice.”

The study committee was not able to complete its work in time for the March 2002 session of classis and asked for an extension to the October 2002 fall session. This extension was granted, the report was presented to the fall session of classis (2002) and is now being submitted to Synod 2003.

Although much work on the issue of restorative justice has already been done by different denominations, agencies, and organizations (including our own Christian Reformed Church in North America and its agencies, as well as various individuals), we ask that classis consider this report in order that we may create a healthy dialogue and discussion, thereby providing a better awareness of doing a biblically based justice for the benefit of our society. We trust and pray that through means of this report a greater concern will be raised

for doing justice in the land—justice that seeks to restore, transform, and correct.

II. Outline of the report

- I. Background and mandate
- II. Outline of the report
- III. Restorative justice: what it is
 - A. *Biblical-theological concepts and their relationship to justice*
 - B. *The central significance of restorative justice and crime, forgiveness, and grace*
 - C. *Societal values and crime*
 - D. *Justice, crime, and our Christian responsibility*
 - E. *What restorative justice does*
- IV. Why the church should be involved in the discussion and facilitation of restorative justice
- V. Practical matters and benefits of the restorative justice approach

III. Restorative justice: what it is

As we present this report on restorative justice, it is our hope and prayer that it will become evident that we need very much to deal with the justice system in our land. How we go about this will directly include the faith community where the door for redemption and healing will be opened and where direct ministering to the victim, to families, to the offender, and all involved will take place.

In introducing the term *restorative justice*, many people ask what it is and how it could more effectively benefit our present-day setting of doing justice. We need at once to add a very important additional word to this term: *transformative justice* in order to get to a full understanding of this concept.

Restorative justice is the popular name given to a wide range of emerging justice approaches that aim for more healing and satisfying responses to crime. Both victim and offender and the effects of these actions need to be addressed. Our present society, however, views justice more in the retributive sense (“lock the person up for the crime he’s committed and ‘throw the key away’—he deserved what he got”), where the punishment somehow fits the crime. Restorative and transformative justice aims to get at the various experiences and circumstances that led to the crime and attempts to hold the offender fully accountable by making him or her realize how the victim has been wounded. Imprisonment is not the simple solution. More needs to be done in order to bring about healing, restoration, and eventual transformation. It does not mean at all that somehow we are aiming to go “soft” on crime and the offender. Rather, the aim is to bring the offender fully to an understanding and realization of what he has done that has hurt all of society.

From a Christian perspective, this means that we do not merely approach justice from the law-and-order angle but rather from the biblical understanding of the peace (*shalom*) that comes as a result of Christ’s victorious work. In the New Testament, Jesus brings the vision of justice to its fullest expression by “healing and preaching the Good News, moving freely among all people, including the despised and rejected. He introduces in the Sermon on the Mount the revolutionary ethic of forgiveness. The sinner is given hope. The prodigal is welcomed home. Jesus is the great ‘restorer’” (Rev. Pierre Allard).

In that light, restorative justice calls those who have done harm to make radical life changes, all the while knowing that God's love is unconditional. In extreme cases of crime, such as serial killings, this goal will obviously be hard to achieve, but we must always aim to heal what has been broken and thereby strengthen the community to prevent further harm. Restorative justice puts a human face on both victim and offender and provides opportunity for everyone involved to tell the stories about what happened so healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation can begin. It provides ways to look first of all at the person and then at what the person has done, thereby avoiding the blame games that place us (as society in general) in a position of strength and the offenders as weak and inferior—a typical us-them approach that results in splitting off and separation rather than in healing.

Restorative justice is, simply speaking, justice that focuses on addressing the effects of an offense on all the parties involved and bringing healing to all parties to the extent that is possible. The term *transformative justice* was preferred by justice advocate Ruth Morris who strongly argued that individuals may not be restored to dysfunctional or dangerous systemic settings; she advocated for structural transformation.¹ Restorative justice “pioneer,” Howard Zehr’s definition as quoted in the September 2000 CSC-PAC, Regional Restorative Justice Council’s handbook is as follows: “Crime is a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, the offender, and the community, in search of solutions which promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance.”

Restorative justice is often juxtaposed to the dominant form of justice in the Western world, termed *retributive justice*, which as an adversarial system of justice focuses not on the hurt done but on the laws that have been broken. Restorative justice understands that crime hurts people, and justice should heal and address the hurt done; it has a fundamentally relational focus.² Historically, the church has accepted retributive justice uncritically, as symbolized by the scales of justice held by a blindfolded woman, a supposedly impersonal unbiased rational weighing of the facts and laws.³ It has, however, come to the attention of many that this form of justice is incarcerating mostly vulnerable and resourceless people at alarming rates, especially in the United States—a country that prides itself in freedom and democracy. The tragedy is that Canada seems to be following the United States in calling for tougher retributive justice, responding to public perception and populist *jingoism* that crime is on the increase, while paradoxically serious crime is lower than a decade ago. Tough law-and-order positions lock people up for long periods of time for punishment of wrong done, making most offenders angrier and less

¹Ruth Morris, *How Do We Convince the Public: The Place of Community Education in Creating Healing Justice* (Toronto: Rittenhouse, 1994), 10. Ruth Morris has written many other short items from a transformative justice perspective.

²Many books are available on restorative justice. Basic is Howary Zehr’s first book, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1990). Many resources are available from the Mennonite Central Committee by Wayne Northey and others.

³Pierre Allard, interview by David Cayley, in *Ideas: Prison and Its Alternatives*, radio talk show transcript (Toronto: CBC Radio, 1996), 91. Pierre Allard states that the Reformation did not address the criminal justice system and left it as it was.

capable of functioning in society. Furthermore, it does little to develop a sense of responsibility and maturity in offenders or to heal the emotional and financial hurts of the victims and their relatives.

It is important then, to make available to our congregations materials and opportunities to dialogue on this important issue and to decide just how the church must respond to, and advise local congregations to think, speak, and act from biblical perspectives on criminal justice and related issues; and how to support and direct Christian professionals and volunteers involved in criminal justice and social justice ministries.

A. *Biblical-theological concepts and their relationship to justice*

Three theological concepts central to Reformed thought are also vital to restorative justice. These concepts, or theological principles are: *grace, covenant, and shalom*. We will rely on two Christian theologians who have recently authored books relevant to the issue.⁴ Other Reformed theologians such as Nicholas Wolterstorff, Henry Stob, and Richard J. Mouw lend relevancy to this work. Besides the work of these authors, a few articles have recently appeared in *The Banner*, but the Christian Reformed Church has not put much emphasis on doing serious theological reflection on restorative justice as an alternative to the present dominant form of retributive justice.

Retributive justice rests on a basic assumption that punishment is effective, perhaps edifying. If laws are broken, the guilty must be punished and “pay their debt to society.” Punishment has become an end in itself—more important than the outcome. A pragmatic approach to punishment assumes that it will deter others from committing a crime. If this were true, crime in Canada and the United States should be eliminated by the supposed deterrent effect of this system because the United States and Canada incarcerate more people than any other nation in the Western world. In 1996, only Russia incarcerated more people than the United States. The United States also executes people by capital punishment many times more than any other developed country.⁵ Punishment and capital punishment only serve to make the overall criminal and justice problems worse. Basic to this phenomenon from a theological point of view is the misunderstanding by the Christian church of the biblical concept of justice as intended by its authors. We must look into the history of where our current thinking has come from to discern what the biblical concept of justice really is. Justice, as intended by God and demonstrated by Jesus, was at base relational, covenantal *torah*, not abstract and legal. At base, God’s righteousness was a model for human righteousness in a relational covenantal sense.

⁴Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

⁵Correctional Services Canada, *Basic Facts about Federal Corrections* (Ottawa: Correctional Services Canada, 1999), 14, establishes a per capita incarceration rate of 129 for Canada and 649 for the United States compared with 53 in Norway and 83 in Belgium. Marshall states that one might expect a low crime rate in the United States, but, per capita, the crime rate is five times that of European countries without capital punishment (245-46). Ruth Morris, *We Are Being Cheated: Corporate and Welfare Fraud* (Toronto: Rittenhouse, nd) reminds us that people are ten times more likely to be killed by conditions at the workplace than by street assault.

Herman Bianchi, the Dutch criminologist cannot even accept the validity of the term *criminal justice system* as it currently exists. The term is a misnomer because it is not just.⁶ He notes that neither Israel nor Rome had a criminal justice system as we have today. Jail was more a place of detention for a while: People did not “serve time.” Bianchi also suggests that the early translators of the Bible, bowing to social attitudes favoring retaliation, mistranslated *heshlem* or *shelem*, not with peace and reconciliation words, but with retaliation and retribution. Similarly, the biblical intent of the *Lex Talionis*, is to limit retaliation (revenge), directing restoration instead to honor the value of the harm done; it is not as in modern adversarial litigation where people “sue the pants off each other.” The Hebrew word *tsedeka*, according to Bianchi, following Martin Buber, is not legal justice but has a more direction-guiding intention; it is commitment to truth, to make things come true, to affirm, and not to punish. He associates the word *Torah* as intentionality, not as abstract legal justice or imperatives but rather as directive words and gracious practical wisdom on how to live as followers of Yahweh. These are gracious principles to give guidance into and for the future. They give direction for problem solving and for covenant well-being, for shalom, and to restore shalom.

God’s design for justice is for a relationally lived justice not merely a compliance to a metaphysical law code. Justice in this sense is not a “matter of principle, or a narrow modern forensic or legal concept” but rather a matter of right relationship. Ancient *tsedeka* was not just a right relationship between God and the individual person but also a social reality of right relationships of shalom among the people themselves.⁷

Christopher Marshall has done a thorough research of the notion of justice in the New Testament. Referring to the Old Testament, he notes that *mishpat* and *sedequah* are central words indicating the concept of justice—a justice that relates to all areas of life, a central concept that shaped covenant life in Israel.⁸ Regarding the use of justice words in the New Testament, Marshall notes that the many root words with *dik* all have deeper meanings than is carried in the English translations of righteousness or right, “in Biblical usage ‘justice’ goes beyond the legal sphere to evoke the idea of comprehensive well-being, wholeness, and peace.”⁹ The challenge (for translators) has been, and continues to be, in doing exegesis to inform attitudes and action in the area of justice. “[I]nterpreters have unwittingly brought to the text an essentially Western concept of retributive justice based on metaphysical law rather than a Hebraic concept of covenant justice based on relationship.”¹⁰ The word *shalom* is central to what restorative justice is all about. Neil Plantinga has said it so well: “that shalom is God’s design for creation and re-creation and that sin is a blamable vandalism of shalom.”¹¹

⁶Herman Bianchi, *A Biblical Vision of Justice*, MCC Occasional Paper (Kitchener, Ont.: MCC, 1984), 1-9.

⁷Herman Bianchi, *Gerechtigheid als Vrijplaats* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1985), 13.

⁸Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 46-47.

⁹Ibid., 36.

¹⁰Ibid., 43.

¹¹Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 197.

