



AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2006



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH



AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2006

June 10-17, 2006
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2006 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 10, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. David H. Kromminga, pastor of Sherman Street CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 2006 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. There will be an orientation meeting for first-time delegates and advisors Friday evening, June 9, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. The location of the orientation meeting will be announced at the registration desk.

A Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 11, 2006, at 3:00 p.m. at Sherman Street CRC, 1000 Sherman Street SE, Grand Rapids. Rev. Kromminga 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 4 and 12. 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.

Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director of the CRCNA
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2006. Whether you are a returning delegate or whether you are here for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a pleasant and blessed experience. We come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as representatives of the classes that delegated and appointed you to serve. Our staff is here to assist you in whatever way we are able. Please feel free to ask for anything you need, and if you need information before arriving, you can contact us at the office of the executive director by writing to borgdorp@crcna.org or calling 616-224-0832.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2006 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 executive director 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

Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2006:

Friday orientation

7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Orientation for first-time delegates and advisers
8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Orientation for advisers only

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 - 3:00 p.m. Advisory-committee meetings
3:00 - 3:20 p.m. Break
3:20 - 5:30 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
5:30 - 6:30 p.m. Dinner

Monday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m. Opening worship
8:45 - 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 - 8:45 a.m. Opening worship
8:45 - 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 2006

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Ronald E. Klok Cecil Van Niejenhuis	MinistersArthur L. Verboon Johannes Schouten
Elders	Fred E. Folkerts Gary Haarsma	EldersJohn D. Boonstra René Hebers
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	H. Charles Kooger Richard A. Bodini	MinistersJohn Van Sloten Philip F. Reinders
Elders	Robert Dykstra Hessel Kielstra	EldersAndrew Konynebelt Bob Klay
Arizona		
Ministers	Robert Walter, Jr. Alfred Lindemulder	MinistersRay P. De Lange Jeffrey A. Dykema
Elders	Jose Rayas Keith B. Lofdahl	EldersEduardo A. Gonzalez _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Derek Van Dalen Alvern Gelder	MinistersRichard G. Oberg, Jr. William S. Johnson
Elders	Kenneth Prol Bryan Wiegers	Elders_____ _____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Martin Vellekoop Pieter G. Sinia	MinistersKoendert (John) J. Koster Stanley J. Groothof
Elders	George Vandenberg Kenn J. Faber	EldersJohn A. Buikema _____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Alvin Beukema Henry Jonker	MinistersGerrit Veeneman _____
Elders	Tony Van Tol John Snel	EldersGord Houweling Art Verwoerd
California South		
Ministers	Ronald I. Chu Neville L. Koch	MinistersPeter Y. Shin Rick Kim
Elders	Rudy Gonzalez Paul Andringa	EldersGeorge Jorritsma Preston Stewart
Central California		
Ministers	James A. Vander Slik Larry Van Essen	MinistersDerek M. Zeyl David J. Nederhood
Elders	Paul Whatley, Sr. Darrell Kootstra	EldersMark Humphreys Albert F. Veldstra

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham	Ministers Thomas S. Baird Dirk Miedema	Ministers William T. Koopmans Richard J. deLange
	Elders Larry Luth Gerrit De Boer	Elders Martin P.J. Bosveld _____
Chicago South	Ministers W. Wayne Leys Julius T. Medenblik	Ministers Harvey A. Brink Timothy S. Bossenbroek
	Elders William R. Buikema, Jr. William B. Weidenaar	Elders _____ _____
Columbia	Ministers Virgil L. Michael Jelmer P. Groenewold	Ministers D. Vance Hays Donald L. Recker
	Elders David A. Hitt Samuel W. Stukey	Elders _____ _____
Eastern Canada	Ministers John H. Noordhof Paul R. Vanderkooy	Ministers Harry J. Bierman David A. Vroege
	Elders Bernard H. Berghout Jean Lauzière	Elders John Beking Clarence VanderHeide
Georgetown	Ministers Jerry Van Groningen Matthew A. Palsrok	Ministers Joel R. Boot Jeff Stam
	Elders Lawrence Vredevoogd Melvin Vander Bie	Elders Bernard VanderKlok _____
Grand Rapids East	Ministers George F. Vander Weit James E. Blankespoor	Ministers William C. De Vries David H. Kromminga
	Elders Del Nykamp Chris Stoffel Overvoorde	Elders Charles P. Jansen Marvin Zuidema
Grand Rapids North	Ministers Charles L. Geschiere C. James den Dulk	Ministers Brian P. Bosscher Terry D. Slachter
	Elders Wayne Hubers David Young	Elders Carl L. Vande Pol Jerry Elenbaas
Grand Rapids South	Ministers Dan A. Gritter Michael W. Hoogeboom	Ministers Curtis A. Walters John J. Steigenga
	Elders Pablo Canché P. Herbert Advocaat	Elders Brent R. Cottingham Steven L. Skahn
Grandville	Ministers Roger Y. Ryu Anthony J. Meyer	Ministers Thomas K. Groelsema John P. Douma
	Elders Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr. James Roskam	Elders Todd Kuperus Henry J. Koetje
Greater Los Angeles	Ministers David R. Koll Roy Palavicini	Ministers Daniel J. Brink Dionisio Aguhob
	Elders Frank P. De Haan David Haberbush	Elders Arthur E. De Jong _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Hackensack	Ministers Ramon Orostizaga Brent A. Pennings	Ministers Andrew R. Sytsma Douglas H. Bratt
	Elders Hernan Zapata-Thomack Curtis L. Dubay	Elders Kenneth E. Verbrugge Kenneth J. Vander Wall
Hamilton	Ministers John H. Bouwers William C. Veenstra	Ministers Jeffrey P. Janssen James E. Pot
	Elders Dick L. Kranendonk George Elzinga	Elders Cor Visser John Schuurman
Heartland	Ministers Duane E. Tinklenberg Kevin J. Muyskens	Ministers M. Dale Fopma Greg Dyk
	Elders Michael J. Jacobsma Fred Krommendyk	Elders _____ _____
Holland	Ministers Douglas R. Fauble Marvin J. Hofman	Ministers Keith M. Doornbos Jack B. Dik
	Elders Gus J. Van Den Berge Arlan Hossink	Elders Ray Schrotenboer Ken Laninga
Hudson	Ministers Howard J. Vugteveen In Chul Choeh	Ministers Craig E. Broek Peter A. Hoytema
	Elders John Szto Everett J. Faber	Elders Ted Faber _____
Huron	Ministers George W. Holthof Elzo Tenyenhuis	Ministers Jacob (Jack) De Vries _____
	Elders Rick De Graaf John Van Dorp	Elders Bert Langendyk Henry Exel
Iakota	Ministers Donald W. Cowart Aldon L. Kuiper	Ministers Jerry D. Buwalda Carl H. Bruxvoort
	Elders Marlowe Van Ginkel Lee Van Ruler	Elders Jacob J. Van't Land _____
Illiana	Ministers Henry Reyenga, Jr. Joel W. Zuidema	Ministers Herman J. Schutt Gary Schipper
	Elders Henry Schenkel Harley D. Ver Beek	Elders Glenn Smits Donald Dykstra
Kalamazoo	Ministers Dale L. Slings Robert L. Boersma	Ministers Warren H. Lammers Raymond J. Steigenga
	Elders Lou J. Meinema John Haan	Elders Hector Quemada Jack Karston
Lake Erie	Ministers Harry R. Winters, Jr. Robert A. Arbogast	Ministers Rolf T. Bouma Mark R. Van't Hof
	Elders Gene Johnson Sam Dykstra	Elders Ken Ludema _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior	Ministers Calvin J. Friend David A. Zylstra	Ministers Daniel J. Vos William C. Tuininga
	Elders Don Wieberdink Lee Bleeker	Elders Tom Van Engen
Minnkota	Ministers Joseph Vanden Akker LeRoy G. Christoffels	Ministers Gerrit Besteman Bradley A. Meinders
	Elders Paul C. Ward C. Paul Vander Kooi	Elders Dan J. Riemersma Lonald O. Lien
Muskegon	Ministers Larry D. Baar Michael D. Koetje	Ministers David J. Sieplinga Charles Uken
	Elders Ronald D. Bielema Craig A. Bytwerk	Elders Alvin G. De Kam
Niagara	Ministers Andrew E. Beunk James C. Dekker	Ministers Gerald Van Smeerdyk Harold A. Winter
	Elders Louis den Bak Klaas Wierenga	Elders John Te Brake
Northcentral Iowa	Ministers Gary Brouwers Thomas J. Vos	Ministers Steven L. Schulz Charles Walton
	Elders Billy De Kruyff Ronald Klaasen	Elders Herbert W. Schreur
Northern Illinois	Ministers Merle Den Bleyker George Cooper	Ministers Jon E. Hoekema Fred A. De Jong
	Elders Diego B. Flores James Bosman	Elders _____
Northern Michigan	Ministers Kenneth D. Koning Peter R. Byma	Ministers Jon O. De Bruyn Daniel R. Wolters
	Elders Chris Kostelansky Richard A. Huijbregtse	Elders John Rozeveld
Pacific Hanmi	Ministers Theodore Lim Jin Choi	Ministers Seung Jai Kang Hyung Ju Park
	Elders Cheol Lee Byung Duk Min	Elders Sung Chang Choi Dong Il Kim
Pacific Northwest	Ministers John Van Schepen Mark A. Van Haitsma	Ministers Darren C. Roorda Gui Je Park
	Elders Jim A. Carberry Stanley C. Vander Pol	Elders Mark Wagenaar
Pella	Ministers Jack M. Gray Jeffrey L. Sajdak	Ministers Gideon E. Wamala John Gorter
	Elders Roger P. Zylstra Gordon Stuit	Elders John Venema Ronald D. Hiemstra

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Ed W. Visser Karl J. House	Ministers
Elders	Martin Adema Dick Langerak	Elders
		C. Harry Salomons Peter Slofstra John Struyk George Van Drunen
Red Mesa		
Ministers	William J. Kempkes John J. Greydanus	Ministers
Elders	Duane Chimoni Norman Chee	Elders
		Robert J. Byker Bobby Boyd Herb Beyale, Jr Ed T. Begay
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	John W. Medendorp Steven J. Alsum	Ministers
Elders	Jerry Koedam James Boonstra	Elders
		Thomas E. Dykman Merwin Rylaarsdam Terry Gray Paul Bolt
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Pedro Toledo Vernon G. Vander Zee	Ministers
Elders	Javier Torres James Kelley	Elders
		Thomas R. Dykstra M. Jeffery Klingenberg _____ _____
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Paul R. De Vries Bruce J. Vaandrager	Ministers
Elders	Henry E. DeVries II Lee De Vries	Elders
		Benjamin M. Hulst Randal L. Meyers _____ _____
Toronto		
Ministers	Erick J. Schuringa Ted S. Bootsma	Ministers
Elders	Edward Sikkema Albert Kramer	Elders
		Samuel Cooper C. Nick Overduin Jan De Koning _____
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Kou Vang Leslie J. Kuiper	Ministers
Elders	Gerald Heinen John Scherer	Elders
		Peter T. Verhulst Daniel J. Roeda Harvey De Young _____
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Daniel Mulder Thomas Vander Ziel	Ministers
Elders	Harry Faber John D. Scheffer	Elders
		Randall Van Osdol George Den Hartigh James P. House
Zeeland		
Ministers	Steven J. Mulder David A. Vander Meer	Ministers
Elders	Harv Koetje Bill De Kleine	Elders
		Ronald J. Meyer Tyler J. Wagenmaker Ken Austhof Ron Hassell

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board or BOT) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2005 and Synod 2006.

I. Introduction

A. General

Even before this report addresses the business pertinent to synod's agenda, it is appropriate that the Board acknowledge the death of Dr. David H. Engelhard since synod last met. Dr. Engelhard was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor in February 2005, and, after ten months of treatment, he was taken from this life in late December 2005. We continue to mourn his loss, and the church in various ways has celebrated his life and ministry. It is appropriate that Synod 2006 acknowledge and give thanks for the ministry of Dr. Engelhard as the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church from 1994 to 2005.

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) for the purpose of managing the joint venture between the Canada and Michigan Corporations. Together the directors of both corporations are 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 revised and approved at Synod 2001 (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 519). Editorial revisions were incorporated in 2005 to reflect the organizational adjustments that were approved by Synod 2004 and 2005.

The Board has met two times since Synod 2005 (September 2005 and February 2006) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2006. The Board's agenda is usually made up of agency matters (program review, personnel appointments, focus of the agency, and so forth), polity matters (study reports, board appointments, interim committee of synod concerns), as well as the normal range of organizational matters that come up in a complex organization such as the CRCNA. The Board is also responsible for overseeing the work of the executive director.

The executive committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees also meet separately to consider Canadian issues as needed. 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. However, most of the activity that engages Board members is accomplished in the binational meeting of the Board

because the ministries of the church are mostly organized along binational lines. The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Rev. Bruce T. Ballast (Region 6), Mr. Dan Cooke (Region 12), Mr. Paul Dozeman (member-at-large), Mrs. Gail F. Jansen (member-at-large), Mr. Delvin Huisingh (Region 10), Rev. W. Wayne Leys (Region 9), Rev. Rodney Vander Ley (Region 5), Ms. Sari Mills (member-at-large), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschafer (Region 7), Rev. Robert J. Timmer (Region 8), Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen (Region 11), Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee (Region 10), Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (Region 8), and Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks (Region 11).

The members of the Board from Canada are Rev. Andrew Beunk (Niagara), Mr. William Crofton (B.C. North-West), Mr. Jack Geschiere (Chatham), Mr. Hessel Kielstra (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Rev. Jake Kuipers (Quinte), Mr. Enno Meijers (Toronto), Ms. Gayle Monsma (member-at-large), Mr. Keith Oosthoek (member-at-large), Rev. John Pasma (Alberta North), Rev. Bert Slofstra (B.C. South-East), Rev. William C. Tuininga (Lake Superior), Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (member-at-large), Mr. Gary VanArragon (Huron), Rev. Paul Vanderkooy (Eastern Canada), and Rev. Arie G. Van Eek (Hamilton).

The executive director (Dr. Peter Borgdorff) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

1. Board officers: Rev. W.W. Leys, president; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, vice president; Dr. P. Borgdorff, secretary; Rev. B. Slofstra, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers: Rev. W.W. Leys, president; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, vice president; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director; Mrs. G.F. Jansen, treasurer; Mr. John H. Bolt, director of finance and administration.
3. Executive Committee: Mrs. G.F. Jansen; Rev. J. Kuipers; Rev. W.W. Leys, chair; Mr. K. Oosthoek; Rev. B. Slofstra; Rev. L.J. Vander Zee. Dr. P. Borgdorff serves ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	1	3rd
19	2	3rd
18	1	1st

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
2005-2006 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$90,268	\$112,835	\$135,402			
19	\$82,128	\$102,660	\$123,192			
18	\$74,575	\$93,219	\$111,863	\$86,268	\$107,835	\$129,403
17	\$68,201	\$85,251	\$102,301	\$75,311	\$94,139	\$112,966
16	\$62,850	\$78,562	\$94,275	\$66,218	\$82,772	\$99,327
15	\$58,346	\$72,932	\$87,519	\$58,607	\$73,258	\$87,910
14	\$51,214	\$64,018	\$76,821	\$52,181	\$65,226	\$78,271
13	\$45,234	\$56,543	\$67,851	\$46,789	\$58,487	\$70,184

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	B.C. North-West	Rev. Dick Kwantes		
	lakota	Rev. Robert Timmer	Rev. Roger W. Sparks	2008(1)
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. Peter H. Kim		2008(1)

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

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 1995, the executive director 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 twenty-four classes have adopted a decision to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Kalamazoo
Atlantic Northeast	Lake Erie
B.C. North-West	Lake Superior
B.C. South-East	Muskegon
Chatham	Niagara
Chicago South	Northern Illinois
Grand Rapids East	Pacific Northwest
Greater Los Angeles	Quinte
Hackensack	Red Mesa
Holland	Rocky Mountain
Hudson	Southeast U.S.
Huron	Toronto

3. Ethnic advisers to synod

Synod 2005 revised the rules governing the appointment of ethnic advisers. The basic policy is:

At each synod up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. The position of ethnic adviser is continued “as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The BOT should appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed.”

The number of ethnic minority delegates scheduled to be at Synod 2006 is seven. To round out that number to reach twenty-five the BOT appointed the following persons:

Mrs. Natalie Beyale
Ms. Yatta Foryoh
Mr. Abel Gonzalez
Mr. Socheth Na
Mr. Tim Nguyen
Mr. Thurman Rivers
Ms. Gloria Sanchez

4. Women advisers to synod

Synod 2001 adopted a set of guidelines to regulate this advisory position (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493). On the basis of the guidelines, the Board appointed the following women advisers for Synod 2006:

Ms. Mary R. Baas
Ms. Sina Den Otter
Dr. Karen De Mol
Mrs. Marlys J. Popma
Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen
Ms. Carol Veldman Rudie
Mrs. Beverly A. Weeks

5. 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:

B.C. South-East

Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra is the pastor of Willoughby CRC, Langley, British Columbia. He has served as campus ministry executive. Rev. Boonstra has also served on the classical Home Missions committee and the Langley Memorial Hospital chaplain committee. He currently serves as alternate to the Board of Trustees.

Rev. Colin Vander Ploeg is the pastor of Living Hope CRC, Abbotsford, British Columbia. He has served on the classis Alberta North nominating committee, various ad hoc and advice committees, and the housing co-op maintenance committee. *Rev. Vander Ploeg* currently serves on the classis ministry committee and on the administrative and worship committees.

Niagara (alternate position only)

Rev. James C. Dekker is the pastor of Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ontario. He has served on the Committee for Contact with the Government (Canada), as an alternate to the Calvin College Board of Trustees, as a delegate to the Board of Trustees, and as president of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation.

Rev. Harold A. Winter is the pastor of Trinity CRC, St. Catharines, Ontario. He has served on the Brock Campus ministry committee for Classis Niagara, as chair of CART, and as a peer learning group coordinator.

Region 9

Dr. James La Grand is the pastor of Beacon Light CRC, Gary, Indiana. He has served on the executive committee of the World Missions board and as chair of the Halifax-Dartmouth Council of Churches. He currently serves on the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) 2006 Congress Planning Committee.

Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga is pastor of Sunrise CRC, Lafayette, Indiana. He has served on the classical Home Missions committee and as delegate to synod. He currently serves as church visitor.

Region 10

Dr. Ronald D. De Young is the pastor of Oakland CRC, Hamilton, Michigan. He has served on the classical Home Missions committee and as synodical deputy. He currently serves on the classical interim committee.

Rev. John Rop, Jr., is the pastor of Calvin CRC, Muskegon, Michigan. He has served on the board of Northern Michigan Christian Schools. He has also served as cadet counselor, catechism teacher, deacon, elder, and on the church plant task force.

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

Alberta North

Rev. John Pasma (incumbent)

Rev. Neil De Koning (alternate)

B.C. North-West

Mr. William Crofton (incumbent)

Mr. Andy de Ruyter (alternate)

Niagara

Rev. Andrew E. Beunk (incumbent)
Alternate position is presently vacant.

Region 10

Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee (incumbent)
Rev. Marvin J. Hofman (alternate)

b. At-large member

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also chosen directly by synod. This year Mrs. Gail F. Jansen completes her second term and is not eligible for reelection. Mr. Keith Oosthoek is completing his first term and is eligible for a second three-year term. 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:

U.S.

Rev. Mary S. Hulst is currently serving as adjunct faculty for Western Seminary and Calvin Theological Seminary. She has served on the synodical Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering. Rev. Hulst currently serves as alternate to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk is the pastor of Mill Creek Community CRC, Mill Creek, Washington. She has served on the classical Home Missions committee, the denominational Home Missions board, and the Seattle association of theological education.

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

Canada

Mr. Keith Oosthoek (incumbent)
Mr. Bert Schouten (alternate)

6. Agency director appointments

Synod 2005 adopted a recommendation that the Board of Trustees be authorized to ratify, on behalf of synod, the appointment of a director for The Back to God Hour ministry. At its meeting in February 2006, the BOT, upon the recommendation of The Back to God Hour board, appointed and ratified Dr. Robert C. Heerspink to assume that position April 1, 2006. It is appropriate that synod acknowledge Dr. Heerspink's appointment. His curriculum vitae is found in Appendix A.

Mr. Wayne deJong resigned his position as the director of CRWRC-Canada last fall to accept a position with Habitat for Humanity-Canada. The Board of Trustees also at its meeting in February 2006, upon the recommendation of the board of CRWRC, appointed Ms. Ida Kaastra Mutoigo to assume the position of director of CRWRC-Canada effective July 1, 2006, subject to the ratification of Synod 2006. Ms. Mutoigo's resume is attached as Appendix B. The BOT recommends that synod acknowledge and ratify the appointment.

7. Appointment of director of Canadian ministries
Synod 2005 authorized the BOT to proceed with the appointment of a director of Canadian ministries (DCM). At its September 2005 meeting, the BOT appointed Rev. Bruce Adema to the position and also ratified the appointment on behalf of synod. Rev. Adema is presently completing his term of service with Christian Reformed World Missions in the Philippines and will begin his service as DCM June 1, 2006. It is appropriate that synod acknowledge Rev. Adema's appointment. His curriculum vitae is found in Appendix C.
8. Resignation of Dr. Calvin L. Bremer
The resignation of Dr. Calvin L. Bremer as the director of The Back to God Hour and as the executive director-designee for the CRC is well known. The BOT deeply regrets the circumstances that gave rise to this development and acted as needed to deal with the resulting situation. The BOT is prepared to provide synod with a full accounting of the circumstances that led to the decisions made. Initial disclosure will be made to the advisory committee at synod, and, if it is decided to deal with this matter in any of the plenary meetings of synod, it will be appropriate that such a discussion take place in executive session.
9. Executive search report and nominations
Subsequent to these developments, the BOT reactivated the search process and formed a new search committee to seek a nominee for consideration. It is anticipated that the search committee will advance a nomination to the meeting of the BOT in early May. When the BOT selects and approves a person to be nominated to Synod 2006, a communication will be sent out immediately. The résumé of the candidate will be available in the supplementary agenda that will be mailed to all of the delegates by late May 2006.
10. Form of Subscription revision
Synod 2005 instructed the BOT to appoint a committee to draft a revision of the Form of Subscription. The following persons were appointed and agreed to serve: Rev. John Kusters (chair), Rev. Mark Davies, Rev. Albert Westerhuis, Mr. Walter Ackerman, Ms. Patricia Storteboom, and Ms. Wilma Vanderleek.
11. Contemporary Testimony revision
Synod 2005 instructed the BOT, in consultation with CRC Publications, to appoint a committee to draft a revision of the Contemporary Testimony. The following persons were appointed and agreed to serve: Rev. Morris Greidanus (chair), Rev. Ron Feenstra, Rev. Sheila Holmes, Dr. Clayton Libolt, Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, and Dr. George Vandervelde.
12. Christian day school tuition assistance for Calvin Theological Seminary students
Synod 2005 instructed the BOT to appoint a committee to study Christian day school tuition assistance for master of divinity students at Calvin Theological Seminary. Mr. John Bolt (chair), Mr. Phil Vandenberg, Mr. Paul Dozeman, and Mr. Tom deJong completed that assignment and proposed a plan for implementation. The BOT adopted the recommenda-

tions of the committee subject to the allocation of funds in the 2007 fiscal year budget. A copy of the report is attached as information in Appendix D.

13. Membership count procedure

Synod 2005 instructed the BOT to appoint a committee to revise the membership count procedure. The following persons were appointed and agreed to serve: Dr. Henry De Moor (chair), Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Rev. Daniel Mouw, and Mr. Mike Dykema. The BOT received the report and recommends it to synod for adoption. It is attached in Appendix E.

14. Revision of Church Order Article 41

Synod 2005 instructed the BOT to appoint a committee to propose a revision of Church Order Article 41 in response to overtures received last year. The BOT recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the report. Please see Appendix F.

15. Adoption of change in Church Order Articles

The following changes to the Church Order were considered to be substantial changes by Synod 2005, and Church Order Article 47 states that “no substantial alterations shall be effected 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)

Synod 2005 (see *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 741) proposed to Synod 2006 that Church Order Article 8 be revised to include a new section b and slightly edited (addition in italics) section c. The text for Church Order Article 8 follows:

Article 8

- a. Ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are eligible for call, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- b. *Ministers of the Reformed Church in America are eligible for call to serve in the Christian Reformed Church, with due observance of the relevant rules.*
- c. Ministers of other denominations, *other than from the Reformed Church in America*, desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be declared eligible for a call by a classis only after a thorough examination of their theological training, ministerial record, knowledge of and soundness in the Reformed faith, and their exemplariness of life. The presence and concurring advise of synodical deputies are required.
- d. Ministers of other denominations who have not been declared eligible for a call shall not be called unless all synodical requirements have been met.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 8

16. Convening churches of synod

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

- 2007 - Graafschap (Holland), Noordeloos (Holland), and First CRC (Grand Rapids)
- 2008 - Pending an invitation
- 2009 - Pending an invitation
- 2010 - The Board of Trustees recommends that Synod 2006 accept the invitation of First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, to be the convening church with synod meeting at The Kings University College.

17. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee hears appeals from actions taken by a classis or by an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in such cases where the actions are alleged to violate the Church Order or the agencies' mandates. The committee's nine members include persons with legal expertise and include both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Article 30-c of the Church Order Supplement. Normally, an aggrieved party brings written charges against another party, setting forth specific acts of the second party that allegedly were wrongful. The committee conducts a hearing, including witness testimony and a presentation of relevant documents. After deliberation, the Judicial Code Committee announces its recommendation. Where appropriate, the committee brings its recommendations to synod for implementation.

Two members of the committee are completing their first terms and are eligible for reelection to a second term: Mrs. Carol Ackerman and Rev. Andrew K. Chun. Mr. Edward J. Vander Kloet is completing his second term and is not eligible for reelection. We thank them for their faithful service and recognize the contribution they have made to the life of the church during their years on the committee. A slate of nominees to fill this opening will be included in the BOT Supplement report to synod.

18. Assistance for smaller churches and matters related thereto

Synod 2005 instructed the BOT, in consultation with Home Missions, to propose an integrated plan for supporting smaller (and healthier) congregations. Developing such a plan is taking longer than anticipated and this assignment has not yet been completed. It is our hope that a proposal can be advanced by way of the supplementary agenda.

19. The affiliation process

The process for affiliating with the CRC by congregations that desire to do so is presently nearly dysfunctional. Various classes have designed their own procedures, and not all such procedures conform to denominational standards. For a time, it was thought that the proposals of the Alternate Routes to Ministry Committee's work would provide a better format and procedure. However, that has not happened because neither that report, nor the work of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, really addresses this matter. A task force that had been working on this matter was then reconvened and reported on its work to the BOT. The report is attached as Appendix G. The BOT recommends its approval.

20. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the executive director 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. The book reflects, therefore, denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 2006 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of members (baptized and confessing) 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, the total number of members leaving for other CRCs, and the 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 1047 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was at the 82 percent level this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 863 ministries.

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 2005. These booklets are updated by the executive director 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 executive director. 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 2005 survey will be presented to Synod 2006 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 will be updated through Synod 2006 and will be sent on request to any church (or individual) who asks. It can also be found on the CRC website at www.crcna.org/pages/positions.cfm. An abbreviated version can be purchased through Faith Alive Resources by calling 1-800-333-8300.
- e. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

The *Index of Synodical Decisions* is a valuable aid for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The index was updated in 2001 and is available in both book format and CD ROM format through Faith Alive Resources (1-800-333-8300). It is our intention to update the official publications following Synod 2006.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual was revised again in 2005 by the executive director and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the executive director.

B. *Program and finance matters*

A good deal of the Board of Trustees' (BOT) work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of agency reports and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. The details about budgets and other financial matters are contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2006 – Financial and Business Supplement* that is given to delegates to synod at the time the supplementary report is distributed. 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 the CRCNA (ED) with the assistance of the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of denominational ministries (DDM), and the office of the director of finance and administration (DFA). The Ministry Council (MC) is the interagency administrative entity that is consulted as needed for the overall administration of the denomination, has responsibility for the Denominational Ministries Plan and the collaboration among the agencies, and recommends to the Board such program matters as require its approval. The membership of the MC is composed of senior denominational staff and is chaired by the ED.

The Board is thankful to report that the cooperation among the agencies and educational institutions is very good. Joint ministry initiatives, frequent interagency consultations, and the use of shared resources are common. The Board encourages 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. The BOT is committed to continuing the trend of reducing duplication of skills and efforts while maintaining, as much as possible, the specialties in ministry that pertain to specific ministry organizations.

The agencies, with some participation of the educational institutions, have been very active in developing and adapting the use of the Ministries Plan Scorecard (MPS) methodology in administering the various ministries of the denomination. Since 1997, all of the agencies and educational institutions have been functioning within the parameters of a Denominational Ministries Plan. The current version of the plan sets out shared values and ministry priorities. A limitation of the present situation is that while the ministry plan is an appropriate blueprint for guiding denominational ministries, actual implementation is made difficult due to fact that each agency and educational institution functions with a significant measure of independence. In too many instances, the ministries plan functions as an add-on to synodically approved

mandates of many years standing rather than as the central thrust of an agency's efforts. The MPS methodology is intended to overcome that limitation as the agencies together adjust to the stated priorities for the whole of the denomination's efforts.

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

1. Ministries in Canada

The year 2005 was a tumultuous year in Canadian federal politics with a Liberal minority government falling to Parliament's nonconfidence vote in early December. A new government was elected January 23, 2006, and is now taking hold in the land. The ministries of the CRC in Canada have moved along hopefully and with thanks to God within this climate. As seen below, some ministries are impacted by or respond more directly to the political atmosphere than others. Yet, Reformed Christians always work in the firm trust that God rules all governments and persons in our land.

Specific denominational ministry activity unique to the CRC in Canada is as follows:

a. Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The centers located in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton have worked through an encouraging year of ministry. All three centers report growing commitment and participation in worship and spiritual development, especially in services and ceremonies during Advent.

Winnipeg director Ms. Jeannette Sybenga reports that all books and filing systems are completely up to date for the first time in memory. From Regina, Mr. Bert Adema gives thanks for significant unsolicited donations from people outside the CRC; he sees this as an affirmation of ministry. The Edmonton Native Healing Centre suffered a flood in late December, with damage limited because local police noticed the event and notified director Harold Roscher.

In the absence of a director of Canadian ministries, Rev. John Van Til is carrying on a consultation to evaluate the programs of each center and of the ministry as a whole in order to affirm and measure goals and directions. The Board of Trustees has received the assessment report dealing with these ministries and expects to finalize its consideration of the recommendations at its May 2006 meeting. Rev. Van Til also maintains regular contact with and supervision of the local directors.

b. Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG)

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) engages in research, advocacy, and education on issues in Canadian public policy. CCG's work is rooted in biblical and Reformed confessional perspectives and shaped by collaboration with ecumenical agencies and other justice partners. Highlights of 2005-2006 include:

- Submission of the CCG brief "Food Justice Makes a Difference" to Parliament and its subsequent posting on the website of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC);

- Two CCG/Office of Social Justice federal election information packets that were made available to congregations through the communications department;
- Ongoing efforts to provide a prophetic and constructive perspective on international food security, the definition of marriage, affordable housing, and a number of related issues.

Visit www.crcna.org/cg for further information on CCG activities.

c. Service Link

ServiceLink, the volunteer program of the CRC, is in its eleventh year in Canada of providing opportunities of service, learning, and missions to our constituents across the country. Last year, volunteers contributed the most hours in ServiceLink history. Four hundred and forty-four volunteers gave over 65,400 hours to serve God by serving others. Volunteers served in Indonesia and Sri Lanka with CRWRC's tsunami relief efforts, in Nigeria and Eastern Europe with CRWM in the Summer Missions Program, in Chicago with a Christian Community Health Centre, and in Honduras with CRWRC on a University of Winnipeg internship. Youth groups traveled during March break to Florida and Mississippi to work in disaster relief and community development respectively.

Although many volunteers prefer to serve overseas, many dedicated volunteers serve each week in the Burlington office, assisting the agencies and programs by providing a wide range of services such as doing mailings for The Back To God Hour, filing for the ServiceLink office, and helping Diaconal Ministries Canada prepare board meetings. We thank God for his continued faithfulness in providing CRC ministries with passionate people in service for his kingdom.

d. Ecumenical relations

The CRC continues its wide and deep ecumenical involvement in Canada. As a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), and KAIROS-Canadian Ecumenical Social Justice Initiatives, our denomination takes part in several forums that give opportunity for Reformed witness as well as mutual learning. For example, volunteers from congregations nationwide represent the CRC on KAIROS program committees that present a unified, consensual Christian witness on ecological, economic, aboriginal, and human rights themes. As part of the ecumenical network, the CRC has been able to lend its voice to the many churches around the world that are advocating for the release of the Christian peacemakers kidnapped in Baghdad before Christmas by a militant fundamentalist Islamic group. Although we do not know their fate at this time, we continue in prayer for them.

e. Race Relations

In December 2005, the Office of Race Relations hired its first staff member in Canada. Mr. Steve Kabetu, a member of Friendship Community CRC, Toronto, is working half-time out of the Burlington office. A native of Kenya, Steve and his family live in Ajax, Ontario. His task is to continue "widening the circle" by strengthening ethnic diver-

sity within CRC churches in Canada. Working with CRC agencies and the Denominational Office staff as part of the antiracism programs, Mr. Kabetu is branching out from the grassroots programs first developed by volunteers among Toronto-area congregations. This work will broaden the scope of All Nations Heritage Week and support multiethnic conferences and culturally diverse church plants in Canada.

f. Personnel changes

The office of the director of Canadian ministries (DCM) had been vacant for nearly a year when in September 2005 the Board of Trustees appointed the Rev. Bruce Adema to this position. Rev. Adema, former pastor in St. Albert, Alberta, will finish his term of seminary teaching as a CRWM missionary in the Philippines in May 2006 and be introduced to Synod 2006. From December 2005 until Rev. Adema's arrival, the Rev. James Dekker, pastor of Covenant CRC, in St. Catharines, is serving one day a week in the Burlington office.