In his essay, "Concept of Justice," Henry Stob writes: "It should be said therefore, that not equality and inequality, but personality or personhood is the basic principle of Justice." As image-bearers of God, we must understand justice Christianly and demand that every human being be treated equally according to who he is: a creature in God's image with an important task (vocation) to do. Justice must be impartial, and justice must be equitable. "The principle of equity gave the death-blow to the ancient unequalitarian theory that goods and offices are to be distributed in proportion to the amount of reason, intelligence, or wealth that men possess, and also to the modern naturalistic unequalitarian theory that goods and offices are to be distributed in accordance with differences in color, race, sex or natural origin." These differences have no root in the personhood or vocation of humans. It must be emphasized that humans are also individual persons, and therefore justice must be qualified in an equitable way. People may not be treated identically in the same way as simple abstract arithmetic equality. Differences in life situation and needs must be taken into consideration. Equity-justice, God's justice, is not an abstract transaction in isolation; it is rather, sensitive to the dynamics of community life.¹²

The Greek blindfolded goddess of justice, *Justicia*, with the scales in her left hand and the sword in the right hand does not involve the dynamic human (covenantal) dimension of justice. Impartiality is treated as a pure justice; a science arithmetically dispensed. "Blindfolded, she pursues no special interest, the scales help her treat each and every person equally; with sword she warns against disputing her judgments."¹³ It must be noted that the Romans reserved capital punishment for slaves and that the form of justice that was adopted by the West was the punitive system applied to slaves and non-Roman citizens.¹⁴ Mercy and justice, however, must embrace for justice to be justice and to create shalom. Agape transforms justice. Equality does not annul individuality any more than individuality annuls equality. "Only equity (fairness as to investment and circumstances) can keep the scales of justice balanced against the weight of absolutist collectivism on the one hand, and relativistic individualism on the other."¹⁵ If *Justicia* is just, then Yahweh is patently unjust, states Volf.¹⁶ According to Volf, God is impartially partial, for, as people, our identities are shaped in interaction with others, not in aloof libertarian independence.¹⁷ Justice, then, should move away from detached judgments and toward relationship enhancing and empowering decisions: "true justice will always be on the way to embrace."¹⁸ As an example, Volf uses the situation in Acts 6:1-6,

¹²Henry Stob, "The Concept of Justice," in *Ethical Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 123-33; see also Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 225.

¹³ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 220-21.

¹⁴Bianchi, *Gerechtigheid*, 20-23; Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 220.

¹⁵ Stob, "The Concept of Justice," 133.

¹⁶ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 221.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 222 n.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 225.

in the post-Pentecost situation with the Greek widows. What prevailed was practical wisdom, not abstract calculation.¹⁹

Restorative justice is fully grounded in theological convictions: the God-given worth of each and every person as an image bearer of God; no one is disposable; God and God's people hear the cry of the suffering; and the vision that human conflict and harm can be most effectively addressed by attending to the healing of all those persons affected.²⁰

Miroslaf Volf's central thesis in his book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, is that God's reception of hostile humanity into divine community is a model for how human beings should relate to each other. His book is about restorative justice in the context of the aftermath of the religious ethnic wars in Yugoslavia. In his explication of the Lukan parable of the lost son in Luke 15, Volf finds that the memory of sonship makes repentance possible for the younger son.²¹ Likewise, in our society, the offender needs a responsive affirming context, born of human solidarity in order for reconciliation or social responsibility to be possible. The community is to be a community of moral commitment and mutual worth, not of mere functional utility. The community is to be a collective relational entity, as was the covenantally structured society of the Old Testament.

The memory of sonship, of truly belonging, makes repentance and responsibility possible. The bigger part of the story (grace) is that the father had not excluded his son but had kept him in his heart. Christ, in breaking the dividing wall of hostility, speaks to the sin of holding clear-cut distinctions and rules of exclusion and inclusion—an obsession with abstract rules like that of the Pharisees.²² The perception of the older son, however, is that the father acts unjustly. From this we can learn that social life is not merely contractual or reciprocal, “you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours,” but rather a covenant of moral commitment. God's justice is grace and agape in creating shalom; it is where justice and mercy embrace. Volf indicates that this is indicated by a society in which we make space for the other.²³ How indeed can we hold an offender accountable if we exclude the offender from our accountability to him or her? The memory of the Father's community, of social solidarity, and of the possibility of going back gives hope and gives the offender opportunity to be accountable as well.

B. The central significance of restorative justice and crime, forgiveness, and grace

It is sometimes said that restorative justice is soft on crime, is soft justice. Some politicians get votes by promising the electorate that they will get back to law-and-order approaches and will punish crime. This seems to be delusional equivocation done in the final analysis to win votes. Restorative justice gets to the root of a solution to the harm done by an offense. Both victim and offender, and all the community involved in the ripple effect of a crime, are

¹⁹Ibid., 230.

²⁰Restorative Justice Week 2000, *Is There a Better Way?* (Ottawa: Correctional Services Canada, 2000).

²¹Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 158.

²²Ibid., 221.

²³Ibid., 149, 154.

open for healing and positive movement to the future. The offender must look at his or her own behavior and the issues that were/are involved in offending. Restorative justice does not merely lay blame but empowers the guilty parties to become aware of their own behavioral responsibility. Punishment, says Marshall, lies in the pain of taking responsibility;²⁴ it lies in the “law of inherent consequences,”²⁵ One reaps what one sows. To go back to one’s community and to the victims of one’s crime is a hard thing to do compared to avoiding contact. In fact, the adversarial retributive system does not encourage face-to-face exchange between victim and offender. It has been the emphasis of restorative justice to make sure that the needs and hurts of the victim are addressed—that all the focus is not merely on the offender and the punishment in terms of abstract judicial calculation for time to be served.

Restorative justice emphasizes the need for the victim and the relatives of the victim to be centrally involved in the process. State controlled retributive justice has the state (the Queen in Canada) as the primary legal victim, and the real victims and their needs are usually not relevant (circumstantial evidence only) to the case. The emphasis is on proof, not truth. Recently, with the push for victims rights, there has been a renewed awareness of the marginalization of the real victims, but, as an extension of a retributive system, the emphasis can often still be quite adversarial, marginal, and not fully conducive to reconciliation or healing, let alone to fostering forgiveness. In the dominant justice system, Bianchi refers to a “short circuit,” in that the law has become an end in itself and relational peace is not an objective. He puts it this way: “In the Greek-Roman legacy the idea of justice involved the principle that the *right* rules are to be applied in the *right* way. The outcome is less important than the *right* application of the *right* rules at the right time. It is an idea we have adopted in our Western culture, still found in the principle of the ‘rule of law.’ The outcome is less important.”²⁶

Volf asks: Is there “a higher law of the victim”?²⁷ Are victims without sin? There is a historical tendency for victims to become victimizers. In today’s adversarial and retributive justice system, the opportunity for healing and forgiveness are merely, if at all, options or alternatives. Also, healing really must start when the offense occurs and not when the litigation is finally over—sometimes years later. The dominant system sentences offenders to time with the emphasis on a calculated length of time appropriate to the offense. Sentences are not based on what is needed for healing or growing. To return pain for pain is a bittersweet vicious cycle that traps everyone in the hurt of the pain of the past. Volf stresses that both victims and offenders need to practice repentance, each for his or her own distinct temptations and behavioral tendencies. To talk about the need for the victims’ repentance is to talk about their inherent sinfulness, *not* in the sense of taking the blame for what happened but rather in repentance for pride and a persistent hateful tendency to

²⁴Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 132-34.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 123, 127.

²⁶Herman Bianchi, “Returning Conflict to the Community,” in *Tsedeka Justice*, vol. 1 (Toronto: The Tsedeka Justice Foundation, 1988), 5, 6.

²⁷Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 101.

want revenge. Repentance has to do with the “creation of the kind of social agents that are shaped by the values of God’s kingdom and therefore [are] capable of participating in the project of authentic social transformation.” The idea is that the transformation of people rather than the proper ascription of blame is at the heart of repentance and mirrors the fact that Jesus’ proclamation of repentance was motivated not so much by fear of the coming final judgment as by joy over the nearness of God’s reign (Matt. 13:44).²⁸ Justice moves toward shalom, not damnation; toward inclusion, not exclusion. In the history of redemption, God’s wrath and judgment were always meant to restore. God does not take delight in unjust judgment.

Forgiveness and grace are central to the gospel and are the basic foundation in restorative justice. Forgiveness, Marshall insists, is the *sine qua non* of eschatological existence in the messianic community.²⁹ Hanging on the cross where he was sent by an unjust judge, Jesus became his own example on his teaching of forgiveness. Volf asks an important question: If justice is done, why is forgiveness necessary? Even restorative justice cannot restore the past, it can only transform the person for a new future without the urge for vengeance.³⁰ When applied to cases involving the death of a person or huge personal losses of well-being, we can think of nothing that can rectify the original offense. Often quoted in the media is the heart-wrenching response of the relative of a victim: “my son/daughter is dead, why should this ‘killer’ walk about free.”

Forgiveness cannot restore the past and may not condone the past act either, but as Marshall states: “Forgiveness is a response to pain that does not merely *re-act* but *acts anew*.”³¹ For the Christian, forgiveness is rooted in God’s forgiveness and his grace bestowed on us.³² Forgiveness must go beyond mere restorative justice,³³ and forgiveness is not a substitute for justice. Forgiveness provides the framework in which the quest for properly understood justice can fruitfully be pursued.³⁴ Forgiveness is not a quick fix; it is not denial, nor may observers minimize the pain suffered. Forgiveness is a psychospiritual journey—it remembers, feels the hurt, laments, and speaks the truth. Cries of rage are sent to God as in the imprecatory Psalms. These Psalms, Volf reminds us, are not policy or a template for physical revenge.³⁵ Forgiveness is catharsis and truth-telling in the heart; but more than that, the terrible hurt and injustice is placed before God for the miracle of forgiveness. The process of forgiveness moves us away from the dark forces that lurk in the hearts of all of us.³⁶

²⁸Ibid., 118, 118 n, 119-21.

²⁹Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 74.

³⁰Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 222.

³¹Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 268.

³²Ibid., 192. (cf. the parable of workers in the vineyard and so forth.)

³³Ruth Morris, “Why Transformative Justice,” (paper presented at the Congress of the Canadian Criminal Justice Association, Ottawa, Canada, September, 1997).

³⁴Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 123.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 124; Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 255-84.

C. *Societal values and crime*

Scapegoating and labeling people in prison as all bad, and we, the victims, as all good and innocent, are denials of the presence of disorder in all of us and in society. If we operate with stark distinctions of light/darkness, good/evil, says Volf, we are in danger of demonizing and destroying whatever we happen not to like.³⁷ Scapegoating and a simplistic dividing of people into good and bad (“the bad ones are in jail, the good ones are not”) are denials of the sin that is a part of all of us (Rom. 3:23) and of the systemic disorder that nurtures dysfunction. Populist and common-sense attitudes today often view complex social-psychological issues through distorted and biased perspectives of polar opposites, and they act on these by crying for justice when in reality they mean vengeance. Bianchi suggests that the emotional pleasure from retaliation derived by our society today is the greatest hindrance to developing alternatives to the retributive system of crime control.³⁸

The secular mind of modern liberalism, inspired by the Enlightenment, has served to shape the churchgoer’s view of social life with attitudes (a cluster of behavior tendencies) of individualism, of seeing life from a business point of view (social Darwinism) and not through the lens of the concept of *torah* and covenant. That which informs Christian perspectives also are the core beliefs of an unredeemed and dysfunctional aspect of the abstract Roman legal system as developed further by the Inquisition. The individualists, the populists, the libertarians, all of us who merely “privatize” crime as personal moral failure, need to be brought to the social awareness that the Bible describes us not as mere individuals but as persons-in-community. Wolterstorff and Stob, emphasize with Calvin that justice must produce shalom and that the command to love one another is rooted in our common solidarity as God’s image bearers—that we are all “united in a sacred bond of fellowship.”³⁹

Corporate communal solidarity with the offender also indicates that we have an aspect of complicity with the toxic social systems that have nourished deviant behavior. We, who stand to benefit from the structures of society, must also take responsibility for the negative aspects of these structures as they inflict poverty and injustice. Just think of the “collateral damage” of the competitive global economy and the blight of poverty and racism in a country that has one of the world’s highest standards of living. With the popular belief that “winning is everything” prevalent in our society, is it any wonder there is so much fraud and violence? It is well known that competition skills in themselves are not indicators of psychological health; the ability to collaborate and problem solve are.

The prison population in the United States and Canada is made up of a highly disproportionate representation of marginalized aboriginal or ethnic groups and the poor. The prisons also contain a high number of untreated, unsupported, mentally challenged individuals. In Canada, native men account for 12 percent of the prison population and native women 17 percent,

³⁷Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 55.