2. Report of BOT-related ministry programs

a. The Office of Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention, directed by Ms. Beth Swagman, was established by Synod 1994. This office continues to assist churches and classes with educational materials, advice, and support. Working within the organizational framework of the Denominational Offices, Ms. Swagman provides churches with the resources necessary to both prevent abuse and deal with its ugly realities in the church. The very existence of this ministry is a reminder that the brokenness of our world also impacts the church. By raising awareness and providing the tools necessary to combat abuse in the church, this office provides an important service to the CRC. The full report from Abuse Prevention is contained in Appendix H.

b. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries, led by former U.S. Army chaplain, Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., supports and assists Christian Reformed chaplains. While normally employed by nondenominational organizations, these chaplains represent the CRC in many and varied settings. Chaplains most often encounter people at their point of greatest need and vulnerability. Often these encounters and the work of the chaplains take place in a secular or interfaith setting, making their tasks even more challenging and complex. These men and women are the heart and hands of the church in often difficult and complex situations. A full report from the Chaplaincy Ministries is contained in Appendix I.

c. The Office of Disability Concerns

Established in 1984, the Office of Disability Concerns continues to faithfully minister to, and with, persons living with disabilities. This year is a year of transition for Disability Concerns. After fourteen years of faithful service as director of the Office of Disability Concerns, Dr. James Vanderlaan is retiring. The church is grateful for his work and his leadership in breaking barriers and enhancing the ministry of Disability Concerns. Under his leadership, the church has become more aware of

and responsive to the gifts and needs of our disabled members and their families.

Over the past two years, the Disability Concerns Advisory Council has been evaluating the future and scope of this ministry. It recommended that the CRC continue the ministry under the leadership of a full-time director. In response, the BOT has implemented a search process. It is anticipated that by the time synod meets, a new director will have been selected for a three year term. Dr. Vanderlaan's report can be found in Appendix J.

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

The scope and work of this ministry, under the direction of Rev. Duane Visser, continues to expand. Churches continue to seek advice and support in times of conflict and pain. As the need for intervention continues to increase, it is also evident that more needs to be done to promote prevention and education. Rev. Norman Thomas focuses much of his attention on this part of the ministry. In addition, work is being done to evaluate the needs of the many unordained staff persons in our churches. This growing field of professionals is often overlooked by the broader church, and Pastor-Church Relations is seeking ways to more effectively support these staff persons. Pastor-Church Relations also provides information services to assist churches in their ministerial search processes. The efforts of Pastor-Church Relations are more fully described in the report that is contained in Appendix K.

e. The Office of Race Relations

Directed by Rev. Esteban Lugo, the ministry of Race Relations is moving forward with the plan to bring about biblical reconciliation within the church. The director, working with others, has developed a new approach that addresses not only antiracism but also the importance of reconciliation and restoration of relationships. Rev. Lugo is assisted by Rev. Norberto Wolf in California and Mr. Steven Kabetu in Canada. Together, they are providing new training to assist churches and classes. Rev. Lugo's report is attached in Appendix L.

f. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, as coordinator of the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, has dedicated much of his time and energy this past year to the Micah Challenge. The Micah Challenge, endorsed by Synod 2004, is a rapidly growing movement to reduce and overcome poverty around the world. Additionally, Mr. Vander Meulen and his staff work diligently in efforts to bring justice around the world, beginning in North America. These activities 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. A more complete report is contained in Appendix M.

g. The Office of Ministry Planning

Mr. Michael Bruinooge serves the denomination as the director of ministry planning. The basic document of reference is the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP) that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod reviewed and endorsed the plan in 2002, and the identity statement that is part of the DMP is available in booklet form as well as posted on the denominational website.

The DMP was revised by the Board of Trustees earlier this year. This revision includes the new vision and mission statements adopted by Synod 2005. It also retains the 2002 plan's important attention to biblical and theological identity. Its changes are in the plan's summary of core values and strategic objectives.

The four core values remain the same, yet each has been given a new set of implications for our denomination and its ministries.

The plan's ten new strategic objectives are as follows:

- 1) Transform lives and communities
- 2) Create and sustain healthy congregations
- 3) Transcend boundaries
- 4) Disciple believers
- 5) Develop leaders
- 6) Nurture children and youth
- 7) Become ministries of choice
- 8) Develop staff capacity
- 9) Ignite generosity
- 10) Partner for impact

It is important to note that the second objective—create and sustain healthy congregations—was endorsed by Synod 2005 as the priority for our ministries at the present time. As the plan itself comments, "By focusing on the health of the local congregation the board recognizes both need and opportunity. Many congregations are struggling. They need attention—and they need resources. Yet the purpose of this attention—and the fruit of congregational health—is that they see and seize opportunities to be agents of God's transforming mission, locally, nationally, and throughout the world."

The revised DMP can be found in its entirety in Appendix N. In order to effectively implement the plan throughout our ministries, the board has adopted a tool widely used in business, government, and nonprofit organizations, called the Balanced Scorecard. Our own term for it is the Ministries Plan Scorecard (MPS). The MPS gives us the means to ensure that all our ministry agencies are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan's ten objectives. Although the MPS will not be fully operational for another year, we are hopeful that it will help the board use the plan as a dynamic instrument for oversight of our ministries.

h. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

The Christian Reformed Church is continuing its involvement in the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) initiative that is funded by a grant

from Lilly Endowment, Inc., to support and strengthen pastors in their ministries. The grant amount is \$1,999,278 over five years, ending on December 31, 2007. The grant is administered out of the Denominational Office and represents a collaborative approach involving Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations.

This year again we were very pleased with the interest shown in the SPE program by pastors, congregations, classes, and denominational agencies. At the website cited below, a summary of the program can be found, including contact information, vision, program elements, highlights of 2005, and plans for 2006:

Website: www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

E-mail: pastoralexcellence@crcna.org

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 scheduled for Synod 2006:

- The Back to God Hour
- Christian Reformed World Missions
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

4. Discipleship Office

Synod 2005 adopted a recommendation that a Discipleship Office be established and instructed the BOT to take the initiative to help make that come about. In consultation with CRC Publications, the BOT has decided that such an office should be located within the framework of the healthy church initiative. Further development of that directive is currently underway.

5. CRC Foundation

The CRC Foundation in the United States, a Michigan 501(C)(3) corporation, continues to provide support for some of the ministries of the denomination and to promote interagency projects and initiatives. In late 2003, the CRC Foundation-Canada was formed but has not yet become active in Canada. Most of the activity of the foundation is for the current year in which funds are received and distributed. The foundation directors also function as the oversight board over denominational investments. These investments are primarily composed of temporary cash reserves and bequests that are waiting to be liquidated. Neither the foundation in Canada nor in the United States has significant long-term assets at this time.

With the retirement of Mr. R. Jack and Mrs. Rosemary De Vos last year, the BOT has authorized the recruitment for a full-time director. The director will assist in the work of the Foundation, but the BOT also decided that the person filling this position will be the Director of Development for the CRC and as such provide coordination and leadership to the development staff of the various agencies. The recruitment for a qualified person has thus far not been successful. However, the search continues, and it is hoped that the position can be filled in the near future.

C. *Financial matters*

Most of the financial information is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2006 – 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 2007 (July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007), and recommended ministry share amounts for the year 2007. In addition, synod will be 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 Rev. W. Wayne Leys, chairman of the Board; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That one of the officers of synod offer a prayer of thanksgiving for Dr. David H. Engelhard's service as general secretary from 1994 to 2005. Furthermore, that synod adopt the following resolution and communicate it to Mrs. Jeanne Engelhard and her family:

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church, gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 10-16, 2006, expresses its gratitude to the Lord for the service of Dr. David H. Engelhard, and to his family for sharing in David's life and ministry during his years of service. The members of synod express their Christian empathy and condolences to the Engelhard family for the passing from this life of Dr. Engelhard December 22, 2005. May the God of all comfort sustain and encourage you.

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

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

E. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

F. That synod recognize Dr. Robert C. Heerspink's appointment to be the director of The Back to God Hour and that Dr. Heerspink be permitted to address synod to extend his personal greetings (II, A, 6).

G. That synod ratify the appointment of Ms. Ida Kaastra Mutoigo as the CRWRC-Canada director (II, A, 6).

H. That synod recognize Rev. Bruce G. Adema's appointment to be the director of Canadian ministries and that Rev. Adema be permitted to address synod to extend his personal greetings (II, A, 7).

I. That synod adopt the recommendations of the membership count report (II, A, 13) as follows:

1. That synod request that the following be added to the current hardship policy in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

- e. A significant number of professing members in military service.
- f. A significant number of professing members who have moved to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church and have exercised their right to “retain their membership in the church of their former residence” or in “the nearest Christian Reformed church.”

2. That synod request that the following be added to the current Ministry Share Policies section in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

That synod remind the churches of the definition of inactive membership adopted by Synod 1998 as cited above and judged by Synod 1999 to be sufficiently clear and of the fact that this definition is included annually on the Yearbook reporting form.

3. That synod request that the following be added to the current conclusion in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

That synod declare that with respect to the count of inactive members only those numbers will be so recorded in the Yearbook that have been presented to and approved by a church’s classis at its fall meeting. The stated clerk of each classis shall communicate the approved numbers for each congregation to the executive director of the CRC by November 1 of each year. It is understood that these approved numbers are deemed accurate for the purposes of the Ministers’ Pension Fund, classical ministry shares, and denominational ministry shares.

4. That synod request that the following be added as a conclusion to the current policies listed in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

In reporting membership counts, churches are encouraged to follow the current policies and definitions as indicated above and to make faithful use of the appropriate guidelines in place with respect to hardship and inactive member categories. Churches are reminded that our unique system of ministry share contributions is entirely dependent on mutual trust and accountability, on honesty, on forthrightness, and on equity for all. Classes are requested to fulfill their responsibilities not only in monitoring but also in providing assistance where needed by requesting congregations able to do so to help those who are struggling to meet their commitments to classical and denominational ministry shares. In this way, the assemblies and their various agencies will be able to make ministry decisions in a climate of realistic budgeting.

J. That synod adopt the recommendations for the revision of Article 41 of the Church Order as proposed (see Appendix F):

1. It is recommended that synod revise Church Order Article 41 as follows:

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one of its meetings annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important in the life and ministry of member congregations or in the denomination.

Grounds:

- a. The history of Article 41 demonstrates that the current formulation generally has not resulted in fruitful work.
 - b. Encouraging churches to discuss ministry issues that they believe are important for their life together is likely to result in fruitful work.
2. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form by adding the following sentence to the top half of the form:

We testify that our council faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and diligently and effectively attends to ministry within our congregation, community, classis, denomination, and the broader kingdom of God.

3. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form by deleting the word *hereby* from the sentence currently on the form. The bottom half of the credential would read:

Church Order Article 41 calls classis to assist its member churches in the following way:

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one meeting annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important.

Two questions would follow. First, "In what aspect of your ministry would you like the assistance of classis?" This was one of the questions under Article 41 from 1914-1947 and, in essence, has remained a question because the back of the credential reads, "Items of Information and Requests for Advice or Help of Classis." Making this an open question encourages each council to think specifically about its ministry and highlights the availability of assistance from classis.

The second question is: "What aspect of ministry would you like to discuss at classis?" This question will assist the classis in determining matters of specific importance to its member churches.

4. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form as found in the Addendum to Appendix F.

K. That synod adopt the change proposed by Synod 2005 in Church Order Article 8 (II, A, 15).

L. That synod accept the invitation of the First CRC of Edmonton, Alberta to be the convening church for Synod 2010 (II, A, 16).

M. That synod reappoint the eligible members of the Judicial Code Committee for a second three-year term (II, A, 17).

N. That synod adopt the recommendations of the Affiliation Process Report as follows (II, A, 19):

1. That the BOT recommend that Synod 2006 approve the affiliation process as described in Appendix G.
2. That synod instruct classes and synodical deputies to follow the procedures and phases outlined in this report so that consistency can be achieved in the affiliation process.
3. That synod approve the process and phases for affiliation to be inserted as a Supplement to Article 38-g of the Church Order.

O. That synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 25 to October 1, 2006, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday on October 1, 2006 (see Appendix L).

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

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Peter Borgdorff, executive director

Appendix A Curriculum Vitae

Robert C. Heerspink

Personal Description

I was privileged to be raised in a home where God's covenant faithfulness was put on display. My father worked in Christian education, both as a high school teacher and on staff at Calvin College. My mother contracted polio when I was a year old, and was confined to a wheelchair for fifty years. The way in which she handled her disability was a witness to me of God's grace and how one can serve God in the midst of all circumstances. During my high school years, I made a public profession of faith and began to wrestle seriously with a call to pastoral ministry. The pursuit of that call shaped my educational studies after high school.

After completing studies at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, I entered parish ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. I married the former Edith (Edie) Miedema in 1980, and we have been blessed with three children: Eric, Joel, and Amy. Edie has been an art educator at a number of Christian schools throughout West Michigan.

I have served four churches throughout the West Michigan area during my twenty-six years of parish ministry. During that time, I returned to the class-

room and earned a doctor of ministry degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. My focus on financial stewardship opened the door to involvement with some of the early initiatives of the denomination in the area of financial stewardship education.

I have a deep love for the Christian Reformed Church, where I was nurtured in Christian faith. Increasingly, I have had a desire to serve the broader church beyond the local parish. That desire has led to involvement in several denominational committees and boards, and now to a desire to serve the church through the ministry of The Back to God Hour.

I have a deep concern for people, and their need to hear the gospel. I look forward to the challenge of providing leadership to The Back to God Hour in a time of significant cultural and technological change.

Educational History

1993	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
1979	Calvin Theological Seminary
1978	Calvin Theological Seminary
1975	Calvin College

Work History

2005 - Present	Interim Director, Back to God Hour
2005 - Present	Ministry Practices Specialist, Calvin Theological Seminary
1999 - Present	Senior Pastor, Faith Community Christian Reformed Church, Wyoming, Michigan
1989 - 1999	Senior Pastor, Cottonwood Heights Christian Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan
1984 - 1989	Pastor, Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church, Portage, Michigan
1979 - 1984	Pastor, Eastmanville Christian Reformed Church, Eastmanville, Michigan

Appendix B Curriculum Vitae

Ida Kaastra Mutoigo

Personal Description

My life began on a dairy farm within a family that was quite active in the Christian Reformed Churches of Ingersoll and Aylmer, Ontario. Eventually, I realized that the church could not save me from my sinful nature, but Jesus Christ could. I decided to follow him and, by the age of 13, felt God's call to serve him as a missionary someday.

After completing my education at Dordt College and the University of Guelph, I began my career in missions with CRWRC and served in Uganda for nine years. There, I met and married my husband, James Mutoigo, and we eventually had three children: Violet, Bryant, and Angela. From 1994-2000, our family lived in Canada where I completed my master's degree while serving

also as the coordinator for ServiceLink. Then, we felt God's leading again to East Africa where I have served for the past six years as the team leader for CRWRC and where James managed his own law firm.

Now, as we transition back to Canada, I realize that God has blessed me with many experiences, both painful and exciting, that have developed my gifts in servant leadership and my passion for working with the church to impact communities throughout the world. It is my prayer that through our ministry together, we will become the kind of transformed community we wish to see in this world. May God be glorified through it all!

Educational History

2001	McGill University
1999	McMaster University Center for Continuing Education
1998	Mohawk College
1985	University of Guelph
1982	Dordt College

Work History

2000 - Present	Team Leader, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), East and Southern Africa Ministry Team (ESA MT)
2002 - Present	Part-time Lecturer, Uganda Christian University (UCU),
1995 - 2000	ServiceLink Coordinator, Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)
1989 - 1994	Field Director, CRWRC, Kampala, Uganda.
1985 - 1989	CRWRC Planning and Development Advisor, Vision Terudo, Ngora (Ugandan national partner agency), Uganda

Appendix C Curriculum Vitae

Bruce Gerald Adema

Personal Description

I was born in Brampton, Ontario, to Martin and Trudy Adema, who had both immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands when they were children. They met at Immanuel CRC, the church in which I was baptized. In 1981, I made public profession of my faith at First CRC of Guelph, Ontario.

In Guelph, I met my wife, Joanne Teresa Thalen, daughter of Jack and Joanne Thalen. When we married, I was employed as an ambulance officer in Chesley, Ontario, and we became members of First CRC in Owen Sound, Ontario. During our time in Chesley, we were blessed with the birth of our first child, Rebecca Johanna.

Joanne and I talked often about what was God's will and calling for us and concluded that the Lord wanted us to serve the kingdom in the ministry. I resigned from the ambulance service, and we moved to Grand Rapids to enroll at Calvin College as a freshman. During our time of study at the college

and at Calvin Seminary, we had three more children: Justin Martin, Seth Jacob, and Chara Trudy.

My faith journey began at the beginning of my life as my parents made God and church a central part of our world through teaching and modeling the Christian faith to me and my siblings. As a youth, my faith was present but not very active. When Joanne and I married and especially when we began to have children, I realized that I needed to deepen my relationship with the Lord and live the life of Christian discipleship. My experiences in life and ministry have only helped deepen my assurance of the truth of the gospel and have made me more committed to serving the Lord in whatever way he calls.

Educational History

1988 - 1992 Calvin Theological Seminary
1985 - 1988 Calvin College
1980 - 1981 Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology

Work History

1997 - present Theological Educator, Koinonia Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed World Missions, Davao City, Philippines
— Currently serving as Interim Seminary Director (equivalent to seminary president in North America) during the year-long absence of the seminary director
— Served as Director of the Master of Divinity program
— Church Planter in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines
1992 - 1997 Pastor, Christian Reformed Church, St. Albert, Alberta
1988 - 1992 Calvin Theological Seminary, Field Education,
— Intern pastor, First Abbotsford CRC, BC (1989-1990)
— Summer student pastor at the Hope CRC, Thunder Bay, Ontario (1991).
1981 - 1985 Chesley and District Ambulance Service, Chesley, Ontario

Appendix D

Christian Day School Tuition Assistance for Calvin Theological Seminary Students

I. Background

Synod 2005 received Overture 9 from Classis Grand Rapids East requesting

synod to develop a denominationally supported fund to provide financial assistance to seminarians pursuing master of divinity degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary so these students may be assisted with tuition costs incurred in sending their children to Christian day schools.

Grounds:

1. Christian day school education is valued by our denomination and encouraged by our Church Order.
2. The future leaders of our denomination should model our denomination's commitment to Christian day school education in the educational choices

they make for their own children. These choices should not be limited by financial constraints.

3. Because of a variety of factors within the congregations of our classis and within the student population itself, congregations in Classis Grand Rapids East, which extended such assistance in the past, are unable to continue their past level of support.
4. Although seminary students may spend a number of years in the classes near Calvin Theological Seminary, the institution where the majority of our ministers are trained, these future ministers will serve the entire denomination. The denomination, not merely the home classis or the classes geographically near the seminary, should contribute to Christian day school costs of the children of its future ministers.

(Agenda for Synod 2005, p. 579)

Synod's response to the overture was to

instruct the Board of Trustees to conduct a study on how to assist Calvin Theological Seminary students whose intention is to enter into the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church with Christian school tuition for their children.

Grounds:

1. Your committee has become aware that there is significant need. At the present time there are 115 M.Div. students enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary. Twenty-nine of those students have families with school-age children. The total number of school-age children of those 29 families is 66. The cost of educating these 66 children is in excess of \$350,000 in the Grand Rapids Christian School system, and this is only taking into account those students who are enrolled in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program at Calvin Theological Seminary.
2. The cost of Christian schools for those entering the Seminary should not be a hindrance for those contemplating entering the ministry.
3. Right now the burden for assisting Calvin Theological Seminary students with their tuition falls on just a few of our churches and classes.
4. We do not believe that it is wise or prudent for synod to specify how relief (i.e., a ministry share or asking student fund committees for greater assistance for those students who have school-age children) might be given to these students and who is to administer such relief without further study and reflection.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 738)

The Board of Trustees appointed a committee that included Mr. John Bolt, Mr. Paul Dozeman, Mr. Phillip Vanden Berge, and Mr. Thomas DeJonge. The following is a summary of their work and recommendation to the Board for action.

The committee believes that it is appropriate for the Christian Reformed Church in North America to provide assistance to all full-time students enrolled in the master of divinity program at Calvin Theological Seminary—tuition assistance for their dependent children enrolled in a qualified Christian day school beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. The assistance would be in the form of an interest free loan subject to forgiveness for service, equal to 50 percent of the actual tuition costs for the children and limited to 50 percent of the tuition charged by the Grand Rapids Christian School Association. Funding for the program would come from an additional \$2 ministry share allocation to the Calvin Theological Seminary budget. The committee's conclusion and recommendations are based on the following considerations and procedures.

II. Background data

The committee requested detailed information from Calvin Theological Seminary regarding students with dependent children. Mr. Richard Sytsma, dean of students, created and distributed a survey for students to respond to. The survey queried the following information:

- The program in which the student was enrolled at the seminary.
- The number of dependent children, including their ages and grade in school.
- The tuition that was required for their children to attend day school and any assistance that they were receiving to pay such tuition.

There were fifty-one respondents to the survey who indicated that they had dependent children. Of these, twenty-five were enrolled in the master of divinity program. Because the instruction of synod to the Board of Trustees was to assist those students of Calvin Theological Seminary who were studying to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, only these students were included in the analysis.

The families of these twenty-five students included sixty-three children. This is similar to the number of children considered by the committee at synod and is felt to be a good approximation for the near-term master of divinity student population. Five of these families have children who have not yet attained school age, three families home-school their children, and one family sends their children to the public schools. This leaves sixteen families with children enrolled in Christian day school.

The total tuition bill for those families who did send their children to a private Christian school was \$147,500. Tuition assistance from various sources totaled \$63,700 leaving an out of pocket tuition cost of \$83,800. It should be noted that three of the sixteen families sent their children to the Lutheran schools whose tuition is significantly lower than the tuition rates of the Grand Rapids Christian School Association.

The source of assistance for these families is quite varied. Some receive assistance from their local congregations, including those that participate in the covenant plan. Some receive tuition discounts directly from the school. Still others receive tuition assistance from family members.

If all the day school age children of the master of divinity students attended Grand Rapids Christian Schools, the annual tuition bill would be approximately \$317,000.

The following is the proposed structure of the recommended program.

III. Eligibility

A. *Qualified Christian day school*

Qualification of a Christian day school would be dependent on the declaration in its bylaws of a Reformed perspective in keeping with the model Basis of the Grand Rapids Christian School Association as found in the Addendum. The registrar's office at Calvin Theological Seminary would maintain a listing of qualified Christian day schools and be the sole judge of the qualification of a particular school.

B. Full-time master of divinity student

Only full-time master of divinity students with dependent children enrolled in a qualifying Christian day school would be eligible for this assistance. Students must be enrolled for ten credit hours each semester to be considered full time. If the seminarian became part-time or changed their degree program, no further assistance would be available until full-time status as a master of divinity student was reestablished.

C. Financial need

The dollar amount of financial assistance provided to the full-time master of divinity student would be determined solely by the level of tuition at a qualifying school and would not be dependent on the financial capacity of the specific seminarian. Creating a financial need qualification could make this program conflict with the covenant plans adopted by local congregations.

For example, assume there are two full-time master of divinity students who are members of the same Christian Reformed Church, which has adopted the covenant program to pay for the tuition of the children of its members. If one of the seminarians had significant financial need and was provided fifty percent of the tuition of the dependent children, while the second seminarian had less need and therefore would qualify for a smaller tuition assistance payment, the local congregation would be paying different amounts to the Christian day school for two of its children.

The concern is that the payments by the congregation would then be dependant on the financial capacity of the parents. This would be contrary to the basis upon which the covenant program operates. The guiding principle is that of the congregation responding to a promise made to help raise the children of the church in the ways of the Lord and providing the financial resources to accomplish its commitment without regard to the financial ability of the parents.

D. Tuition assistance loan

1. Loan agreement

The tuition assistance provided through this program would in fact be a zero interest loan. The qualified master of divinity student would sign a financial agreement each time tuition assistance was provided. The agreement would spell out the amount of the loan as well as the repayment provisions. This would be a loan between Calvin Theological Seminary and the eligible student. These agreements will be maintained by the seminary administrative offices.

2. Amount of the loan

The loan amount would be 50 percent of the tuition bill for the semester per the statement from the qualified Christian day school. The 50 percent limit would be based on each dependent child enrolled.

3. Loan repayment

The Christian day school tuition assistance loans will become due and payable six months following the earlier of the date the master of divinity student graduates from Calvin Theological Seminary or that the master of divinity student no longer has full-time status. If full-time status is reinstated, any payments required under the loan agreement would be suspended.

If the master of divinity student has graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and has taken a call to serve a Christian Reformed Church, or has taken a position as a new church planter working with the Christian Reformed Church in North America through an agency of the denomination or local classis, the monthly payments under the loan agreement will be suspended until six months after such time as the individual no longer serves in either capacity.

The loan is payable monthly in sixty equal payments. If payments are initiated and subsequently suspended, the number of such payments and any future payments shall not total more than sixty. The seminary will administer the collection of these payments.

4. Special loan dispensation

If the individual has served as the pastor of a Christian Reformed Church congregation, or a new church planter as described above, for sixty months, 50 percent of the original loan principal will be forgiven. For each additional twelve months of service as the pastor of a Christian Reformed Church or new church planter, an additional 10 percent of the original loan principal will be forgiven. The amount forgiven shall not exceed the then current outstanding balance owing on the original loan.

IV. Funding

A. It is recommended that the funding for this program be made through ministry shares. In 2004, the latest full year for which data is available, \$24,533,000 in ministry shares were collected. This equates to \$93,580 for each \$1 of ministry shares requested. The estimated tuition to Christian day school for the children of full-time master of divinity seminarians is in the range of \$300,000 to \$350,000. An initial target of \$2 of requested ministry shares would be expected to fund half of the estimated tuition cost.

B. The additional \$2 of ministry shares would be added to the annual budget of Calvin Theological Seminary as a specifically designated fund. If, during the school year, less funds are required to provide tuition assistance than the \$2 ministry share delivers, the excess funds are to remain specifically designated to provide the assistance in future years.

C. All fund collections received by the seminary from Christian day school assistance repayments are to also be returned to this specifically designated fund. The liquidity available from this fund to provide the tuition assistance will be reviewed annually as part of the annual review of the seminary financial budget with adjustments to the ministry share allocation as deemed appropriate.

V. Recommendations

A. It is recommended that the Christian Reformed Church in North America provide to all full-time students enrolled in the master of divinity program at Calvin Theological Seminary tuition assistance for their dependent children enrolled in a qualified Christian day school beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. The assistance would be in the form of an interest free loan subject to forgiveness for service, equal to 50 percent of the actual tuition costs for the

children, limited to 50 percent of the tuition of the Grand Rapids Christian School Association.

B. It is recommended that the funding for the program be provided through an additional \$2 ministry share allocation to the Calvin Theological Seminary budget.

C. It is recommended that the provisions for implementing this proposal be approved.

Addendum

Basis of the Grand Rapids Christian Schools

Section 1.3. Basis. The supreme standard of The Grand Rapids Christian Schools shall be the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, herein confessed to be the infallible Word of God, as these are interpreted in the historic Reformed confessions: The Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort.

Acknowledging that these Scriptures, instructing us of God, ourselves, and God's creation, contain basic principles authoritative and relevant for education, we hold that:

- (a) The authority and responsibility for educating children resides in the parents or guardians of the children and not in the state or the church. Parents, however, may delegate their authority to those who can competently carry out this God-given parental right.
- (b) The primary aim of a Christian parent in securing the education of his child should be to give him a Christian education—that is, an education whose goal is to equip the child for living the Christian life as a member of the Christian community in contemporary society.
- (c) Christian parents, when delegating the authority for educating their children, should delegate it to those institutions, which seek to provide Christian education for the student.
- (d) The responsibility for maintaining such institutions rests on the entire Christian community.
- (e) The Christ proclaimed in the infallible Scriptures is the Redeemer and Renewer of our entire life, thus also of our teaching and learning. Consequently in a school which seeks to provide a Christian education it is not sufficient that the teachings of Christianity be a separate subject in the curriculum, but the Word of God must be an all-pervading force in the educational program.

Section 1.4. Subscription to the Basis of GRCS

- (a) Subscription to the Basis of GRCS
Subscription means agreement with and endorsement of its statement of "Scripture as the infallible Word of God," the three Reformed confessions as explained in B and C below, and "the basic principles...of education, a-e."

(b) Subscription to the Three Reformed Confessions

Subscription means agreement with the basic doctrines of the historic ecumenical Christian faith as expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and stated in the three Reformed confessions: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

Among these basic doctrines are the following: general and special revelation; the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; the triune nature of God; the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ; the historicity of creation and the human fall into sin; the incarnation, virgin birth, sinless life, atoning sacrificial death, bodily resurrection and ascension, universal reign, and future return of Jesus Christ; the presence and sovereign power of the Holy Spirit in creation and in the regeneration and sanctification of God's people; salvation by grace alone through faith alone; the church as the visible body of Christ in the world, people from every nation who love Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; and the obligation of Christians in gratitude for salvation to live according to God's will. This list of doctrines is illustrative, not exhaustive.

(c) Exceptions to the Three Reformed Confessions

Subscription does not mean unqualified agreement with or endorsement of everything contained in the three Reformed confessions. Subscription allows for exceptions of two kinds. The lists of possible exceptions are illustrative, not exhaustive.

- 1) Incidental statements that are not essential to the formulation of basic doctrines but are problematic because they may be incorrect or inappropriate. Examples are: Paul as the author of Hebrews; ungracious historical references to Roman Catholics and Anabaptists.
- 2) Particular doctrines about which orthodox biblical Christians do not agree. Examples are: the nature and administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper; the organization and government of the church; the relationship between God's sovereign grace and human responsibility in election and regeneration; and the sequence of events at the return of Jesus Christ.

(d) Summary

Subscription to the Basis means unqualified endorsement of Scripture as God's infallible Word, the Reformed confessional statement of the basic doctrines of ecumenical Christianity, and the biblical principles for education. Reservation about any of these positions, with the exceptions noted in C. above, indicates an inability to subscribe.

(e) Adjudication of Questions about Subscription

If a question arises concerning whether a particular doctrinal statement is required by subscription or is a possible exception, determination shall be made by the GRCS administrator or governing body responsible according to GRCS organizational structure: principals, the superintendent, or if necessary, the Board of Trustees.

Adopted 3/14/05

Section 1.5. *Application of the Basis.*

“Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony” shall function as a summary and exemplary application of the world and life view taught in Scripture and promoted in GRCS.

Adopted 3/14/05

Appendix E Membership Count

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

Synod 2005 instructed the BOT “to rework the BOT report, Appendix B, III ‘Membership Count’ (pp. 49-52) in consultation with Dr. Henry De Moor and report back to Synod 2006” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 780). Assisted by a study committee consisting of Dr. Henry De Moor, Mr. Mike Dykema, the Rev. Leonard Hofman, and the Rev. Dan Mouw, the BOT now presents the following (reworked) report and accompanying recommendations.

B. Background

The mandate to the BOT from Synod 2003 requires that “the widely divergent practices of how membership is counted” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 641) be reviewed. Not only may there be divergent practices in counting members, there are also widely divergent practices in reporting members. For years, we have heard that churches receiving grants tend to report a larger set of numbers to the granting agency than they do to the *Yearbook*. They know that ministry shares are figured on the latter numbers.

Theoretically, the membership count within the CRC should be very easy to determine. The CRC recognizes two membership categories: baptized members and confessing or professing members. A church need only add up the number in each category and report it to the *Yearbook* and to the classis of which it is a part. The baptized member category has been less problematic to the churches than the confessing member category.

Over the years, synod has recognized that not all churches are able to pay their ministry share amount for each member. The so-called small church category gave a certain reprieve in ministry share expectations to churches smaller than 193 confessing members (*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 560; at the time, 80 families). This means of assisting smaller churches should not drastically affect the way members are counted, and yet even the smaller churches find it tempting not to record all their members. There is general agreement that giving in to this temptation violates the principle that all churches meet their ministry share obligation in an equitable manner.

One factor affecting membership count is the church council’s knowledge of which members are actually supporting the church financially. There is a temptation to delete certain members from the count when it is known that they are not paying their fair share. These are not members who *cannot* give but who *do not* give. Nonetheless, the council does not want to be responsible for ministry shares for such people and thus drops them from the membership count. Denominationally, no one really knows how many members are in this category. Here, too, there is general agreement that giving in to this temptation

violates the principle that all churches meet their ministry share obligation in an equitable manner.

II. Categories

The two categories affecting membership count more than any others and therefore demanding synod's attention are those of "hardship" and "inactive members." It is with respect to these two categories that the BOT now comes with observations and recommendations.

A. *The hardship category*

The hardship category includes those members who *cannot* rightly be expected to give financially to the church—at least not very much. In this category are college students, single parents, fixed-income elderly, unemployed and underemployed, those in military service, "members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church" and have exercised their right to "retain their membership in the church of their former residence" or in "the nearest Christian Reformed church" (Article 67, Church Order), and others in comparable circumstances. Even though synod has put in place guidelines in keeping with which churches can obtain relief through their classis for such circumstances (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p. 709, and *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 567), the temptation (and an easier route) is to obtain relief by not identifying these members in the first place. Therefore, many members in the so-called hardship categories are not reported, and the accountability to classis in this matter is circumvented.

The BOT reminds synod of the following action of Synod 1993 currently included as a policy that is placed annually before all local and classical treasurers in a mailing entitled *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

That synod adopt the following guidelines updated from the Acts of Synod 1986 for use by the classes in arriving at an attainable ministry-share percentage when a local congregation believes it cannot pay the full ministry-share allocation.

- a. A significant number of professing members who are unemployed.
- b. A higher than average number of professing members with low income or on public assistance.
- c. A significant number of professing members whose marriage partners are not members of the church.
- d. A significant number of professing members who are full-time students.

(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 567)

The BOT recommends that synod decide that the following be added to the current hardship policy (above) in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

- e. A significant number of professing members in military service.
- f. A significant number of professing members who have moved to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church and have exercised their right to "retain their membership in the church of their former residence" or in "the nearest Christian Reformed church" (Church Order Article 67).

Note: It is assumed that virtually every congregation will have at least some individuals who fall into the hardship category and yet be able to give 100

percent of ministry shares. The phrase *significant number*, as used in these guidelines, therefore refers to what classes may regard as an exceptionally high ratio of such individuals.

B. The inactive members category

The most recent factor affecting membership count is the category of inactive baptized member or inactive confessing member. Even though the definition for this inactive category is clearly stated, many churches are not following the definition but instead are lumping both members who cannot give and members who *do not* give into this category. The term *inactive* refers to

those baptized or confessing members who are declared by the consistory to have a relationship to the congregation which has ceased for one year or who for one year have not made faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the Lord's Supper, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., military service, residence in a nursing home, missionary service, students away at school) that make such faithful use impossible.

(*Acts of Synod, 1999, p. 562*)

There are no hard data about how many in the inactive category are appropriately there and how many should really be reported differently. When one is dependent on a thousand different reporting sources, it seems fair to assume that many different factors and presuppositions are influencing the count.

Currently, there is no system in place to monitor either the reporting or the veracity of the reporting of inactive members. The BOT has asked the general secretary (now, presumably, the executive director) to send a letter yearly to those churches who report a higher than average number of inactive members. In 2004, that number amounted to approximately 11 percent. Beyond this measure, it seems appropriate that synod adopt a policy for monitoring this count that parallels the policy currently in place for the hardship category. A system of monitoring and reporting by a classis may provide needed accountability and greater equity and accuracy in the system.

Therefore, the BOT recommends the following:

1. That synod remind the churches of the definition of *inactive* membership adopted by Synod 1998 as cited above and judged by Synod 1999 to be sufficiently clear and of the fact that this definition is included annually on the *Yearbook* reporting form. Further, that this definition be included in the Ministry Share Policies section of *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*.
2. That synod declare that with respect to the count of inactive members only those numbers will be so recorded in the *Yearbook* that have been presented to and approved by a church's classis at its fall meeting. The stated clerk of each classis shall communicate the approved numbers for each congregation to the executive director of the CRC by November 1 of each year. It is understood that these approved numbers are deemed accurate for the purposes of the Ministers' Pension Fund, classical ministry shares, and denominational ministry shares. Further, that this definition be added to the current policies listed in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information* regarding inactive membership count.

In its report to Synod 2005, the BOT made a number of additional recommendations regarding inactive membership. These recommendations were focused on lapsing of membership, on resignation of membership, and also on disciplinary procedures undertaken by elders and consistories such as exclusion of baptized members and excommunication of professing members. The BOT acknowledges that strategies to achieve equity and accuracy in membership count reporting should not include directions regarding the length of time appropriate to these procedures and pastoral methods associated with them. In the nature of the case, such judgments need to be made by our consistories, not predetermined by denominational policies on accurate reporting. Synod observed, therefore, that “the current proposals do not sufficiently distinguish ministry share considerations from pastoral concerns.”

Instead, the BOT is convinced that the best way to achieve fairness in membership count reporting is to emphasize that which underlies our Reformed church government as a whole and our assembly structures in particular, namely, an atmosphere of mutual trust, honesty, forthrightness, and appropriate accountability. The above recommendations have been made in that spirit and, in addition, have hopefully contributed to even greater clarity regarding our denominational ministry share system.

The following recommendation is made in order to keep this matter before the churches on an ongoing basis. In this regard, the committee recommends that the following be added as a conclusion to the current policies listed in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

In reporting membership counts, churches are encouraged to follow the current policies and definitions as indicated above and to make faithful use of the appropriate guidelines in place with respect to hardship and inactive member categories. Churches are reminded that our unique system of ministry share contributions is entirely dependent on mutual trust and accountability, on honesty, on forthrightness, and on equity for all. Classes are requested to fulfill their responsibilities, not only in monitoring, but also in providing assistance where needed by requesting congregations able to do so to help those who are struggling to meet their commitments to classical and denominational ministry shares. In this way, the assemblies and their various agencies will be able to make ministry decisions in a climate of realistic budgeting.

III. Recommendations

The Board of Trustees recommends the following in respect to membership count:

A. That synod request that the following be added to the current hardship policy in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

- e. A significant number of professing members in military service.
- f. A significant number of professing members who have moved to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church and have exercised their right to “retain their membership in the church of their former residence” or in “the nearest Christian Reformed church.”

B. That synod request that the following be added to the current Ministry Share Policies section in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

That synod remind the churches of the definition of *inactive* membership adopted by Synod 1998 as cited above and judged by Synod 1999 to be sufficiently clear and of the fact that this definition is included annually on the *Yearbook* reporting form.

C. That synod request that the following be added to the current conclusion in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

That synod declare that with respect to the count of inactive members only those numbers will be so recorded in the *Yearbook* that have been presented to and approved by a church's classis at its fall meeting. The stated clerk of each classis shall communicate the approved numbers for each congregation to the executive director of the CRC by November 1 of each year. It is understood that these approved numbers are deemed accurate for the purposes of the Ministers' Pension Fund, classical ministry shares, and denominational ministry shares.

D. That synod request that the following be added as a conclusion to the current policies listed in the *Denominational Ministry Shares, Offerings, and Other Financial Information*:

In reporting membership counts, churches are encouraged to follow the current policies and definitions as indicated above and to make faithful use of the appropriate guidelines in place with respect to hardship and inactive member categories. Churches are reminded that our unique system of ministry share contributions is entirely dependent on mutual trust and accountability, on honesty, on forthrightness, and on equity for all. Classes are requested to fulfill their responsibilities, not only in monitoring, but also in providing assistance where needed by requesting congregations able to do so to help those who are struggling to meet their commitments to classical and denominational ministry shares. In this way, the assemblies and their various agencies will be able to make ministry decisions in a climate of realistic budgeting.

Appendix F

Church Order Article 41 Report

I. Mandate from Synod 2005

Synod 2005 received two overtures regarding Church Order Article 41, the article that asks each council to answer six questions on the credentials it submits to each classis meeting. Overture 4 from Classis Zeeland (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 571-72) asserted that the "present questions are neither very productive nor of critical significance in [the] work of mutual assistance and supervision" and requested that these questions "be replaced with a simple testimony on the credential that each council is being faithful to the doctrinal

standards and church order of the Christian Reformed Church and diligent and effective in carrying out its ministry.” Overture 5 from Classis California South (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 573), asserted that question five reflects an “outdated view of how we minister to people,” is no longer implemented, and requested that this question be dropped.

Synod 2005 “affirmed the concerns expressed in these two overtures and asked the Board of Trustees to appoint a committee to recommend changes to Church Order Article 41. *Ground*: The questions contained in Article 41 as it currently functions are perceived to be ineffective” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 722). Also, at Synod 2005 the advisory committee considering the report of the Committee to Study Church Education recommended “that the following question be added to Church Order Article 41: does council diligently provide for the nurturing of the faith of all its members? *Ground*: This vital part of church life is absent from the current list of questions posed by classes to its church delegates” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 719). This recommendation was referred to the committee to be appointed to respond to Overtures 4 and 5.

II. History of Church Order Article 41

Note: Over the years, the material in what is now Article 41 has been in articles with different numbers. For clarity, we will always refer to the article dealing with the questions on the classical credential as Article 41 and the article dealing with church visiting as Article 42.

A. *Predecessors to Church Order Article 41* (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1942—Part 1*, pp. 26-35)

At the Convent of Wezel, 1568, we see the beginning of classical supervision by way of questioning. Classes were to do an investigation “in various churches as to what order is used in the instruction of the Word, as also the regulations for the Sacraments and discipline, and finally, whether Elders and Deacons fulfill their offices zealously and well.” Though not officially adopted, at the first general synod (Emden, 1571) a number of ministers agreed to a certain way of conducting classis: “a president shall be chosen . . . he shall ask each one in particular whether they hold Consistory meetings in their church; whether the discipline of the church runs its course; whether there are heretics to combat; whether they have any doubts as to the main heads of doctrine; whether they are caring for the poor and supervising the schools; whether they need the assistance of other ministers for the government of their church and similar questions.”

The 1572 particular (provincial) synod of Edam “said nothing about any questioning by Classes.” The 1573 particular synod of Alkmaar decreed that in its territory ministers of neighboring churches should meet every Monday as a group. Every other Monday several of these groups would meet together “to see to it that in every congregation efficient Consistories function; that the ministry to the poor and schools are maintained; that good mid-week meetings are held; . . . that the Confession is signed by all.” The 1575 particular synod of Rotterdam decided that the ministers of ten or twelve neighboring churches should meet together in such numbers and at such times as is necessary and at those meetings “shall inquire as to the condition of the Churches, the doctrine and life of the ministers, elders and deacons and such like things.”

In Article 41 of the Church Order of the Synod of Dordt (1578), the questions agreed to at the 1571 synod of Emden were adopted almost word for word.

After summarizing this history, the authors of the 1942 report conclude, "It appears that two ideas combine in the practice of asking these questions at Classis. First of all, historically, they were intended as a matter of mutual supervision, so as to promote good discipline in the Churches. In the second place, they were intended to determine the program of classis. . . . from the fact that this questioning held first place on the agenda, and no other real task is assigned classis (except the hearing and criticism of a sermon), it appears that the work elicited by this questioning constituted the real work of classis."

B. *Synod 1942*

The 1942 report resulted from a request for a synodical ruling on the method of answering the questions in Article 41. Typically, these questions were asked orally by the president of classis, but some classes were beginning to use a questionnaire instead. When the overture of the Grant, Michigan, church to "return to the method formerly in vogue of answering these questions orally" was defeated by Classis Grand Rapids West, Grant asked synod to "declare . . . that the provisions of Art. 41 C.O. can only be met by answering the questions of this Article orally" (*Agenda for Synod 1941 — Part II*, p. 132-36). Synod 1941 responded, "The method of answering these questions by questionnaire is indeed contrary to the spirit and letter of Article 41." However, since this method was finding favor among the churches and had "apparent merits," synod appointed a committee to consider the advisability of using a questionnaire. If the committee deemed this change advisable, it was to advise synod "both as to a revised form for this Article and a form of questionnaire to be used in our Churches."

The 1942 report observes, "Since this article gives no other work to classis, it would seem that our Church Order, too, intended this questioning to constitute the real task of Classis. This is certainly different from the place it now occupies in our Classical meetings. Usually these questions are now asked at the end of the meeting and answered in a most slipshod manner. Van Dellen and Monsma [authors of the *Church Order Commentary*] speak of 'a mere perfunctory last minute formality.' We feel that the custom of requiring overtures on our Letters of Credential, and publishing agenda, robbed this questioning of its program—controlling place, and this, together with the competition of Church Visitation as a means of supervision, made this part of the work of classis practically obsolete."

"As a method of supervision, this questioning by a few general questions, answered *vive voce*, in public, hurriedly at the end of the meeting, is neither efficient nor psychologically wise. What Consistory wishes to reveal abnormalities in its work at such a time and in such a manner? Under such circumstances the question may be raised whether there is much use in maintaining such a custom. This inefficiency was one reason why some Classes ordered a change to a written questionnaire, even though, as Synod stated, this method was contrary to the letter and spirit of Article 41."

The committee asked four questions: "(1) Should we return to the original way of conducting Classes, making these questions the basis of all work done? (2) Should we drop these questions entirely, and improve Church Visitation, relying on that agency to do all the work of supervision? (3) Should we retain

these questions and ask them in the usual way, for antiquities' sake? (4) Should we improve them so that they may again take a real place in our Classical work?"

When it talked about the practice of church visitation, the committee said, "While realizing that, if properly conducted, church visitation is a far more effective, and naturally, a far more thorough way of exercising supervision over the Churches, we would seriously object to dropping this questioning at Classis. Rather than dispense with these questions, we should find a more efficient way for conducting this work of Classis."

The committee recommended that synod approve the questionnaire method of asking the Article 41 questions. It also encouraged synod to improve the questions so they give an accurate picture of congregational conditions and so they "cover those areas of church life which demand supervision under modern conditions." The committee recommended nine questions with the understanding that classes could add to, but not subtract from, the list.

Synod 1942 approved the questionnaire method in addition to the oral method. It also declared "that an inquiry on the part of the Classis into the spiritual state of its several congregations constitutes the central and principle task of classis, and therefore should take precedence. Hence Article 41 should not be taken up at the end of classical meetings but at the outset. Furthermore, Synod directs the attention of the churches to the fact that these questions should never be answered in a perfunctory manner, but should serve as a basis for further examination" (*Acts of Synod 1942*, p. 110). Synod rephrased and added to the list of questions recommended by the committee and adopted eleven questions.

C. *The 1965 revision of the Church Order*

Prompted by a request from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands to work with them on a proposed general revision of the Church Order, Synod 1951 appointed a committee to do that. The committee proposed that Article 41 read as follows: "In order properly to supervise and assist the churches, the president, on behalf of classis, shall at least once a year interview the delegates of each church especially concerning church government and discipline, the ministry of mercy, missions, and Christian education, and such matters as synod and classis may consider of special importance. Admonitions, encouragement, and advice shall be given according to need" (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 456)

The committee made the following comments: "Article [41] specifies how the classes shall seek to execute their supervisory task and work of assistance. Synod will note that the proposed article does not enumerate the precise questions which the chairman would ask of each delegation. The matters for inquiry are merely mentioned. The president will be required to formulate his own questions. The committee hopes that the acceptance of this type of formulation will make this number on the classical agenda more meaningful.

"Synod will also note that this supervisory task by classis and at classis would not be required more than once a year. This also we expect will render this supervisory exercise more meaningful and more profitable. Today the supervisory work we fear is not taken seriously as a general rule, and is almost a fruitless exercise. This we feel is in part due to the faulty method with which this work is done, and the frequency with which it is done" (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 446).

When Synod 1965 adopted the new Church Order, two overtures addressed this article. Classis Toronto asserted that the work outlined in this new article was the duty of the church visitors and that the questions of the present Church Order should be retained (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 447). Classis Hackensack also asked that the present questions be retained because, among other reasons, the new wording “is lacking in precision and opens the door for possible abuses of a hierarchical and even whimsical character and the lack of definiteness of the proposed Article [41] leads to the very real possibility that the Article will ere long be honored more in its neglect than in its faithful exercise” (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 469). Synod responded by rejecting the proposed revision and by retaining the questions of the current Church Order.

D. Post 1965

Since 1965, several attempts have been made to revise Article 41. Classis Alberta South asked Synod 1973 to retain only question 5 and to adopt the formulation proposed by the Church Order Revision Committee, asserting, among other things, that “Synod 1965 decide to replace the proposed formulation by the existing one in the old Church Order without giving any grounds for it, that in most classes Article 41 has become a dead letter, that some of the questions in Article 41 are irrelevant (question 1 & 3). The other two cannot be answered by a simple yes or no, and are to be discussed in church visiting and in this way reported to classis, and that the formulation of Article 41 in the present Church Order encourages the perfunctory answering of these questions” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 721). Synod did not accede to this overture. It said, “Mutual supervision of the church is further provided for in Article 42 of the Church Order which speaks of the task of church visitors and the proposed change does not guarantee that this mutual supervision will be conducted in a more meaningful way” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 35).

In 1984, Classis Alberta South, concerned that the present questions were closed questions that could simply be answered with a yes or no, suggested a reformulation to open questions that called for “specific, thoughtful answers which would help the classes evaluate the work of the consistories more adequately.” The classis also asserted that “asking these questions would enable classis, if it so chose, to deal with two or three questions at each meeting, thus providing opportunity to examine the various aspects of the consistories’ work more carefully” (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 436). Synod did not accede to this overture. It said, “The kind of questions and discussions suggested by the overture are already covered in the annual visits of the church visitors, consistories are free to elaborate whenever necessary on the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers called for by the current Church Order Article 41 questions and a change of the Church Order is not necessary to accomplish the kind of classical discussion envisioned in the overture. Any classis is free to allocate part of its agenda to a more wide-ranging discussion at any time” (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 592-93).

In 1991, Classis Greater Los Angeles overtured synod to revise Article 41 to read as follows: “In order to properly assist the churches, the classis shall ask on the classical credentials whether the council needs the help or advice of classis on any matters pertaining to its offices or to the ministries of its congregation.” Among the reasons were, “the supervisory role of classis envisioned in article 41 can better be handled by the church visitors under the requirements of article 42, . . . [these] questions are often answered in a perfunctory

way and the six required questions are very limited in scope and do not address other key areas of church life, such as prayer, worship, discipleship, subscription to the creeds and confessions, adherence to the Church Order, and support of the quota system" (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 515). Synod did not accede to this overture. It said, "Though limited in scope, the present questions provide opportunities for serious reflection on a number of crucial areas of ministry and there are ways in which classes can deal with these questions in a less perfunctory manner" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 814-15).

The changes requested by two overtures to Synod 2005 are described in the first section of this report (*Mandate from Synod 2005*).

III. The questions in Church Order Article 41

A. Four to five

There were four questions in the 1914 Church Order: "(1) Are the consistory meetings held in your church? (2) Is church discipline exercised? (3) Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for? (4) Do you need the judgment and the help of the classis for the proper government of your church?" In response to an overture from Classis Illinois, synod split question (3) into two because "the question is a double one, and really requires two answers, and in this manner more justice will be done to both causes concerned" (*Acts of Synod 1930*, p. 48).

B. Five to eleven and back again to five

Synod 1942 increased the number of questions to eleven. "It soon became evident that this alteration and increase was no improvement. The churches felt that there was too much needless duplication of detailed questions asked at the time of Church Visitation (see Church Order Article 42) and that the multiplicity of questions did not help to make the supervisory phase of our classical gatherings more valuable, but that the large number of these questions rather helped to render this Classical work even more fruitless than it already was" (*The Church Order Commentary 1949*, Monsma and Van Dellen, p. 187).

Synod 1947 "once more reduced the number of questions to five. But in place of the very significant, original fifth question — 'Do you need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of your Church?' — Synod, dropping this question in toto, placed the far more secretarial question: 'Have you submitted to the stated clerk of Classis the names and addresses of all baptized and communicant members who have, since the last meeting of Classis, moved to where no Christian Reformed Churches are found?'" (*The Church Order Commentary 1949*, Monsma and Van Dellen, p. 187).

C. Five to six

In response to an overture from Classis California South, Synod 1972 added a sixth question: "Does the consistory diligently engage in and promote the work of evangelism in its community?" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 56).

D. Six to eight?

Synod 1995 was asked to add two questions. In Overture 6, Classis Alberta North asked for the addition of "Does the council ensure that one or more worship services are held on the Lord's Day and that all members of the congregation are given the opportunity to grow in their understanding of

God's Word, the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions so that they may live as true disciples of Christ?" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 329). Disability Concerns proposed "that synod add to the questions in Church Order Article 41 a question about whether the council has made the church building and programs fully accessible to people with disabilities. This question, if put to each council two or three times a year, would help to remind churches that the gospel of God's grace and the fellowship of his gifts must be made accessible to all people" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 189).

The advisory committee that considered Overture 6 did not recommend the addition of the proposed question. It said, "The overture also asks that another question be added to Church Order Article 41. We note that the Committee on Disability Concerns is also proposing that a question be added to Article 41 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 189) and that many other questions can be added to this article. We believe that the church will not be well served by a proliferation of questions under this article" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 754). The advisory committee that dealt with the request of Disability Concerns recommended that synod refer the request to the Pastoral Ministries Board for further discussion, indicating, among other reasons, that "adding questions to Article 41 may serve as a precedent for using article 41 as a long checklist on numerous aspects of ministry sensitivities and involvements such as SCORR, ministry-share commitments, family visiting, evening worship services, etc." (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 671).

Pastoral Ministries recommended to Synod 1996 that this question be added: "Is the church building barrier free, and are all church services and activities made accessible to all eligible people, including those with disabilities?" (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 165) Synod defeated that recommendation (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 509).

E. Six to seven?

The recommendation of the Committee to Study Church Education to add another question to Article 41 is described in the first section of this report (*Mandate from Synod 2005*).

IV. Analysis

A. *The relationship of Church Order Articles 41 and 42*

Throughout the discussion of the effectiveness of Article 41, frequent mention has been made of the practice of church visiting (Article 42). Church visiting has been used as a reason to eliminate the questions under Article 41 and also as a reason to retain the questions under Article 41 in their current form. We observe that mutual supervision of the churches is done through church visiting. Some classes have found creative ways to do this regularly in classis meetings. Other classes have recommitted themselves to the traditional method of regular church visiting, a visit to the church council by representatives of classis, so the entire council can be involved in and benefit from a discussion about its ministry. We affirm the value of church visiting and encourage classes to be diligent in accomplishing it.

B. *The questions under Church Order Article 41*

The number of questions under this article grew from four to five. Then it grew to eleven. When synod found that this increase was not helpful, it pared

the number back to five. Then it increased to six. In the last decade, synod defeated proposals to add two more questions. Now synod is being asked to add another question about faith nurture because “this vital part of church life is absent from the current list of questions posed by classes to its church delegates” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 719). We concur in the 1991 observation of Classis Greater Los Angeles that a number of key areas of church life are not present in Article 41: “prayer, worship, discipleship, subscription to the creeds and confessions, adherence to the Church Order, and support of the quota [ministry share] system” (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 515). We also concur in the observation of the 1995 advisory committee that “the church will not be well served by a proliferation of questions under this article” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 754). In fact, our history has demonstrated that.

C. *Church Order Article 41 itself*

For the past sixty-four years, our churches have repeatedly indicated that the questions in Article 41 are dealt with in a perfunctory manner and no longer set the agenda for classis as they once did. Already in 1942 a synodical report indicated that these questions were seldom asked at the beginning of a meeting but had become “a mere perfunctory last minute formality” and that “this part of the work of classis was practically obsolete.” Article 41 has been referred to as a “dead letter,” and the work connected with it has been regarded as “fruitless.” *Perfunctory* is a word used again and again to refer to the way the questions in Article 41 are answered and considered. When our task force met to discuss our mandate, each of us used the word *perfunctory* to describe how our churches and classes deal with these questions.

In spite of such admissions, synod has continued to retain the current formulation of the article. When the Church Order Revision Committee suggested a different formulation to make the work of mutual supervision more fruitful, synod decided to maintain the status quo. In the face of repeated requests for change, synod encouraged the church to work harder at this task and maintained that “there are ways in which classes can deal with these questions in a less perfunctory manner.”

We are grateful that Synod 2005 did not respond in the same way when the churches once more asked for change. It is not wise to expect different results while continuing to do the same thing we have been doing for over six decades. It is time to listen to our own voices about the perfunctory way we handle Article 41. It is time to make a change that reflects the desire of the churches and also reflects what is developing in a number of classes as churches ask how they can assist each other in ministry.

D. *A revised Church Order Article 41*

For a number of reasons, there is a new and increasing interest in ministry on a classical level and an interest in our classes to equip member churches for ministry. Some classes are allocating time in their meetings for the discussion of particular ministries. Some classes are holding retreats at which one or more ministries are discussed. Some classes have appointed special task forces or committees to address a particular ministry. Some of these initiatives address matters mentioned in Article 41, but, most of the time, the impetus comes from a specific interest or need recognized by the classis, not from the Article 41 questions.

The most recent Church Order Revision Committee was on the right track when it proposed that mutual supervision be maintained but that a list of questions mandated by synod be replaced by a discussion of matters that the president of classis deemed to be important. An opportunity to discuss a wide variety of concerns always exists because of church visitation. Time at classis is best spent addressing ministry concerns identified by the classis itself; these concerns will vary from classis to classis.

V. Recommendations

A. It is recommended that synod revise Church Order Article 41 as follows:

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one of its meetings annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important in the life and ministry of member congregations or in the denomination.

Grounds:

1. The history of Article 41 demonstrates that the current formulation generally has not resulted in fruitful work.
2. Encouraging churches to discuss ministry issues that they believe are important for their life together is likely to result in fruitful work.

B. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form by adding the following sentence to the top half of the form:

We testify that our council faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and diligently and effectively attends to ministry within our congregation, community, classis, denomination and the broader kingdom of God.

C. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form by deleting the word hereby from the sentence currently on the form.

The bottom half of the credential would read:

Church Order Article 41 calls classis to assist its member churches in the following way:

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one meeting annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important.

Two questions would follow. First, "In what aspect of your ministry would you like the assistance of classis?" This was one of the questions under Article 41 from 1914-1947 and, in essence, has remained a question because the back of the credential reads, "Items of Information and Requests for Advice or Help of Classis." Making this an open question encourages each council to think specifically about its ministry and highlights the availability of assistance from classis.

The second question is: "What aspect of ministry would you like to discuss at classis?" This question will assist the classis in determining matters of specific importance to its member churches.

D. That synod revise the Classical Credential Form as found in the Addendum to Appendix F.

Church Order Article 41 Task Force
Anthony Louwerse
Ronald Meyer
Arthur Schoonveld
George Vander Weit, reporter
William Vis
Laryn Zoerhof, chair

Addendum
Classical Credential Form

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
CLASSICAL CREDENTIALS

To Classis _____

To convene _____ at _____
(date)

The council of _____ Christian Reformed Church of _____ has appointed _____ and _____ as delegates to the meeting of classis referred to above. The alternate delegates are _____ and _____.

We instruct and authorize them to take part in all deliberations and transactions of classis regarding all matters legally coming before the assembly and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the concept of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church, as well as in harmony with the Church Order.

We testify that our council faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and diligently and effectively attends to ministry within our congregation, community, classis, denomination, and the broader kingdom of God.

By order of the council,
_____, president
_____, clerk
_____, date

Church Order Article 41 calls classis to assist its member churches in the following way:

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one meeting annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important.

1. In what aspect of your ministry would you like the assistance of classis?
2. What aspect of ministry would you like to discuss at classis?

_____, president
_____, clerk
_____, date

Appendix G

Affiliation Process for Pastors, Organized Congregations, and Emerging Churches

I. Background and observations

Synod 1984 appointed the Study Committee on Ordination of Pastors from Multiracial Groups. Many worshippers from a variety of cultures had sought to become members in the CRC, and they needed leaders who know their cultures and languages. It was reported to Synod 1998 that currently “the CRC has 136 congregations which identify themselves ethnically / racially (African-American, Native American / Canadian [Navajo, Zuni, Metis, etc.], Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hispanic, Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Vietnamese) and 43 congregations which identify themselves as multiethnic” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 267). Presently, based on 2005 CRC *Yearbook* data, there are 178 congregations that identify themselves as being ethnically and racially diverse and, in addition, another 63 congregations that identify themselves as multi-ethnic. It should be noted, however, that the affiliation process described in this document also applies to Anglo pastors and churches interested in affiliating with the CRC.

Between 1984, when the committee was appointed to design an affiliation process, and 1998, over 130 pastors have affiliated with the CRC to provide the leadership required within the various ethnic communities. In addition, several ethnic minority pastors have been trained at Calvin Theological Seminary and have entered the ministry of the CRC through that route. Since 1998, at least another 120 pastors from racially diverse origins have assumed leadership roles in congregations and nonparish ministries. Of the more than 250 such pastor affiliations mentioned above, nearly all continue to be active in the CRC at the end of 2005.

Since 1998, the trend of affiliating congregations has slowed, except for Korean congregations. The process used by classes for affiliation purposes has mostly followed the guidelines adopted by Synod 1987, but some classes have customized the process to reflect their own experience and developing values. However, synodical deputies have repeatedly reported the lack of consistency among classes and the presence of great ambiguity in what is recommended and what is required in the affiliation process.

Obviously, the affiliation procedure adopted in 1985 has been a blessing for the CRC and its ministries throughout North America. Much has also been learned about how to manage the affiliation process better because the years of experience have enabled us to review what has worked well and what has not.

The three-phase plan adopted in 1985 (getting acquainted, fellowship, and affiliation) has worked reasonably well in the classes where it has been carefully used. Sometimes the process was rushed, and negative consequences

have resulted. In other instances, the process was so prolonged that leaders and congregations lost interest in affiliating with the CRC. Overall, however, the three phases properly administered have proven to serve us well.

At the same time, we have also learned of some flaws in the process of how the CRC has dealt with affiliations of various kinds. Among others, three are highlighted below.

A. Orientation and assimilation

One of the weak points in the existing process has been the orientation of new pastors and their congregations to life and ministry in the CRC. While a few classes have done that well, in most classes too little attention has been given to the importance of orientation prior to and after affiliation. It is important that the mentor maintain a relationship with the affiliating congregation and pastor for at least one year following the formal affiliation vote and approval.

B. An emphasis on participation in denominational life has been lacking

Concern has been expressed that too often affiliating congregations have not been adequately prepared to meet denominational obligations that are assumed when affiliating with the CRC. Participation in denominational life (i.e., attendance at classis meetings and participation in synodical activities) is a highly held value in the CRC and needs to be communicated to affiliating congregations. Financial concerns have also led to the current review of this process. Many pastors serve small congregations who have not been able to pay an adequate salary, provide insurance benefits for the pastor and family, and pay the pension premiums. Unfortunately, there often is unfamiliarity with options that might be considered, such as a tent-making or a two-point ministry. There is a concern that unless financial issues are addressed proactively we may be making ministry in smaller congregations increasingly difficult.

C. The capacity of classes to assume growing financial responsibilities

Classes have been asked to bear a larger and larger responsibility for the financial assistance of smaller and/or newly affiliated churches, and some of them are beginning to feel overwhelmed by the additional expense. The safety-net provisions that are provided denominationally for smaller churches and/or ministries in specialized settings are not permanent solutions. The viability of a congregation (programmatically and financially) needs to be assured as part of the affiliation process.

II. Receiving pastors and congregations into the CRC

A. Preface

Contact between non-CRC congregations (or groups of Christians) and members of the CRC can result in the desire of a non-CRC congregation to become affiliated with the CRC. When such a congregation already has an ordained pastor, then the requirements of the Church Order (Article 8) will also need to be met. If the affiliating congregation is unorganized upon affiliation, then Church Order Article 38 will also need to be considered. These matters are important because the CRC recognizes that receiving such congregations and pastors hospitably and sensitively increases the likelihood that

such affiliations will enrich the denomination and benefit the affiliating congregation.

It is imperative that there be ample opportunity for such groups and the denomination to become well acquainted with each other before making commitments. To promote this, we recommend that synod approve a process made up of three phases:

1. Getting acquainted
2. Mentoring and orientation
3. Affiliation

It is important that the integrity of both the group and the denomination be respected both in the formal process and in the developing relationship. Throughout the developing relationship, there needs to be a spirit of mutual-ity, adequate flexibility, and a willingness to exercise adaptability to the specific situation. It should also be clearly understood that the process of affiliation can be terminated at the initiative of the church or the classis. The phases described below are designed to provide for a growing relationship. The amount of time required in each phase may vary with each situation. Time frames at any point may be extended as both parties decide.

While the process described here assumes that the affiliation process is about receiving both a group of believers and a pastor, there will be times when a group will seek affiliation without a pastor, or a minister will apply for admission to ministry in the CRC without a congregation. In such cases, the process here described will need to be adapted accordingly.

B. Phase 1: Getting acquainted

During this phase, persons of the group and members of the CRC make initial contact and decide to find out more about each other. Often this phase begins with personal and even casual contact between a member or leader of the CRC and their counterpart in the other group. This initial contact may lead to a more formal exploratory discussion between the interested church and the CRC person facilitating the conversation. Such exploratory discussion might include a preliminary study of each other's history, theology, polity, and perhaps attending one or more worship services. It should also be clear from the beginning whether the context of the discussion is with an organized or an emerging congregation. Also basic to the process of getting acquainted is the exploration of a common Reformed theological perspective and values, as well as a mutual commitment to being in a ministry together. If this phase goes beyond initial contact and preliminary discussions (done by the facilitator), then classis should appoint one of its members to be an official counselor to represent the classis in further conversations. The goal of this phase is to determine whether the group wants to proceed to a phase of meaningful fellowship with a view toward joining the CRC denomination as well as exploring whether the classis wants to receive the congregation (and its pastor if applicable) into the CRC. The getting-acquainted phase will normally take anywhere from three to six months to complete. The amount of time required will depend on the date when initial contact is made, the set dates of the classis meetings, and the length of time needed to provide and receive initial information from all parties.

The getting-acquainted phase will usually have the following stages of involvement:

1. Personal contacts—including some initial discussion about the history, theology, polity, and practices of the respective churches. (This part is usually accomplished by a facilitator for the initial exploratory discussions.)
2. Distribution of materials such as:
 - *The CRC and You* (available in English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese)
 - *Belonging*
 - *What the Christian Reformed Church Believes* (Robert De Moor)
 - An overview of CRC history (needs to be developed)
3. Request for information from non-CRC group/ church such as a:
 - a. Letter of interest re affiliation from the church's leadership. This letter should specify whether the affiliating church is a 501(c) 3 registered and organized congregation, or whether it seeks affiliation as an emerging congregation. If the congregation is a 501(c) 3 organized congregation, a copy of the bylaws need to be attached to the letter. It also should be clear that the church's leaders are committed to function within CRC polity.
 - b. Church profile and ministry plan including a description of the church's commitment to a Reformed biblical, confessional, and theological identity.
 - c. Financial documents (budget, actual expenses, pastor's compensation [salary, benefits, pension, and so forth]).

Note: When the information from the affiliating church has been received, a copy will be provided for classis as information.

4. Initial request for information from a non-CRC minister seeking to be received into the CRC as per Church Order Article 8 must be processed as per the requirements of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee and the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy such as:
 - A personal letter from the pastor detailing his faith journey, educational history, and ministry experience.
 - A formal resume
 - A certificate of health as required by the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee
 - Diplomas
 - Transcripts
 - Ordination certificate
 - Psychological evaluation as required by the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee
 - Written statement re reasons for wanting to join CRC
 - Three letters of reference (at least one from a CRC ministry leader).
5. The minister and church leaders of the church exploring affiliation will meet with the designated leadership of classis to determine the course forward. A motion to continue the process needs to be adopted by both

classis and the potentially affiliating church. In the case of classis, the motion needs to include a “declaration of need” for the minister to be admitted under Article 8. This will require the presence of synodical deputies.

6. If both classis and the potentially affiliating congregation adopt an initial motion to continue the process, then the general orientation of affiliating leaders begins under the guidance of a classis-appointed mentor. (The mentor may or may not be the same person who functions as the counselor.)

C. *Phase 2: Mentoring and orientation*

After it is established in phase 1 that there is mutual interest in deepening the relationship and that both parties have made initial commitments to each other, then the next step toward affiliation can begin. In phase 2, the process consists of mentoring and orientation. In this phase, the classis will acquaint itself more fully with the background, values, beliefs, and vision of the new group. At the same time, the leaders and members of the new group will orient themselves more fully with the confessions, theology, polity, and practices of the CRC. It is desirable for both parties that their joining together will enrich their respective ministries as they serve God together. This phase will normally take not less than six months to complete.

The mentoring and orientation phase will usually include the following:

1. Congregational orientation

- a. In-depth orientation and/or training of church leaders (elders, deacons, church school leaders, women’s group leaders, and so forth) in the following:
 - CRC polity and Church Order
 - Distinctive features of the Reformed faith
 - CRC doctrinal and ethical decisions
 - Financial rights and obligations, including salary, insurance, pension, ministry shares, and so forth
 - CRC history—both origins and the era of development to the present
- b. Orientation of the whole congregation (many of the same topics introduced to church leaders will also be covered with the whole congregation).
- c. Expected outcome: The congregation is requested to pass a motion affirming the continuation of the affiliation process.

2. Pastoral orientation

- a. In-depth orientation begins in consultation with the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). The standards used by SMCC for issuing a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry will be used in the affiliation process.
 - Trace and review the spiritual formation of the pastor now serving the affiliating church.

- Study or review of Reformed theology and confessions, including all of the distinctive features of the Reformed faith.
 - Study CRC polity and Church Order.
 - Review significant synodical decisions on doctrinal and ethical matters.
 - Understand the financial rights and obligations (insurance, pension, loan fund, ministry shares, salary, and so forth). Identify options for bi-vocational situations.
 - Understand the relationship of a local church to the classis and of the classis to synod.
 - Understand the decision-making process in the CRC including overtures and the route of appeals.
 - Explain the requirements of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- b. Exposure to the broader life of the CRC begins and the following are suggested:
- Attendance at denominational events.
 - Introduction to CRC ministries and to the function of denominational boards and committees, including a visit to CRC offices in Grand Rapids. Some of this may be included in EPMC.
 - Attendance at classis meetings as guests and observers.