³⁸Bianchi, “Returning Conflict to the Community, 1-23, esp. 4.

³⁹Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 78-79, 92, 131. See also Gordon Spykman, *Human Rights: A Biblical Study* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1990).

while native people make up only 3 ½-4 percent of the general Canadian population.⁴⁰ Elizabeth Comack notes the increasing poverty and injustice that is faced, especially by native women. She writes, “the structure of inequality in Canadian society extends to not only class and gender, but race as well.”⁴¹ Rick Linden writes that the issue of high crime rates among natives, “are a result of the despair, dependency, anger, frustration and the sense of injustice prevalent in Aboriginal communities, stemming from the cultural and community breakdown that has occurred over the past century.”⁴² This entire matter of complicity and disproportionate representation requires our attention as a Christian community.

All of us, victims as well as offenders, must confess and repent of social complicity. As a society, we must repent from devotion (idolatry of consumerism) to money, hatred of enemies, and envy and jealousy. All are sins for both victim and offender, but our global economy and consumer society dehumanizes and objectifies people into “consumers” (buyer beware of predatorial, aggressive marketing). This and the histories of oppression have created what might be called “collateral damage” in marginalized peoples—“the weak victims of the social jungle.” Forty million children in twenty-three of the wealthiest countries of the world live in poverty; one million live in poverty in Canada.⁴³ Jonathan Burnside and Michael Schluter state, “whilst crime is always the product of individual moral choices, the way in which we organize our society and particularly the quality of our relationships can make criminal choices more likely. . . . If we are serious about tackling crime we must first identify the kind of society we want to live in and then consider whether we are prepared to sacrifice what it takes to attain it.”⁴⁴ For the Christian, it is clear that our society must be shaped by the values of Christ’s rule, by the values of relational covenant life. Rowan Williams states that the church has an increasing responsibility to keep alive the question of justice, “of what commitments a society is actually making in its treatment of persons.”⁴⁵

D. Justice, crime, and our Christian responsibility

Shalom is God’s design for human life, not mere perfection or profit or goal-achievement or law-keeping. Shalom is experiencing wellness in all relationships—with God, with self, with others, and with nature. Shalom is our mandate. Wolterstorff, states that we are not called to stand around and wait for shalom to arrive, we are workers in his cause of peace, it is our *missio Dei*.⁴⁶ Marshall quotes Perry Yoder, “we should understand justification, not as

⁴⁰Cayley, *Ideas: Prison and Its Alternatives*, 80.

⁴¹E. Comack, “Women and Crime,” in *Criminology: A Canadian Perspective*, ed. Rick Linden (Toronto: Harcourt, 1992), 157.

⁴²Rick Linden, “Social Control Theory,” in *Criminology*, 335.

⁴³Susan McClelland, “Child Poverty,” *MacLean’s*, 17 September 2001, 20. See also Jean Swanson, *Poor Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001).

⁴⁴Jonathan Burnside and Michael Schluter, “Relational Justice: A Reform Dynamic for the Criminal Justice System,” *New Life*, no. 11 (1994): 17-30. Also Rowan Williams, “Ministry in Prison: Theological Reflections,” *New Life*, no. 11 (1994): 43-55.

⁴⁵Rowan Williams, “Ministry in Prison,” 54.

⁴⁶Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 72.

punishing justice, but as shalom justice—justification is liberation from sin in order that things may be right. Justification by faith is a manifestation of restorative justice.”⁴⁷ Volf admits that in an imperfect world there may be times when we need to rely on an imperfect justice of abstract law and the “sword” to protect the weak from the domineering and exploiting strong. “It must be used in defense of the oppressed, it must always be “situated” in the context of love. Anything short of love cannot be perfect justice.”⁴⁸ Without the will to embrace, justice is likely to be unjust.⁴⁹

We live in a society with the results of past injustices that have led to situations that should just not exist, but today’s realities are a part of our communal social-cultural heritage. Ignored land rights and centuries of socioeconomic disenfranchisement, for instance, are vitally important issues for problem solving toward shalom. Transitional strategies may need to stretch our ethical sensitivities, for example, in discussions on native land rights and treaties, on drug addiction and harm-reduction strategies, and on welfare and unemployment. It may not always be possible to do what we think is right, but we attempt what is best with the vision of biblical shalom in mind. Wolterstorff maintains that God has established a covenantal reputation of siding with the disenfranchised, the powerless, and the poor.⁵⁰ Jim Consedine notes that justice is part of the very essence of God and quotes theologian Kevin O’Reilly, “the justice of God is not the quality whereby God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. God is just when he intervenes in the lives of the underprivileged, especially the orphans and widows, to save them from the injustices of men (Duet.10:18).”⁵¹

It is an easy reaction to distance ourselves from those of other faiths—we label them “unchurched,” “unbelievers,” “lost,” or worse. We distinguish of lower value the life and well-being of those designated the “undeserving poor,” or we diminish the worth of addicts and prostitutes. We easily label those of “diminished worth” as our enemies with dehumanizing labels such as “trash,” “vermin,” or worse. Our creational and covenantal solidarity will not allow us to do that. Nor may we consumerize offenders or victims, (dehumanize) as mere abstract legal entities for services. Nor may we dehumanize them with objectifying and stigmatizing labels. Then it would be easy to just “sweep the whole issue under the carpet.” Rather, we are called to remain in relational integrity even with our enemies.

Truth sustains community, and deception destroys community (Eph. 4:15, 16). Without the will to make space for the other person, to embrace the other person, there can be no truth between people; without truth there can be

⁴⁷Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 59, quoting Perry Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible’s Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1987), 65.

⁴⁸Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 223, quoting Reinhold Niebuhr, “Christian Faith and Natural Law” in *Love and Justice: Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1967), 50.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 224.

⁵⁰Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 75.

⁵¹Jim Consedine, “Transforming Criminal Justice: A Holistic Way into the New Millennium” (Unpublished paper used by permission from Wayne Northey), quoting Keven O’Reilly, theologian.

no peace, says Volf.⁵² Bianchi emphasizes that the West has absolutized “objective truth,” whereas the Bible speaks of *tsedeka* truth, relational truth.⁵³ As Volf puts it, we must see truth from here and from there—from the other’s point of view. Before you can search for the truth, you must be interested in finding it, he says.⁵⁴ Before we can search for the truth and accept it, before we can unmask deceptions and ideologies, the truth must be in us, “in you” (John 8:45; 2 Cor. 11:10).⁵⁵ Volf continues, “The will to community is to refuse to dehumanize the other with labels and material images, and to be willing to embrace them as friends. There is some irrational conflict when the will to truth and communion is absent. Sometimes it looks like there is no common ground, but there is, once there is a will to be in communion, even if it is just a better argument with a will to move towards embrace.”⁵⁶ To speak the truth in love, *en agape*, is both, word in deed; it is, “to truth.” Truth living is a truthful life (Eph. 4:14).⁵⁷

The truth is that in Christ there is no exclusion for he has made all things new. Laws of purification of the old covenant have been fulfilled in him. To appeal to these laws for support of punitive justice, which labels image-bearers as “unclean or unworthy,” is to annul the new covenant ethos. One text used as support for retributive justice is Deuteronomy 13:5, “so you shall purge the evil from your midst.” This of course was “finished” in Christ, and, as followers of Christ, the church is called to exemplify the social implications in the present: the already in the not yet; the anticipatory, proleptic, nature of the kingdom referred to in Reformed theology. The purification laws must be read as the genre. They are customary ritual, social, and dietary laws, common in the ancient Bronze Age culture.⁵⁸ Common was the concept of “cutting a covenant.” Similarly, sacrificial animals were certainly not put on the altar for mere punishment but as a cleansing that went beyond that specific act. These common practices were used and transformed by God in the historical work of redemption. These laws were never meant to be punitive and cruel or unjust. Instead, they were ultimately to bring shalom in Christ. Marshall reminds us that God ultimately demonstrates his covenant fidelity by purging the land, “and thus protecting his people . . . and preserving and establishing shalom.” Again he restates, “God is not keeping some metaphysical order of justice finely tuned; he is preserving the covenant.”⁵⁹

Punishment as prescribed by a system of abstract law cannot create healing and shalom between the people involved because neither their needs nor their persons were central in the transaction. Punishment cannot atone for sin

⁵²Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 258.

⁵³Bianchi, *Gerechtigheid als Vrijplaats*, 29.

⁵⁴Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 250, 251, 254.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 256.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 257, 258.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 256. See also Stob, “Principle and Practice,” in *Ethical Reflections*, 31-49.

⁵⁸P. Wayne Townsend, “Eve’s Answer to the Serpent: An Alternative Paradigm for Sin and Some Implications in Theology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 33, no. 2 (1998): 405, 416.

⁵⁹Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 62, 63.

committed. Louk Hulsman, a retired senior official of the Dutch criminal justice system says satirically that in the modern criminal justice system the judges are “playing the old scholastic game of the Last Judgment and creating social order by punishment and reward.”⁶⁰ According to Hulsman, crime is seen from that medieval point of view, as a transgression of the moral order “rather than [as] a breach in the community. This law then exemplifies and embodies this order, rather than serving the citizens as a tool with which to settle their differences. Prison time provides a scale by which the degree of transgression can be precisely measured.”⁶¹ Hulsman says that civil law is a better model wherein the parties are vitally involved and are helped as they come to a “common definition” of what happened and presumably to solutions of how to make things right.⁶² Restorative justice sees justice done in the lives of people involved in the hurt, not in the proceedings of the courtroom. Mediation and peacemaking is restorative. Strict law enforcing takes us to another place, not usually to shalom.

E. What restorative justice does

Crime is still often cast as a private violation of the moral order: “you do the crime (sin), you do the time.” We have seen that the atonement theory cannot be used as a model for criminal justice to satisfy created social obligations nor to heal the hurts. Justice as an end, to satisfy an abstract body of laws, is not biblical justice. Punishment as hurt is certainly present in the “inherent consequences” of the offense for the offender. Pain and discomfort are also felt in the work of making restitution and of making personal behavioral changes in the process of repentance. Pain, in and of itself, is of little social value in the present system of doing time. Howard Zehr notes that the stigmatizing pain of the current justice system does little to restore the individual—it usually makes things worse. However, when parties involved in a criminal situation are faced directly with the effects of what they have done and take responsibility for the harm done and make things right, the result will be a healthy social pain of “reintegrative shame.” This is a restorative process, unlike the blaming and infliction of pain measured by abstract laws.⁶³ It will take a sense of reciprocal covenantal solidarity to make this effective, such as the younger son’s remembering his bond to the community of the father.

Restorative justice is community justice, and the community as a whole is involved in the hurt as well as in the solution to the hurt. It is forgiveness and love that heal hurts and create the possibility of justice and shalom. To lay the responsibility on the individual offender is to ignore the effects of the structural and formative deficits—of the trauma, abuse, and violence experienced by the vulnerable and those at risk. Victims, too, have little communal or systemic support in dealing with the hurt done to them and their families. Narrow moralism belittles the effects of sin under which we all labor; such as systemic and structural disorders; disorders in organic life; and bio-physical

⁶⁰Louk Hulsman, interview by David Cayley, in *Ideas: Prison and Its Alternatives*, radio talk show transcript (Toronto: CBC Radio, 1996), 42.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*, 68, 69.

conditions such as bipolarity, schizophrenia, borderline personality, fetal alcohol syndrome, and so forth. These conditions are over-representative in the lives of those in the prison system. It is true to say that the root of the individual's problem is sin and a conversion is needed, but a broader emphasis is required to be of help in creating shalom. Shalom is wholistic and empowering. The offender was often offended against in developmental years. He did not make in isolation the "bed he/she was made to lie in." Here we must sense that the powers of the age, the principalities and powers, are there for us to address and not to run away from or retreat from, as Wolterstorff outlines in his well known book, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. The powers, says Volf (relying on Walter Wink) are corporate-spiritual powers and are essentially good, but can be "hell bent on control."⁶⁴ The structures are transformed by agape, by the love of God in Christ as ministered by the church through its witness to the world. Agape is bigger than even that most salutary thing called *Philadelphia*.⁶⁵ The structures should be valued as present expressions of the benevolence of God.⁶⁶

This calls for all congregations to be involved in prayer; in wholistic lifestyles (all of life is lived religion); in direct work for creating shalom in their lives to embody shalom within themselves, in their families, in their communities, in their countries, and in creation. The mandate is to challenge the current social attitudes of individualism and narrow pietism today. The modern ideology of corporate (business) growth must also be given the grace and balance of what Gerald Vandezande calls, as an alternative, a moral economy or "an economy of care."⁶⁷ Guenther Haas insists that "the pursuit of goodness must always further the good of the common life of the community."⁶⁸ Haas, from a neo-Calvinist perspective of creational norms and the cultural mandate, espouses what is called "kingdom theology" (a combination of eschatology or protology, creation theology, and hermeneutics). Wolterstorff insists that this perspective must also incorporate liberation perspectives for oppressed and powerless people.⁶⁹ Says Haas, "Christians do not exhibit love to their non-Christian neighbors if they do not attempt to shape social institutions and structures in a more biblical pattern."⁷⁰ Schuurman also makes this important point: "Creation and eschaton alike call for a social stance that rejects cynicism, on the one hand, and triumphalism, on the other, by provoking persistent and patient work to transform the world so that it more closely approximates God's shalom, confident that ultimately the grace and power of God will prevail over the forces of sin, evil, and death."⁷¹

⁶⁴Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 78.

⁶⁵Stob, "The Concept of Love: Eros and Agape," in *Ethical Reflections*, 120.

⁶⁶Douglas Schuurman, "Creation, Eschaton, and Social Ethics: A Response to Volf," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (1995): 157.

⁶⁷Gerald Vandezande, *Justice, Not Just Us* (Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre, 1999), 32, 33.

⁶⁸Guenther Haas, "Kuyper's Legacy for Christian Ethics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 33, no. 2 (1998): 332.

⁶⁹Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 72.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 338.

⁷¹Schuurman, "Creation, Eschaton, and Social Ethics," 154. See also Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 21-22.

IV. Why the church should be involved in the discussion and facilitation of restorative justice

The church is called to be both light and salt in the world, to be involved in society in a prophetic and transforming sense. The church is not called to escape reality but is called to be involved in all of life. It is not to hide its light under a bushel or safeguard its talents in pious seclusion but to get “its hands dirty” and take risks as it incarnates itself in the context of the culture in which it is placed. This follows the paradigm of the incarnational presence of the Word of God in a dialectical relationship with the spirit of the times and its accompanying idolatries as well as in the fight with the principalities and powers. Each generation must be made aware of its unique incarnational task as salt and light, discerning the spirit of the times and addressing these with responses rooted in the healing rule of Christ, a rule that reconciles, transforms, and affirms all relationships.

Christ’s rule is not a rule by abstract policy and truth but by the Spirit and living Word, which incarnates itself in relational and historical shalom. Herman Ridderbos, in commenting on the Matthew account of salt, states that the church is not called to be a radical revolutionary, nor merely a loyal supporter of the status quo, but it is called to be a transforming agent—mysteriously active, permeating all—as salt and yeast act in unseen and mysterious ways in food. Just as the person and work of Jesus Christ challenged the central values of Imperial Rome and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem with the gospel’s call to extend covenant love and justice to all, so the church today is called to challenge the central values of today’s impersonal, power-and-progress-seeking global economic institutions, and to measure up to Christ’s call to shalom—a shalom especially for the most vulnerable, marginalized, and outcast of today’s society.

Many of these “disenfranchised” are over-represented in our prisons, even in our Canadian and United States cultures, in which such a small percentage of the world’s population “enjoys” the consumption of a disproportionately large measure of resources at an unsustainable rate. The United States leads the incarceration rate of the Western world, and Canada is second to it.⁷² The focus on profit and gain at all costs obviously has serious negative effects on the quality of human life.

Restorative justice is an alternative form of justice to the dominant retributive form. The church is called to be aware of the spirit of the times that incarcerates and calls for harsher than actually warranted punishments for crime from the public and their representative politicians. The church must ask its specialty institutions to conform to values that would create shalom in society, not more division, poverty, anger, and revenge. Restorative justice has many forms of applications that would offer just and healing alternatives to a cold and calculating punishment-oriented system. As such, the church could be prophetic and act as the conscience of society and give wise direction as a value-forming agent in the community.

Our Reformed heritage is well qualified to give expression to what we call “kingdom” theology, namely a religion for all of life. Sadly, however, the

⁷²The United States incarcerates 649 per one hundred thousand of its population; Canada 129; Norway only 53. From Restorative Justice Council of BC Statistics of 2001. Cf note 5.

dominant retributive criminal justice system has not been the focus of the church for transformation or reformation from a unique Reformed Christian perspective. It is important for all the members of the church to be critically aware of the history and development of the modern justice system and of the issues around modern prisons so they can pray, speak, and act intelligently from an informed and broad Reformed Christian perspective on criminal justice issues.

The terms *church as institute* and *church as organism* have been used in Reformed theology to refer to the organizational and the communal aspects of the church. *Sphere sovereignty* (another term used) refers to various specialty spheres in society, each having its own autonomous responsibility and authority sufficient for its own mandate. There have been some differences of opinion over whether the church as institute should get involved with the responsibilities of the church as organism, thus leaving the spheres isolated from the prophetic and sacramental life of the church as institute. It must be said that the two aspects are not mutually exclusive (nor are the spheres) but that both are to be in constant dialogue and interaction. Wolterstorff's observation is pertinent that a hands-off approach by the church as institute to the state, from a neo-Calvinist perspective was taken advantage of and contributed to the church's endorsement of apartheid in South Africa; "the Cultural mandate gone to seed."⁷³

Like the prophet Jeremiah, the church is often called upon to give voice to an opinion that does not want to be heard, yet must be said. Studies that have looked into the social atmosphere of the Weimar Republic before the explicit existence of Nazism found that there was at that time an increased desire for more and more punishment of offenders and for more law and order by an increasingly disempowered middle and merchant class looking for scapegoats. Parallel trends are happening today.⁷⁴ Nils Christie, the well-known Norwegian criminologist, in his book, *Crime Control as Industry: Towards Gulags Western Style* (1993), observed that the willingness to punish is increased with social distance. He also sees prisons as centers from which totalitarian thinking can spread as a cancerous growth that people get used to as "total control becomes a habit and begins to produce the conditions for its own expansion."⁷⁵ To speak up for social shalom is a covenantal duty of the church.

There must be balance and accountability among the various sectors of human and cultural life to bring about shalom rather than merely efficient corporate and material progress at the expense of the quality of human life, especially of many image-bearers at the periphery of society. Prisons are filled disproportionately by first nations (in Canada) and poor people; individual street crime is made the focus of war on crime. Those who wield power in society have resources that enable them to avoid accountability for (white collar) corporate and institutional crime. Like ancient Roman society, there is an obvious two or three tiered justice system. Justice ultimately must produce shalom especially for the poor and needy, and the church as institute must

⁷³Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 58.

⁷⁴Cayley, *Ideas: Prison and Its Alternatives*, 10.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 1-2.

again act as salt and light to the various spheres of a social system, to the justice system, and must speak up for all God's image-bearers. A hands-off approach that leaves penal and social reform merely up to individual initiatives and responsibility or to parachurch groups is abdicating the responsibility of being a guide and supporter of those who are the "arms and legs" of the Word. The church can also become narrow and irrelevant to critical life issues. We need to be constantly reminded that the modern Christian's social-economic values can often be more informed and shaped by the platform of the political party endorsed than by the values of the gospel.

The church as institute is responsible for nurturing the ethos of the church so that it can experience and reflect abundant life in all areas of life and be a health-giving presence and sign of the kingdom as it advocates and works out of the values of shalom in individual and collective activities during the week. All of life is lived religion, and true religion must be tasted especially by the weak, the poor, and those in prison. How can a denomination develop an ethos where justice and mercy embrace? That is an issue that the synodical and the local classes must focus on: how to help the congregations be aware of the issues inherent in the modern criminal justice system and how restorative justice serves as a valuable alternative model to inform, guide, and support the church as organism as it finds ways to express kingdom values and services in the community. Perhaps a courageous example is that of the Anglican Church, which sent a pastoral letter to be read to each congregation about the "wrong headed" referendum on aboriginal treaty negotiations.⁷⁶

Within the Christian Reformed Church denomination there have already been some initiatives to express the need for awareness raising in the congregations on restorative justice. This was done in April 2001 when the Coordinating Council for Church in Society (CCCiS) made the recommendation to study restorative justice from a biblical point of view and to support a three-year educational awareness-raising effort for the denomination. The intention was to study restorative justice from a Reformed redemptive-historical point of view because restorative justice has already been studied from many theological perspectives for the past twenty or thirty years. Much has been done within the field of restorative justice, but the denomination needs delegated individuals and approved resources and services with which to interact and collaborate ecumenically and in interfaith projects.

For almost a decade now, the third week of November has been set aside by restorative justice organizations for awareness-raising activities in faith communities and churches. It is endorsed by Corrections Services Canada, which also provides free resources for Restorative Justice Week. The International Prison Chaplains' Association (IPCA), a founding supporter of Restorative Justice Week, provides support and credibility to prison chaplains worldwide, as prison chaplains are often marginalized along with those they serve in prison. IPCA reminds the churches and governments of the minimum standards for human rights and for prison conditions set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human rights. In its communication documents of its international convention of 2000, IPCA reminds the churches

⁷⁶Douglas Todd, "Bishops Call on Anglicans to Vote No or Reject Ballots," *The Vancouver Sun*, 5 April 2002, sec. A, 1, 10.

“to remain a prophetic voice for the rights and dignity of prisoners who have no voice of their own. . . . It urges churches to remember that it is the hope of salvation that is our ‘helmet’ (1 Thess. 5:8) and not a spirit of vindictiveness. Churches are therefore urged to do all they can to lessen discrimination towards people sent to prison so that the self-esteem of prisoners may be restored.” IPCA recognizes that victims of crime are often overlooked, that there are few resources and services to help them with their pain and anger, and that churches help create opportunities for healing and reconciliation. IPCA urges prisoners to be involved with reconciliation services to work for healing and personal responsibility.⁷⁷

In many communities, there are already victim-offender services and other restorative justice organizations and resources with which the church can work to express its mission of reconciliation. In British Columbia, we have the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) and men-to-men and women-to-women (M2W2). Nationally, there is also the Church Council for Justice and Corrections, as well as Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and our denomination’s new Justice Coordinator in Canada, Sandra Elgersma. Along with these and many other resources, the church as organism can work as salt and light. However, it will remain the church as institute’s responsibility to nurture and facilitate congregational efforts so that the mission of the church is done in the spirit of its calling and in a wholistic way by balancing the hermeneutic circle of word and deed.

V. Practical matters and benefits of the restorative justice approach

Restorative justice can be described as an umbrella perspective, a philosophy or theology for all areas of life: a noncombative perspective on problem solving or conflict resolution (ADR or alternative dispute resolution). It represents a whole range of applications, from maintaining interpersonal relationships to healing broken community relationships due to crime. As we struggle with life in today’s adversarial and competitive consumer society, we need alternative attitudes and behaviors in addressing conflicts of many kinds.

Specifically, we can apply restorative justice perspectives to community brokenness resulting from crime’s harm and decide how to best repair this brokenness. Restorative justice works from the maxim: It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. Restorative justice focuses on future goals and needs, on what needs to be done. The focus is on problem solving and on exercising and facilitating responsibility. It avoids being stuck in the past of the offense by merely laying blame and wanting to punish. Restorative justice elicits community wisdom and involvement in problem solving and is thus eminently practical on the school playground and in business, as well as in the criminal justice system.