D. Phase 3: Affiliation

The conclusion of phase 2 introduces the final phase in the affiliation process and will lead into a formal decision about affiliation either as an organized or an emerging congregation. The affiliation phase is the most formal of the three phases and will include all of the following:

1. Reaffirm by a letter from the church leadership and addressed to classis the church's desire to affiliate with the CRC.
2. Request by a letter from the pastor to be examined for admission (Article 7 or 8) to the ministry of the Word in the CRC.
3. Appoint a counselor to oversee the reception of the congregation.
4. Receive the congregation as an organized or emerging body by formal motion into the fellowship of the CRC.
5. Conduct a colloquium doctum (if "need" has been established—see B, 5 above) for the pastor and, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, admit the pastor as a minister of the Word in the CRC.
6. Provide classis with updated articles of incorporation and bylaws.

III. Conclusion

Affiliating with the CRC, as is likely the case for any other faith community, must be based on a shared faith, common confessional commitments, and a mutual interest in the mission to which God has called us. A denominational fellowship is like a covenantal relationship. Each covenant has at least two parties, and it is critical to the process that both parties be honored in the growing relationship. The preceding phases are intended to facilitate that

outcome. However, it is also important that the affiliation process have some consistency to it. Therefore, the committee recommends that synod require these phases to be followed rather than just recommending and advising classes in the process. In fairness to all, and because affiliating congregations not only become part of the receiving classis but also of the denomination, the processes outlined should be required by synod. Furthermore, the committee recommends that the procedure be adopted by synod as a supplement to Church Order Article 38-g.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That the BOT recommend that Synod 2006 approve the affiliation process as described above.
- B. That synod instruct classes and synodical deputies to follow the procedures and phases outlined in this report so that consistency can be achieved in the affiliation process.
- C. That synod approve the process and phases for affiliation to be inserted as a Supplement to Article 38-g of the Church Order.

Affiliation Task Force
Peter Borgdorff
Tong Park
Gary Teja
John Van Schepen
Stanley Workman

Appendix H

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

I. Introduction

The mandate for Abuse Prevention is to provide educational resources, develop policies, and conduct training events. These three activities revolve around two core goals: reducing the risk of abuse in the church setting and responding justly when abuse has occurred. The impetus for these activities is church leaders who call for assistance when they encounter an abuse incident in their congregation.

Abuse incidents have many aspects in common; hence the phrase, *classic case of abuse*. For example, when we hear that an abuser took opportunities to be alone with a child, we say that is a classic pattern of isolation used by an abuser. Some incidents, however, have an unusual element that potentially could make that incident more complicated to handle. For example, when the victim is the pastor's child, we assert that this incident will probably become more complicated for the family and the congregation to handle.

If each situation followed the same predictable pattern, the need for education and awareness would still be great both for the purposes of prevention and for a just response. However, because any situation can become complicated, church members and church leaders who respond without

policies and education can inadvertently make matters worse. If they respond negligently, they risk becoming liable for their actions.

There is no rule or policy that governs every situation. Education, awareness, and policies are simply the best protection. Together, these elements can also reduce the risk of liability.

II. Accomplishments

A. The Office of Abuse Prevention encourages each congregation to implement a child safety policy. In 1996, the CRC was one of the first denominations in North America to establish a baseline child protection policy. Insurance companies have accepted the baseline policy, and it remains a model for other denominations as well. The 2006 *Yearbook* data indicates that 358* out of 1,047 churches have a child safety policy.

*This figure fluctuates with gains and losses each year. In the past three years, the average number of churches with a child safety policy was 346.

B. The director of the Office of Abuse Prevention makes presentations at churches, classes, educational institutions, and other church-sponsored events on a weekly basis. Training addresses abuse dynamics, child safety policies, church leader misconduct, domestic violence, and assisting churches to respond to incidents of abuse.

C. The Office of Abuse Prevention continues the effort to establish a protocol for responding to allegations of abuse against a church leader. The protocol was approved by Synod 1997 and is known as the advisory panel process. Members of a classis abuse response team administer the process. Last year, two requests for a panel went unfilled because the classes did not have an advisory panel available. Based on a decision by Synod 2005, churches in a classis without an abuse response team can now hail a neighboring classis that has a team for assistance.

The following is a list of classes with an abuse response team: Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, Arizona, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Chatham, Chicago South, Columbia, Georgetown, Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grandville*, Hamilton, Huron, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Lake Superior*, Minnkota, Muskegon, Niagara*, Northern Michigan, Pacific Northwest*, Quinte, Rocky Mountain, Thornapple Valley, Toronto, Yellowstone*, and Zeeland.

*Started or restarted in 2005.

D. Since the Office of Abuse Prevention began in 1994, several resources have been produced. They include the following:

- *Preventing Child Abuse* is a guide to help churches form a child safety policy. The book is published in English, Spanish, and Korean.
- *Responding to Domestic Violence* is a guide to help churches respond to domestic violence.
- *Too Close for Comfort* is a book describing the forms of abuse.

- Brochures were written to describe the *Advisory Panel Process* and the *Suggested Guidelines When Children Bring Allegations Against a Church Leader*.
- Packets were developed to help churches start a child safety policy and to help classes form an abuse response team.
- Worship resources were developed, including litanies, sermons, song selections, bulletin covers and inserts, children's bulletins, and devotionals.
- Training manuals were produced for conducting the advisory panel process and for writing child safety policies.

A new resource will be available in 2006-2007. Manuals for junior high and senior high students on healthy sexuality are being written.

E. The Office of Abuse Prevention collaborates with other agencies, departments, and institutions to enhance mutual goals of abuse prevention, education, and justice. Initiatives in these areas include:

- Training for seminary students enrolled in Pastoral Education at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- Consulting with the director of Pastor-Church Relations.
- Consulting with the director of Chaplaincy Ministries.
- Conducting workshops for Small Group Ministries (CRHM).

These opportunities are available in 2006:

- Collaborating with several departments to coordinate a conference on the topic of forgiveness.
- Conducting training to help CRC and RCA churches develop child safety policies.

III. Challenges

A. The first challenge is to increase the number of churches instituting abuse policies. Over the past three years, the denomination averaged 346 churches with a child safety policy. It will likely take several more years before *half* of the CRC churches have a child safety policy.

B. The second challenge involves local classes. Each year, synod encourages each classis to form an abuse response team, yet nineteen classes do not have a team. Several teams disbanded over the years, and a few current teams do not offer any programs or services. As a result, victims of church leader misconduct are denied access to a fair and just process. This disparity is perceived by some as a lack of concern for victims and as a way to protect church leaders.

C. The third challenge, related to the first two, is to overcome the resistance to education and awareness about the dynamics of abuse. Dealing with abusive situations within churches is extremely complex, and finding a common path to walk as we journey through revelation, confession, repentance, and reconciliation is difficult; education can help.

D. A fourth challenge is providing tools to help churches and individual church members address the connection between sexual abuse and human

sexuality. Our sexuality is a beautiful gift from God, yet many Christians still have difficulty addressing issues of human sexuality and sexual abuse.

IV. Conclusion

In summary, these challenges are related. They have been with the church for generations, and they remain today. The response to these challenges does not lie in policies or in education alone. The church should examine the attitudes and beliefs that keep these challenges alive. Before we can do anything, we have to admit there is a problem.

Appendix I

Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director)

I. Introduction

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries manages the chaplains' ministry for the denomination. At the end of 2005, the Christian Reformed Church in North America had seventy-four full-time chaplains, seventeen part-time chaplains, thirteen active-duty military chaplains, and fourteen chaplains in the National Guard and the Reserves. These chaplains serve throughout North America and in overseas assignments. Chaplains serve in such places as the military, hospitals, nursing homes, youth centers, correctional institutions, hospice centers, counseling centers, veterans' medical facilities, and, more recently, in several workplace settings.

Synod 2004 made the following decision regarding chaplains' participation in the Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF):

- a. Effective January 1, 2006, the [MPF] plans be amended such that credited service be granted to persons employed in endorsed chaplaincy positions provided the costs of such participation are paid by the direct employer of the chaplain, by the chaplain directly, or by some other payer as may be agreed between the plan administrator and the chaplain.
- d. That the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA work with the director of Chaplaincy Ministries to provide financial assistance to chaplains in particular hardship situations during the three year period after the effective date of this change.

(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 622-23)

As a result of this decision, many of our chaplains discussed their options with the Ministers' Pension Office. The director of finance and administration and the director of Chaplaincy Ministries conducted a teleconference that was open to all chaplains. Many chaplains sought the advice of the Ministers' Pension Office and received various calculations that assisted them in making their decisions. Several chaplains, who cannot maintain credited service in the pension plan for lack of ability to pay, have decided to retire early. They will join the ranks of minister of the Word emeritus but will not retire from active chaplain ministry.

Provision was made in the Chaplaincy Ministries budget to provide financial assistance to chaplains who could demonstrate hardship. The executive director, the director of finance and administration, and the director of Chaplaincy Ministries agreed on a formula to evaluate requests and determine the amount of assistance. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries urges

all classes and all chaplain-calling churches to take time to discuss pension issues with their chaplains to ensure that no chaplain is left vulnerable and impoverished.

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries also communicated with seventy-three individuals interested in chaplain ministry. We work with these prospective chaplains to review their training, certification, and application for endorsement. We have nine students who are studying to be chaplains: four in clinical pastoral education, one in training with the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education, one senior in Calvin Theological Seminary interested in becoming an institutional chaplain, and three in the military Chaplain Candidate Program.

The fact that the denomination no longer provides pension coverage impacts the recruitment of chaplains. All chaplains now need to negotiate pension benefits with their employers. Ministers in their 50s desiring a more full-time pastoral care ministry must now negotiate pension benefits with their prospective employers, pay the pension costs themselves, or make other decisions about their investment in the Ministers' Pension Plan.

The director of Chaplaincy Ministries offers our chaplains personal and professional support through periodic site visits, e-mail updates, newsletters, regional cluster meetings, and an annual conference. He also works jointly 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. The denomination has in place a process that encourages and sends forth high-quality professional chaplains.

New chaplains are needed to replace those who will leave this specialized ministry. The current chaplains are aging, and the number of retirees is growing. We encourage pastors to prayerfully consider this vital and rewarding form of ministry. We also encourage pastors to stress in their congregations the importance of providing a ministry of pastoral care to those who, for various reasons, are unable to be a part of congregational life.

An important role for the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is our participation in governmental and professional organizations. These organizations set the standards for the practice of chaplaincy and pastoral care. Decisions made by these organizations have an impact on the level of training required for chaplains as well as on the development of chaplaincy programs within institutions. Most of our civilian chaplains have membership in one of the following certifying organizations: The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), and the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE). These organizations provide additional ongoing training. Many of our chaplains are Board Certified chaplains. Twenty-one are APC certified, five are AAPC certified, five are ACPE certified, and six are CAPPE certified. We have six clinical pastoral supervisors: Rev. Cornelius DeBoer, Rev. W. Dean Dyk, Rev. James Kok, Rev. Frederic Koning, Rev. Robert H. Uken, and Rev. Case Vink.

The Christian Reformed Church has a reputation for excellence with these accrediting and certification agencies as well as with the institutions in which our chaplains perform ministry, with the result that many of our chaplains have been placed in positions of leadership and responsibility.

We note with gratitude the service and the retirement of the following chaplains: Rev. Ronald Baker, Rev. Stanley Bultman, Rev. Thomas Dykstra, Rev. Dirk Evans, Rev. John Jansen, and Rev. Harry Kuperus.

This year we interviewed four chaplains. The three following chaplains were added to the roster during the past year: Rev. Phil Apol, Rev. Mark Knopers, and Rev. Carolyn Wharton.

II. Noteworthy events

A. The Council on Collaboration (consisting of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, and the National Association of Jewish Chaplains) established common standards and a common code of ethics for chaplains. This development will greatly advance the professional training of chaplains and begin to unify standards for training in pastoral care.

B. The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces elected Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., as chair-elect for this current year, and he will assume the role of chair in December 2006.

C. Chaplain Tom Walcott is assigned to Naval Station Rota, Spain. Chaplain Scott Koeman is in Qatar. Chaplain Tim Won and Chaplain In Soon Hoagland are in the Army Chaplain Advanced Course. Chaplain Won has been selected for a year of Clinical Pastoral Education at the end of the Advanced Course. Chaplain Tim Rietkerk is taking advanced studies in ethics at Princeton Seminary. The following chaplains were promoted: Rev. Charles Cornelisse to LTCOL, Rev. Timothy Rietkerk to MAJ, Rev. Doug Vrieland to LCDR, Rev. James Vande Lune to LTC, Rev. Robert Bierenga to LTC, Rev. Dale Ellens to COL, Rev. Melvin Flikkema to LTC, Rev. Gordon Terpstra to LTC, Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker to CPT, and Rev. David Sutherland to LT(N). Chaplain Eric Verhulst moved from active duty Navy to Navy Reserve.

D. The United States' war with Iraq involved many of the military chaplains—active military, National Guard, and Reserves. Chaplain Timothy Won, a captain in the Army, returned for his second tour of duty in Iraq serving with the Tenth Mountain Division. Chaplain Bruce Anderson, a commander in the Navy, returned from serving with the Marines in Iraq. Chaplain Tyler Wagenmaker, a captain in the Michigan National Guard and the pastor of Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church, returned from serving in Iraq with a unit from Louisiana. We are thankful to God for these chaplains and for their ministry to the men and women in the armed services of the United States. We thank the Beaverdam CRC for the sacrifice it made during the one and one half-year of duty by Rev. Wagenmaker.

E. The director of Chaplaincy Ministries was part of a team of five who went, at the invitation of the Secretary of the Air Force, to the Air Force Academy in early June to investigate allegations of religious discrimination. The report of this trip was sent by the Air Force secretary to Congress as part of the overall assessment of the command climate at the Academy. The Secretary of the Air Force issued Interim Guidelines on Religion that created a great deal of

concern among the religious endorsers, especially on the issues of public prayer and evangelizing. Several members of Congress and endorsers in the evangelical community expressed concerns about the policy.

F. Working with the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, a plan was developed to advance the decisions of Synod 2005 on restorative justice. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries will take the lead on these issues and recommendations.

G. Several other CRC chaplains were involved in providing pastoral support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Chaplain Jack Van Dyken, the post chaplain at Fort Polk, provided chaplain ministry and other assistance to many people in the area. Almost \$1 million passed through his chaplain's fund. Chaplain Ron Cok deployed with the Veteran's Affairs assistance teams. Rev. Russell Van Antwerpen worked for CRWRC and Church World Services at a coordination center. Several other chaplains were ready to go in support of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and Church World Services. The hurricanes devastated the infrastructure in the South, making it very difficult to get chaplains in place. We have learned many lessons and hope to be more effective in the future. Statistics show that 60 percent of the people affected seek out spiritual support before any other support (followed by support from friends and family, then support from mental-health caregivers).

H. The special Chaplain Development Fund account continues to grow. This fund will be used for chaplain training, subsidy of salaries, and support for other professional training and development.

I. The director of Chaplaincy Ministries was the recorder for the report of the synodical Committee to Study War and Peace.

III. Challenges to the ministry

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

B. New chaplains are needed to replace those who will leave this specialized ministry. We currently have no chaplains in the United States' federal prison system. The report of the synodical Committee to Study Restorative Justice provides churches and classes with a challenge to minister within our criminal justice systems to prisoners and their families.

C. Chaplain ministries, in the federal prison system and the military, require that men and women entering these ministries be under age forty. This is a very small pool of ministers in the Christian Reformed Church.

D. The National Guard and Reserves components of our military services offer the possibility for living in two great worlds of ministry: continuing service to a local congregation while ministering part-time in the armed forces. We encourage pastors to prayerfully consider this vital and rewarding ministry.

E. We encourage pastors to hold before their congregations the importance of the church's ministry of pastoral care, especially to those people who for various reasons are unable to be part of normal congregational life. As our

population ages, pastoral care for the elderly will become a larger part of the church's ministry. Councils should promote and encourage chaplaincy ministry in area senior citizen homes, in assisted-living facilities, in long-term care facilities, and in hospice care.

G. The office continues to gather information from other denominations on best practices. We will establish and publish clear guidelines for the endorsement of chaplains and for the joint supervision of chaplains. We will also work to improve our Chaplaincy Ministries home page.

IV. Conclusion

As the Christian Reformed Church continues to minister in these 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 to which they are sent to serve. Our chaplains help people come to grips with the many vexing questions about suffering, death, loss, and quest for meaning in their lives. Our chaplains represent the church in many diverse settings, bringing Christ's love and constant reminders of one's hope in Christ.

Appendix J

Disability Concerns (Dr. James Vanderlaan, director)

I. Introduction

There are two parts to the strategy Disability Concerns follows in carrying on its synodical mandate. First, we publish the stories of people with disabilities and the help they receive from their churches in our newsletter *Breaking Barriers* (BB). We send this newsletter in bulk without charge to all CRC congregations that agree to distribute it, as well as to many individuals. In this way, we hope to alert congregations to the gifts and needs of people with disabilities.

Second, we develop and maintain a network of regional (classical) disability consultants and church contact people to help us provide information and advice to members with disabilities and to their church councils. The following activities fit into this two-part strategy.

II. Activities

Disability Concerns continues to develop the following:

A. Regional disability concerns committees

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

The Eastern Canada committee is the oldest and is functioning well. The Chicago committee is busy laying plans for a Chicago-area disability conference. The West Michigan committee is the youngest and is planning future activities.

B. Regional cross-disability conferences

We continue to hold the Eastern Canada annual conference for the regional church contact people. Rev. William Van Dyken, Hope Haven chaplain and

regional consultant for the three surrounding classes, has organized conferences in his area.

C. Regional disability consultants

The regional disability consultants are vital in our effort to assist churches in removing the barriers that keep people with disabilities from using their gifts in the congregation. We meet with all the consultants at an annual disability conference for instruction and inspiration.

The disability consultants are diligent in their work, but they are volunteers, and we regularly need to find successors for them. Of the Canadian classes, two presently need consultants: B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East. In the United States the following classes need consultants: Arizona, Central California, Columbia, Grand Rapids East, Northern Michigan, Pacific Hanmi, Wisconsin, Yellowstone, and Zeeland.

D. Church contact people

At present, 363 churches have church contact people in place—160 in Canada and 203 in the United States. They see to it that *Breaking Barriers* is distributed in their congregations, and that the disability needs are addressed. Of the 1,025 total Christian Reformed Churches, 500 receive bulk orders of BB—282 in Canada and 218 in the United States. The 138 churches receiving bulk orders but not having a church contact person ask us to send the order to the pastor, clerk, deaconate, or secretary. We also send one copy to every CRC 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	Number Ordered
69	61,400
68	60,104
67	58,269
66	56,723
65	55,826
64	52,031

The following is the distribution breakdown for the December 29, 2005, issue (# 69) of *Breaking Barriers*:

Distribution	Quantity
Individual U.S.	2,598
Individual Canada	342
Quantities U.S.	27,910
Quantities Canada	25,300
Agency U.S.	1,199
Agency Canada	182
Clerks & Secretaries U.S.	1,568
Clerks & Secretaries Canada	526
Pastors U.S.	1,375
Pastors Canada	354
Foreign	46
Total	61,400

E. CRC agency contacts

We give class lectures at Calvin Theological Seminary and occasionally at Calvin College. We also are recruiting disability advocates in each agency with the Board of Trustees' approval, and have occasional conversations with agency directors to enhance awareness of disability issues that may arise in their ministries.

G. Participation in ecumenical and interfaith disability organizations

We participate in the following organizations:

- National Council of Churches of Christ Disability Committee
- Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities
- Pathways to Promise (mental illness and communities of faith)

H. Personal contacts

We steadily communicate 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.

III. 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 developments in achieving this compliance. The *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the executive director of the CRCNA to all councils, provide the data.

The questionnaire is slightly altered from previous years, but is essentially unchanged. Disability Concerns questionnaire results from *Yearbook 2006* (the database contains 1,025 churches) are as follows:

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Barrier free	513	495	432	411
1. Worship area	802	747	633	577
2. Fellowship areas	762	703	599	542
3. Classrooms	653	601	494	448
4. Restrooms	733	672	543	491
5. Pulpit area	249	213	115	112
6. Main entrance	734	681	563	514
Signing for the deaf	38	36	48	46
1. All services/programs	7	5	5	4
2. When requested	69	56	63	57
Aids for hard of hearing and deaf	348	426	426	432
1. Special hearing aids	462	467	443	386
2. Captioned video screening	47	50	31	29
3. Printed texts of the sermons	102	85	75	58
4. Other	66	67	53	44
(Consists of PowerPoint presentations, overheads, sermon outlines, sound systems and loops, wireless hearing aids, tapes, and videotapes.)				

Aids for the visually impaired	302	313	368	409
1. Large-print bulletins	250	237	223	217
2. Large-print song books	385	386	374	345
3. Large-print Bibles	330	345	318	290
4. Braille when requested	28	26	26	26
Special programs	178	193	209	226
1. Friendship classes	218	220	203	197
2. Fellowship activities	146	132	120	115
3. Christian housing assistance	32	36	31	29
4. Respite care	32	35	31	23
5. Other	31	31	36	24
(Care to shut-ins, one-on-one for children with mental impairments, special programs as needed, GEMS counseling, attention-deficit education, children's church school for children with autism and mental impairments, and a support network for special-needs children.)				
Transportation	259	269	303	300
1. In a lift-equipped church vehicle	17	16	16	20
2. In an regular church-owned vehicle	104	96	83	72
3. In a privately owned vehicle	425	390	354	326
4. Weekly	248	219	215	196
5. When requested	348	339	289	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. The answers this year are as follows:

Participation of members with disabilities serving in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation (320 churches responding):

	2005	2004	2003	2002
1. Paid staff	24	19	17	21
2. Officebearer	50	52	67	61
3. Church school teacher	58	53	52	49
4. Usher/greeter	192	173	163	155
5. Committee member	151	141	133	128
6. Other	141	130	137	106
(Classroom attendant, friendship staff, choir, sound-booth operator; most did not state what position the person held.)				

Of the 1,025 churches polled, only 699 churches returned the 2006 questionnaire.

Appendix K

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Duane A. Visser, director; Rev. Norman Thomasma, educational specialist)

I. Introduction

By design, the church is countercultural. In this world, the church also reflects a culture that, in North America, is becoming increasingly individualistic, isolationist, and anxious. Some students of our culture describe this as a time of social regression—a time in which the sinews and ligaments of healthy

communal life are seriously stretched and no longer provide the strength and support needed for steadiness and growth.

Congregations in the CRC, like congregations in many other church groups, are increasingly places of opportunity and growth as well as dissatisfaction and challenge. Within this climate, the relationships among pastors, staff, and congregations are often stretched and threatened. This is reflective of our time.

The weekend preceding the writing of this report was a weekend in which five coaches in the National Football League were fired. The primary reason was that the teams were not winning. However, further investigation would reveal that there were many factors informing these decisions, including the skill level of the teams, the attitude of the owners, the character and competence of the coaches, and the affection level of the fans. Nevertheless, in every case, the coach had to move on.

As Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) responds to the challenging environment of congregational life, the complexity of situations is evident. Even though the contributing factors are many, it is often the pastor or key staff members who become the focus of the congregation's concern and are asked to change or move on.

II. Activities

PCR is involved in consultation with congregations and in cultivation of healthier relationships within the life of the church. Often, this involves meeting with lay leaders, pastors, staff, and congregational members in the hope of finding a measure of healing or growth. Increasingly, PCR recognizes the need to focus on the connective tissues of the denominational culture; that is, the people and protocols designed to support the points of relational connection within the ecclesiastical body. This report outlines some of the specific ways this is happening:

A. In cooperation with classical interim committees, PCR works with sixty-five regional pastors who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses challenged by the demands of life and ministry. These regional pastors also help broker mentoring relationships for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple pastors or professional church staff within a congregation. In October 2005, forty regional pastors and spouses gathered for encouragement and training in their regional pastor activities.

B. In fulfillment of the synod's mandate that all new pastors shall have a mentor for the first five years of ministry, PCR continues to develop the pastoral mentoring enterprise. Nine regional conferences were held in the spring of 2005 and a plenary conference is slated for April 17-19, 2006—a conference that will include mentees and spouses as well as mentors and spouses.

C. Increasingly, PCR is involved in educational activities with councils, congregations, and classes. Seminars on effective conversation, evaluation strategies, conflict, and theological/biblical themes related to the life of congregations are increasingly being offered in the churches.

D. A corps of transitional ministers (formerly called specialized interim ministers) are specially trained to help congregations deal with challenging

times of transition. Currently, the denomination employs four transitional ministers:

Rev. Larry Slings – First CRC, Allendale

Rev. Leonard Troast – Lamont CRC

Rev. Robert Walter – Palm Lane CRC, Phoenix

Rev. Melle Pool – Bethel CRC, Lacombe; Consultant – Classes Alberta North and Alberta South/Saskatchewan

There are other transitional ministers serving congregations without special training. PCR is often involved in brokering relationships between these pastors and congregations seeking their services. Additionally, PCR gathers these specialized ministers once a year for consultation and training.

PCR is currently in the process of developing an endorsement process that will provide some level of standardization for those serving as transitional ministers in the CRC. This will be particularly relevant to congregations seeking a transitional minister and to pastors sensing a call to this sort of ministry. (*Note: The name certified transitional minister has been introduced to distinguish those who are trained and endorsed from those who are serving without this training or endorsement. The generic use of the term interim minister has contributed to a situation in which congregations are not always aware of the level of training or expertise that a minister brings to the transitional situation facing a congregation.*)

E. Significant efforts are being exerted in response to the growing wave of CRC pastors reaching retirement age. PCR is producing materials to help these pastors and spouses as they approach retirement, including the development of strategies for appropriately using their experiences and gifts in the service of the church. Some pastors approaching retirement are being encouraged to obtain the training that will lead to being endorsed as a certified transitional minister.

F. Significant developments can be reported in response to the growing number of staff serving congregations. A survey of CRC congregations has revealed over eight hundred unordained professional staff serving in leadership capacities. Efforts are growing toward developing networks for these staff members, providing organizational support, instituting credentialing processes, and strengthening the denominational culture toward a more staff-friendly environment.

G. PCR administers a continuing-education fund for pastors and professional church staff. Grants up to \$750 are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event or opportunity they are pursuing.

H. The Ministerial Information Service maintains profiles of over seven hundred pastors and congregations. Through the office of PCR and a volunteer group that meets monthly, congregations seeking pastors are assisted in finding pastors who might be suited for a potential call. Ms. Laura Palsrok in the PCR office provides effective coordination of this service.

III. Challenges

A. PCR is increasingly recognizing a need for the vital role of church visitors. In our denomination, church visitors are uniquely placed to initiate a conversation with the leadership of a congregation in which difficulties are becoming apparent. The selection, training, and empowering of church visitors is seen as an important role for PCR in the next season of ministry. Strategies are being developed to strengthen this critical but currently uneven ministry in the CRC.

B. The pastoral mentoring program has been greatly assisted by a generous grant from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program sponsored by the Lilly Foundation. PCR is exploring ways to sustain these supports when the grant money is no longer available.

C. An ongoing need being more frequently expressed is the need for elder and deacon training. PCR is planning to develop this training with particular focus on just-in-time delivery.

D. Increasingly, PCR is being asked for advice and assistance relative to structuring churches' growing ministry staffs. PCR is exploring ways to provide greater expertise and consultation as churches move from familiar patterns of ministry into the less standardized forms of church staffing strategy.

E. With the dramatic increase in professional church staff, PCR is beginning to respond to the growing needs for evaluation procedures, salary guidelines, intrastaff protocols, credentialing, and the matching of available staff with congregations seeking such services.

IV. Conclusion

Pastor-Church Relations has the opportunity and responsibility to influence the congregational culture of the CRC. The efforts outlined above are intended to strengthen the supporting structures of congregational and denominational life so that "from (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Appendix L

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The Office of Race Relations endeavors to carry out the directives given by the BOT to implement synodical decisions regarding "God's Diverse and Unified Family." A new mandate was adopted by Synod 2004. It specifies:

CRC Race Relations will initiate and provide effective and collaborative training, programs, and organizing actions in ways that mobilize Christian Reformed agencies and educational institutions, as well as classes and congregations to recognize, expose, and dismantle racism in all its forms and to experience true biblical racial reconciliation as a diverse and unified family of God.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 558)

The Office of Race Relations has hired Mr. Steve Kabetu to serve as Race Relations coordinator for Canada. Rev. Esteban Lugo serves as adviser to the

Ministry Council and encourages agencies and educational institutions to participate in advancing the work of antiracism/ racial reconciliation within the agency and/ or institution.

The Race Relations Advisory Council is expanding its membership and continues to provide encouragement and direction to the work of Race Relations in all its endeavors. Having been appointed by the director of Race Relations and the executive director of ministries in 2005, the Race Relations Integrating Team (RRIT) is moving forward in its work to oversee the expansion of the antiracism/ racial reconciliation initiative throughout the United States and Canada. Plans for the form that expansion will take are in development.

The Office of Race Relations has partnered with Youth Unlimited to sponsor an urban conference for senior high teens called "Where U At?" in March 2006. Students will be challenged to examine who they are, add meaning to where they are, and build community.

Activities of the director have included preaching at numerous Grand Rapids area churches; serving classis as a facilitator/ mediator for reconciliation; attending and/ or speaking at conferences and our institutions; taking part in antiracism training and meetings; conducting regional visits; visiting with scholarship recipients; and consulting with various people, including ministers and laypeople.

Last summer, the Office of Race Relations sponsored the first Women of the Nations (WON) event—a time of worship, prayer, and building new relationships for encouragement, support, and unity. Plans are underway for our next Women of the Nations event: the first Women of the Nations Summit to be held in the fall of 2006.

The Office of Race Relations will also sponsor a number of regional workshops on antiracism and racial reconciliation throughout the year.

The Office of Race Relations requests that synod encourage churches, classes, and our institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 25 through October 1, 2006, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 1.

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 celebrating All Nations Heritage Sunday 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 M

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

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church has always had a good track record on addressing hunger and poverty but has realized that more needs to be done to address the *root causes* of world hunger. Understanding that hunger is always part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation, the CRC formed the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA) to address these root causes.

Today, the OSJHA works to develop a deeper understanding of and response to God's call to "let justice flow like a river" in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty. The OSJHA works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJHA is also occasionally involved in direct advocacy.

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions (see summary of The Micah Challenge, below), 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.

II. What is social justice?

When we talk about social justice, we are referring to God's original intention for human society: a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace (*shalom*) reigns. God calls us, the church, to participate in redeeming society so that all—especially the weak and vulnerable—can enjoy God's good gifts. To do this, we identify the root causes of what keeps people poor, hungry, and powerless and then witness and work to remove those barriers.

III. Our work

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

We do this in a variety of ways:

1. With the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the OSJHA has introduced a global Christian movement, The Micah Challenge, to the CRC. The Micah Challenge, which was endorsed by Synod 2004, encourages Christians to deepen their engagement with the poor and challenges government leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The MDGs are eight measurable, time-bound targets that address poverty and hunger and their root causes. The OSJHA and CRWRC are particularly excited to engage a new generation of young Christian Reformed people in global justice and poverty issues through innovative websites (www.micahmorphosis.org) and campus visits and organizing. We look forward to collaborating on service-learning opportunities, concerts, college courses, and more.

2. In addition to promoting The Micah Challenge within the Christian Reformed Church, the OSJHA has the honor of acting as the organizing headquarters for the U.S. national Micah Challenge campaign. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen was selected in June 2005 to be the coordinator for The Micah Challenge USA; he heads a steering committee of numerous representatives from evangelical denominations and Christian organizations from around the country. (The CRC has also been active in leadership of the Canadian Micah Challenge campaign, mainly through its CRWRC Canadian director.) Because the United States and Canada, for better and for worse, play such key roles in the international order, The Micah Challenge in the United States and in Canada is poised to play critical roles in the struggle to bring attention and action to overcoming poverty. The CRC is in the center of this struggle.
 3. *The Advocate* is our monthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered in both electronic and paper form to more than one thousand recipients each month and supplies a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. To subscribe, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on *The Advocate* newsletter link.
 4. The OSJHA website (www.crcjustice.org) serves more than fifteen hundred visitors a month. In addition to providing news and advocacy opportunities, the site supplies practical resources and helpful information to pastors, deacons, social justice committees, students, and every CRC member who wants to live the call to do justice.
 5. *Shalom Seekers: Living the Call to Do Justice* is the OSJHA workshop kit that helps to create or revitalize a social justice committee and to challenge and enrich Bible study or other education groups. Canadian and U.S. versions of the kit are available through Faith Alive Christian Resources (CRC Publications) by calling 1-800-333-8300 or by visiting: www.faithaliveresources.org.
 6. In Canada, network building includes regular workshops at diaconal conferences, Days of Encouragement, and other venues (i.e., adult Sunday school). The Micah Challenge continues to provide many opportunities to introduce social justice into Canadian congregations and social justice groups.
- 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 regarding selected issues that relate to root causes of poverty and hunger.
1. We are actively involved in encouraging churches and their members to participate in The Micah Challenge and related ONE and Make Poverty History campaigns. By wearing the white wrist band, a symbol of solidarity and action with the poor, and by urging our government leaders to meet their public promises on behalf of the world's most vulnerable people, Christians can be a driving force to make extreme poverty and hunger history in our time. Those who wish to learn more can visit our website: www.crcjustice.org, or The Micah Challenge website at: www.micahchallenge.org.

2. In Canada, we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives and also work with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. This year, we will continue our involvement with the ongoing KAIROS campaign, "Water: Life Before Profit!"
3. We facilitate advocacy to Washington, D.C., or Ottawa (in partnership with the Committee for Contact with the Government) when appropriate for our areas of focus. This year, such ad hoc advocacy included refugee issues, increasing levels of U.S. and Canadian assistance to the struggle against HIV/AIDS, more and better U.S. humanitarian aid, getting a Millennium Challenge grant from the United States for an irrigation project that affected our mission area in Mali, pressuring the U.S. and Canadian governments to do more to end the suffering in Darfur (Sudan), and working to ease the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

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 and mercy.

Appendix N

Denominational Ministries Plan for Agencies and Institutions of the Christian Reformed Church (February 2006)

I. Introduction

Over the nearly 150 years of the Christian Reformed Church's existence, God has blessed the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) with many opportunities for united ministry through its denominational agencies and institutions. Since its creation in 1991, the Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Christian Reformed Church has been entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing, coordinating, and integrating the work of its diverse denominational ministries.