The majority of people in jail are there because of what we call street crime. News media will write large reports on corporate fraud or on industrial disasters such as the 1992 Westray Mine explosion in Canada, but few individuals ever go to jail for corporate fraud, political graft, industrial violence, or for implicitly supporting conditions that enhance poverty or racial exploitation (see *The Vancouver Sun*, May 2, 2002, “Poverty Is a Killer”). However, harm

⁷⁷International Prison Chaplain’s Association, *IPCA Declaration 2000*, (Ottawa: IPCA, 2000), 1-4. The IPCA address is: 340 Laurier Street, Ottawa, Canada.

done by many forms of violence, exploitation, and injustice, hurts us all, and the fear of injustice and crime makes victims of us all. We may all experience secondary traumatization and victimization by the injustice, violence, and harm observed around us in our lives. It is important to realize that private perception on public crime is not always consistent with the facts. It is significant as well not to over-focus on the powerless and helpless victims-turned-offenders, or on the single personal incident, and use these offenders as scapegoats to assuage our fear and to address our anger. Our response to crime must be objectively and intelligently based on all the facts of the “big picture.” Practical community involvement in justice is not vigilante justice, not a “knee jerk” response to personal pain or the application of a privatized morality.

Thus, education and awareness raising are very practical. Education about alternative responses to the harm done in crime will offer opportunities to tell stories of personal pain as well as affording possible alternatives to be followed in creating a solution to the harm done, thus empowering the individuals and the community.

Networking with support agencies such as Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), KAIROS, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, and so forth will be important because practical public action should be directed by sound and balanced theological reflection. Important issues such as perspectives on aboriginal issues (First Nations people are over-represented in prison), on poverty, on welfare, on homophobia, on mental health, on drug abuse, and on harm reduction, to name just a few are issues that need to be wrestled with. These are often contributing factors as well as practical life issues in the lives of those affected by the criminal justice system.

Important also are the skills building of individuals and the pooling of resources and local professionals to help network and facilitate community resources for local solutions of identified needs.

Practically speaking, being proactive is most helpful in community problem solving; thus creating resources and helping those at risk: single parents, young offenders, children living in poverty, those living with poor family life skills, and so forth.

Supporting and being involved in local M2W2 programs that support individuals while in prison and after they get out as well as supporting and being involved with the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP), mediation programs, and community corrections programs in localities where they are being endorsed and utilized, are other practical matters (some by community organizations, some by RCMP, some by victim services, or some by probation officers—especially for youth diversion programs, mental health, social workers, and so forth.).

The families of victims or offenders need practical special and trusting support and services that heal and restore as well as support them as they are often suddenly without a breadwinner or partner or parent.

Communities could develop restitution and community service projects for those who wish to participate. Communities can help in ensuring that individuals with behavioral and work-skill deficits can have opportunities to learn effective skills.

Involvement in support for individuals returning to society from prison includes serious offenders, such as sex offenders, and needs special supportive communities that can also help the returnee with a covenant for accountability.

There is also the need for housing, employment, meaningful living opportunities, and emotional and spiritual support. A caring and supportive community is very much needed.

There are needs for volunteers to help in recovery homes, transition homes, and in homeless shelters. More shelters and homes are necessary as public funds are withdrawn for these public services. Financial support is needed for existing support homes and recovery programs as these become more utilized, resulting in strained resources. (Food banks and shelters are band-aid solutions and address short-term needs only). Communities should be continually aware of new support needs for the marginalized—needs that are often met with resistance or neglect.

Advocacy is needed both federally in Ottawa and provincially in Victoria, as well at our local municipal levels, to strive for a supportive “response-able” environment, which in turn reflects community *shalom*. We must speak and act for the victim, the offender, the poor, and the needy in the context of doing restorative justice.

Classis B.C. North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

Overture 2: Instruct the Committee Appointed to Review the CRC’s Position on Women in Office to Honor Both Convictions Present in the Denomination

I. Background

A. A Review committee to be appointed

Synod 2003 will appoint a committee to review the regulations (Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a) that govern the use of women’s gifts in our denomination (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 698). This overture requests that synod include in the mandate of this committee an instruction to honor both convictions among us on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

B. Two convictions to be honored

After almost twenty-five years of discussion, our denomination said, “there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister and evangelist” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Unfortunately, Synod 1995 also adopted regulations that did not honor both convictions as evenhandedly as possible and that curtailed the use of women’s gifts more than necessary. Over the past eight years, synod has continued to deny our women members opportunities to use their gifts instead of taking the steps necessary to honor both convictions among us. It is past time for our denomination to honor our women members who wish to serve and the churches and classes that welcome their service.

C. A small beginning

Synod 2000, the last synod to review the 1995 regulations, made a small beginning in correcting the imbalance in the regulations when it amended the

regulation that prohibited our denominational agencies from using the financial contributions of God's people to support women ministers. Undoubtedly, that amendment was influenced by events at Synod 1998. An ethnic minority woman seminarian was declared a candidate for ministry. She believed that God was calling her to the military chaplaincy and had completed the basic training required by the military. All she needed to fulfill her calling was the endorsement of our denomination's Chaplaincy Ministries.

What a wonderful occasion for great rejoicing! A person entering the gospel ministry! The Lord blessing our denomination's desire to become a place where people of all races join hands and hearts in service! The first Christian Reformed woman to serve as a military chaplain, bringing the message of salvation in Christ Jesus to those who serve in our armed forces! Sadly, this occasion for great rejoicing was overshadowed by a debate on the regulation that prohibited our denominational agencies from financially supporting women ministers.

The candidate's calling church and the classis of which it was a member sent an overture to synod to plead her cause. Part of synod's advisory committee argued that Chaplaincy Ministries should not be permitted to endorse her because the 1995 regulation prohibited it. Part of the committee argued that Chaplaincy Ministries should be permitted to endorse her. During the debate, one of synod's advisors assured synod that the U.S. military, not our denomination, would pay her salary. In light of that assurance, synod permitted Chaplaincy Ministries to endorse her. Thanks to the United States of America, not to the Christian Reformed Church, she was able to fulfill her calling.

When Synod 2000 reviewed the 1995 regulations, it amended this one. No longer can one conviction determine how the contributions of all God's people are used. Instead, both convictions are honored. Now our denominational agencies are permitted to support women ministers serving in some fields and not permitted to support those serving in others (Regulation 6, *Church Order 2002*, p. 24).

The same imbalance that once characterized this regulation still characterizes some of the other regulations adopted in 1995. Those regulations do not honor both convictions among us, and they unnecessarily hinder our women members from using their gifts. Synod 2000 corrected the imbalance regarding the financial contributions of God's people. Synod 2005 must correct the imbalance that remains in other regulations.

D. Women in the offices of minister and evangelist

Note: In this section what is said about ministers is applicable to evangelists also.

Synod 1995 honored the convictions of all congregations regarding the office of elder. It rejected the suggestion that classes be permitted to prohibit member congregations from ordaining women elders and instead permitted all congregations to ordain women elders (Regulation 5, *Church Order 2002*, p. 23-4). Synod 1995 did not honor the convictions of all congregations regarding the office of minister. Instead, it adopted a regulation that permitted classes to prohibit member congregations from ordaining a woman minister (Regulation 4, *Church Order 2002*, p. 23). During our women-in-office debate, some expressed the fear that the day will come when our denomination will force congregations to deny their convictions when they ordain officebearers.

For the past eight years, synod has permitted precisely what many fear may happen in the future. It has given classes the authority to force a congregation to deny its convictions by prohibiting it from calling a woman minister. No classis ought to be able to force a congregation to call a woman minister when it wishes to call a male. By the same token, no classis ought to be able to force a congregation to call a male minister when it wishes to call a female.

When Synod 2000 reviewed this regulation, it made a slight change in an attempt to honor the convictions of congregations who wish to call a woman minister, a change that some classes had already made themselves. When a congregation wishes to call a woman minister, classes are now “*encouraged* (italics ours) to declare an exception to Church Order Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed” (*Church Order 2002*, p. 23). Realizing that some delegates will not attend a classis meeting if women are delegated, Synod 2000 also encouraged classes “to make an additional ruling that the female pastor may not be delegated to classis until classis extends an invitation” (p. 23). Though such *encouragement* is admirable, classes are still permitted to dishonor the convictions of member congregations by prohibiting them from calling a woman minister.

When questions arose about women voting at congregational meetings, Synod 1957 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. All congregations were free either to extend or to withhold the vote from women. When questions arose about women deacons, Synod 1984 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. All congregations were free either to ordain or not to ordain women deacons. When questions arose about women elders, Synod 1995 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. All congregations were free either to ordain or not to ordain women elders. In the calling of ministers, synod should not continue to give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. Rather, synod should follow its past models and declare that all congregations are free to ordain or not to ordain women ministers. As is true with women elders and in deference to the convictions of neighboring congregations, synod should allow classes themselves to decide if women ministers will be delegated to classis meetings.

E. How will the examination take place?

When these matters are discussed, synod is very quickly distracted from the question: “Should we honor the convictions of fellow Christians?” to the question of “How will this work in practice?” For example, at Synod 2000, a delegate wondered if in some classes there would be enough delegates who would participate in the examination of a woman candidate. It is always easier to focus on potential difficulties than to discuss potential solutions. It is always easier to build fences instead of bridges.

The reporter for the 2000 review committee responded to the question of how we might honor both convictions by saying, “One cannot spell out in detail how classes would work that out organizationally. It is possible, for example, that the entire classis might sit in on the examination and might even address questions to the person being examined and satisfy themselves as to whether the person is doctrinally knowledgeable and has the other appropri-

ate gifts of ministry and so on. When it actually comes to voting, the classis would agree to let the vote be decided by those in classis who feel free to participate in the voting. When we look at that kind of scenario, we do not see an insuperable obstacle. We trust the good will and the creativity that will be present at that particular level” (*Tape of Synod 2000*). Indeed, when synod determines that it will honor both convictions among us, people of good will will find ways to do that. If necessary, the review committee can describe some of those in its report to synod.

F. Women as synodical delegates

For the past eight years, synod has said that duly elected and ordained elders and ministers may not attend synod if they are female (Regulation 1, *Church Order 2002*, p. 23). It says this because some males, claiming that this is a matter of “conscience,” assert that they cannot participate in an assembly with women delegates. Synod 2000’s review committee warned the church about elevating this matter to the level of “conscience” (cf. *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 374-76), saying, “when the difference can be characterized as pertaining to neither an essential doctrine nor a moral standard but as belonging to the area of biblical wisdom principles, responding with a ‘conscientious objection’ may not be as appropriate as recognizing and conceding a ‘serious difference of judgment’ which needs to be resolved within the unity of Christ’s church. Then, in spite of sharp differences on the issue, we are freed up to recognize and celebrate our continuing unity in him who is our peace (Eph. 2:14-18)” (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 376).

Synod 2000 responded to this counsel only by revising words, not by revising practice. Synod replaced the word *consciences* with the word *conviction(s)* each time the word appeared in the regulations, but it did not revise this regulation. It continued to prohibit women from attending synod as if delegation was a matter of “conscientious objection.” There was no resolution of this matter “within the unity of Christ’s church.” There was no celebration of “our continuing unity in him who is our peace.” The division of male and female continued. The dividing wall of hostility was maintained.

Even if the church ignores the advice of the 2000 review committee and elevates this matter to the level of conscience, it is still inappropriate to exclude all female elders and ministers from synod because some male elders and ministers will not attend if women are delegated. One can understand why this might be troublesome on the classical level because our Church Order obligates each council to delegate an elder and a minister to classis. However, no Church Order article requires an individual elder or minister to attend synod. Some officebearers routinely decline nomination because they do not have the interest or gifts to serve well at synod. Others decline nomination for any number of personal reasons. Officebearers who assert that they cannot attend synod if women delegates are present should be informed that they are under no obligation to attend. Synod should not continue to operate as if males have preferred status.

G. Women as synodical deputies

When Synod 2000 reviewed the 1995 regulations, it urged “councils and classes to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695). It continued, “Such use of the Spirit’s gifts is an essential part of

honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church. Such use of the Spirit's gifts enriches the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship. Such use of the Spirit's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue" (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695).

Synod 2000 did not take its own words seriously. Its review committee recommended that synod amend the regulation on synodical deputies to read, "A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate" (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 697). Here was a way to make full use of the Spirit-given gifts of both males and females while honoring both convictions present in the denomination. The eighteen classes that permit the installation of women in all church offices would be able to elect a women synodical deputy, thereby using the gifts of women more fully and enabling these eighteen classes to request a female synodical deputy, especially for the examination of a female candidate. The twenty-nine classes that do not permit such installation would be assured that a male synodical deputy would be available to them. Instead of honoring both convictions, synod continued to allow one conviction to determine how the entire denomination will be governed. It continued to declare that all synodical deputies must be male (*Regulation 2, Church Order 2002*, p. 23).

H. Synodical voting on female seminarians

The 1995 decision to permit congregations to ordain women to all church offices meant that "being male" was no longer a qualification that persons had to meet in order to become ministers. Now women seminarians could be declared candidates. To honor both convictions on this matter, synod adopted a regulation (*Regulation 7, Church Order 2002*, p. 24) assuring Calvin Seminary trustees and synodical delegates that they would not be forced to participate in the candidacy process against their convictions. Synod said, "In the declaration of candidacy delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting."

This way of honoring both convictions was not acceptable to some delegates who did not want to *abstain* from voting but instead wanted to *vote against* female candidates. Thus, Synods 1996 and 1997 separated seminarians into two groups, a group of males and a group of females, so delegates could do that. At Synod 1997 seventeen delegates felt so strongly about this that they even recorded their negative votes (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 603).

In response to an overture objecting to the separation of seminarians by gender, Synod 1998 decided to vote on each candidate separately. No longer could anyone assert that synod was separating seminarians by gender because now every seminarian was separated from every other seminarian, but there was little doubt about why this new method was adopted.

This voting procedure is terribly wrong. When the Seminary faculty and board recommend seminarians to synod, they assure synod that all the seminarians have, or soon will have, fulfilled all the qualifications specified by our denomination for entrance to the gospel ministry. Delegates may abstain from this process if they disagree with the denomination's decision to delete "being male" as a qualification. If delegates wish to participate in the process, they may vote negatively if they choose and may even record their negative vote. However, it is inappropriate for synod to separate qualified seminarians

so delegates can vote against some of them solely on the basis of gender instead of on the basis of denominationally specified qualifications.

How wrong this voting procedure is has been illustrated by the inconsistent practice of every synod that has participated in the procedure. Synod's designation of a seminarian as a candidate is an important action that is necessary for the seminarian to receive a call. However, the most important action of synod is its approval of the work of the synodical deputies that gives a congregation and a classis permission to ordain the candidate. This is the point at which candidates *officially* enter the ministry even though they are ordained before that official approval takes place.

The same synods that declared that delegates could abstain from the process only if seminarians were separated by gender or separated from every other seminarian voted on synodical deputy reports in the way synod traditionally votes—in a group. No delegate claimed that he could abstain from the process only if the synodical deputy reports were divided by gender or voted on individually. Delegates abstained as delegates normally abstain. They simply did not vote. If they participated in the process, they voted negatively. No synod separated the synodical deputy reports so delegates could vote against candidates on the basis of their gender instead of on the basis of denominationally specified qualifications.

The regulation adopted by Synod 1995 honors both convictions and attempts to maintain unity by encouraging delegates to abstain rather than casting a negative vote. The way synod currently votes on seminarians who have applied for candidacy is wrong and lacks both common courtesy and Christian grace. It is the only time synod uses this method of voting. If synod wishes to continue this method of voting, it should adopt the same method when it votes on synodical deputy reports. In fact, if synod is concerned that all delegates vote individually on all people presented to it instead of responding affirmatively to the recommendations of those entrusted to advise it, synod ought to use this new method of voting whenever it votes on people. Synod is better served if it returns to its traditional method of voting and follows its current regulation.

I. Do what they say, not what they do

Our Savior spoke of the religious leaders of his day and said, “do everything they tell you, but do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Matthew 23:2, 3). For over twenty-five years, synod has encouraged churches and classes to make all possible use of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church. Very recently synod said that “such use of the Spirit's gifts is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church” and that “such use of the Spirit's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695). As councils and classes respond affirmatively to the words of synod, they experience great blessing and increased ministry. They are also hindered in their ability to implement the words of synod because synod does not practice what it preaches but instead continues to curtail the use of women's gifts more than necessary. Our members, churches, and classes need more positive modeling and leadership from synod in our communal effort to honor both convictions among us.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to include in the mandate of the committee that reviews the regulations in the Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a an instruction to honor both convictions among us on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

1. Since 1975, synod has regularly encouraged the church to make full use of women's gifts.
2. Synod 1995 declared, "there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731).
3. The regulations adopted in 1995 do not honor both convictions as evenhandedly as possible and curtail the use of women's gifts more than necessary.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 3: Withdraw Membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The Wyoming Christian Reformed Church, Wyoming, Ontario, overtures the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to withdraw its membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

Grounds:

1. The theological commitments of several members of the WARC allow for serious doctrinal deviations from the historic Reformed faith and theologians of member churches of WARC are permitted "to interpret Scripture in a manner incompatible with sound Reformed hermeneutical principles and practice," as the Interchurch Relations Committee noted in its report to Synod 2002 (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 263). Three of these deviations include unorthodox views of human sexuality, the covenant of marriage, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (further documentation re the United Church of Canada, the United Church of Christ [USA], and the Remonstrant Brotherhood [the Netherlands] will be provided to the advisory committee).
2. Scripture clearly warns the church to not welcome nor share in the error of those who do not continue "in the teaching of Christ" (2 John 9). To deny the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is to deny Christ's explicit teaching in Scripture (1 Corinthians 15). If Christ has not been raised bodily from the dead, both our faith and our message are null and void. Paul writes, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (I Corinthians 15:14). The denial of the bodily resurrection strikes at the very heart of our salvation.
3. An alliance of churches suggests a common witness to a common gospel. However, the report of the IRC to Synod 2002 presumes that the WARC

will continue to produce studies and make pronouncements with which the CRC “cannot agree” (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 263). An alliance of churches in which disagreement exists as to the specific content of the Reformed witness to the world (in that “serious doctrinal deviations” are tolerated by member churches, as the IRC report concludes, *Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 263), is not an expression of biblical unity. The Scriptures call for a unity of “mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10), a unity “in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13), and a unity rooted in the truth of God’s Word (John 17:17).

4. Although the IRC does not believe that the toleration of serious doctrinal deviations is warrant for the Christian Reformed Church to remain apart from the WARC (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 263), the Scriptures call us to “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught,” so that we will be able to “encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:9). The Scriptures clearly call us to refute error and serious doctrinal deviations (2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9), not to stand among them (Psalm 1), support them (2 John 10), or unite ourselves to those who hold them and teach them (2 Peter 2:1, 2).
5. Membership in WARC contradicts the commitment made by office-bearers in the form of subscription. In the form of subscription, office-bearers promise to teach the doctrines of the Three Forms of Unity “diligently, to defend them faithfully, and not to contradict them, publicly or privately, directly or indirectly” and they also promise “to reject all errors that conflict with these doctrines . . . to refute them, and to do everything we can to keep the church free from them.” This promise is at odds with the basis of membership of the WARC that speaks of member churches holding a position on faith and evangelism that is in “general agreement with that of the historic Reformed confessions, recognizing that the Reformed tradition is a biblical, evangelical, and doctrinal ethos, rather than any narrow and exclusive definition of faith and order” (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 258). However, the Church Order of the CRCNA speaks of the Reformed Creeds as a “true interpretation” of the Word of God (Church Order Art. 1-a) and to sign the form of subscription signifies an officebearer’s agreement with “the doctrine of the church” (Church Order Art. 5) not its ethos (“way of life”). It is difficult to understand how an officebearer of the CRCNA can uphold and defend the Canons of Dort, written against the position of the Remonstrants, when we are active members in an alliance with the Remonstrant Brotherhood of the Netherlands (see listing of member churches, *Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 273).
6. The Interchurch Relations Committee, in its report to Synod 2002, admits that the WARC is an organization that “appears to be traditionally but not distinctively Reformed” and includes member churches that permit and tolerate “serious doctrinal deviations” and that the CRC can presume that WARC will continue to produce studies and make pronouncements “with which the CRC cannot agree” (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 263). Therefore, to make an “alliance” with such denominations is contrary to our own confession” (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
7. Members of the Christian Reformed Church are being compelled to support financially an organization that will use those funds to support

what is contrary to the Word of God. The IRC suggests that “the CRC’s annual membership dues would amount to about \$14,000” (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 259). Funds collected from member churches are used to pay the expenses of all WARC committees, and financial aid is available for all smaller churches of member denominations. In this way, members of the CRCNA are being compelled to support that which they know to be in error.

Council of Wyoming CRC, Wyoming, Ontario
John Beintema, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Chatham but was not adopted.

Overture 4: Apply Special Discipline to the Council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario

Classis Yellowstone overtures Synod 2003 to apply special discipline, according to Church Order Article 83, to the council of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church who made the decision to carry out a congregational vote considering “nominations of gay and lesbian members, including those living in committed relationships, for all elected (church) offices.”

Grounds:

1. Synod can influence First Toronto Christian Reformed Church.
2. The action of the Council of the First Toronto CRC in allowing any of its members to live in “committed same sex relationships” (cf. *The Banner*, March 2003, p. 8) is a clear violation of Scripture regarding the sin of homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26,27; Genesis 19) and of the guidelines given to the Christian Reformed Church by Synod 1973.
3. The action of the council of the First Toronto CRC in deciding “to consider nominations of those living in committed same-sex relationships for all elected offices” violates the biblical standards (1 Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:6-9) for bearing office in the church of Jesus Christ.

Classis Yellowstone
Del Van Den Berg, stated clerk

Overture 5: Declare Birth Control to Be a Private Disputable Matter

I. Historical background

In 1936, the Christian Reformed Church spoke out against birth control,¹ stating that married people should follow the biblical mandate to be fruitful and multiply and therefore produce as many children as is compatible with the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the mother and the children. No subsequent synodical decision has changed this official position.

¹The term *birth control* in this overture means the prevention of the conception, not the abortion, of an unborn child.

In response to an overture from Classis Grand Rapids East, Synod 1934 appointed a committee to study the issue of birth control in view of its widespread practice and the concern of church members regarding the Lord's will in this matter. In an era of birthrate decline, Synod 1936 appointed a special committee that wrote the "Birth Control Testimony," which synod adopted. It called married church members to fulfill one of the purposes of marriage, which is to beget children. It also testified against the "growing evil of selfish birth restriction" and "indiscriminate dissemination of contraceptive information."

In 1971, three individuals overtured synod to reconsider the church's position on birth control in light of the concern about overpopulation, the possibility of governmental population control, the use of birth control devices, and the need for a clear witness to the world. Synod defeated a recommendation to appoint a committee to study the matter but urged those with special competence in these subject areas to serve the church with published articles showing a biblical perspective. Since 1971, the issue has not come before synod, though practice regarding birth control has changed considerably (see *Acts of Synod 1906*, pp. 52-53; *Acts of Synod 1930*, p. 140; *Acts of Synod 1934*, pp. 125-27; *Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 12, 136-38; *Acts of Synod 1971*, pp. 55, 132, 643-46).