In 1997, the BOT adopted, and synod endorsed, a Denominational Ministries Plan, which responded to the ministry visions and ideas of church leaders and local congregations from across the denomination. That plan, which was a product of two extensive listening tours, focused on detailed goals and objectives. In 2002, a revised ministries plan focused more upon the CRC's theological identity and core values. This arose out of the BOT's growing conviction that the church as a whole, and its agencies and institutions in particular, needed greater clarity about the CRC's identity and purpose. Various factors contributed to this conviction, summarized as follows:

- Many CRC members, including elders, deacons, pastors, and other church leaders, have difficulty articulating what it means to be a Reformed Christian and Reformed church in a North American religious environment of declining biblical and theological literacy.
- As the CRC becomes more diverse in culture, education, ethnicity, and the religious background of its members, the CRC needs a positive

biblical and theological vision that communicates across these and other differences.

- Clarity regarding the church’s identity and purpose is necessary in order for the church to set precise goals and develop effective ministries.
- The CRC is often uncertain how to view itself in relationship to the broader church. At times, the CRC is too self-congratulatory, failing to appreciate the richness and diversity of the broader Christian church. At other times, the CRC is too apologetic, even embarrassed that it has a particular theological identity.
- The CRC often has difficulty in dealing with change. At times, the CRC is too resistant to change, unnecessarily rigid and inflexible. At other times, the CRC is too quick to change, lacking discernment about what has enduring value and significance.

The current ministries plan retains the 2002 plan’s important attention to biblical and theological identity. It introduces changes, however, in the plan’s vision and mission statements and summary of core values. In addition, it substitutes ten objectives for the previous plan’s seven strategic values and ministry priorities. Among these objectives one is singled out as the priority for achieving the vision of the denomination and its ministries at this time in its history: *creating and sustaining healthy congregations*.

The order of the plan is as follows:

After setting forth a **vision statement and a mission statement**, a list of **core values** and a clarification of the church’s current **context for ministry**, this plan sets forth **objectives** to guide CRC agencies and institutions as they plan their respective ministries and fulfill their synodical mandates. The ministries plan then articulates an **identity statement** titled Central Affirmations of the Christian Faith from a Reformed Perspective. The purpose of this identity statement is to offer to all agency and institution personnel, board members, CRC leaders, and CRC members (1) a concise statement of what it means to be a Reformed Christian and Reformed church in North America today, and (2) an expanded biblical and theological foundation for the vision, mission, and core values in this ministries plan.

Finally, although it is not reproduced here, this ministries plan includes a **scorecard of measures and targets** used by our ministries as a tool to monitor implementation of the plan. These measures and targets may be changed from time to time.

II. Vision and mission statements

A. *Vision statement*

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God’s kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

B. *Mission statement*

The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church support and unite the efforts of CRC congregations and assemblies to implement this vision.

III. Core values

A. *We value Scripture as interpreted in the Reformed tradition*

This means that:

- We treasure the gospel as God’s good news for the world
- We believe discipleship is at the heart of our life and faith
- We hold theological clarity and consistency as being integral to our ministries
- We know that our family and church relationships spring from covenants of trust and accountability
- We affirm that, in good times and bad, we rest in the sovereignty and providence of God

B. *We value a kingdom perspective*

This means that:

- We affirm justice and mercy as attributes of God and requirements for humanity
- We oppose racism and work to counter its effects
- We are stewards of God’s resources
- We embrace all people as God’s image bearers

C. *We value the church as God’s new community*

This means that:

- We affirm the church’s key role in God’s mission to redeem the world
- We recognize that our corporate vitality depends on healthy local congregations
- We cultivate leaders and members who are biblically formed, competent, trustworthy, and committed to following Jesus Christ
- We seek leaders who reflect the range of voices and people in the church
- We work collaboratively with others through worldwide networks and partnerships
- We are one in purpose, identity, and ministry
- We are a source of stability for members and partners

D. *We value Christian vocation*

This means that:

- We act in ways that place God at the center of our lives and give him glory
- We find opportunity to serve God in multiple occupations and settings
- We want to do the right things for the right reasons and with maximum impact, doing them effectively, efficiently, and with integrity
- We want children and young people to see that they belong to Christ and to find their place of service within the church and community

IV. The context for ministry

A. *The external environment*

Understanding the current cultural context in which the church does its ministry is important for the church in determining priorities and approaches to ministry. This ministries plan observes the following external forces at work in the world:

1. The pace and scope of change

People are being pressured by rapid changes in almost every area of life. Church ministries must be flexible in order to deal with the new calls for service that these changes produce.

2. New forms of spirituality

People are seeking meaning in their lives. Their search takes place in the context of the forces of globalization on the one hand and the fragmentation of society on the other. Many people are reaching out for something lasting and fulfilling that transcends their daily lives.

3. Self-centeredness

A proliferation of choices within a consumer-oriented society is fueling the drive toward individual survival and personal fulfillment. However, when people put themselves at the center, they often use or ignore others, exploit creation, and dishonor God. In a climate of shrinking denominational loyalty and widespread mistrust of authoritarian institutions, the church must find new ways to promote God-centered, other-oriented ways of living.

4. Globalization and the influence of technology

Technological advances are making national economies interdependent and are bringing about rapid cultural change. They are influencing employment, communication, lifestyles, and medical and other choices. The opportunities and difficulties afforded by these changes require informed pastoral care, diaconal responsiveness, and dedication to justice by the church.

5. New groups in society

While the values of the marketplace are gaining influence, there are misgivings about their adequacy as guideposts for society, especially in light of the growing gap between rich and poor. At the same time, people are losing faith in the capacity of governments to solve their problems. Instead, they are looking to groups that are separate from both government and the marketplace. Christians can play a vital role in such civic organizations by influencing their values, plans, and actions.

6. Violence

Political, social, and religious grievances, both real and imagined, are causing groups to lash out with campaigns of violence—killing and maiming the innocent. Meanwhile, violence as a way of dealing with everyday conflict is encouraged by stories and images from the news and entertainment industries that seem to condone it. Governments must uphold high moral standards and practice statesmanship and justice in confronting evil and violence. Christians, as agents of reconciliation, are

called to model forgiveness and to demonstrate respect for the God-given value of every person.

7. Coherence in Christian witness

There is a growing convergence between branches of the Christian church that emphasize personal conversion and morality and those that emphasize social outreach and a Christian worldview. The CRC has been shaped by both views, equipping it to play an important role in the witness of the larger Christian community. By encouraging members to participate in ecumenical initiatives, we can be yeast and salt in the world.

8. Shifts in worldwide Christianity

The population center of Christianity is moving. Increasingly, Christian beliefs are expressed through a multitude of cultural contexts instead of being dominated by Western culture. Intentionally working for diversity within the CRC will enable it to respond to initiatives from members of other cultures in North America and around the world.

B. *The internal environment*

It is also important for the institutions and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church to understand their internal denominational context as they plan their ministries and determine their priorities. This ministries plan observes the following internal forces at work in the denomination:

1. Congregational emphasis

Congregations are increasingly focused on local ministries. Churches work with other churches, organizations, or individuals, regardless of denominational affiliations, to achieve their ministry goals. Denominational affairs hold less interest than local church affairs. Denominational agencies and institutions must provide ministry resources that congregations see as relevant and useful.

2. Church shopping

People tend to join churches that meet their personal and family needs rather than focusing on doctrinal positions. In addition to seeking inspiring worship and pastoral care, people are looking for churches that enable them to develop and use their gifts.

3. Demography

The demographics of the CRC are changing.

- The CRC has increasing material abundance. Demographic analysis of the CRC shows that *real* household income of CRC members continues to grow more rapidly than that of average North Americans.
- The CRC is an aging church, with the median age of members rising from 44 years in 1987 to 50 years in 2002.
- The CRC is becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity.

4. Diversity of ministry

The CRC is becoming increasingly diverse in its styles of worship, in the range and scope of its ministries, and in the background and training of its leaders.

5. Ministry planning

Many congregations are engaging in strategic planning and the development of vision and mission statements as a basis for ministry. Some are doing so as a matter of survival while others use the planning process to promote growth by identifying and responding to ministry opportunities.

6. The Reformed perspective

There is growing confusion, and sometimes apathy, about being Reformed. Although most CRC members claim to appreciate the church's creeds and confessions, their knowledge of the creeds and their ability to apply them to today's world and in their own lives are declining. The CRC is in significant transition—from a church in which much of the glue that held it together was a strong ethnic identity, to a church held together and guided by a positive biblical and theological vision that communicates across lines of culture, education, and ethnicity.

7. Agency collaboration

Agencies and institutions are increasingly aware that they can empower the church for ministry most effectively when they work together, with each contributing what it does best. However, current organizational structures and cultures do not lend themselves well to joint planning and action.

8. Leadership and decision-making

Incorporating more persons of ethnic minority and more women at every level of denominational leadership and decision-making is a continuing challenge. Efforts to make all levels of denominational ministry more inclusive and accessible must continue.

V. Objectives

In light of the vision and mission statements and core values above, and in view of the particular challenges and opportunities presented by the current context of ministry, the Board of Trustees identifies the following objectives that should guide all CRCNA ministries as they set goals and propose programs. Although they impact each ministry differently, depending upon its particular mandate, the Board identifies the objectives below as ones that all agencies and institutions must support and share as they plan for and conduct their ministries and work collaboratively with one another.

Furthermore, as noted previously, the Board singles out one of the following objectives for special attention at this time by the ministries of the church: *create and sustain healthy congregations*. By focusing on the health of the local congregation, the Board recognizes both need and opportunity. Many congregations are struggling. They need attention—and they need resources. Yet, the purpose of this attention—and the fruit of congregational health—is that they see and seize opportunities to be agents of God's transforming mission—locally, nationally, and throughout the world.

A. *Transform lives and communities worldwide*

Recognizing that God rules over all, CRC ministries will:

- Proclaim redemption, forgiveness, and new life in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Profess the lordship of Christ over individuals, churches, ministry organizations, and societies
- Live by the word and deed nature of the church’s mission
- Seek stewardship of all God’s creatures as well as the environment
- Work for justice for the poor, the socially marginalized, and oppressed people and communities.

B. Create and sustain healthy congregations (this is also the **current strategic priority** of our ministry agencies and institutions)

Through responsiveness to the felt and actual needs of congregations, CRC ministries will foster measurable enhanced congregational health, including stronger local ministries and a church planting movement.

C. Transcend boundaries

CRC ministries will work with assemblies and congregations to help the Christian Reformed Church be a denomination that respects boundaries—ecclesiastical, regional, national, organizational, or cultural—yet is also able to transcend them. This includes:

- Assisting the CRC to collaborate both internally and externally so that it maximizes learning and implements ministry with maximum impact and efficiency
- Assisting the CRC to build and learn from its networks and coalitions while maintaining a good sense of itself and its own theological heritage
- Exploring how to build unity among CRC denominations worldwide.

D. Disciple believers

CRC ministries will nurture a culture of discipling in the CRC so that members of all ages and members of partner organizations worldwide are helped to:

- Live out their Christian vocation in all dimensions of life
- Develop a biblical understanding of Christian discipleship that includes practice of the spiritual disciplines, witnessing, stewardship, earth-keeping, discipling of others, and parenting and doing business with integrity and wisdom
- Grow as disciples and in a sense of hospitality toward one another within the bond of the covenant.

E. Develop leaders

CRC ministries will:

- Identify, develop, and support both volunteer and professional (paid) church leaders, including pastors, ministry associates, youth leaders, worship leaders, church educators, community workers, and administrators
- Train, mentor, and disciple them so they are biblically formed, prayerful, competent, and display a Christlike character
- Join partner organizations in developing leaders in churches and communities worldwide.

E. Nurture children and youth

CRC ministries will assist the churches to become a body of Christ in which:

- Children and youth are nurtured in a dynamic relationship with the Lord and his people; are equipped to understand, experience, and express the good news of God’s kingdom; and are integrated into the church’s life and ministries
- Parents are encouraged and supported in their role of spiritual development of children and youth
- Christian schools and colleges flourish in a mutually supportive relationship among schools, colleges, and youth organizations that nurture the faith of our children and youth.

G. Become ministries of choice

CRC ministries will provide support and resources for congregations so effectively and responsively that:

- Congregational leaders and members from all areas of ministry go to the denomination first to fill an identified need
- CRC ministries are valued and supported by others beyond the denomination.

H. Develop staff capacity

CRC ministries will build a culture of employee development that excels at providing CRC agency and denominational office staff—both paid and volunteer—with quality training, supervision, and mentoring; encouraging, influencing, and supporting them so that their interest and passion for the CRC vision and mission grows, and each CRC staff person becomes an authentic ambassador for the CRC and its ministry.

I. Ignite generosity

CRC ministries will foster the recognition in the CRC that stewardship is the supreme challenge of the Christian life and a key to Christian gratitude, with the effect that churches understand and support better the CRC’s local, national, and international ministries, celebrate their impact, and support them with unprecedented personal and financial involvement.

J. Partner for impact

CRC ministries will partner with each other and with congregations for greater impact in ministry both in North America and around the world, enabling the CRC to stretch and leverage God’s resources and achieve greater impact in ministry than they can by acting independently.

VI. Identity statement

A. Central affirmations of the Christian faith from a Reformed perspective

The purpose of this identity statement is to answer the question: What does it mean to be a Reformed Christian? Many Christians in North America, including members of the CRC, may question the value, even the appropriateness, of asking such a question. The emphasis in North American Christianity today is upon finding those things that unite Christians with, not distinguish them from, fellow Christians.

B. *Why bother with Reformed identity?*

In many ways, the impulse to focus upon what Christians have in common with one another is exactly the right one. The CRC often has spent too much time and energy on matters that divide the CRC from, instead of unite it with, other Christians. Jesus himself prayed that the church would be one (John 17:27). Paul makes a great deal of the fact that the body of Christ is one (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4-6). What better mission and vision statement could any church want or need than Paul's great call to "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13)? It is hard to put too much emphasis upon what unites Christians with one another.

Moreover, the enemy of the Christian church today is not other Christians, whether Lutherans or Methodists, Roman Catholics or Pentecostals. The primary enemy of the North American church is a deadly secularism that threatens all Christians and against which they should stand together in common faith and action. Indeed, in many ways, the CRC already joins hands with other Christians. Local congregations often work together with other churches in setting up food banks and tutoring programs. Denominational agencies often do their worldwide ministry in collaboration with other churches and religious organizations.

So why does the CRC continue to spend time and energy articulating what it means to be Reformed?

C. *Everyone has an accent*

All Christians speak with what one person has called "an accent," a particular theological accent. There is no such thing as pure, Christian speech. Imagine trying to get people from New Orleans, Boston, Brooklyn, and Omaha to all speak with the same accent. It does not work—not because these people dislike each other but because language by its very nature develops locally. Particular people living together develop particular ways of expressing themselves. "Culture" is the accumulation of these particularities, including shared experiences, shared meanings, and shared ways of life. The particularity of human community is actually part of the marvelous diversity of God's creation.

In the same way, Christians, as they work and worship together, develop particular ways of speaking. There is no such thing as pure, theologically neutral, Christian speech. Particular people who have had common experiences of faith and life develop particular ways of understanding Scripture, expressing their faith, and worshiping God. To be sure, when these differences lead to conflict and alienation, then healthy differences have become sinful divisions, but Christians will always speak with particular theological accents.

Indeed, this particularity is also deeply biblical. The 1 Corinthians 12 image of the church as a body highlights both the unity of the church (one body) and the diversity of the church (hands and feet and eyes). The teaching of this great chapter is clear: The biblically healthy church has deep unity *and* rich diversity. Indeed, one of the deep biblical truths is the truth of the one and the many. The triune God himself is one and three.

There is nothing inherently sinful or divisive when Reformed Christians or other groups of Christians try to understand and develop their own theological accents. In fact, such self-understanding, as it strengthens the particular

hands or feet or eyes of the body, strengthens the whole body in its united witness to the world.

D. The Reformed accent

Sometimes people use the term *Reformed* or *distinctively Reformed* as though it is a theological accent spoken by only a few people, and as though it is an accent that has little in common with the broader Christian church. Neither of these is true.

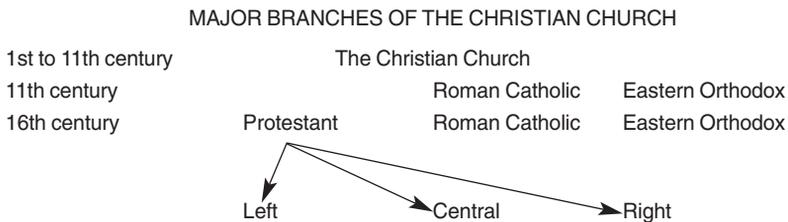
The Reformed accent is much larger than the CRC and the CRC's particular history. It thrives in countries around the world, including Hungary, Korea, Indonesia, Scotland, and Madagascar. The Heidelberg Catechism, only one of many Reformed confessions, has been translated into thirty languages. Moreover, the CRC itself is increasingly diverse. On a given Sunday, members of the CRC worship in at least fourteen different languages!

Moreover, Reformed Christianity has much in common with the universal Christian church. Reformed Christianity is squarely anchored in that broad Christian orthodoxy that goes back to the New Testament church. Reformed Christians share with all other Christians a common faith in the triune God who created the heavens and the earth, whose second person became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and whose third person, the Holy Spirit, has indwelt the church. Reformed Christians join with Christians in all times and places in affirming the saving purpose of God to unite all things in Jesus Christ, the mission of the church to proclaim this good news, and the hope of Christ's return in glory to usher in the new heaven and the new earth. Reformed Christians confess their faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed along with the church universal.

This identity statement seeks to articulate some of the particular accents of the Reformed tradition but in ways that are accessible across many ethnic, denominational, and generational lines. In fact, such an inclusive expression of the Reformed perspective is not just desirable but essential—if the Reformed perspective is to provide ongoing sources of unity and purpose for the CRC.

E. The family tree

One way to explain the Reformed tradition is to locate the Reformed family in the broader family tree of the Christian church. The following simple chart shows how the Christian church has developed over the centuries.



Note: In the following, the further to the left, the more radical the break from the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant Churches

16th century	Anabaptist	Reformed	Lutheran	Anglican
17th century	Quakers	Puritans		
18th century		Methodist		
19th century	Free Church			
20th century	Pentecostal			

The Christian church was united until the eleventh century when the western church (the Roman Catholic Church) split from the eastern church (the Orthodox Church). In the sixteenth century, new winds of the Spirit blew through the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant Reformation was underway. Christians discovered anew the central message of the Bible—that we are saved by grace alone through faith. Out of the Protestant Reformation came four major branches—the Anabaptist, Reformed, Lutheran, and Anglican. The order in which these four branches are listed from left to right is significant. The further to the left one goes, the more radical was that church’s break from the Roman Catholic Church. In terms of formality of worship, this chart moves from less formal (left side) to more formal (right side); in terms of sacraments, from less central in worship to more central in worship; in terms of church government, from less hierarchical to more hierarchical. In this family of European-based churches, the Reformed perspective often represents a broad middle ground.

As Reformed Christians seek to locate themselves in the North American Protestant family tree, it is tempting to think that the Reformed perspective as found in the CRC represents a middle ground between present-day liberalism and fundamentalism. After all, Reformed Christians do share with fundamentalism an unapologetic belief in supernaturalism and with liberalism a desire for the Christian faith to be culturally engaging.

The Reformed tradition as that has evolved in the CRC does not really fit on a continuum between these two North American extremes. Most Reformed Christians strongly distinguish themselves from liberalism, with its inadequate view of Scripture’s inspiration and authority, its antisupernaturalism, and its wariness of talking about personal sin and the need for repentance and faith in Christ for salvation. Furthermore, Reformed Christians also strongly distinguish themselves from fundamentalism, with its anti-intellectualism and suspicion of science and learning that arises from a lack of emphasis upon the doctrine of creation; its lack of cultural engagement; and its tendency to emphasize the rule of Christ in the world to come rather than in this world, a tendency that arises from a dispensational understanding of history in which the kingdom of God is still a future reality.

Traditionally, the Reformed perspective has represented a third way that is quite distinct from both liberalism and fundamentalism and that does not define itself in terms of this North American struggle. Reformed Christians are “confessing Protestants” whose posture is not first of all defined polemically (against liberals or against fundamentalists) but is defined historically by a theological tradition that goes back to John Calvin and the Reformers and to St. Augustine.

One helpful way to locate the Reformed branch in the North American family tree is in relationship to evangelicals. The term *evangelical* is used differently by different people. When evangelical Lutherans, of whom there are eight million in North America, use the term *evangelical*, they mean orthodox and Christ-centered theology. For them, it is quite possible to be part of a mainline, historic Protestant denomination and be evangelical and feel no tension between those two. Others use the terms *evangelical* and *fundamentalist* synonymously, which is quite a different meaning.

The term *evangelical* is most often used by those who wish to distinguish themselves from fundamentalism and often for many of the same reasons that Reformed Christians wish to distinguish themselves from fundamentalism. Furthermore, evangelicals themselves often see significant overlap in the terms *evangelical* and *Reformed*. Institutions such as Fuller Seminary, Gordon Conwell Seminary, Wheaton College, *Christianity Today*, and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, and persons such as John Stott, J.I. Packer, and Chuck Colson would describe themselves as evangelical. Also while they are not *confessionally* or *denominationally* Reformed, they would consider themselves theologically Reformed in much of their teachings. In the same way, many Reformed folks positively (and rightly) identify themselves as evangelical.

F. Three approaches to being Reformed

Observers of the Reformed tradition have identified three major Reformed emphases or “minds” that have flourished in the North American cultural context.

The first emphasis or mind is the *doctrinalist*. Here *Reformed* refers primarily to a strong adherence to certain Christian doctrines as taught in the Scriptures and reflected in the confessions of the church. The question for doctrinalists is: What do we believe? Doctrinalists especially appreciate Louis Berkhof, a Reformed theologian whose *Systematic Theology* is a thorough summary of Reformed doctrine.

The second emphasis or mind is the *pietist*. Here *Reformed* refers to the Christian life and to one’s personal relationship to God. The question for pietists is: How do we experience God in our daily walk of faith? Pietists especially appreciate Hendrik de Cock, a pastor in the Netherlands who led the Afscheiding, a breakoff in 1834 from the Dutch state church that had lost its theological and spiritual vitality.

The third emphasis or mind is the *transformationalist*. Here *Reformed* refers to the relationship of Christianity to culture, to a world-and-life view, and to Christ as transforming culture. The question for transformationalists is: How do we relate the gospel to the world? Transformationalists especially appreciate Abraham Kuyper, a pastor, scholar, and prime minister of the Netherlands who led the Doleantie movement in the Netherlands in the 1880s, a movement that stressed the development of a Christian culture and had a very direct impact upon the CRC in North America.

Obviously, these three emphases or minds are overlapping. No hard and fast line can be drawn between them. They also represent three distinct approaches, both historically and conceptually, and provide the framework for presenting sixteen key words or phrases that summarize the Reformed accent.

G. *What we believe (the doctrinalist emphasis)*

1. Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16)

Reformed Christians have a high view of Scripture. They believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God. Two passages of Scripture illumine Scripture's nature and authority:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Inspired, infallible, and authoritative are three words Reformed Christians frequently use in explaining their view of Scripture. *Inspired* has in view the source of Scripture: God himself speaking by his Holy Spirit through human authors. *Infallible* means that the Scriptures are true and absolutely unailing in matters of faith and practice. The Bible is true and trustworthy in all that it intends to teach. *Authoritative* refers to the claim of God's Word upon believers' lives. Believers live "under," and are called to obey, God's Word.

During the Reformation, Reformed Christians asserted *Sola Scriptura* (only Scripture) to distinguish themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, which asserted that Scripture, tradition (the teachings of the church), and the official pronouncements of the church were all equal in authority. To this, the Reformers responded that only Scripture is our authority for faith and life.

Today the strongest threat to a high view of Scripture is not from those who would try to *raise up* church teaching to a level of authority equal to Scripture. Rather, it is from those who would *pull down* Scripture and say that Scripture is not the Word of God at all, that it is not from God, that it is not historically accurate, that things like the resurrection are just myth, and that it certainly is not authoritative for our lives. Christians counter that no matter how foolish it may look to the modern, enlightened mind, Christians believe this book is the means by which the God of the universe has communicated with human beings, his image bearers. Christians believe that this book is the Word of God.

Another threat to a high view of Scripture today is what might be called the God-told-me-this view of revelation. Many Christians testify that God has revealed himself to them personally, inwardly, and uniquely. While Reformed Christians fully embrace the work of the Holy Spirit, they also insist that the Spirit and the Word work together. As Henry Stob, past Calvin Seminary professor, has succinctly stated it, "The Spirit always rides the back of Scripture." Or as Bernard of Clairvaux said it, "Scripture is the wine cellar of the Holy Spirit."

Finally, a word about the Bible's message. It is possible for Christians to become so absorbed in debates about the Bible's nature and authority that they miss its positive message. The Bible is not first of all a set of problems to be solved; it is a dramatic story of God's salvation of the world. The main character in the story is Jesus Christ. The climax of the story is his death and

resurrection. All this and more is what the church has in mind when it says that the Bible at its core is “redemptive revelation.”

2. Creation-fall-redemption (Colossians 1:15-20)

Creation-fall-redemption is a basic Reformed way of organizing and understanding the Bible and its message and of understanding history. God created the world; the world fell into sin; God has redeemed and is redeeming the world through the work of Christ, a redemption that will one day be complete when God creates a new heaven and new earth.

Pastors and elders are always delighted when young people come forward to make profession of faith. In the course of the interview, the young person is usually asked, “What does it mean to be a Christian?” Pastors and elders are pleased with any answer that includes a clear reference to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and his death and resurrection for our eternal life. Reformed pastors and elders are doubly pleased when a young person begins the answer to that question, “Well, Christians believe that in the beginning, God created everything. And then, the world fell into sin. . . .” Creation-fall-redemption is the way Reformed people tell the story. It is the storyline of history and of Scripture.

More will be said later about the importance of the doctrine of creation. Here, however, the critical importance of the biblical teaching that human beings are *image bearers of God* must be noted.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:26-27)

The biblical teaching that human beings are image bearers of God is pivotal for knowing ourselves and knowing God. Human beings image God as they exercise their God-given mandate to rule over all things (v. 26) and as they live in loving communion with each other.

As John Calvin says at the beginning of his *Institutes*, human beings come to know more about themselves as they learn more about God, and they come to know more about God as they learn more about themselves. This is so because human beings, in fact, *bear God’s image*.

The truth that human beings are all image bearers of God has implications for nearly every ethical position the church takes, including those on abortion, sexuality, marriage, abuse, capital punishment, war, race, and disabilities. Few biblical doctrines cast a longer shadow over the church’s ethical discourse than the doctrine of humanity’s creation in the image of God. Indeed, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14).

3. Grace (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Grace is the unmerited favor of God toward those who do not deserve it. Grace is the unconditional and freely given love of God to people who can do nothing to earn it but can only accept it as a gift. Grace is the love of the father in the parable of the prodigal son that moves him to welcome and accept the lost son—not because the son finally did this or that but simply because the father loved his son unconditionally. Grace is the astounding

truth that nothing we do can make God love us more or less. God loves us because he loves us. God loves us because he is rich in love.

Historically, when Reformed folks have talked about grace, they have stressed how much salvation is a gift of God, not a human achievement. Indeed, as Paul says,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (Eph. 2:8-10)

The “five points of Calvinism” refer to Reformed doctrines that underscore the radical nature of God’s grace. They have often been summarized with the acronym TULIP (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints). As an acronym, TULIP is often misunderstood as focusing on human failings. In fact, its central thrust is the graciousness of God, and the biblical teachings that lie behind it are some of the richest teachings in all of Scripture:

- Every human being and every part of human existence is corrupted by sin, leaving humanity helpless and hopeless except for the grace of God. Paul says, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once lived” (Eph. 2:1). In their fallen condition, human beings are not just weakened, sick, or at a disadvantage. They are dead, unable to do anything, unable to believe, and without God’s help.
- In his divine mercy, God has chosen believers and called them to himself in love even before they were born, indeed, before the world was even created. “[God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5). God did not elect his children based upon his foreknowledge of who would believe but did so “according to the good pleasure of his will.”
- God’s saving grace is not universal, but particular, given only to those whom God has chosen from eternity.

For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified. (Rom. 8:29-30)

- God’s grace, not human decision, is the decisive factor in salvation. Believers do not choose God so much as God chooses believers. Jesus taught that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5) and “no one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me” (John 6:44). Certainly, faith is a human act and decision, even this faith is a gift of God.
- By his power, God holds believers securely in his grasp and will not permit anyone or anything to separate believers from himself. Jesus said,

“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:27-28)

Believers are held securely in God's grip. Believers do not hang onto God so much as God hangs onto believers. This has been called the eternal security of the believer; the perseverance of the saints. As Paul says at the end of Romans 8,

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vv. 35-39)

When Calvinists talk about their salvation, they become speechless at how thoroughly their salvation is the work of God—from beginning to end, God's gift and God's grace, expressed the words of the hymn, "Nothing in my hands I bring, only to thy cross I cling."

4. Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Covenant is one of the richest biblical concepts for describing God's relationship to his people. Covenant means partnership, an agreement between parties that entails promises and obligations. It is significant that the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, again and again portrays God as one who binds himself to his people in promise, in obligation, in covenant. God does not have to promise anyone anything. Again and again, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, and to David, God promises to love them and be with them.

The whole Bible is suspended on the great covenants God makes with all these people and others. Furthermore, the Bible is unified around this *one* covenant of grace. One of the reasons one tends to hear more Old Testament preaching in Reformed churches than in many other churches is that Reformed preachers do not set the Old Testament against the New Testament but see the Old Testament and the New Testament as revealing one covenant of grace—a single covenant beginning with God's promise to Adam and Eve that he would crush the head of the serpent and spanning to the new city of God described in Revelation 22.

The concept of covenant—God's binding himself to his people in promise and commitment—is a rich concept for understanding God's saving activity today. In worship, God renews his covenant promises to us, and we renew our covenant vows to God. Preaching declares and offers the covenant promises of God. The Lord's Supper is a sign of God's new covenant. In baptism, God promises to be faithful to our children. Fellow members of the church make promises to God and to one another.

Together, these promises form a thick web of commitments, of communal connection that we know as the body of Christ, the church. Church membership is very important because when someone joins the church, she is not just putting her name on the membership list of an organization but is entering into covenant with God and with other believers. In this covenantal understanding of the church, leaving one congregation for another is a very weighty matter because it tears at this rich web of covenantal connections and commitments made at the congregational level.

Covenant is an important and strategic emphasis for the church in this individualistic culture. In a time when society is desperately trying to figure out how morality and character are developed, Christians understand the

key role of promise-making and promise-keeping. Our society needs communities of promise. The church needs an emphasis today upon covenant in our understanding of God and the church.

5. Common grace (Matthew 5:43-48)

God's common grace, in distinction from his saving grace, refers to that attitude of divine favor that extends to humanity in general; to believers and unbelievers alike. The church has observed three distinct evidences of common grace in the world. First, God gives natural gifts to unbelievers as well as believers. One does not have to be a Christian to be an excellent pianist or attorney or scientist. Second, God restrains sin in all people. Because of sin, human beings are not as good as they could be; because of common grace, they are not as bad as they could be either. This is why unbelievers at times actually seem to be better people than believers. Virtues such as patience, courage, and compassion never totally lose their resonance in any image bearer of God. Third, God enables unbelievers to perform positive acts of civic good. God preserves a basic sense of civic justice that enables human societies to function in an orderly way. Common grace prevents society, marred and distorted by sin and evil, from totally disintegrating.

The teaching of common grace has many implications for how Christians live and serve in the world. God's common grace is a model of grace that Christians should embody not just within the church and toward believers but in the world and toward all people. Common grace encourages believers to develop positive points of contact with unbelievers as they live in the world together and seek common ends. Christians should give their attention to not just what divides them from but what unites them with all people. Common grace is the reason Christians can appreciate movies or novels or works of art produced by unbelievers, viewing them as God's good gifts, and at times even seeing in such works the allusions of transcendence or grace. Common grace reminds Christians that the conflict of this age (what Abraham Kuyper called the "antithesis") is between God and Satan, not between Christians and non-Christians. The battle is not between two groups of people but between two spiritual powers, which, significantly, reside in and cut through every person.

The teaching of common grace calls the church to have multiple purposes in its ministry that correspond to multiple divine purposes. The deacons' food pantry, the chaplain's hospital ministry, and the pastor's marriage counseling are all part of the mission of God to save the world, even though the receivers of these ministries may not be believers or become believers. The Christian's deep desire is that every person in the world will bow to Jesus Christ, but within that overarching mission of God, the church ministers in multiple situations with multiple purposes. It does not subordinate the value of one ministry to another. God is glorified in many different things, and all these ministries have their integrity and purpose in the overarching mission of God to save the world.

H. *How we experience God in our daily walk of faith (the pietist emphasis)*

It is important to point out once again that the three approaches (doctrinalist, pietist, and transformationalist) overlap. Christians may not separate what they believe, how they experience God in their daily walk of faith, and how

they relate the gospel to the world. Even so, these three approaches do capture different emphases not only within the CRC but also in the broader Christian church.

1. Personal relationship to Jesus (Romans 8:38-39)

When Christian Reformed people are on their deathbeds, their pastors often use the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism to remind them of the heart of their faith: “What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” The heart of our faith is our personal relationship to Jesus Christ. As Paul says in Romans 8,

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vv. 8:38-39)

At times, the Reformed tradition has been misunderstood as emphasizing too much the “head”—knowing the correct doctrine—and not enough the “heart”—our personal relationship with Christ. However, the Heidelberg Catechism, the CRC’s most used and most loved confessional statement, is filled with references to one’s personal relationship to Jesus Christ, and is a deeply pastoral and personal statement of faith. However, more important than vindicating the catechism, the Christian faith, at its heart, is the story of God’s restoring sinners into a right relationship with him through Christ.

Not all Christians and faith traditions are as open and ready to talk about their relationship to Christ in this way. In fact, as was pointed out in the brief explanation of the pietist approach, the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, the CRC’s mother church, actually started as a breakoff from the state church because the state church had become very liberal and was embarrassed by such “heart talk.” Many churches today are also reluctant to call people to this most personal encounter with Jesus Christ. While Reformed Christians always see the work of Christ as encompassing more than the believer’s personal relationship to Jesus Christ, they never see it as less than this personal union with Christ.

Reformed Christians do have concerns about American evangelicalism’s tendency, at times, to talk about one’s relationship to Jesus in a way that unduly narrows the scope of the Christian life. The Christian life is more than my interior affections, my inner feelings about and toward Christ. The inner state of the believer may, but also may not, be the best reference point for Christian obedience. Especially in a therapeutic age, dominated by the quest for inner happiness and self-fulfillment, Reformed Christians are rightly concerned that the language of “personal relationship to Jesus Christ” not overshadow other equally important and often more comprehensive ways of understanding and enacting the Christian life.