II. Biblical considerations

A. *Genesis 1:28*

The statements made to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" were understood by synod as commands to prohibit birth control for every human being. However, they are not commands, since the Hebrew imperative mood (normally a command) that is used within the context of a blessing describes the result of the blessing, not a command. Even if these verbs are universal commands, then people would be sinning by remaining unmarried. Thus, by this train of thought, Jesus and Paul were sinning by choosing to remain single and never to have children. Instead, both Jesus (Matthew 19:12) and Paul (1 Corinthians 7:1, 7) approve of singleness for the purpose of doing God's kingdom work.

Furthermore, the blessing was promised to Adam and Eve in their perfect state to increase the number of believers on the earth and is the Old Testament counterpart to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore, a couple may devote themselves to the spread of God's kingdom without having children and still be living in obedience to these commands.

As a result, Genesis 1:28 does not prohibit birth control, which can be an expression of human's subduing of the earth, when it is done with God-glorifying motives in prayer for the sake of God's kingdom and according to God's Word.

B. *Psalms 127:3-5*

Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate (NIV).

The Psalm begins and ends with references to a city in the Promised Land that is being defended by an army. Certainly, children are God's gifts to be

raised to believe in him, but this passage deals with the defense of God's people as a whole by the "arrows" in their quiver. Besides, the usual military quiver held thirty to fifty arrows. Again, Psalm 127 describes God's blessing, not his command.

C. Genesis 38:8-10

"The sin of Onan is spilling his semen rather than having a child with his brother's wife." The essence of Onan's sin did not involve his use of birth control. Rather, Onan's selfish refusal violated the legal requirement to provide his brother's widow with a son so that the brother's inheritance in the Promised Land would not die out (Deuteronomy 7:13,14).

In conclusion, these and other Bible passages provide no warrant for synod's broad pronouncement against birth control.

III. Recommendation

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtures synod (1) to declare that a married couple's decision whether or not to use birth control to prevent the conception of a baby is a private, disputable matter; (2) to urge married couples to determine the size of their families prayerfully and biblically; and (3) to encourage couples, in their family planning, to be motivated by a desire to glorify God and to further his kingdom and not by selfish reasons or fear of the future.

Grounds:

1. No Bible passage prohibits birth control that prevents the conception of life—unlike the sin of intentional abortion.
2. A couple's decision about the number of children they might have—or whether they have any children—is a disputable matter to be guided by the principles of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, not a matter for synodical pronouncement.
3. The personal decision of birth control is a matter of Christian freedom to be guided by prayer and the biblical principle of 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
Durk De Jong, stated clerk

Overture 6: Revise the Guiding Precepts Proposed by the Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering

I. Background

Synod 1999 appointed a study committee "consisting of pastors, theologians, scientists, and others to examine the biblical/theological/ethical issues raised by the increasing capabilities and recent discoveries in bioscience and genetic engineering: specifically to provide pastoral advice to the churches on issues such as in vitro fertilization, surrogate pregnancy, artificial insemination by donor, birth control methods (RU486, IUD), abortion in cases of rape and fetal deformity, harvesting of fetal tissue, and cloning, and report to Synod

2002” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 578). The committee was granted a one year extension and is presenting its report to Synod 2003. Classis Iakota has reviewed the committee’s report to Synod 2003 and submits the following overture.

II. Overture

That synod make the following revisions to the guiding precepts contained in the report of the Committee to Examine Life issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering before giving its approval.

A. *The first precept (A)*

In the report, the first guiding precept reads as follows:

We must not recommend rules that bind the conscience in disputable matters. To do so would violate personal Christian liberty. Instead we should prescribe only where God’s will is clear. Scripture is clear that every human life is created in the image of God and is precious to God. Scripture does not explicitly teach what moral protections the unimplanted human embryo deserves, although it is clear that as a unique human life it warrants significant protection.

(*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 293)

We recommend that the first precept be altered and read as follows: “Scripture is clear that every human life is created in the image of God and develops under his watchful care. Therefore, human life at every stage of development is precious and warrants full protection from willful or arbitrary destruction or neglect.”

Grounds:

1. The committee’s reference to personal Christian liberty and not binding the conscience in disputable matters is well taken. However, the application of the sixth commandment to unborn humans is not a disputable matter. Our consciences are not free but are bound by the Word of God in the issues of life and death.
2. The committee’s use of the word *significant* (as in, the unimplanted human embryo deserves *significant* protection) is ambiguous and allows for less than total protection.

B. *The second precept (B)*

In the report, the second guiding precept reads as follows:

Because human embryos deserve significant moral protections, creating human embryos in vitro is something that should be done only when every embryo so created will be given an opportunity to implant and develop into a child.

(*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 293)

We recommend that the second precept be altered and read as follows: “Because human embryos deserve absolute moral protection, creating human embryos in vitro is something that should be done only when every embryo so created will be given an opportunity to implant and develop into maturity.”

Grounds:

1. The term *significant* should be changed to *absolute* to remove any doubt as to the measure of moral protection unimplanted embryos deserve.
2. The term *child* should be changed to *maturity* to avoid the notion that an embryo or fetus is not a child until it is born.

C. *The fourth precept (D)*

In the report, the fourth guiding precept reads as follows:

It may not be morally wrong to ingest a morning-after pill in the case of rape due to the complexities of the situation, including the fact that it is often unclear if an embryo has been created as a result of the rape.

(*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 293)

We recommend that the fourth precept be changed to read as follows: "It is morally wrong for a woman who has been raped to ingest a morning-after pill, because a morning-after pill contains a contraimplantive substance that is designed to cause the death of an unimplanted human embryo."

Grounds:

1. The report (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 300) lists the morning-after pill as a contraimplantive, which is intended to cause the death of a human embryo.
2. While we support victims of rape, we should not encourage them to bear an additional burden of guilt that would stem from the possibility of having caused the death of a human embryo by ingesting a morning-after pill.

D. *The fifth precept (E)*

In the report, the fifth guiding precept reads as follows:

It is good for married couples to want to have children, and it is a blessing to have children, but there are limits to the lengths to which couples may go in order to have children. Infertility is a disorder in God's design for human procreation, and we may attempt to prevent or correct this but only through morally acceptable means.

(*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 293)

We recommend that the following "limits" be listed under the fifth guiding precept:

1. Only the number of embryos a couple is willing and able to host and nurture to maturity should be procreated.
2. "Selective reduction" is morally unacceptable because it intentionally destroys human embryos.
3. All human embryos should be given all available means of support and an opportunity to develop to maturity.
4. All willful acts or negligence designed to cause the death of human embryos are the moral equivalent of killing them unless such acts are necessary to save the life of the mother.
5. The repair of genetic aberrations found through genetic screenings is morally acceptable if it does not put embryos at undue risk.
6. It is morally unacceptable to implant only embryos that appear to be healthy because God is the giver of life and only he should decide who should live and who should die.

Ground: The fifth precept does not provide pastoral guidance unless the limits it refers to are clearly stated.

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 7: Submit the Report of the Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering to Further Expert Review

I. Background

Synod 1999 appointed a study committee “consisting of pastors, theologians, scientists, and others to examine the biblical/theological/ethical issues raised by the increasing capabilities and recent discoveries in bioscience and genetic engineering: specifically to provide pastoral advice to the churches on issues such as in vitro fertilization, surrogate pregnancy, artificial insemination by donor, birth control methods (RU486, IUD), abortion in cases of rape and fetal deformity, harvesting of fetal tissue, and cloning, and report to Synod 2002” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 578). The committee was granted a one year extension and is presenting its report to Synod 2003.

II. Overture

Classis Iakota overtures synod 2003 to have the report of the Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering reviewed by additional CRC scientists, physicians, theologians, and pastors and to instruct the present committee to incorporate those suggestions that will make the report more scientifically sound and pastorally credible.

Grounds:

1. The report contains the following areas of weakness:
 - a. The report discusses previous synodical decisions that deal with human procreation (1936 and 1972). However, the report fails to observe that Synod 1936 actually speaks out against birth control, stating that “married people should follow the biblical mandate to be fruitful and multiply and therefore produce as many children as is compatible with the physical, mental, and spiritual well being of the mother and the children.” Thus, the committee needs to develop its position on contraception without trying to base it on the statements of Synod 1936.
 - b. The report would be strengthened if it cited scientific or medical literature to substantiate its claims, such as the following: “It is commonly thought that many embryos conceived during normal human procreation fail to thrive due to abnormality in the embryo itself or due to the mother’s inability to host a pregnancy at that time” (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 277).
 - c. In the committee’s interpretation of the 1972 synodical decision to allow abortion in the case of saving a mother’s life, it refers to “the principle of double effect.” The report, however, does not define this principle. It would be better to describe the principle of double effect or to remove the reference to it from the report.
 - d. Some of the committee’s comments about the RU-486 abortion pill are not accurate. For example, the report states that RU-486 “can be taken at any time during a pregnancy in order to induce an abortion” (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 304). In reality, the RU-486 pill is only effective if it is administered during the first nine weeks of pregnancy.

This inaccuracy undermines the overall credibility of the report and should be corrected.

- e. With respect to contraception, the report does not address other methods such as vasectomy and tubal ligation. To be complete, the report should discuss these methods of contraception and offer guidance about the use of them.
 - f. The report makes an unsubstantiated statement regarding stem cells, namely; “Embryos provide the best source of these stem cells” (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 307). The report also refers to the fact that “Stem cells can also be acquired from nonembryonic sources . . . ” (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 307) but does not list such sources.
2. Such a review would strengthen the report and enhance the guidance that it will give to the CRC as its members deal with recent advances in bioscience and genetic engineering.

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 8: Not Adopt Recommendation C, 4 of the Report from the Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering

I. Introduction

This overture addresses one recommendation of the report to Synod 2003 from the synodical Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering (see *Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 275-313). We are concerned with recommendation C, 4 in that report.

II. Background

The Dispatch CRC council has reviewed the report with appreciation for its clear stand in favor of protecting the life of every human being from its beginning to its end. The committee has worked through the implications of the unequivocal prolife commitment of the CRCNA in its decision by Synod 1972 with respect to the issues raised by bioscience and genetic engineering. In 1972, synod stated clearly that the church does not condone “the wanton destruction of any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death.”

We approve the recommendations of the committee to Synod 2003, with one exception, namely, recommendation C, 4 which reads, “The ingestion of a morning-after pill after a rape cannot always be judged morally impermissible due to the complexities of the situation, including the fact that it is often unclear if an embryo has been created as a result of the rape.” We remind classis that the morning-after pill prevents the implantation of a living embryo on the uterine wall, and thus, in effect, causes its death.

In the committee’s discussion of the moral permissibility of using the morning-after pill in the case of rape, it acknowledges that there was a majority and a minority view. Some thought it was permissible, others that it was not permissible.

The argument in favor of permitting the use of the morning-after pill is based on two points. First, “taking a morning-after pill may or may not cause the death of an embryo because there is currently no immediate way to know whether fertilization has occurred as a result of the rape. So, taking the morning-after pill is not a straightforward case of killing an embryo. It does, however, signal a willingness to kill an embryo if one is present” (p. 292). Second, “rape is a violent act done against the will of the woman.” The committee adds, “The event of rape itself is so traumatic that it’s more than we can say to insist that a raped woman carry to term any possible embryo that may result” (p. 292). However, the committee does not show the same hesitancy to insist on protecting the embryo once it is known that the embryo has become implanted. The committee says, “We all agree that it would be wrong for a woman who has been raped to take an abortifacient after the implantation of an embryo. After the embryo has been implanted, it deserves the protections synod endorsed in 1972” (p. 293).

It seems to the council that the committee’s first argument for this exception is based on faulty reasoning. The argument from ignorance of whether or not conception has occurred does not lessen culpability. If you burn down a house when you know someone is inside, it is murder. It is no less murder when you burn the house not being certain someone is inside but intending to kill them should they be. Even the intent itself is an evil intent, according to the implications of Jesus’ words about the need to guard our thoughts and desires (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28).

It seems to the council that the committee’s second argument for this exception gives up too much. We do not know for certain, but it appears to us that the second argument is the real reason for this exception, namely, the emotional health of the woman. Admittedly, rape is a traumatic experience that most of us could not even imagine, but does the violence of rape, which overrides the will of the woman, and the emotional trauma that results from it warrant the killing of an innocent human life? Additionally, why would a morning-after pill be morally permissible but an abortifacient would not? In either case, an embryo is or may be killed.

The reason we say the second argument gives up too much is that it is based on the emotional state of the woman. This same argument is used for most abortions today. If the argument is valid in the case of a pill that kills an embryo before implantation, it would also be valid in the case of a pill or physical procedure that kills an embryo after implantation. The committee argues throughout that the moral protection warranted by the human embryo does not depend upon the embryo’s location or stage of development. We are morally obligated to offer it protection and care wherever it is (petri dish, freezer, or womb) and at every stage of its life from conception to death.

The council realizes that rape is a violent act against the will of the woman. Every effort should be made to deal with the emotional state of the woman through support and therapy from the entire Christian community.

III. Overture

Dispatch CRC, Dispatch, Kansas, overtures that synod not adopt recommendation C, 4 of the Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering, which gives an exception to the use of the morning-after pill in the case of rape.

Grounds:

1. The committee's recommendation C, 4 is based on faulty ethical reasoning that is contrary to Scripture.
2. The committee rests this exception on the grounds of the emotional needs of the woman and thus opens the door for accepting abortion on the same grounds.

Council of Dispatch CRC, Dispatch, Kansas
Michael Nyhoff, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Rocky Mountain but was not adopted.

Overture 9: Amend and Clarify Recommendations in the Report of the Committee to Study Christian Day School Education

I. Introduction

Classis Lake Superior commends the synodical Committee to Study Christian Day School Education for the thorough historical study and timely recommendations produced (see *Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 314-97). Together with the committee, Classis Lake Superior recognizes the profound complexity of the issue of supporting Christian education in the pluralistic U.S. and Canadian societies in which God gives us the privilege and challenge of living. The range of opinions and convictions elicited within the CRCNA during this study must have been daunting to embrace and consider equitably. We are grateful to the committee for having recognized within the body of the report various legitimate responses that parents conscientiously have chosen in order to educate covenant community children Christianly. Yet, we realize that many members of the CRC in both nations have made conscientious choices that might seem to run counter to the report and recommendations. Also, those who read *only* the report's summaries and recommendations—and they will be by far the majority—may raise, unfairly, angry and critical responses.

Additionally, we draw synod's attention to an overall tone, particularly in the first part of the report, that could give rise to accusations that the report (and thus the CRCNA) promotes elitism and exclusivity. In certain sections (especially pp. 324-28), elements of haughtiness, paternalism, and assumed superiority of our particularly articulated Reformed (i.e., Kuyperian) worldview grate against the commitments and sensitivities of committed Christians who do not share every detail of the report's vision.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Superior overtures synod:

- A. To amend recommendation F as follows: "That synod recognize the legitimacy of conscientious parental choices that do not necessarily include Christian day school, always declaring that Christian day school education. . . ."
- B. To make the report's otherwise worthy recommendations of congregational and communal support for Christian education more embraceable by the greatest number of members within the CRCNA and among Christians with whom we are in community in the United States and Canada.

Grounds for A and B:

1. Because not all Christians automatically recognize Christian day school education as crucial to Christian life and witness, denominational communications—such as this synodical study report—must always breathe a spirit and tone of broader ecumenical appreciation and partnership rather than speak words that might needlessly alienate.
2. This will also make this recommendation more in line with the change in the church order under recommendation M.

C. To amend recommendation G by adding the sentence: “They should also exercise caution and consultation with governmental revenue agencies in order to avoid compromising churches’ charitable status.”

Grounds:

1. The recommended financial mechanisms involved to incorporate Christian school support into congregational budgets are unclear.
2. Governmental tax agencies might consider such budget-line recommendations merely a “quid pro quo” transaction—and not a direct charitable donation. (Consider, for example, the difficulties encountered in Ontario with donations to “Corban” in recent years.)

D. To clarify the relationship between internal spiritual covenant nurture and desired evangelistic growth.

Ground: The body of this report recognizes this complex interrelationship (p. 347), but does not explain it clearly, nor does it suggest or recommend a helpful resolution.

Classis Lake Superior
Steven Zwart, stated clerk

Overture 10: Instruct the Ministers’ Pension Fund Administrators to Change Disability Qualifications

Classis Lake Superior overtures synod to instruct the Ministers’ Pension Fund administrators to change the qualifications for a minister to receive disability pension by eliminating the jurisdiction of the United States Social Security Administration in determining disability.

Grounds:

1. The present qualifications do not deal pastorally with the minister or the congregation that must continue to support him or her until the Social Security Administration qualifies the minister.
2. The present process inflicts needless emotional hardship on the pastor. Besides dealing with the fact that he or she is unable to continue in the calling of pastor, the pastor must also deal with all the bureaucratic red tape to be declared disabled. Such processes take their toll on a pastor and family who are not allowed to truly grieve the loss of their last congregation and the pastor’s career.
3. The present qualifications can deal a financial blow to small congregations that cannot pay both their present disabled pastor and a stated

supply or interim pastor, much less call a new pastor until the minister is receiving the total disability pension. Although there is help through other agencies, these agencies should not have to fund a church from their limited finances when the pension money is available and the pastor has been vested to receive the pension.

4. The denomination has qualified doctors available to the classes and the Ministers' Pension Fund who can more compassionately deal with the disabled pastor to make the process move more quickly and relieve the pastor of the financial burden.
5. A quicker resolution of the situation allows the congregation to get on with grieving the loss of their pastor and begin the process to get on with the ministry of the church in its community and the world.
6. The present qualifications do not recognize the separation of church and state in matters that need the church to show leadership in how to deal with those who are hurting.

Classis Lake Superior
Steven Zwart, stated clerk

Overture 11: Allow the Casting of Lots in Election of Officebearers

I. Background

Synod 1989 declared that “the election of officebearers shall ordinarily be by way of a congregational election as described in Church Order Article 4 and urged “the councils to follow this procedure.” Synod’s ground stated, “Election by the congregation honors the priesthood of all believers and involves the members in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they exercise their responsibility” (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 502).

Synod decided this issue based on a study committee’s observations about the Bible that led them to urge the churches not to cast lots. The first five-cited observations basically stated that the casting of lots was used by God to guide Old Testament Israel and that the Old Testament foretold the coming of the new covenant with the presence and power of the Spirit to govern the church. However, synod’s decision was based on the next three observations that emphasized the importance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when God created the priesthood of all believers (Acts 2). The conclusion was drawn that the fact that the disciples drew lots to choose an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:14-26) before Pentecost prevents the disciples’ actions from establishing “a method for selecting officebearers in the church” (*Acts of Synod 1989*, pp. 500-501).

II. Biblical evidence

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost followed the disciples’ casting of lots, but does that fact prevent us from using that action as a pattern for electing officebearers? Our overture contends that the disciples’ casting of lots was done by the leading of the Holy Spirit and that, therefore, the casting of lots should also be allowed as one of the methods for God’s election of officebearers.

The gospel of John (7:37-39) records Jesus' promise of living water for believers, which John interprets to be his promise of the Holy Spirit, "whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified." John emphasizes Jesus' death on the cross as his glorification and thus says that the Spirit would be given after that event. Synod 1989 assumed that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the fulfillment of John 7:37-39 and of the other promises in the gospel concerning the Holy Spirit's coming.

However, when Jesus appeared to his disciples on Easter evening (John 20:19-29), he greeted them twice with the greeting, "Peace [meaning *salvation* in the New Testament] be with you!" (the usual greeting that probably meant much more in this context) and then, after showing them his hands and side, "he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (20:22). His gift of the Holy Spirit was then followed by the authority to give and withhold forgiveness (20:23). With these actions and words, Jesus instituted the priesthood of all believers energized by the Holy Spirit. The further importance of Pentecost was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to give the apostles power for their mission of proclaiming the good news (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 14), but Jesus had already given the Holy Spirit to his disciples on Easter evening as the beginning of the fulfillment of his promises.

As a result, when the disciples decided to cast lots to replace Judas (Acts 1:14-26), Luke writes that they "all joined together constantly in prayer" (1:14), that their replacement of Judas was the fulfillment of the Old Testament (1:16, 17, 20), and that there were certain qualifications to be fulfilled for that choice (1:21, 22). Then "they proposed two men" and "prayed, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen [literally, *electd*] . . ." (1:23, 24). This passage not only presents us with an authoritative pattern for God's election of officebearers because the Holy Spirit was present in the lives of the disciples by way of Jesus' previous gift, but it also gives us the following reason for casting lots accompanied with prayer. When a congregation votes, they cannot know the nominees' hearts (for example, which of them is best suited for the offices at this time in the life of the church). As a result, election (God's choice, according to Peter) by casting lots leaves the final choice to God's infinite knowledge (Psalm 139:1-4) and does not depend on church members' incomplete knowledge and/or imperfect motives. The priesthood of believers would be preserved in such an election by the casting of lots as church members pray.

III. Overture

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtures synod

- A. To require that councils choose nominees for election based on biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-10).
- B. To allow the casting of lots for the election of officebearers while accompanied by the members' prayers at a congregational meeting (see Acts 1:14-26 for a biblical model).

C. To change Church Order Article 4-c to read as follows (with added words in italics and replaced words struck through):

The election of *officebearers* by the congregation *or by the casting of lots* shall take place under the supervision of the council ~~after~~ *during the members'* prayer. . . .

Grounds:

1. The council should be required to present qualified nominees because the apostles proposed two names in Acts 2:23.
2. The casting of lots does not nullify the priesthood of believers when it is accompanied by the congregation's prayers.
3. The casting of lots is a biblically established pattern because the disciples' choice of Matthias to replace Judas by the casting of lots (Acts 1:14-26) followed Jesus' gift to the disciples of the Holy Spirit on Easter evening (John 20:22).
4. The casting of lots is not prohibited by Belgic Confession Articles 30 and 31 because those articles do not specify that the election is to be accomplished by the members' votes but only that it is to be "a legitimate election of the church." By vote or by lot, the choice of officebearers is God's legitimate election of officebearers in his church (Acts 1:24).
5. The casting of lots eliminates the elements of human weakness, personal preference, and politics in the election process and relies on God's guidance based on his infinite knowledge of his people (Acts 1:24).
6. According to Acts 1:14-26, the casting of lots (indeed, all of a congregation's actions) should be accompanied by prayer.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
Durk De Jong, stated clerk

Communication 1: Council of All Nations CRC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The Council of All Nations Christian Reformed Church protests the decision of Synod 2002 to not accede to two overtures requesting a revision of the decision of Synod 2000 regarding women serving as synodical deputies (*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 480-82).

Grounds:

1. Synod 2002's decision is incongruous with its repeated urgings to other ecclesiastical assemblies—e.g., councils and classes—”to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695). Synod 2000's statement does not allow for exceptions. This implies a double standard—i.e., synodical roles need not follow the same encouragement.
2. Allowing for male alternates in the role of synodical deputy (cf., *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 697) would in no way bind the conscience of any delegate nor challenge the position of any classis.
3. It has not been demonstrated which responsibilities of a synodical deputy require gifts apart from those God grants to women ministers.
4. Continuing to restrict certain roles in our church along gender lines hinders our witness. This denominational issue has prohibited people from joining local congregations.

Council of All Nations CRC, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Graham Lavers, clerk

Note: This communication was presented to Classis Eastern Canada but was not adopted.

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