2. The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-17)

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the holy Trinity of God. Biblical Christians seek a proper and balanced appreciation for the work of all three persons of the Godhead. Moreover, Christians not only stress the work of each person of the Trinity—the work of God the Father in creation,

the Son in redemption, and the Holy Spirit in sanctification—they also stress the unity and fellowship of the divine life and the way that Scripture has revealed God as a divine community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Indeed, in the very life and fellowship of God himself, Christians see modeled the communion and self-giving love for which they were created and redeemed.

Within this trinitarian fellowship, the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier of the people of God and of the church's life and witness. The work of the Holy Spirit is all-encompassing. The Holy Spirit is the giver of spiritual life; the one who is renewing believers to be like Christ; the one who gives believers his fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control; and the one who gives gifts to the church to empower ministry.

John Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism both offer a rich and vibrant theology of the Holy Spirit. (One nineteenth-century theologian referred to John Calvin as “a theologian of the Holy Spirit.”) The Reformed confessions especially emphasize these works of the Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit gives the believer saving faith and new spiritual life.
- The Holy Spirit assures the believer of eternal life.
- The Holy Spirit renews the believer to be like Christ (the work of sanctification).
- By God's Word and Spirit (an important combination for Reformed Christians), Christ gathers his church. The Holy Spirit builds it.
- The Holy Spirit is active in the sacraments, uniting us to Christ's body and blood, washing away our sins by Christ's blood, effectuating the real presence of Christ in both baptism and holy communion. Indeed, Christian worship is only possible because of the Holy Spirit's life and work in the church.

Too often people associate the Holy Spirit with particular kinds of piety or with particular, extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit (healing, speaking in tongues, prophecy). The teaching about the Holy Spirit set forth above makes clear that the work of the Holy Spirit is comprehensive, that it encompasses every aspect of the believer's life, of the church's ministry, and of God's redemptive program.

It is important to say a word at this point about the role of prayer in the Christian life and in the church. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, prayer is the centerpiece of the Christian life of thankfulness. Christians pray both to thank and to ask God for the gifts of his grace and the Holy Spirit (Q. and A. 116). The Holy Spirit is both the subject and the object of Christian prayer. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to pray and is the gift that comes to those who pray. A rich and lively understanding of the Holy Spirit will be accompanied by a rich and lively understanding *and practice* of prayer.

Finally, a rich and lively engagement with the Holy Spirit is virtually inseparable from Christian worship. Worship as an engagement of God and his people is, from beginning to end, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is central in the Reformed understanding of the real presence of Christ in the sacraments and preaching as Spirit—charged encounters with

God. Worship renewal, wherever it takes place, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. Gratitude (Colossians 3:15-17)

A very important question in the Christian life is: What motivates the believer? What is the root disposition that empowers everything one does in the Christian life? The Bible's answer, and a Reformed emphasis, is gratitude—not guilt, not fear, not the obligation of law, but gratitude. The whole Christian life is an acting out of one response: Thank you!

In Colossians 3, where Paul lays out the basics of our new life in Christ, he mentions thankfulness three times:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be *thankful*. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another with all wisdom; and *with gratitude* in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks* to God the Father through him. (vv. 15-17, italics added)

It is ironic that Christians who emphasize gratitude as the energizing source of all Christian disposition and action could still be seduced by legalism—external conformity to dos and don'ts—for legalism cuts believers off from Christ. Legalism preoccupies people with how their religious life looks to other people, not with how it looks to God. A legalistic spirit is far from a grateful spirit, far from a heart of thanksgiving.

Such legalism at times has infected CRC piety and must be acknowledged for what it is: a perversion, a failure, a sin to be confessed, and a contradiction of a central biblical teaching, namely, that all obedience flows out of a heart of gratitude.

One of the most significant features of the Heidelberg Catechism is the placement of its teaching on the Ten Commandments. Of the three sections of the catechism—Our Guilt, God's Grace, Our Gratitude—the Ten Commandments are placed in the section on gratitude. Christians do not obey God *in order to* get rid of their guilt or *in order to* earn their salvation. They obey because God already has removed their guilt and given them the free gift of salvation. Obedience is the Christian's way of saying thank you for the gift of salvation, not the way of earning salvation.

Linking obedience to gratitude does not mean that obedience is less important, that Christians should only obey God on days when they feel especially grateful. Duty, discipline, calling, and obligation are still important marks of Christian piety' but guilt, fear, and moralism have limited value as motivators for the Christian life. All obedience ultimately must flow from the deep wellspring of gratitude, from the thankful heart.

4. The church (Ephesians 4:1-16)

When Reformed people talk about the Christian life, they very quickly begin talking about the church. Reformed Christians hold strongly that *to belong to Christ is to belong to those who belong to Christ*. Many Christians have the false notion that one can be a Christian but not have any connection to the church, the body of Christ. It has already been noted that one tendency in much of North American Christianity is to unduly narrow the scope of the Christian life to one's personal relationship to Jesus and to one's interior affections and feelings. Such a narrow focus quickly becomes too inward

and subjective and often unconnected to the church. While a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit are an important part of the Christian experience, that relationship with Christ and the Spirit is fleshed out *in the church*, the covenant community of believers, the children God has gathered and is gathering.

The church as the body of Christ is strategic in God's great mission program. Far from existing for itself and unto itself, the church exists to proclaim the gospel to the nations and to call people to faith and discipleship. Peter clearly links the church's identity to its purpose:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

When churches live for more than their own institutional security and give themselves in faith and obedience to God's mission, they experience the blessing of God. Jesus' teaching that "those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25) applies to the church as well as to individuals. Churches that lose their lives for Christ's sake and dedicate themselves to the mission purposes of God will in the end find their lives.

It is also important to understand that the church to which believers are organically connected is a *worldwide church* in all its history and diversity. To be in Christ is to be reconciled with one another as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people of God. Justice and reconciliation work is not simply an option for churches that choose to pursue it, it is a foundational mark of the church as God's new community.

For [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph. 2:14-18)

North American Christians today tend to minimize the importance of their identification with the worldwide church. "Who cares about the church of history or the worldwide church?" However, the church was not invented in the 1980s in Southern California or in the nineteenth century in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The church must remind itself of its deep solidarity with the church of all times and places. A much-needed corrective to the extreme individualism of our age is for Christians to see the project of personal sanctification less as an inward, individual project, and more as a journey in connecting one's self to the universal practices and habits of Christians everywhere and from throughout history.

Such solidarity with the universal church and appreciation of tradition does not inhibit change and innovation in the church. A key Reformed principle is that "a Reformed church is always to be reforming." The Reformation itself was a radical reforming and renewing of the church, and thus, the church is always reforming and renewing, dying and rising again. The church as a living organism, vitally connected to Christ as the branch to the vine is, by definition, ever growing and changing.

5. Word and sacrament (Romans 10:14-15; Matthew 28:16-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Public worship is one of the main ways Christians nurture their faith and their relationships with God. For Reformed Christians, the heart of Christian worship is the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. It is significant that ministers in the CRC are ordained to *the ministry of Word and Sacrament*.

Reformed Christians have a high view of preaching. Preaching is not just a lecture in which the preacher talks about God; it is a Spirit-charged encounter with God in which the preacher, in the reading of Scripture and in preaching, proclaims the Word of God. Reformed Christians actually speak of the sermon as *the Word of God* to highlight the revelational significance of preaching in the context of public worship. In this connection, it is significant that in Reformed worship the Holy Spirit is traditionally invoked not only in the context of the sacraments but also in the context of the reading and preaching of the Word (the prayer for illumination).

As worship renewal takes place around the world and within the CRC, there is also a renewed interest in the sacraments—holy communion and baptism. It is important to note two particular emphases of Reformed Christians when it comes to the sacraments.

First, Reformed Christians seek to recognize and celebrate *all* of the biblical themes associated with each sacrament. Just as a diamond has many different sides and angles from which to view it, each sacrament is viewed in Scripture from many different angles.

For example, baptism is bound up with the call to discipleship (Matt. 29:19), the gift of salvation (Mark 16:16), the reception of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 8:16; 10:44-47), new birth (John 3:3), forgiveness and washing (Acts 2:38; 22:12), dying and rising with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:8), incorporation into the church (1 Cor. 12:13), the new clothing of Christ (Gal. 3:27), and the unity of the body (Eph. 4:5).

The Lord's Supper is also bound up with many scriptural themes, including covenant renewal (Ex. 24:8), thanksgiving, forgiveness, the eschatological hope of the heavenly feast (Matt. 26:26-29), atonement (Mark 14:12), spiritual nourishment (John 6:35), remembrance (1 Cor. 11:24), and proclamation (1 Cor. 11:26). The Reformed tradition seeks to recognize and celebrate all of these biblical dimensions to the sacraments.

A second Reformed emphasis with respect to the sacraments is the accent it places upon God's action. Each sacrament involves both God's action and our action, but Reformed Christians emphasize God's action in both sacraments: the way in which God, in his grace, is promising, proclaiming, nourishing, sustaining, comforting, challenging, teaching, and assuring.

Put another way, the sacraments are more than just an exercise on the part of the worshiper. They are celebrations through which *God*, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is present among us and actively nourishes our faith and draws us closer to himself. They are the means by which God actually comes to us in grace.

People around the world today are hungry for mystery and transcendence, spawning many new forms of spirituality. Many Christians themselves long for more awe and transcendence in worship; they long to see the

power of God in worship and experience his divine presence in real and powerful ways. In such a world, Reformed Christians have in their own worship tradition an emphasis upon Word and sacrament that highlights the great engagement between God and his people that takes place in Christian worship in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. How we relate the gospel to the world (the transformationalist emphasis)

In this emphasis, *Reformed* refers to a certain view of the relationship of Christianity to culture, to a world-and-life view. The question for transformationalists is: How do Christians relate to the culture around them? More specifically, how do Christians promote the Lordship of Christ in culture and society? How does the church address the gospel to the world around it and avoid the isolationism that so often has characterized the church? Six words or phrases help in understanding this dimension of being Reformed.

1. Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:11)

These words, of course, come straight from the Bible. Paul concludes that great hymn of praise to Christ, “At the name of Jesus every knee should bend . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). Another biblical phrase that Reformed Christians use to make the same point is “Our God reigns.”

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” (Isa. 52:7)

This affirmation that Jesus is Lord takes on particular significance in the modern world where we are plagued by *dualism*, the devastating split between the sacred and the secular. The secular worldview, which is the air one breathes today in North America, would have Christians believe that the world is really split in two, split between the sacred and the *secular*. It is fine for Christians to have their little Jesus in their little sacred world, but whatever claims Christians make about Jesus apply only to that little world called “the sacred.”

When Reformed Christians hear such sacred-secular talk, they remember the words of Jesus: “All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18), and the teaching of Paul that God “raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” (Eph. 1:20-21).

Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper, Reformed Christians strongly reject this sacred-secular dualism and declare that Jesus is Lord of all things. If the most well-known passage of the Heidelberg Catechism is Q. and A. 1 (“What is your only comfort in life and death? That I belong . . .”), then the most well-known quotation of Abraham Kuyper is, “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!’”

2. Kingdom (Matthew 6:10)

The concept of Christ’s lordship over all things is closely related to the biblical and Reformed emphasis upon the kingdom of God. Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and

believe the good news” (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus taught many parables of the kingdom. Jesus taught Christians to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

The kingdom of God is the rule of God over all things. God is king. He is sovereign. He reigns. God always has ruled, but his rule has been vindicated and established once and for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:15-23).

The kingdom is both a present and a future reality. It is “already now” and “not yet.” Jesus said the kingdom is at hand; he also prayed for the kingdom to come.

One can see the fruit of this already-now kingdom concept in ministries throughout the CRC. The list below is only a small sample of such kingdom endeavors:

- Christian colleges and Christian schools across the United States and Canada
- Elim Christian School for children with physical and mental disabilities in Chicago
- Citizens for Public Justice in Toronto
- Cary Christian Center, a community development association near Jackson, Mississippi
- Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C.
- Beginnings Counseling and Adoption Services of Ontario
- Pine Rest Christian Hospital of Grand Rapids, Michigan

These are all kingdom endeavors. These institutions are bigger than the church, God’s gathered people. They are the fruit of Christ’s reign in the world. They are part of that new order of peace, justice, and healing that Christ has ushered in.

Christians live in hope because the kingdom is also not yet. Christians look forward to not just the defeat but the banishment of Satan, to Christ’s glorious return, and to a new heaven and the new earth where there will be no more tears or brokenness or death and where, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Closely related to an emphasis upon the kingdom is a commitment to seek justice in society. Many passages of Scripture call for Christians to seek justice, but none is more eloquent than Micah’s call to Israel:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)

It follows from an emphasis upon the lordship of Christ and the kingdom of God that Reformed Christians would be strong promoters of involvement in the broader society; *justice* is generally what Christians seek as they work in these broader areas. Theologians and philosophers talk about the relationship between love and justice. Generally speaking, Christians construe God’s call to *love* as applying to the personal relationships Christians have with people within the communities in which they live; whereas *justice* is something that Christians can seek for all people everywhere. Some examples of seeking justice are:

- Fighting against laws or practices that cause racial discrimination or economic inequities.
- Promoting a proper balance of punishment, rehabilitation, and restoration in the criminal justice system.
- Promoting policies that alleviate human suffering, poverty, and hunger and that give hope and opportunity to the weaker members of society.

One important caveat is in order here. Biblical justice and the idea of justice as it is used in North American political discourse often have quite different overtones. Justice in North American society tends to focus upon personal rights, what one is entitled to, what is due an individual; whereas justice in the Bible, while it certainly includes a concern for personal rights rooted in the human person's exalted status as God's image bearer, upholds the notions of righteousness, obedience to God's law, the restoration of relationships, and the righting of wrongs that leads to righteousness and peace. Justice in the Bible is fully bound up with the kingdom of God and God's new order of righteousness and peace.

3. Word and deed (James 2:14-17)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

Just as a biblical understanding of the Christian life quickly leads to the church, so a biblical understanding of the church quickly leads to the word-and-deed nature of the church's mission. The church's mission has a *word* (proclamation) component; it also has a *deed* (action) component.

- The church proclaims that Jesus is Lord *and* mentors those on public welfare.
- The church calls people to faith in Jesus Christ *and* helps refugees resettle.
- The church builds the body of believers and promotes justice in society.
- The church has elders *and* deacons.

Word and deed go together in the Christian life and in the church's ministry. The church cannot divide the ministry of word and deed, and it certainly cannot choose between them.

4. The cultural mandate (Genesis 1:27-28)

Cultural mandate is a term one hears frequently in Kuyperian, Reformed circles. The cultural mandate refers specifically to Genesis 1:27-28:

So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

This is a mandate, a job description that God gave Adam and Eve at the very beginning of the world in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve a position of dominion over the whole earth, a position that included the power to name, which, in significant ways, is the power to create. Human beings rule the world with God! "You have made them a little

lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet” (Ps. 8:5-6).

The point here is not that human beings are in control and can do anything they want. The point is not that people can dominate and exploit. It is quite the opposite. Human beings are appointed stewards; they are responsible to make the most out of this great world God has created. Human beings are builders, designers, creators!

The cultural mandate accompanies a strong emphasis upon creation. One of the things that flows directly from a strong doctrine of creation and the cultural mandate is an appreciation of science. Reformed Christians do not have a deep suspicion of science (or of the rest of learning, for that matter) the way some Christians do. God has revealed himself through two books: the book of Scripture and the book of nature. Of the latter book, the psalmist says, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Science is a systematic way to “read” the book of nature. When the book of science appears to conflict with the book of Scripture, Reformed Christians reread and study both books to see where they are misreading. Ultimately, these two books cannot contradict each other because God is the author of both.

Environmental stewardship is another strong implication of the cultural mandate and its emphasis upon creation. “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Ps. 24:1). Christians are to be caretakers of the earth and the environment. This world is not ours to do with as we please. It is God’s world, and he has appointed human beings to be stewards, guardians, and caretakers.

5. Christian education (Proverbs 9:10)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Prov. 9:10)

Reformed Christians share with all Christians a strong emphasis upon Christian education. Historically, the CRC in particular has emphasized the importance of Christian education not only in home and church but also in educational institutions—elementary, high school, college, and university. Because Christ is Lord of all of life, including all spheres of learning, all education must be God-centered. In this understanding of the integration of faith and learning, God should not be left out of education at any level.

The biblical mandate for Christian education, for integrating Christ into all facets of life and learning, perhaps can be seen most clearly and beautifully in Colossians 1:15-17:

[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Therefore, the Christian schools started by Reformed Christians are built upon a positive vision: Learning is rooted in Christ. At the same time, they are not opposed to public education. As public citizens, Reformed Christians are typically very supportive of the local public education

system; they support Christian schools *and* vote for school millages. Many CRC congregations have teachers and students in Christian schools and public schools. Although Christian schools sometimes have isolated the Christian school community from its broader community, such isolation is not the goal and in fact must be resisted at every turn. All the world, not just the church, is God's. God, in his common grace, cares for all people, even those who do not acknowledge him. Reformed Christians have strong convictions about Christ-centered education; they also have a strong interest in all people's well-being.

6. Christian vocation (Ephesians 4:1)

"Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1). The entire life of the Christian—not just on Sunday and not just church life—is a divine vocation, a response to God's call to follow Christ. In a world where all things hold together in Christ, Christians offer every part of their lives—their time, their work, their giftedness, their creativity, their wealth, their recreation—to God as an offering of thanksgiving and obedience.

Many people who hear the word *Calvinist* immediately think of "the Calvinist work ethic," an ethic of working hard, working honestly, and taking pride in one's work. That work ethic is rooted in the Calvinist conviction that all human work—whether one calls it a job, a career, or a calling, whether it is high-powered or simple, high-paying or nonpaying—is a response to God's call and is part of fulfilling God's mandate to rule the earth and Christ's command to follow him.

Beyond our daily work, this all-embracing understanding of God's *call* upon our lives produces strong and conscientious kingdom servants in business, professions, labor, homemaking, civic community organizations, volunteer organizations, education, science, industry, farming, and government. This emphasis upon Christian vocation is one of the reasons the CRC has had a special love for Christian liberal arts education in which every area of learning, from philosophy to physics, biology to business, is a response to God's call. This healthy sense of Christian vocation also fosters a strong sense of stewardship—a commitment to use wisely the time, talents, resources, and wealth that God has entrusted to us.

J. *Putting them all together*

It was pointed out earlier that these three emphases—doctrinalist, pietist, and transformationalist—often have functioned as distinct approaches or minds in the CRC. It is important to observe that a well-balanced Christian life and theology need all three of these integrated emphases. The doctrinalist emphasis by itself can lead to exclusivity and inaction. The pietist emphasis by itself can lead to individualism and nondiscernment of broader dimensions of Christianity. The transformationalist emphasis by itself can lead to an overstated inclusivity that softens the antithesis between Christ and the evil one. Each emphasis, by itself, tends toward pride and an uncharitable devaluing of the other two emphases. One key to healthy ministry lies in living with an integrated, whole vision of the Christian life.

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. This 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.

May God grant the church, as Paul prayed, “a Spirit of wisdom and revelation as [we] come to know [Christ]” (Eph. 1:17).

*Now to him who by the power at work within us
is able to accomplish abundantly far more
than all we ask or imagine,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

(Eph. 3:20-21)

Appendix O Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

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

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,230	-	-	-	1,230
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	2,763	1,942	-	100	4,805
Receivables & Advances	55	-	-	-	55
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	576	-	-	-	576
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,624	1,942	-	100	6,666
Accounts Payable	447	-	-	-	447
Notes/Loans Payable	880	-	-	-	880
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,382	-	-	-	1,382
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,709	-	-	-	2,709
Net Assets	\$ 1,915	1,942	-	100	3,957
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: 1,942,000 Estate				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,209	\$	4,286
% of Total Income		42.8%		43.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,567	\$	4,209
Estate Gifts	\$	831	\$	1,012
Total Gift Income		4,398		5,221
% of Total Income		44.7%		52.9%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	321	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	908	\$	360
Total Other Income		1,229		360
% of Total Income		12.5%		3.6%
TOTAL INCOME		9,836		9,867
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	4,006	\$	3,391
FTEs		10		10
International	\$	3,543	\$	3,772
FTEs		13		13
Television – Animation	\$	200		
FTEs				
Program Initiatives	\$	85	\$	371
		-		-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	7,834	\$	7,534
Total Program Service FTEs		23		23
% of Total \$		81.0%		78.9%
% of Total FTEs		71.9%		71.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	556	\$	657
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,287	\$	1,358
FTEs		5		5
Total Support Service \$		1,843		2,015
Total Support Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		19.0%		21.1%
% of Total FTEs		28.1%		28.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,677	\$	9,549
TOTAL FTEs		32		32
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	159	\$	318

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

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,218	-	-	-	2,218
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	21,810	-	2,536	8,232	32,578
Inventory	453	-	-	-	453
Prepays & Advances	784	-	17	-	801
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,289	-	-	615	3,904
Equities	50,531	-	10,159	59,555	120,245
Partnerships	-	-	-	5,401	5,401
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	3,491	3,491
PP & E	123,968	-	-	-	123,968
Other	-	-	-	2,033	2,033
Total Assets	203,053	-	12,712	79,327	295,092
Accounts Payable	2,942	-	-	-	2,942
Notes/Loans Payable	45,863	-	-	255	46,118
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	6,523	-	-	-	6,523
Deferred Income	856	-	9	-	865
Other	25,563	-	129	208	25,900
Total Liabilities	81,747	-	138	463	82,348
Net Assets	\$ 121,306	-	12,574	78,864	212,744
Footnotes:	<p>Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.</p> <p>Note 2: List details of designations.</p> <p>Note 3: List details of restrictions. Over 1,600 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources</p> <p>Note 4: List details of restrictions. Endowed gifts</p>				

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

	Fiscal 03-04 Actual	Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,732	\$ 2,756
% of Total Income	2.9%	2.9%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 3,438	\$ 2,913
Estate Gifts	\$ 10	\$ 26
Total Gift Income	<u>3,448</u>	<u>2,939</u>
% of Total Income	3.7%	3.1%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 86,499	\$ 88,646
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,272	\$ 1,622
Total Other Income	<u>87,771</u>	<u>90,268</u>
% of Total Income	93.4%	94.1%
 TOTAL INCOME	 <u>93,951</u>	 <u>95,963</u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 80,834	\$ 82,859
FTEs	591	591
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	<u>\$ 80,834</u>	<u>\$ 82,859</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	591	591
% of Total \$	87.1%	87.0%
% of Total FTEs	81.7%	81.7%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 4,650	\$ 4,792
FTEs	52	52
Plant Operations	\$ 4,941	\$ 5,190
FTEs	58	58
Fund Raising	\$ 2,417	\$ 2,375
FTEs	22	22
Total Support Service \$	<u>12,008</u>	<u>12,357</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	132	132
% of Total \$	12.9%	13.0%
% of Total FTEs	18.3%	18.3%
 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	 <u>\$ 92,842</u>	 <u>\$ 95,216</u>
TOTAL FTEs	<u>723</u>	<u>723</u>
 NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	 <u>\$ 1,109</u>	 <u>\$ 747</u>

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

	-----June 30, 2005-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,124	-	-	-	2,124
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	1,069	-	2,025	-	3,094
Receivables & Advances	54	855	1,187	-	2,096
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	36	-	-	36
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	11,138	-	-	-	11,138
Other	-	475	4	-	479
Total Assets	14,385	1,366	3,216	-	18,967
Accounts Payable	192	-	-	-	192
Notes/Loans Payable	1,587	292	-	-	1,879
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	168	-	-	-	168
Other	-	647	-	-	647
Total Liabilities	1,947	939	-	-	2,886
Net Assets	\$ 12,438	427	3,216	-	16,081
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$18,663M , Annuity payable \$316M Any balance due to other funds for these assets is included under "other" as unrestricted in Ag. Desig.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Construction liabilities, Student loan receivables and liabilities				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Donor designated, program, scholarship, grants and construction pledges				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,695	\$	2,488
% of Total Income		49.7%		45.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	817	\$	865
Estate Gifts	\$	50	\$	50
Total Gift Income		867		915
% of Total Income		16.0%		16.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,480	\$	1,751
Grants	\$	334	\$	329
Miscellaneous	\$	51	\$	44
Total Other Income		1,865		2,124
% of Total Income		34.4%		38.4%
TOTAL INCOME		<u>5,427</u>		<u>5,527</u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,330	\$	2,384
FTEs		27		27
Public Service	\$	50	\$	49
FTEs		-		-
Academic Support	\$	723	\$	782
FTEs		3		3
Student Services	\$	483	\$	513
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	234	\$	219
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,820	\$	3,947
Total Program Service FTEs		35		35
% of Total \$		71.3%		72.9%
% of Total FTEs		76.1%		76.1%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	786	\$	739
FTEs		6		6
Plant Operations	\$	361	\$	345
FTEs		1		1
Fund Raising	\$	388	\$	386
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		1,535		1,470
Total Support Service FTEs		11		11
% of Total \$		28.7%		27.1%
% of Total FTEs		23.9%		23.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<u>\$</u>	<u>5,355</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>5,417</u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u>46</u>		<u>46</u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	<u>\$</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>110</u>

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Ministries in Canada
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	596	\$	604
% of Total Income		99.2%		94.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	37	\$	38
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		37		38
% of Total Income		6.2%		5.9%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	(32)	\$	-
Total Other Income		(32)		-
% of Total Income		-5.3%		0.0%
TOTAL INCOME		601		642
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Govt. Contact/Church in Soc.	\$	53	\$	60
FTEs		1		1
Indian Ministries	\$	421	\$	435
FTEs		3		3
Electronic Media	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Canadian Ministry Forum	\$	18	\$	20
FTEs		-		-
Other	\$	32	\$	27
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	524	\$	542
Total Program Service FTEs		4		4
% of Total \$		92.6%		92.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	42	\$	47
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		42		47
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		7.4%		8.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	566	\$	589
TOTAL FTEs		4		4
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	35	\$	53

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

	December 31, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,014	-	-	-	2,014
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	45	-	-	-	45
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	187	-	-	-	187
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,889	-	-	-	2,889
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,135	-	-	-	5,135
Accounts Payable	101	-	-	-	101
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	394	-	-	-	394
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	495	-	-	-	495
Net Assets	\$ 4,640	-	-	-	4,640
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)**

	2004 Actual	2005 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	\$ 7,796	\$ 8,424
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 69	\$ 88
Total Other Income	7,865	8,512
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	7,865	8,512
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 6,747	\$ 6,684
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 366	\$ 395
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 554	\$ 562
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 7,667	\$ 7,641
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	97.7%	97.6%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 184	\$ 189
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	184	189
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	7,851	7,830
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 14	\$ 682

**CRC PUBLICATIONS
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2005-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 159	-	23	-	182
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	349	-	-	-	349
Inventory	2,142	-	-	-	2,142
Prepays & Advances	64	-	-	-	64
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	1,355	600	-	-	1,955
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	19	-	-	-	19
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,088	600	23	-	4,711
Accounts Payable	485	-	-	-	485
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	62	-	-	-	62
Other	217	-	-	-	217
Total Liabilities	764	-	-	-	764
Net Assets	\$ 3,324	600	23	-	3,947
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Funds for new curriculum development cost.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	WLM project & Youth ministry				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**CRC PUBLICATIONS
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	862	\$	767
% of Total Income		15.4%		12.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	49	\$	237
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		49		237
% of Total Income		0.9%		3.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,554	\$	5,009
Grants	\$	119	\$	62
Miscellaneous	\$	6	\$	99
Total Other Income		4,679		5,170
% of Total Income		83.7%		83.7%
TOTAL INCOME		5,590		6,174
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	757	\$	893
FTEs		4		3
Education	\$	3,202	\$	3,857
FTEs		18		18
World Literature	\$	350	\$	420
FTEs		3		3
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,309	\$	5,170
Total Program Service FTEs		25		24
% of Total \$		86.2%		88.3%
% of Total FTEs		92.6%		92.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	691	\$	684
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		691		684
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		13.8%		11.7%
% of Total FTEs		7.4%		7.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,000	\$	5,854
TOTAL FTEs		27		26
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	590	\$	320

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

	-----June 30, 2005-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,309	-	988	-	3,297
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,414	-	94	-	1,508
Inventory	513	-	-	-	513
Prepays & Advances	26	-	-	-	26
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	10,967	-	-	-	10,967
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,529	-	-	-	5,529
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	20,758	-	1,082	-	21,840
Accounts Payable	1,235	-	-	-	1,235
Notes/Loans Payable	10,706	-	-	-	10,706
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	125	-	-	-	125
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	12,066	-	-	-	12,066
Net Assets	\$ 8,692	-	1,082	-	9,774
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program				
Note 2: List details of designations					
Note 3: List details of restrictions	Includes \$1,974,000 of Lilly Foundation grant balance				
Note 4: List details of restrictions					

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,089	\$	2,167
% of Total Income		20.2%		18.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	17	\$	436
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		17		436
% of Total Income		0.2%		3.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,317	\$	5,140
Grants	\$	423	\$	209
Services & Misc	\$	3,497	\$	4,070
Total Other Income		8,237		9,419
% of Total Income		79.6%		78.3%
TOTAL INCOME		10,343		12,022
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	937	\$	979
FTEs		5		5
Soc Just Ed./Communications	\$	626	\$	573
FTEs		3		3
CRCPlan/Lilly Grant	\$	712	\$	504
FTEs		2		2
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	4,516	\$	5,031
FTEs		29		29
Finance/Payroll/Development	\$	1,691	\$	2,103
FTEs		21		21
Information Services	\$	570	\$	720
FTEs		7		7
Personnel	\$	121	\$	196
FTEs		2		2
Total Program Service \$	\$	9,173	\$	10,106
Total Program Service FTEs		69		69
% of Total \$		87.0%		87.9%
% of Total FTEs		89.6%		89.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	610	\$	585
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	693	\$	752
FTEs		3		3
Fund Raising (Foundation)	\$	63	\$	58
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,366		1,395
Total Support Service FTEs		8		8
% of Total \$		13.0%		12.1%
% of Total FTEs		10.4%		10.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	10,539	\$	11,501
TOTAL FTEs		77		77
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(196)	\$	521

incls \$411 Sea to Sea

incls \$411 Sea to Sea

Employees' Retirement Plan – Canada (in Canadian \$)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 189	-	-	-	189
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	183	-	-	-	183
Equities	2,099	-	-	-	2,099
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	99	-	-	-	99
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,570	-	-	-	2,570
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 2,570	-	-	-	2,570
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 – Canada (in Canadian \$)
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

		2004 Actual		2005 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	\$	230	\$	230
Participant Contributions	\$	-	\$	21
Miscellaneous	\$	152	\$	188
Total Other Income		382		439
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		382		439
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	53	\$	76
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program-service \$	\$	53	\$	76
Total Program-service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs				
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support-service \$		-		-
Total Support-service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	53	\$	76
TOTAL FTEs		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	329	\$	363

Employees' Retirement Plan – United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	15	-	-	-	15
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,460	-	-	-	2,460
Equities	9,635	-	-	-	9,635
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	6,094	-	-	-	6,094
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	18,204	-	-	-	18,204
Accounts Payable	8	-	-	-	8
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	8	-	-	-	8
Net Assets	\$ 18,196	-	-	-	18,196
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)**

	2004 Actual	2005 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	\$ 950	\$ 968
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,239	\$ 858
Total Other Income	2,189	1,826
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	2,189	1,826
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Distributions	\$ 835	\$ 976
FTEs	-	-
Total Program-service \$	\$ 835	\$ 976
Total Program-service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	90.1%	93.4%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 92	\$ 69
FTEs	1	1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support-service \$	92	69
Total Support-service FTEs	1	1
% of Total \$	9.9%	6.6%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 927	\$ 1,045
TOTAL FTEs	1	1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 1,262	\$ 781

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

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 526	-	-	-	526
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	526	-	-	-	526
Accounts Payable		-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 526	-	-	-	526
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 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	260	\$	254
% of Total Income		91.2%		91.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	7	\$	6
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		<u>7</u>		<u>6</u>
% of Total Income		2.5%		2.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	18	\$	17
Total Other Income		<u>18</u>		<u>17</u>
% of Total Income		6.3%		6.1%
TOTAL INCOME		<u><u>285</u></u>		<u><u>277</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Subsidy Requests	\$	422	\$	331
FTEs		1		1
Auto & Moving Expenses	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Specialists	\$	71	\$	70
FTEs		1		1
Education	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Technology Upgrade	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Small Church Program Support	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	<u>493</u>	\$	<u>401</u>
Total Program Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		100.0%		65.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	216
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		<u>-</u>		<u>216</u>
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		0.0%		35.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	<u><u>493</u></u>	\$	<u><u>617</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u><u>2</u></u>		<u><u>2</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	<u><u>(208)</u></u>	\$	<u><u>(340)</u></u>

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

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 929	-	-	-	929
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,498	-	-	-	1,498
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	21	-	-	-	21
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	8,785	15	-	8,800
Equities	268	500	-	527	1,295
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	91	-	-	-	91
PP & E	32	-	-	-	32
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,839	9,285	15	527	12,666
Accounts Payable	356	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	138	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	421	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	915	-	-	-	915
Net Assets	\$ 1,924	9,285	15	527	11,751
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Trng:\$299 Estates: \$1800	Hawaii: \$1282 Other ~JCM:\$6172			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: \$15				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term Loan:\$481	NA Trn:\$31	Trust:\$15		

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,882	\$	4,920
% of Total Income		63.3%		39.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,460	\$	1,386
Estate Gifts	\$	375	\$	373
Total Gift Income		1,835		1,759
% of Total Income		23.8%		14.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	78	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	916	\$	5,867
Total Other Income		994		5,867
% of Total Income		12.9%		46.8%
TOTAL INCOME		7,711		12,546
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
New-Church Development	\$	4,112	\$	-
FTEs		13		13
Established-Church Develop.	\$	1,408	\$	-
FTEs		17		17
Campus/schools	\$	848	\$	-
FTEs		2		2
Ministry Teams	\$	-	\$	5,084
FTEs		-		35
Ministry Development	\$	-	\$	908
FTEs		-		11
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,368	\$	5,992
Total Program Service FTEs		32		78
% of Total \$		81.2%		79.4%
% of Total FTEs		80.0%		89.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	803	\$	819
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	672	\$	732
FTEs		5		6
Total Support Service \$		1,475		1,551
Total Support Service FTEs		8		9
% of Total \$		18.8%		20.6%
% of Total FTEs		20.0%		10.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	7,843	\$	7,543
TOTAL FTEs		40		87
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(132)	\$	5,003

**Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 5,310	-	-	-	5,310
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	16,450	-	-	-	16,450
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	21,760	-	-	-	21,760
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	17,142	-	-	-	17,142
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	17,142	-	-	-	17,142
Net Assets	\$ 4,618	-	-	-	4,618
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, 2005-----				
	Pension	S.A.F		Total	
Cash	\$ 2,038	115	-	-	2,153
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	143	2	-	-	145
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	10,027	-	-	-	10,027
Equities	16,554	-	-	-	16,554
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	28,762	117	-	-	28,879
Accounts Payable	149	-	-	-	149
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	149	-	-	-	149
Net Assets	\$ 28,613	117	-	-	28,730
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 2004 Actual	MPF 2005 Actual	SAF 2004 Actual	SAF 2005 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	16 \$	31
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	84.2%	91.2%
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	\$ 1,644	\$ 1,666	\$ -	-
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,642	\$ 4,155	\$ 3	3
Total Other Income	4,286	5,821	3	3
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	15.8%	8.8%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	4,286	5,821	19	34
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 1,834	\$ 1,933	13 \$	15
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 1,834	\$ 1,933	13 \$	15
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	84.2%	85.5%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 344	\$ 327	\$ -	-
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	344	327	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	15.8%	14.5%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 2,178	\$ 2,260	13 \$	15
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 2,108	\$ 3,561	6 \$	19

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

	-----December 31, 2005-----				
	Pension	S.A.F		Total	
Cash	\$ 2,970	139	-	-	3,109
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	505	-	-	-	505
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	25,527	-	-	-	25,527
Equities	69,907	-	-	-	69,907
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	98,909	139	-	-	99,048
Accounts Payable	222	11	-	-	233
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	222	11	-	-	233
Net Assets	\$ 98,687	128	-	-	98,815
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 2004 Actual	MPF 2005 Actual	SAF 2004 Actual	SAF 2005 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 66	\$ 91
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	98.5%	95.8%
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	\$ 4,018	\$ 4,173	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 8,766	\$ 6,659	\$ 1	\$ 4
Total Other Income	12,784	10,832	1	4
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	1.5%	4.2%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	12,784	10,832	67	95
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 6,261	\$ 6,462	\$ 80	\$ 58
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 6,261	\$ 6,462	\$ 80	\$ 58
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.9%	90.1%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 703	\$ 708	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	703	708	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	10.1%	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 6,964	\$ 7,170	\$ 80	\$ 58
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 5,820	\$ 3,662	\$ (13)	\$ 37

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

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,320	\$	1,232
% of Total Income		85.4%		84.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	172	\$	219
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		172		219
% of Total Income		11.1%		15.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	54	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	-	\$	7
Total Other Income		54		7
% of Total Income		3.5%		0.5%
TOTAL INCOME		1,546		1,458
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	231	\$	182
FTEs		2		2
Race Relations	\$	326	\$	276
FTEs		4		4
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	470	\$	465
FTEs		3		3
Abuse Prevention	\$	143	\$	143
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	186	\$	205
FTEs		1		1
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,356	\$	1,271
Total Program Service FTEs		11		11
% of Total \$		97.8%		97.5%
% of Total FTEs		91.7%		91.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund Raising	\$	31	\$	32
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		31		32
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		2.2%		2.5%
% of Total FTEs		8.3%		8.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	1,387	\$	1,303
TOTAL FTEs		12		12
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	159	\$	155

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

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,185	1,206	382	-	3,773
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	518	7	1	2	528
Inventory	46	-	-	-	46
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	119	995	95	417	1,626
Equities	75	634	60	509	1,278
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	598	-	-	-	598
Other	44	-	-	-	44
Total Assets	3,585	2,842	538	928	7,893
Accounts Payable	469	137	-	-	606
Notes/Loans Payable	508	-	-	-	508
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	289	-	-	-	289
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,347	-	-	-	1,347
Total Liabilities	2,613	137	-	-	2,750
Net Assets	\$ 972	2,705	538	928	5,143
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Resettlement Fund \$1,400 - Legacy Fund \$599 - Insurance Fund \$76 - Endowment/Annuities \$155 - Japan Note \$475				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments				

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual		Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,810	\$	4,853
% of Total Income		38.3%		37.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	6,218	\$	6,399
Estate Gifts	\$	775	\$	490
Total Gift Income		6,993		6,889
% of Total Income		55.6%		53.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	145	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	624	\$	1,233
Total Other Income		769		1,233
% of Total Income		6.1%		9.5%
TOTAL INCOME		12,572		12,975
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,352	\$	3,460
FTEs		37		32
Asia	\$	3,155	\$	2,789
FTEs		25		19
Latin America	\$	3,470	\$	3,538
FTEs		29		27
Europe	\$	629	\$	666
FTEs		9		8
Education	\$	575	\$	569
FTEs		7		5
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,181	\$	11,022
Total Program Service FTEs		107		91
% of Total \$		86.3%		86.7%
% of Total FTEs		88.1%		89.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	811	\$	786
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	962	\$	911
FTEs		9		6
Total Support Service \$		1,773		1,697
Total Support Service FTEs		14		11
% of Total \$		13.7%		13.3%
% of Total FTEs		11.9%		11.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	12,954	\$	12,719
TOTAL FTEs		121		102
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(382)	\$	256

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2005				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	\$ 5,505	\$ 4,125	\$ -	9,630
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	993	1,214	-	-	2,207
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	192	390	549	-	1,131
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	18	-	18
Equities	-	464	527	23	1,014
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	138	-	124	-	262
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,323	7,573	5,343	23	14,262
Accounts Payable	932	-	-	-	932
Notes/Loans Payable	10	-	-	-	10
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	370	-	-	-	370
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,312	-	-	-	1,312
Net Assets	\$ 11	7,573	5,343	23	12,950
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 = \$2,518 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$4,724 9/11 funds = 331				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$124 Gifts rec'd for subs years = \$4,961 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$258				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

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

		Fiscal 03-04 Actual	Fiscal 04-05 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	9,970	\$ 19,904
Estate Gifts	\$	976	\$ 725
Total Gift Income		<u>10,946</u>	<u>20,629</u>
% of Total Income		77.6%	75.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	2,448	\$ 5,833
Miscellaneous	\$	720	\$ 1,033
Total Other Income		<u>3,168</u>	<u>6,866</u>
% of Total Income		22.4%	25.0%
TOTAL INCOME		<u><u>14,114</u></u>	<u><u>27,495</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Overseas programs	\$	7,978	\$ 9,303
FTEs		61	56
No America programs	\$	872	\$ 1,159
FTEs		10	6
Disaster relief programs	\$	2,403	\$ 4,991
FTEs		8	9
Education	\$	446	\$ 448
FTEs		3	3
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
	\$	-	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$	<u>11,699</u>	\$ <u>15,901</u>
Total Program Service FTEs		82	74
% of Total \$		82.4%	85.6%
% of Total FTEs		81.2%	79.6%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,152	\$ 1,259
FTEs		8	7
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund Raising	\$	1,354	\$ 1,406
FTEs		11	12
Total Support Service \$		<u>2,506</u>	<u>2,665</u>
Total Support Service FTEs		19	19
% of Total \$		17.6%	14.4%
% of Total FTEs		18.8%	20.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	<u><u>14,205</u></u>	\$ <u><u>18,566</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u><u>101</u></u>	<u><u>93</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	<u><u>(91)</u></u>	\$ <u><u>8,929</u></u>

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.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Director of Denominational Ministries
Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Introduction

Synod has given The Back to God Hour the 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 Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; Ms. Rose Olthuis, secretary; and Mr. Doug Kallemeyn, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

The following slate of names were submitted to the respective regions for vote in the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2006:

Region 6

Rev. Bruce Persenaire is pastor of Escalon CRC in Escalon, California. Previously he served a church in Ellsworth, Michigan. Rev. Persenaire has served on the board of Home Missions and various classical committees.

Rev. George Vink is pastor of First CRC in Visalia, California. Previously he pastored churches in British Columbia, Montana, and Michigan. He has served on many classical and denominational boards and committees.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

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

III. The Back to God Hour ministries

This past year has been challenging for The Back to God Hour as the agency has undergone significant internal change. In the spring of 2005, Rev. David Feddes, minister of English broadcasting and listener contact, departed The Back to God Hour for doctoral study. During the summer, the departure of Dr. Cal Bremer as executive director of The Back to God Hour created a leadership vacuum that was filled by the appointment of Rev. Jimmy Lin as interim administrative director and Dr. Robert Heerspink as interim director. Rev. Lin and Dr. Heerspink shared the responsibilities of senior leadership as a search was conducted for the new director of The Back to God Hour. This search was slowed, however, by the need to address significant issues related to The Back to God Hour ministry.

In the fall of 2005, The Back to God Hour received a study on strategic issues facing the organization. The board decided to close *Primary Focus* production due to a lack of sufficient funds to underwrite the program. The board also encouraged the agency to explore greater collaborative relationships with other ministries and agencies, especially Words of Hope, the broadcast ministry of the Reformed Church in America. In addition, the board also decided to relocate senior leadership of The Back to God Hour to Grand Rapids in order to improve collaborative efforts with other agencies. Following these decisions, the search for a director of the agency resumed. It is expected that a director will be in place by the spring of 2006 (update after February board meeting). Following that appointment, the search will resume for an English-language ministry leader.

In the midst of these changes, the staff of The Back to God Hour continued to demonstrate a deep commitment to the mission of the agency. The historic Christian faith has continued to be proclaimed via radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. People have responded to the message of the gospel by phone, mail, e-mail, or, in some cases, by walking to a Back to God Hour follow-up center or to a local church identified with The Back to God Hour. 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.

In a world of rapidly changing technology and ministry opportunity, the staff continues to evaluate new ministries and delivery systems for gospel proclamation. Currently, ministry is carried on in the following ways:

A. Arabic-language ministry

The Back to God Hour maintains a cooperative ministry 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. Interest is great concerning this ministry, which addresses societies heavily influenced by Muslim belief and culture. In addition to traditional radio broadcasting, a new Arabic-language ministry website and a new text message follow-up center for cell phone users in Cyprus help address this interest in the gospel.

B. English-language ministry

1. *The Back to God Hour* weekly half-hour radio program proclaiming the historic Christian faith is heard on every continent in the world. Rev. David Feddes has continued to produce programming while the agency prepares to launch a search for a new English-language ministry leader. The Back to God Hour English-language ministry is heard on nearly one hundred North American stations, on over eighteen major stations in metropolitan areas in Nigeria, as well as on short-wave radio around the world. A follow-up center in Nigeria operates in concert with Christian Reformed World Missions personnel and indigenous church leaders to those who respond to the broadcast. Additional congregations have joined the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria as a result of Back to God Hour broadcasts.

2. The news-magazine format television program *Primary Focus* has completed production. While the program had experienced greater broadcast exposure during the past several years, the cost of the program made continued production prohibitive. The Back to God Hour expresses deep appreciation to the *Primary Focus* staff who continued to produce high-quality programming while the ministry was both underfunded and understaffed. The Back to God Hour will continue to air *Primary Focus* as long as there is a market for past episodes. The Back to God Hour will also continue to explore the use of video in proclaiming the gospel to the English-speaking world.
3. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over four hundred thousand copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional) and a limited number of printed copies of individual sermon messages. Both the sermons and the *Today* publication are available on The Back to God Hour website and by e-mail subscription.
4. The Back to God Hour's two animated programs for children, *The First Easter* and *The Prince of Peace*, continue to be licensed to others and have been produced in Arabic, Spanish, and Portuguese. The animation programs are available in DVD and VCR formats.
5. *Kids Corner* radio program is now heard on over 270 stations in North America, an increase of fifty from a year ago. The number of stations continues to grow. A new series of *Kids Corner* programs with new characters and a new format began airing in spring 2004. So far, eighty programs have been completed. The corresponding website, www.kids-corner.org, is also generating interest. At the website, children can listen to the programs, request music CDs and bookmarks, and do other fun activities. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children.

C. *Chinese-language ministry*

Twenty-six provinces in China are home to over 1.3 billion people. Seven super-power stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China in Cantonese or Mandarin. The Back to God Hour staff in Hong Kong provides follow-up and listener contact for the sixteen programs produced each week.

The Back to God Hour Chinese programs are also heard in major metropolitan areas in Australia, Canada, Central America, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, and the United States. In some of these areas, the programming is bilingual.

The Internet ministry is proving to be an increasingly valuable tool in ministry to Chinese persons, as it can transcend geographical as well as political boundaries. Production is also underway for a new children's radio program that will be augmented by a separate website, CDs, and literature.

Rev. Jimmy Lin gives direction to this crucial ministry.

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 response to the French-language ministry continues a multiyear pattern of growth. A program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's

issues in the African context and hosted by Mrs. Charlotte Mpindi has been especially popular. The Bible Correspondence Course is also attracting more than eight thousand students in Congo and Central African Republic.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

The Indonesian-language ministry moved to a new office this past year in Jakarta. The new facility offers more space for the ministry and greater security in a country plagued by unstable political and religious situations. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaja, our Back to God Hour Indonesian broadcast minister, gives leadership in developing closer ties to the Indonesian churches. A weekly children's television program has begun and is featured on more than twenty stations. The website continues to be a very important part of this ministry.

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. Anonymity provided by the Internet allows listeners to be more open in their search for answers to life and engage our staff in chat room conversations. The children's program, *Kid's Corner*, continues to generate responses.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, telephone, and the Internet are components of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The office in Campinas, Brazil, is responsible not only for production and distribution of all the Portuguese-language programs but also for production of Back to God Hour Spanish-language television programs. The Presbyterian Church in Brazil and many of its congregations are significant partners in this ministry. This past year, a short two-minute program broadcast during the news sparked many responses and contacts for the Presbyterian Church.

H. Russian-language ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, Calvin Theological Seminary graduate and 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. The ministry moved its follow-up center from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Working in conjunction with Christian Reformed World Missions, it is providing materials and seminars for those who respond. A redesigned and updated website has also become an increasingly important part of this ministry.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly four hundred radio stations and forty television stations carry 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 audiences.

Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to this ministry. He has worked with other Reformed agencies present in Latin America to develop preaching and TV production workshops for local preachers and lay leaders.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with RACOM, an agency dedicated to supporting the ministry of The Back to God Hour. In the past year, RACOM was reorganized as a subsidiary 501(c)3 organization of The Back to God Hour. RACOM maintains staff in Chicago, Illinois; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Burlington, Ontario.
2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
3. The Back to God Hour works with selected developing Christian Reformed congregations to raise the visibility of those new church plants through the use of electronic 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 and is now used in French as well.
5. 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 languages. These include collaborative relationships with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (Portuguese broadcasting), the Reformed Church of Japan (Japanese broadcasting), and the Indonesian Christian Church (Indonesian broadcasting).

IV. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; and the newly appointed director of The Back to God Hour when 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 denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

The Back to God Hour
Robert C. Heerspink, interim director
Jimmy Tai On T. Lin, interim administrative director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2005 and the February 2006 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

For the October 2005 meeting, the 31-member Board of Trustees met on campus Thursday and Friday, October 20 and 21. The five new members spent Wednesday evening and Thursday morning in orientation sessions with the board officers and President's Cabinet prior to the arrival of the full board.

Board officers elected for 2005-2006 are: Mr. Bastian Knoppers, chair; Dr. Jack Harkema, vice-chair; and Ms. Cynthia A. Rozendal Veenstra, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, Vice President for Administration, Finance and Information Services, treasurer.

II. General college matters

The October 2005 meeting was spent in the approval of appointments of the trustees to board committees for each division of the college, as well as for approval of the executive committee and the membership of trustees on six college standing committees. Two interviews were conducted by the board for reappointment of college administrators with faculty status. The board also reviewed and approved an \$800,000 net reduction to the 2005-2006 budget that had been approved at the February 2005 meeting to accommodate reduced tuition revenue and the unexpected increase in utility costs. The board also approved a 3.3 percent increase to the ministry housing allowance for the calendar year 2006 to compensate for increased cost of living due to inflation.

The February 2006 meeting was spent conducting faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure; interviewing the candidate for Provost, Dr. Claudia Beversluis; and hearing a report on fundraising efforts. Mr. Keith Oosthoek of the CRCNA Board of Trustees attended the meetings as an observer.

III. Faculty*A. Faculty interviews*

Twenty-two faculty interviews and one administrative interview were the highlight of the February 2006 meeting. Thirteen of the interviews were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations) and seven interviews were for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. Kenneth D. Bratt, professor of classical languages and director of the honors program, was presented the thirteenth 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. W. James Bradley, Ph.D., Director of Assessment and Institutional Research, two years, effective September 1, 2005
2. Kenneth D. Bratt, Ph.D., Director of the Honors Program (three-years, partial load), effective September 1, 2005
3. Randall F. VanDragt, Ph.D., Director of the Ecosystem Preserve (three years, partial load), effective September 1, 2006
4. John Witte, M.A., Dean of Residence Life, two years, effective September 1, 2005.
5. Michelle E. Zomer, M.A., Counselor, Broene Counseling Center, two years, effective September 1, 2005
6. Kenneth D. Hassler, Ph.D., Director, Student Academic Services, two years, effective September 1, 2005
7. Chaka S. Holley, M.S.W., Counselor, Broene Counseling Center, two years, effective September 1, 2005
8. Sarah E. Kolk, M.S.I., Instruction Librarian, Hekman Library, two years, effective September 1, 2005
9. Henry Aay, Ph.D., Frederik Meijer Endowed Chair in Dutch Language and Culture, three years, effective September 1, 2006.
10. Linda M. McFadden, M.Ln., M.B.A., reference and acquisitions librarian, two years, effective November 1, 2005.

D. Provost appointment

Claudia D. Beversluis, Ph.D., provost, effective July 1, 2006, five years, retaining tenured appointment as professor of psychology.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees (see Recommendations VI, B, 1)

Region 3

The first three-year term for Mr. Martin Mudde, regular; and Ms. Ineke Neutel, alternate, will expire in 2006. The board recommends them for a second term.

Mr. Martin Mudde, earned a B.Sc., Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, and is currently employed by the RAM Group as director of operations. Mr. Mudde has worked in government and private industry as a consultant and manager in high technology. He is a member of Calvin CRC, Ottawa, where he served as an elder and chair of the council. He has served multiple terms on the boards of Ottawa Christian School and of Redeemer Christian High, and he served six years on the board of Redeemer University College. He is currently a member of the Administration and Finance Committee.

Ms. Ineke Neutel, earned the B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D., F.A.C.E., pharmacoepidemiology, McMaster University, UCLA, University of Western Ontario. Ms. Neutel is a professor of medicine, University of Ottawa, research scientist at Health Canada, and a Fellow of the American College of Epidemiology. She is a member of Calvin CRC, Ottawa, and served on the education committee. She

has served on the board and the education committees of both Ottawa Christian School and Redeemer Christian High School as well as on the CRC Board of Publications. She is a member of a task force on Assisted Human Reproduction Technology for the Canadian Government sponsored by the CRC Canadian Ministries board.

Region 5

The first three-year term for Mr. Ronald Leistra, regular; and Rev. Paul Hansen, alternate, will expire in 2006. The board recommends them for a second term.

Mr. Ronald M. Leistra has a B.A. Ed. and B.A. in history from Western Washington College; and an M.A. in history from the University of Washington. He previously served on the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. His two daughters are Calvin College graduates. He is a retired professor of history and former department chair at Portland Community College. He and his wife are members of Oak Hills CRC in Portland, Oregon. He has served several terms on the council of Oak Hills Church, Portland, Oregon. Ron is currently a member of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Rev. Paul Hansen received his B.A. from Hope College and his M.Div. from Western Seminary, with further study at Western Michigan University and the Fuller Seminary Institute for Worship Studies. He serves as pastor of First CRC, Lynden, Washington, and has served on the home missions committees in Chicago and Central California as well as the Social Action Committee and the RCA Committee. He has been a synod delegate as well as counselor to five vacant churches in the past two years.

Region 9

The first three-year term for Rev. Gerald Hoek, regular; and Mr. Perry Recker, alternate, will expire in 2006. The board recommends them for a second term.

Rev. Gerald L. Hoek earned his B.A. from Calvin College and M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He currently serves as the pastor of Faith CRC in Nashville, Tennessee, and has previously served as an alternate board member for CRC Publications. He has been a delegate to synod and has served on the board of the Christian Counseling Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and as president of church council. Rev. Hoek is currently a member of the Trusteeship Committee.

Mr. Perry Recker received his M.Phil. at the Institute for Christian Studies and M.L.S. at the University of Pittsburgh. He has served as a librarian for Saint Xavier University and Trinity Christian College. He was a founding board member of the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School and served as an elder at Friendship Community Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. He is currently a member of Pullman CRC in Chicago, and has served as an elder and as cochair of the Classical Committee on Race Relations for Classis Chicago South. He has a heart for both Christian higher education and for racial reconciliation and has represented these issues to classis in various ways.

Region 10

The first three-year term for Rev. Joseph Brinks, regular; and Mr. Christopher Grier, alternate, will expire in 2006. The board recommends them for a second term.

Rev. Joseph Brinks earned his A.B. from Calvin College, his M.Div. and M. T. from Calvin Theological Seminary, and his D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He serves as senior pastor of Grace CRC in Portage, Michigan, and had served previously on the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served in classical positions as a member of the Student Fund Committee, Pastor Fellowship Committee, church visitor, a classis reorganization committee, a mentor, and has been a delegate to synod seven times. He is the chair of the classical interim committee for Classis Kalamazoo and serves as council president. He is currently a member of the Enrollment and External Relations Committee.

Mr. Christopher Grier earned a B.A. from Shaw University and an M.Ed. from Ohio University. He gained staff experience at Shaw University, Ohio University, and Purdue University in multicultural programming and served as director of Camp Tall Turf in western Michigan. He currently is minister of fine arts at Maple Avenue Ministries, Holland, Michigan, and he serves on the board of the Holland Police Community Relations Commission.

Region 11

The first three-year term for Mr. James Haagsma, regular; and Ms. Evonne Plantinga, alternate, will expire in 2006. The board recommends them for a second term to be ratified by Synod 2006.

Mr. James Haagsma earned his A.B. from Calvin College and an M.A.Ed. from Michigan State University. He retired as a Christian school teacher after teaching for thirty-five years at South Christian High School, Grand Rapids. He is a member of Hillside Community CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served three terms as an elder. His previous board service includes the Christian Educators Association Governing Board, the Professional Standards Committee, and South Christian school board. He is also a member of the Byron Center Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. His four children are Calvin graduates; five grandchildren have graduated or are currently attending. He is currently a member of the Advancement Committee.

Ms. Evonne Plantinga graduated with a B.A. from Calvin College and earned an M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. She currently serves as relationship manager / student support for the University of Michigan School of Business. She previously taught in various Christian schools in Michigan and Ontario, and has served on the charter committee to establish the Ann Arbor Christian School Association. She is a member of Ann Arbor CRC, Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she chairs the adult education committee. She has previously served on the Ann Arbor Campus Chapel Board.

Region 10

The second three-year term for Mr. Robert DeBruin, regular; and Mrs. Lois Miller, alternate, will expire in 2006. The following slate of nominees will be

submitted to the respective regions for vote in the May meeting. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2006.

Mr. Roger N. Brummel graduated with a B.A.. degree from Calvin College, an M.A. from Western Michigan University, an M.S.T. from the University of Missouri, and a Ph.D. from Wayne State University. Mr. Brummel retired in 2001 from a distinguished career in the field of pharmaceutical development and currently serves as the CEO/director of the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies. He has served professionally as a member of the American Chemical Society, the Drug Information Association, and the American Management Association. He and his wife, Connie, are active members of Fourteenth Street CRC in Holland. Mr. Brummel has served on numerous boards and committees including Baxter Community Center, Holland Christian Schools, Greater Holland United Way, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. He is recipient of the Calvin Alumni Association Outstanding Service Award as well as of several awards and grants in his field of chemical development.

Mr. Calvin Hulst spent two years at Calvin College and currently is president of Total Product Management, Ltd. in Holland, Michigan. He has served the Christian Reformed Church ably as a long-time president of the Holland Deacons Conference. He has also served as chairman of the steering committee at Providence CRC and formerly was president of deacons at Bethany CRC. He and his wife are active members of their church. Mr. Hulst has served as president of the CRWRC board for five years and has worked on various classical committees. All four of his children are graduates of Calvin College.

Region 10

Mr. Chris Grier is unable to complete his term as alternate to Region 10 delegate Rev. Joseph Brinks. The following slate of nominees for the alternate position only will be submitted to the respective regions for vote in the May meeting. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2006.

Rev. Michael Borgert received a B.A.. from Calvin College and an M.Div. and Th.M. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Borgert is currently pastor of First CRC in Muskegon, Michigan. His service to the church includes work on several committees, the student fund and the finance committees of classis, and the development team at Muskegon Christian School. His community service includes the Heart of West Michigan United Way Day of Caring Campaign and the Calvin College ten-year reunion committee. As a Calvin student, he served on the Multicultural Student Advisory Board. Rev. Borgert and his family are members of First CRC, Muskegon.

Mrs. Barbara A. Buteyn earned a B.A. from Calvin College and an M.A. from Grand Valley State University. Mrs. Buteyn has degrees in preschool education and special education and currently serves as a teacher-consultant in special education. Her board, church, and community service includes the Heritage Homes board in Rochester, New York; church worship and education committees; as well as service as a small group coach's team and on the church adult education committee. She and her husband, John, are members of EverGreen Ministries in Hudsonville, Michigan. Both of their sons have attended Calvin College.

Region 11

Trustee Max Van Wyk of Region 11, is in the second year of his first term as a regional trustee, but must resign his position due to work schedule conflicts. Mr. Van Wyk is willing and able to serve as alternate. The current alternate for Region 11, Mr. Craig Klamer, is willing to serve as the regular trustee. The board approves this change and recommends ratification of the decision at Synod 2006.

Mr. Craig Klamer received a B.A. in business administration from Calvin College. He is currently vice president of merchandise administration for Family Christian Stores, and is a member of the Ada, Michigan, CRC. He has taught classes on the Reformed confessions, directed the adult choir, and served on the search committee for the national director of GEMS. Mr. Klamer is currently serving a second term as elder at Ada CRC and as cochair of worship ministries with the senior pastor.

Mr. Max Van Wyk graduated with a B.A. from Calvin College and went on to earn an M.B.A. from Western Michigan University. He is the CEO of Van Wyk Risk and Financial Management, and is currently a member of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. His previous board service includes the Grand Rapids Christian Schools board, chair of the Grand Rapids Christian Schools Capital Campaign, chair of the Better Business Bureau, the chair of the CNA Pacer Board, and many other committees. He has also served as chair of deacons at Brookside CRC and served the Calvin board as a member of the Advancement Committee.

B. Alumni trustee (see Recommendations VI, B, 2)

Mrs. Ruth Vis has served one year of a three-year term vacated in 2005 by Mr. Dirk Pruis. She is eligible for a second term. The board approves and recommends ratification of the decision at Synod 2006.

Ms. Ruth J. Vis is a 1976 Calvin College graduate with a B.A. in secondary music education and history. Ms. Vis taught English and choral music for one year in Ontario, California. Since 1977, she has served in various capacities for BankOne/Chase, initially in the audit division. She consistently moved up through the ranks and currently serves as Chase Bank's corporate grant-maker and public affairs officer in West Michigan. Her service to Calvin College includes membership in the Calvin Alumni Choir, service on the Calvin Around Town Committee, and Calvin's Discovery Club Fellowship program for precollege students. Ms. Vis is currently vice-chair of the Home Repair Services board and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. She has also served on the board of the Grand Rapids Calvin Alumni Chapter, East Grand Rapids Aquatics, and the Grand Rapids Symphony Volunteer Association. Ms. Vis and her husband, David ('79), are members of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids. Ms. Vis is currently a member of the Advancement Committee.

C. At-large trustees (see Recommendations VI, B, 3)

The third term of Mr. Kenneth Olthoff expires in 2006. The board will recommend a replacement at the May 2006 meeting and submit the name for ratification at synod.

Rev. Norberto E. Wolf has served two three-year terms as an at-large trustee, and the board recommends him for appointment to another three-year term.

Rev. Norberto Wolf received a B.A. from Calvin College and earned a B.D. and M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He serves as the West Coast regional director of Race Relations for the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He served as senior pastor for nineteen years in five congregations of the Iglesia Reformada Argentina, and was president of synod on three occasions. Rev. Wolf has published many articles, essays, and editorials in Argentine magazines and newspapers. In addition, he has translated five volumes of CRC Publication's New Testament Commentary series and four other theological books into Spanish. He and his wife, Dianne, have four children and are members of Anaheim Latin American CRC in California. Rev. Wolf is a member of the Academic Affairs committee.

V. Finance

The board approved the 2006-2007 budget of approximately \$85.2 million. Tuition and fees were set at \$20,475 and room and board at \$7,040. This represents a 6.9 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 2005-2006. Financial aid will also increase at a somewhat greater rate than the costs.

VI. Recommendations

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

1. Jerry G. Bergsma, M.A., *Associate Professor* of Physical Education
2. Keith D. Brautigam, D.M.A., Professor of Music
3. Kimerly R. Gall, Ph.D., Professor of Physical Education
4. Deborah B. Haarsma, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Physics and Astronomy
5. William H. Katerberg, Ph.D., Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of History
6. Amy S. Patterson, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Political Science
7. Laura A. Smit, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Religion
8. James K. A. Smith, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Philosophy
9. James R. Timmer, Jr., Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Physical Education
10. Deanna van Dijk, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor* of Geography
11. Jennifer J. Van Antwerp, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Engineering
12. Jeremy G. Van Antwerp, Ph.D., *Associate Professor* of Engineering
13. Julie Walton, Ph. D., *Associate Professor* of Health

B. That synod, by way of printed ballot, elect the nominees for membership on the board (terms to begin and end on the convening date of the first full board meeting following the meeting of synod).

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Cynthia A. Veenstra, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2006 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 February 2006.

The board officers are Mr. Sidney J. Jansma, Jr., chair; Dr. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, vice-chair; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary.

The board recommends that synod approve the following seminary trustees who have completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment:

Rev. Jack De Vries (trustee)	Rev. Fred Heslinga (alternate trustee)	Region 4
Mrs. Leslie Ruitter (trustee)	Mrs. Sue Imig (alternate trustee)	Region 5
Mr. Douglas Kool (trustee)	Mr. James Hoekstra (alternate trustee)	At large

The following slates of nominees were submitted to the respective regions for vote in the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2006:

Region 7

Ms. Susan Keesen resides in Denver, Colorado, where she is vice president and general counsel of CIBER, Inc. She earned her Juris Doctor at the University of Colorado and has served as elder, clerk, and president of the council of Third CRC, Denver. Currently, she serves on the Judicial Code Committee of the CRCNA and the board of the Colorado Judicial Institute. Ms. Keesen is a member of the American, Colorado, and Denver Bar Associations and has been involved in various civic organizations. She has provided pro bono services to the Christian Living Communities and to Third CRC.

Dr. John Ratmeyer serves as the deputy chief of pediatrics and medical consultant to the child protection team of the Gallup Indian Medical Center, Gallup, New Mexico. He has served as a deacon and is currently serving as an elder at Bethany CRC, Gallup.

Region 8—Position 1

Dr. Byron Noordewier is a professor of biology at Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa. He has served as an elder in two congregations and as a member of the World Missions board as a representative of Classis Heartland. Dr. Noordewier serves on the board of the Christian Scholars Review and is a member of Immanuel CRC in Orange City, Iowa.

Ms. Jerelyn Schelhaas serves as chair of the Theatre Arts Department and instructor of theatre arts and English at Dordt College. She serves on the serving learning committee and the teacher education committee at Dordt. Ms. Schelhaas has served in various capacities within her local congregation including two terms as deacon at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. She is a member of the Sioux Center Rec and Arts Council.

Region 8—Position 2

Rev. Greg Dyk serves as the pastor of the Sanborn CRC, Sanborn, Iowa. He owned his own business prior to training for the ministry and, during that time, served as a deacon and as a member of the southwest Minnesota Diaconal Conference Board. Currently, he serves as the pastoral advisor for the Siouxland Diaconal Conference and as a member and advisor to various committees in Classis Heartland.

Rev. James T. Petersen is pastor of the Crossroads Fellowship CRC of West Des Moines, Iowa. He attended Westminster, Fuller, and Calvin Theological Seminaries and served the past ten years in Classis Lake Superior (Faith CRC, New Brighton, Minnesota).

Region 11

Ms. Doris Ridders, a member of Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a writer-editor-publishing consultant. She spent her professional career in Bible publishing. Ms. Ridders currently serves as an elder and has served on various committees in her local congregation.

Mr. Gary Tinklenberg is a member of Calvin CRC in Lowell, Michigan. He is president of Corrosion Control Consultants and Labs, Inc. Mr. Tinklenberg has served on a classical committee for Classis Thornapple Valley and as both elder and deacon in his local congregation.

Region 12 (delegate position only)

Rev. Andrew Chun is pastor of Covenant CRC in North Haledon, New Jersey. He is a rather recent graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary who brings an ethnic perspective to his ministry.

Dr. Peter Hoytema is senior pastor of the Midland Park CRC in Midland Park, New Jersey. He currently serves as the stated clerk of Classis Hudson and has served on the board of Home Missions, the classical interim committee, and as church visitor (Classis Hudson).

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. Donald Byker as the director of field education; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; and Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor.

There have been two changes in the seminary administration this past year. Rev. Greg Janke began his work as the new director of admissions and financial aid in February 2006 after Mr. David DeBoer left Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) after five years of faithful service. Ms. Joan Beelen will begin her work as the new registrar and academic program adviser in late summer 2006 upon Mr. John VanderLugt's retirement from CTS after twenty-nine years of faithful service.

This year, the board reappointed Dr. Duane K. Kelderman to the position of vice president for administration for three years subject to ratification by Synod 2006. The seminary is grateful for his commitment and service to the seminary and 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 worldwide. 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 2006 meeting, the board acknowledged the years of faithful service of Mr. John Vander Lugt and approved conferring upon him the title of director of admissions and registrar, *emeritus*, effective August 31, 2006, and requests that Synod 2006 also acknowledge this action with gratitude to God.

The board dealt with the reappointment of several faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2006 (*italics indicates change in rank*):

Mariano Avila, *Professor* of New Testament for two years

Donald Byker, Director of Field Education with an *indefinite* appointment

Duane K. Kelderman, Associate Professor of Preaching for two years

David M. Rylaarsdam, Associate Professor of Historical Theology for two years

Richard E. Sytsma, Dean of Students and International Student Adviser with faculty status with an *indefinite* appointment

Pieter C. Tuit, Associate Professor of Missiology for two years

The board, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of Calvin College, reappointed Mr. Glenn A. Remelts to the position of director of the Hekman Library (with faculty status for an indefinite term).

The board granted faculty status to Rev. Kathleen Smith, director of continuing education and director of the Making Connections Initiative. The board also changed the title of Dr. Lyle Bierma from professor of systematic theology to professor of historical and systematic theology.

The board also approved the reappointment of Dr. Emily R. Brink as adjunct professor of church music and worship, Rev. Jack Roeda as adjunct professor of preaching, and Dr. Edward D. Seely as adjunct professor in educational ministries. Each of these reappointments is for three years. It approved giving adjunct faculty status to Rev. Jim Oosterhouse of Christian Reformed Home Missions and appointed Rev. Andrew Beunk as instructor for computer-assisted exegesis for one year (2006-2007).

The board approved a number of part-time teaching arrangements for the 2006-2007 academic year and reports for information that the following leaves have been granted:

Carl Bosma, fall quarter 2006-2007 and summer 2007

Ronald Feenstra, fall quarter 2006-2007 and summer 2007

Calvin Van Reken, spring quarter 2006-2007 and summer 2007

Jeffrey Weima, spring quarter 2006-2007 and summer 2007

Richard Muller (publication), fall quarter 2006-2007.

IV. Curriculum and programs

A. *Center for Excellence in Preaching*

The year 2005 was an important one for the new Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) at Calvin Theological Seminary. Not only was this the first year in which most of CEP's programs were up and running, but CEP also hired its first full-time director when Rev. Scott Hoezee began his work the first of July. Thanks to the fine work of CEP's interim director, Dr. John Witvliet, Rev. Hoezee was able to hit the ground running and further the initiatives already underway. A key element of the CEP program is the newly launched website. Since going online in mid-August, the CEP website (<http://cep.calvinseminary.edu>) has grown steadily and attracted more visitors each month. Early traffic to the website was modest, at around two thousand persons visiting per month, viewing around five thousand individual pages of material. By November when resources for making Advent and Christmas sermons were posted, just over five thousand people found their way to the website, viewing twenty-three thousand pages of the posted materials. Many of these visitors came back multiple times, indicating that the CEP website is becoming a regular resource for many preachers.

The Center for Excellence in Preaching has also sponsored a mentorship program as well as numerous peer learning groups throughout the United States and Canada. Scores of pastors have been involved in these local programs that are designed to bring pastors together for focused conversation as they together pursue the goal of making compelling and vital sermons for God's people. CEP also sponsors workshops and conferences. The spring and fall 2005 Preaching Conferences held at CTS in Grand Rapids drew a combined three hundred pastors from a variety of denominations. Regional day-long seminars were also conducted by CTS faculty in places such as New Jersey, Chicago, and Edmonton, with more such local seminars being planned for 2006. CEP sponsors summer seminars, including Dr. Neal Plantinga's popular "Imaginative Reading for Creative Preaching" three-week seminar and a new initiative called "The Preachers' Oasis" aimed at giving preachers a week-long focused look at how to improve both the content and the delivery of their sermons. Additionally, CEP works closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship as well as with the Festival of Faith & Writing at Calvin College. Through these collaborations, CEP has been able to bring in and sponsor high-profile preachers and preaching-related speakers at the annual January Symposium on Worship (attracting upwards of sixteen hundred participants) and the biannual April Festival of Faith & Writing (which typically brings in around two thousand participants).

At CTS itself, director Hoezee is working closely with professors of preaching John Rottman and Duane Kelderman to work with M.Div. students as they prepare themselves to enter the preaching ministry of the church. New online preaching courses are being planned even as regular preaching courses in the curriculum are being revised and enhanced. A new sermon evaluation form has been created and was specifically designed for use in multiple settings, including in local churches and at meetings of classis as well as in the regular evaluation of students and potential ministerial candidates at CTS (see Appendix A.). In all these ways, and many more besides, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary wants to inspire and

promote preaching that is biblical, authentic, contextual, and life-changing, all for the greater glory of God and the edification of God's people!

B. Making Connections Initiative

The seminary has completed the first year of its "Making Connections Initiative," a five-year initiative to strengthen the seminary's efforts in the calling, training, and sustaining of pastors throughout the CRC and beyond. The central concept of this initiative is that collaboration with others—making connections—leads to more creative and effective outcomes than working alone. Through the building of collaborative relationships within and beyond the seminary, this initiative seeks (1) to increase the number of promising individuals who enter seminary with a vocational commitment to congregational ministry; (2) to reorient the seminary curriculum around the concept of "Theological Education as Formation for Ministry," in which formation focuses upon the development of the whole person in community; and (3) to sustain both ministry practitioners and seminary faculty through collaborative relationships and mutual learning.

Two highlights of the Making Connections Initiative are the new Discerning Your Calling program, and the development of "Formation for Ministry" as the integrating principle for theological education at CTS.

C. Discerning Your Calling

One of the ways CTS is seeking to renew a culture of calling in the CRCNA is by hosting Discerning Your Calling (DYC) events throughout the denomination. Rev. Heidi De Jonge, pastor for discernment initiatives at Calvin Theological Seminary, incorporates worship, small-group discussion, and time for individual reflection into workshops that guide the participants through a series of questions:

- What does it mean to listen to God's voice and to discern God's will?
- What does it mean to be called by God?
- How do I know if I'm called to vocational ministry?
- What vocational ministry possibilities are there?

Rev. De Jonge has led DYC workshops in churches and on high school and college campuses throughout the United States and Canada and is eager to host more events in the future.

D. Formation for Ministry

The other highlight of the Making Connections Initiative is the development of Formation for Ministry (FFM) as the integrating principle for theological education at CTS.

Formation for ministry at CTS includes the following emphases:

- Formation goes beyond merely dispensing information.
- Formation focuses upon the whole person: head, heart, hands, all in the context of community.
- Formation transcends the separation between academic and practical.
- Formation seeks to make every part of the seminary experience form students into increasingly faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Formation is *more* demanding than academic achievement alone in that it involves accountability for not just academic excellence, but one’s total faith life, relational health, and personal commitment to ministry.

Behind this FFM vision is the truth that God forms believers in the *totality* of their lives—“when they sit at home and when they walk down the road, when they lie down and when they get up” (Deut. 6:7). Christ forms students in the classrooms of CTS and in the student center. The Spirit forms students in chapel and in a casual conversation with a friend. The seminary’s goal is to be that community in which, by the Spirit of God and through all of these activities and relationships, Christ forms students into his likeness and prepares them for ministry. Their ministry will, in turn, involve them in forming others into Christ’s likeness.

The visual diagram in Appendix B shows how formation vision translates into the educational program of CTS.

The inner circle lists important formation activities in which students are engaged. Students actively engage in their own spiritual formation, are seeking to discern more clearly their call to ministry, are deepening their capacity for theological reflection upon life and ministry, and are developing practical ministry skills.

The outer circle lists important structures and relationships in this formation project. Students take the full complement of courses in the seminary curriculum, are connected to a mentor (usually a local pastor) throughout their seminary studies, are involved in the full life of a particular local church, and receive specific ministry practice experience in those churches and in summer internships in a variety of ministry settings.

Tying all of these things together are the formation for ministry (FFM) small groups: faculty- or pastor-led groups of seven to ten students that meet weekly over the students’ entire seminary career. These groups are designed to be communities of trust and reflection in which deep spiritual formation, theological integration, and ministry skill development can take place.

The goal of the FFM program at CTS is that each student will “grow up in him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4:15), and that “the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

Calvin Theological Seminary is humbled to be a place where God is forming every student, professor, and staff member into Christ’s likeness.

V. Students

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

Christian Reformed students: 188

Non-Christian Reformed students: 133

International (does not include Canadian students): 85

Programs:

Interns: 5

M.Div.: 141

M.A.: 38

M.T.S.: 29

Th.M.: 66

Ph.D.: 32

Unclassified: 10

Male students: 270

Female students: 51

VI. General matters

A. Continuing education

The seminary is grateful for another excellent year of continuing education and for the close working relationship it enjoys with other continuing education initiatives, including CTS's Making Connections Initiative (MCI), the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP), and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW). The seminary is also grateful for many other collaborators this past year, including the following:

- The Seminars in Christian Scholarship (SCS) and other offices at Calvin College (CC).
- The Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program of the Christian Reformed Church.
- Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM)
- Christian Reformed Pastor-Church Relations office (PCR)
- Christian Reformed Office of Race Relations
- The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity(CCIT) Christian College, supported by CEP, CICW, and MCI

We are pleased at the attendance numbers this past year:

- 3,736 attendees at on-campus continuing education events, with some persons attending several events or a series of group events. This includes the 1,400 who attended the Worship Symposium.
- 1,547 attendees at off-campus events for which we have recorded attendance.
- 7,051 online listeners / viewers to 2005 events posted on the CTS website; 546 of that number were listening to or viewing the simultaneous streaming of the lectures.
- 39,552 online visitors in 2005 accessed our archive of lectures from previous years.

We are encouraged by the interest of pastors and church leaders in continuing education resources, and we look forward to many partnerships in the future.

B. Facing Your Future

The Facing Your Future program for high school juniors and seniors again generated wide interest in the spring of 2006. Thirty-nine nominations were received from local leaders, and thirty-five students participated in the three-week-long program last summer. The program is designed to expose young

people to ministry and theology and to awaken and/or deepen the call to ordained ministry. This summer's three-week experience will combine challenging theological education to students in the classroom with experience at one of three ministry encounter sites in North America.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant to Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., chairman; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary; the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot approve the the following trustee reappointments:

Rev. Jack De Vries (trustee)	Rev. Fred Heslinga (alternate trustee)	Region 4
Mrs. Leslie Ruiters (trustee)	Mrs. Sue Imig (alternate trustee)	Region 5
Mr. Douglas Kool (trustee)	Mr. James Hoekstra (alternate trustee)	At large

C. That synod ratify the following reappointment of an administrator with faculty status:

Dr. Duane K. Kelderman, vice president for administration for three years

D. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments (*italics indicates change in rank*):

Mariano Avila, *Professor* of New Testament for two years
Donald Byker, Director of Field Education with an *indefinite* appointment
Duane K. Kelderman, Associate Professor of Preaching for two years
David M. Rylaarsdam, Associate Professor of Historical Theology for two years
Richard E. Sytsma, Dean of Students and International Student Adviser with faculty status with an *indefinite* appointment
Pieter C. Tuit, Associate Professor of Missiology for two years

E. That synod approve two offerings for CTS (the International Student Subsidy Fund and Facing Your Future program).

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Ruth M. Hofman, secretary

Appendix A Sermon Evaluation Form

Sermon Evaluation Form
Calvin Theological Seminary
& the Center for Excellence in Preaching

At Calvin Theological Seminary and its Center for Excellence in Preaching, we strive to teach students to write and deliver sermons that are Biblical, Authentic, Contextual, and Life-Changing.

This evaluation tool is designed to help you assess a given sermon using these categories. This form is also designed to be useful both for written sermons that an evaluator reads and for sermons actually heard in a worship service.

Ratings: 1=Excellent, 2=Very Good, 3=Good, 4=Average, 5=Poor

THE SERMON

1. BIBLICAL

Because God's Word lies at the center of all preaching, sermons should demonstrate that the Bible (and the specific portion of Scripture on which the sermon was based) determined the main message of the sermon.

What's more, if Scripture truly is *God's* revelation, then the sermon should reveal God's active presence (and above all his saving grace) in any given passage as well as throughout the whole of Scripture. With this in mind, please evaluate this particular sermon:

- The sermon content was derived from Scripture: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon helped you understand the text better: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon revealed how God is at work in the text: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon displayed the grace of God in Scripture: 1 2 3 4 5
- Please state the main point of the specific biblical text as this sermon presented it:

2. AUTHENTIC

All Christians have, and so should display, union with Christ. But preachers in particular should exhibit their own commitment to the faith and to the Savior at that faith's core. Preachers should show that they are convicted by the truths they preach, that they are committed to living out this message in their own lives, and that they are pastorally sensitive to (and are honest about) the challenges that face believers in living out the Christian faith.

With this in mind, please evaluate this particular sermon:

- The preacher displayed passion and enthusiasm for the message: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher's demeanor showed conviction: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher displayed honesty / integrity in applying the message: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher showed pastoral sensitivity in the sermon: 1 2 3 4 5
- Please comment briefly on anything the preacher did that revealed his/her passion for the text/sermon or anything that detracted from your sense that the preacher was committed to the message of the sermon:

3. CONTEXTUAL

The *content* of every sermon comes from God's unchanging Word in Scripture. But the *context* in which that Word must be applied is always changing. Preachers must demonstrate an awareness of the culture, the issues of the day, and the particulars of a given congregation (if the preacher is in a position to be familiar with the congregation). With this in mind, please evaluate this particular sermon:

- The sermon made a connection between the biblical world and our current situation: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon showed an awareness of contemporary issues: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon was delivered in language that fits our contemporary world and that was, therefore, communicatively effective: 1 2 3 4 5

- The sermon revealed God’s active presence and grace in our world today and in the situations people face today: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon was communicated effectively through compelling use of illustrations and examples: 1 2 3 4 5
- Please state briefly an example or two of how this sermon demonstrated that it was written for this current time and place. If the sermon failed to be relevant, state briefly why:

4. LIFE-CHANGING

The Apostle Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is nothing less than the very “power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16). The result of presenting that powerful gospel should be changed lives. Those outside of the faith should feel joyfully called to believe in Jesus as Lord. Longtime believers should feel energized for service and bolstered in their hope and joy. With this in mind, please evaluate this particular sermon:

- Through the sermon God reminded you of grace: 1 2 3 4 5
- Through this sermon God created, or strengthened, the hope that God is actively at work in our lives every day: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon suggested specific ways to look for and see God’s work in our world and even in our struggles: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon provided practical examples / advice: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon communicated God’s grace in a way that could reach out to unbelievers or those unfamiliar with the Christian faith: 1 2 3 4 5
- Please state briefly how this sermon showed the preacher’s desire that the message would affect people’s real lives by giving hope and direction. By listening to the sermon, could you sense God’s Spirit challenging you to new obedience, strengthening your commitment to serve Jesus as your Lord? If the sermon seemed weak in this regard, please state why:

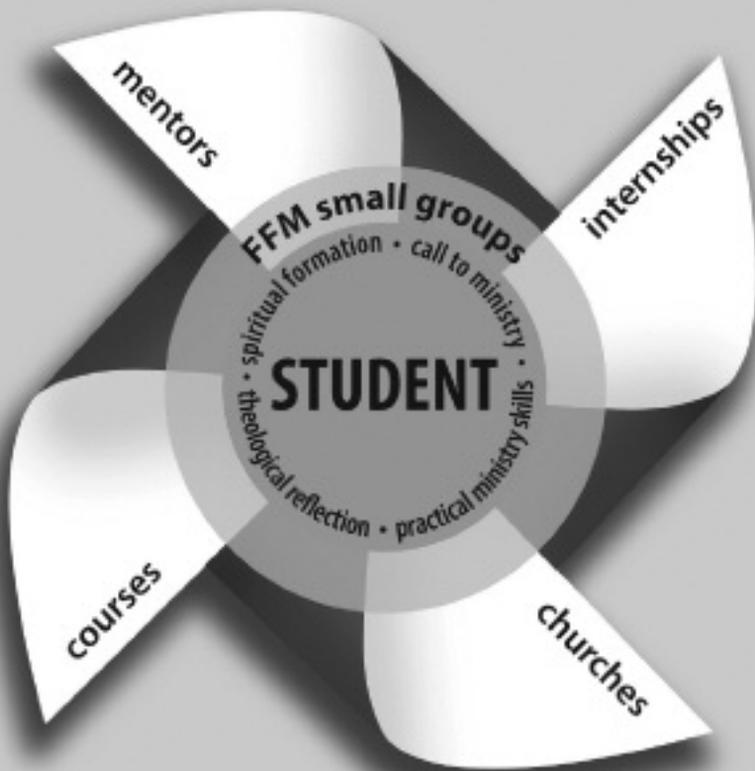
THE WORSHIP SERVICE AND SERMON DELIVERY

Please evaluate the preacher in the following areas related to the actual leading of the worship service and delivery of the sermon (if the evaluator was asked to read a sermon but was not present when it was delivered, this portion may be skipped):

- The preacher led the service confidently and pastorally: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher was organized and so helped the service to flow smoothly and without distractions: 1 2 3 4 5
- The worship service was unified with appropriate selection of songs/hymns, litanies, and other readings: 1 2 3 4 5
- The prayers demonstrated pastoral sensitivity and a good balance among thanksgiving, petition, lament, and praise: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher made good eye contact throughout the service and made use of appropriate facial expressions and gestures: 1 2 3 4 5
- The preacher used a variety of voice tones and varied the speed of his/her speech in the sermon: 1 2 3 4 5
- The sermon displayed a structure that was easy to follow (that is, it had a recognizable beginning, middle, and end): 1 2 3 4 5
- Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the preacher’s leading of the overall service. What was done particularly well? What could be done differently to improve the service’s unity and flow?

Formation For Ministry

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



"Growing up into Christ"
(EPH. 4:15)

The mission of CRC Publications, as adopted by the CRC Publications board in 2004, is as follows:

To provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them 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 is articulated in the Reformed confessions and expressed in the 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:

- increasing anti-intellectualism
- decreasing loyalty to denominations and all institutions
- increasing expectations of “choices” in all areas of life
- increasingly diverse denomination
- explosion of new technology.

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administration of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to the Christian Reformed Church.

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

A. Organization

A board of up to eighteen delegates, one from each CRC region and up to six at-large delegates elected by synod, governs CRC Publications. Three of the at-large members are from the Reformed Church in America. The board ordinarily meets three times annually (January, April, and September).

Each member of the board serves on one of four Councils: Administrative, Faith Alive, Periodicals, or World Literature Ministries.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications board through June 2006 are as follows: Ms. Carrie Mulder, president; Rev. Sidney Couperus, vice president; Mr. Bert Witvoet, secretary; and Mr. Otto Gonzalez, treasurer.

C. Nominations of board members

1. At-large delegates

The following nominees are presented to synod to fill the at-large position that is designated for someone with business and/or finance expertise:

Mr. Tom Prince is a 1987 graduate of Calvin College with a B.S. in accounting; he also has an MBA from Grand Valley State University. He is a partner in the CPA and consulting firm Hungerford, Aldrin, Nichols & Carter in Grand Rapids, specializing in tax and consulting services for a wide variety of industries. Mr. Prince has served as chair of the deacons and of the finance committee and as treasurer at Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids. He teaches finance classes for the Michigan Small Business Center and serves on the advisory committee for the new MBA (Meeting Business Alumni) group at Calvin College. He has also served as treasurer and president of the West Central Michigan Chapter of the National Alzheimer's Association. Mr. Prince is a member of both the Michigan Association and American Institute of CPAs.

Mr. Christopher Vaandrager has a B.S. in accounting from Calvin College. He has worked at Dolinka, VanNoord & Company since he graduated in 1987, providing accounting, tax, and business advice to family and closely held businesses in a variety of industries, including nonprofits. Mr. Vaandrager has served as a deacon and as a finance committee member at LaGrave Avenue CRC. He is a past board member and treasurer of Youth Unlimited and Dynamic Youth Ministries. He is a member of both the Michigan Association and American Institute of CPAs.

2. The following name is presented to synod as an alternate for the three RCA at-large positions:

Rev. Kirsty De Pree of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is currently the pastor of encouragement at Orchard Hill RCA. She has served in educational ministries in several churches and has an M.Div. degree from Western Theological Seminary.

3. Regional delegates

The following nominees are being presented to the classes in their respective regions for vote at the spring classis meetings:

a. Region 4

Rev. Pieter Pereboom is lead pastor of First CRC of London, Ontario. He has also served as youth pastor/director and copastor (youth, preaching, education, small groups, service) at that church, starting in 1992. He was ordained in 2002. Rev. Pereboom has a B.A. in history and philosophy from Calvin College, an M.A. in film theory and a Ph.D. (all but dissertation) in American Film History from the University of Iowa. Rev. Pereboom has served on the synodical Youth Ministry Committee, the denominational Children and Youth Advisory Council, and the Electronic Media Committee of the Council of Canadian Christian Reformed Churches. He has given a number of presentations on youth and early teen ministry.

Rev. Jack Van de Hoef is senior pastor of First CRC in Guelph, Ontario. He has an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary (1985) and has also

audited courses on youth ministry and the minor prophets. Rev. Van de Hoef is currently serving as chair of the Classical Interim Committee for Classis Huron and is the alternate synodical deputy for that classis. He has served as a church visitor, on the executive committee of the local ministerial alliance, and on the Classis Huron Youth Ministry Committee.

b. Region 5

Ms. Kathy Eekhof has a B.A. in education from Dordt College. She taught in a Christian school for a number of years and is currently a substitute teacher. Ms. Eekhof has been and is involved in a number of roles in her local church in Manhattan, Montana, including chair of the worship, education, and children's bulletin committees, a member of the long-range planning committee, and teacher and/or coordinator of the tot church and Sunday school. She also has served on the education committee of the local Christian school. Ms. Eekhof has served two three-year terms as a classical representative on the CRC Publications board.

Ms. Beverly Vander Beek has a B.A. in education from Dordt College and an M.A. in mental retardation from the Oregon College of Education; she has also done postgraduate work in special education. She is a learning therapist and private tutor trained in neurodevelopmental systems. Ms. Vander Beek is currently the Sunday school coordinator at New Hope CRC in Spokane, Washington. She has served for one year on the CRC Publications board, as well as children's worship and VBS director at her church. Ms. Vander Beek has served as education committee chairperson at her church.

c. Region 7

Ms. Lisa Ragsdale is currently a teaching assistant in the masters in English program at the University of Mexico. She has taught a number of writing and composition courses there. Ms. Ragsdale has edited and/or written a number of books, newsletters (especially church newsletters), and articles on a variety of topics. She has also achieved master tutor status and has done considerable tutoring in writing and composition. She has led a women's Bible study in her local church and is responsible for the church newsletter.

Ms. Wilma Wiersma works in the support services department at Denver Christian Schools. She has worked as a teacher's aide and as support services teacher and coordinator. Ms. Wiersma also worked for three years in the academic support program at Calvin College. She has served as a news correspondent for *The Banner* and as editor of the *New Bethesda Bulletin*. She has also written for various Christian magazines, including *My Church*. Ms. Wiersma has a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a M.A. in diverse learner specialization from the University of Phoenix.

d. Region 11 (alternate only needed)

Rev. James Edward Blankespoor is currently the pastor of Boston Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has an M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, and has attended Fuller Theological Seminary; he successfully completed the SPMC program at Calvin Theological

Seminary in 2002. Rev. Blankespoor has written several articles in the area of social justice, served as an intern at the CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, and started Seminarians for Social Justice at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Benjamin Hulst is currently the associate pastor of Cascade Fellowship CRC in Cascade, Michigan. He has an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently finishing up his Th.M. in Old Testament from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Hulst has had experience in leading a youth group and in writing curriculum.

D. Today's New International Version (TNIV)

The TNIV version of the entire Bible has been available for about a year. Many CRC churches are using it as the version they read from the pulpit. Some churches have asked for guidance regarding whether it is a version that is appropriate for worship in CRC churches. Traditionally, synod has asked for a study of new versions such as this to help it determine whether to “designate a version as acceptable for use in CRC worship services.”

In the past, the committee that did this study was called the Liturgical Committee. A number of years ago this committee was renamed the Worship Committee and began reporting to the CRC Publications board. This committee was, in turn, disbanded a few years ago.

CRC Publications has interest in this matter because it needs to decide what version of the Bible to use in new curriculum. The extent of use by churches in their worship services will inform the decision regarding whether to use the TNIV in our curriculum. We believe that many churches will wait until synod studies this version and makes its decision about its acceptability for worship before deciding whether to use the TNIV in their worship services. Thus, an early determination by synod on this matter will be helpful for CRC Publications.

In December of last year, the Board of Trustees' executive committee asked the CRC Publications board to appoint a committee to evaluate the TNIV and to develop a recommendation for synod regarding whether the TNIV should be designated acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

The CRC Publications board appointed this committee at its January meeting. Most of the people on the committee had done some work on this matter for the CRC Publications board last year, so it did not take long to complete its report found in Appendix A.

E. Synodical actions based on the report of the synodical Committee to Study Church Education

In its recommendations based on this synodical study committee, Synod 2005 assigned several tasks to CRC Publications. A brief update on CRC Publications' work on these tasks follows:

1. Discipleship specialist

Synod asked CRC Publications to establish the position of discipleship specialist to

assist CRC agencies, the Children and Youth Ministry Council, youth ministry organizations, and others in integrating their discipleship programs and serve as a discipleship consultant within the denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 720)

When an implementation proposal for this initiative was presented to the Board of Trustees, a number of questions were raised. Accordingly, an alternative proposal was presented to the BOT for placing this specialist within the Denominational Office. Further information can be found in the report from that office.

2. Teacher training

Synod asked CRC Publications to submit to Synod 2006 a plan to offer high-quality teacher and leader training, conferencing, and consulting. This plan has been developed and approved by the CRC Publications board. It can be found in Appendix B. This proposal requests that funding be provided for this initiative from ministry shares; that request has been included in CRC Publications' 2007 budget.

3. Year of faith nurture

Synod asked CRC Publications to provide resources to support and equip churches as they seek to carry out the call from synod that churches and classes make faith nurture a special focus beginning in the fall of 2007 through the summer of 2008. CRC Publications has appointed a committee, chaired by board member Rev. Ken Baker, to develop a plan for providing this support.

F. Relationship with the denominational structure and the Denominational Ministries Plan

CRC Publications has been a strong supporter of the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP). In the past, 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.

CRC Publications staff have also been heavily involved in the development of the Ministry Plan Scorecard that is being used to help implement the DMP. The director serves as team leader for the Strategic Leadership Team, and three other staff members serve on other teams. CRC Publications is committed to working with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this new initiative.

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

- Faith Alive Christian Resources provides all the CRC-developed English-language publishing resources needed by Home Missions to carry out its ministry.
- We regularly interact with other CRC agencies to ensure that their resource needs are being met.
- We have developed a close relationship with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, including in our catalog many resources they recommend and copublishing some resources with them (e.g., *The Worship Sourcebook*).
- World Literature Ministries 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. In fact, the every household *Banner* contains eight pages in each issue covering news from these ministries.

G. *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 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:

- Reformed Church in America (RCA)—One of the most significant developments during the past few years was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA, whereby Faith Alive Christian Resources became the resource provider for the RCA. This agreement was implemented on December 1, 2004, and has been working well. In an e-mail survey of RCA pastors, over 50 percent of respondents said that the partnership has impacted the RCA denomination as a whole and their local church positively. Less than 5 percent said that it had impacted their church negatively. This partnership is the next major step in what has been a long-time partnership on a number of fronts. For example, the RCA was a copublisher for both the *LiFE* and *Walk With Me* curricula.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—The relationship with the ministries that are part of DYM (Youth Unlimited, GEMS, and Calvinist Cadets) is currently in flux. Until last fall, it was carried out through the Children and Youth Ministries Council, which was established recently by the Board of Trustees to serve as the coordinating agent for ministry to children and youth. CRC Publications served as the lead agency for this council.

However, it became clear during the past year that the council was not an effective vehicle for building a strong collaborative relationship. We are currently part of a dialogue attempting to develop a more effective relationship between DYM and the CRC. We have come to realize that we should first develop an overall denominational strategy for ministry to children and youth, and then proceed to establish an effective structure for carrying out that ministry.

- Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA)—We recently formed a partnership with Presbyterians for Renewal, an organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving over three thousand evangelical congregations, is a copublisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. We anticipate an increasingly close cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with this organization.
- Association of Reformed Youth Pastors (ARYP) and Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE)—We continue to work with these two organizations as appropriate and helpful. CRC Publications administered a ministry share allocation to help “jump start” the ACRE organization.
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church—Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the general secretary of the denomination and

numerous promotional materials, is sent to the churches of this denomination.

- Christian Schools International—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss possible shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues. Last year, for the first time, we copublished a resource—a curriculum for youth on origins.
- Baker Book House—We occasionally copublish books with this publisher.

H. *Use of CRC Publications resources by Christian Reformed churches*

Most CRC congregations make extensive use of the many resources offered by CRC Publications. In fact, about 85 percent of Christian Reformed churches are on our customer list. About 70 percent of Christian Reformed churches use one or more of our core curricula. While that number is high compared to many denominations, it is disappointing that many Christian Reformed churches do not place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written from a Reformed perspective—especially because our new Walk With Me curriculum has been positively received by churches from many denominations as a high quality, easy-to-use curriculum. The number of churches that use our doctrinal courses is considerably lower than 70 percent.

I. *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. Until last year, about 98 percent of CRC Publications' materials were printed on recycled paper. However, due to lack of availability of recycled paper for the type of paper we use, many of our products (e.g., The Banner, children's curriculum papers) are no longer printed on recycled paper stock.

J. *Antiracism*

CRC Publications has been an active participant in the effort of the Ministry Council to respond to synod's directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC via a staff antiracism team. Although the staff team is not currently meeting, staff remains committed to this value.

The CRC Publications board has an active antiracism team committed to achieving the following vision approved by the board:

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

K. *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	2nd
17	2	2nd
16	1	2nd
15	1	2nd
15	1	1st

II. CRC Publications' ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. *The Banner*

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.”

Starting in April 2005, *The Banner* has responded to this mandate in a very different way than in the past. It became an every household *Banner*, sent to every CRC home (or distributed within the churches) without cost to recipients.

Overall, this change has gone very well. The number of *Banner* copies printed each month went from about 20,000 to over 100,000. We hear many comments from people who say that they have not read *The Banner* for years (or ever) but now find it very interesting and helpful. The positive feedback is coming from most of the diverse segments that make up the CRC.

The *Banner* staff, led by Rev. Bob De Moor, has worked intentionally at making *The Banner* accessible and relevant to a wide variety of people. They created a structure that provides a solid but pliable platform that allows for continuity and for a number of ongoing adjustments. It allows for multiple points of entry and contains flexible categories (e.g., some columns are “semiregulars” while others simply rotate).

Another encouragement to the *Banner* staff is the supportive relationships they enjoy with the Communications Office of the CRC, the Denominational Office, the Board Editorial Advisory Council, and agency personnel. They have built a relationship of trust that allows for open and honest dialogue.

The eight-page Church@Work section, which is focused on providing information about the work of CRC agencies and institutions, also has been well received by the agencies and by *Banner* readers.

The network of news correspondents continues to be a valuable resource for *The Banner*. Research consistently shows that the news section is one of the most widely read.

The articles that have received the most response during the past year include the following:

- “Love Thy Neighbor” by Lloyd Rang – June
- “Synod: Our Family Reunion” by Emmett Harrison – June
- News Story about Bush at Calvin – July
- “The Faith of U2” – August
- “CRC’s New Executive Director Resigns” – September
- “Christian/Public Schools” – September
- “Reformation: A Short History” – October

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*.

B. *Faith Alive Christian Resources*

This department, headed by Ms. Pat Nederveld, publishes and distributes resources for all areas of church ministry. The goal of this department is to be the first stop for resources for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

The work of this department is carried out through several offices:

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 in recent years was the development of the new children's curriculum *Walk With Me*. Much of the development costs for this curriculum were covered by ministry shares.

This curriculum has been well received by most of the churches. Many church education leaders report very positive reactions on the part of their teachers and children.

Given this positive anecdotal reaction, we were surprised and disappointed that a number of churches did not reorder this curriculum the second year. From the research done thus far, the reasons given for this were so diverse that a response could not be developed. We will do additional research to find out whether there are some common reasons that require changes in the curriculum or in the support we provide churches.

Staff is currently working hard on developing a children's curriculum called *Kid Connection* for smaller churches. Many small churches have let us know that our core curriculum does not work well for their situations because of the built-in assumption that each church has a certain number of children in each class.

Other recent children's resources include the following:

- *Safekeeping* – designed to equip children to deal with abuse
- *WWJD Camp* – resources for a week-long service learning experience for kids.

b. For youth

Our curriculum for youth has undergone substantial revision in recent years. Additional resources published during the past year include the following:

- *Fossils and Faith* – a course for teens on the creation controversy (published in cooperation with Christian Schools International)
- *Route 66* – a quick tour through the Bible
- *Stuff to Know When Cults Come Knocking* – a course that explores the beliefs of several cults and how to respond to them
- *Together: All God's People* – a guidebook summarizing the conferences with the same name, and providing a framework for churches who wish to implement intergenerational ministry.

Probably the most important course Faith Alive publishes for youth is the study of the Heidelberg Catechism. The current offering is called *Questions Worth Asking*. This course, which is perhaps more relational than prior courses on the catechism, is well received by many; however, some teachers would like a more traditional teaching style. To respond to this need, we are developing a course called *HC and Me*.

c. For adults

In recent years, Faith Alive has substantially reduced the variety of resources that it publishes for adults because of low sales. The only Bible study series that are currently being refreshed are the Discover Your Bible series supporting the Coffee Break program and the Word Alive series of intensive Bible studies.

Staff is planning the development of a discipleship program and resource components for adults, young adults, and new Christians that includes such elements as an introductory study that asks the question “What is a disciple?; worship plans; a planning guide for leaders; and short courses on a number of topics such as Bible reading, prayer, stewardship, spiritual gifts, nurturing children in the home, evangelism, marriage, hospitality, and so on.

Staff has also decided to promote the Kerygma Bible Study program and resources to our churches. This is a program of intensive Bible studies that came out of the Presbyterian Church USA.

CRC Publications occasionally publishes study books on specific topics. A recently published title is *Living the Good Life on God’s Good Earth*, which challenges Christians to adopt a simple and stewardly lifestyle.

d. For people with mental impairments

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

- A total revision of the basic three-year Friendship curriculum. The first year was published in July 2003. The curriculum is called *Friendship Bible Studies*.
- *Autism and Your Church* – offers practical guidance to churches for welcoming and including children and adults with autism.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, 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.

f. For leadership

This area of our ministry attempts to provide resources for the various categories of church leaders, including pastors, elders, deacons, and others. Many of the resources we offer are “endorsed products” from other publishers.

The most popular resource in this area continues to be the *Discover Your Gifts* course. A recent popular resource is *The Compassionate Congregation*.

A recent survey of pastors seeking input on our resources for elders and deacons showed a significant lack of awareness about what we offer. This caused staff to wonder about the emphasis on this matter in our churches.

2. Evangelism Office

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

Most of the publishing work has focused on developing the Bible studies needed to support the Coffee Break program.

3. Worship Office

Subscriptions of *Reformed Worship* continue to be steady (about five thousand).

This office continues to work very closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. The most significant product published by this office recently, (in cooperation with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Baker Book House), is *The Worship Sourcebook*—a wide variety of practical worship resources drawn from *Reformed Worship* and a host of other sources. This resource has sold beyond expectations.

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 hymnal over the next few years. We will be working with the RCA to research this matter.

Staff is currently working on *Sing With Me* (a collection of songs that accompany the *Walk With Me* curriculum) and a book of New Testament songs.

Staff also works with RCA staff to coordinate support for the Children and Worship program used by many of our churches.

4. Miscellaneous

Faith Alive staff are also called upon to publish a variety of other resources based on the needs of agencies, synod request, and so on.

Last year, in response to a recommendation from the synodical Committee to Study Christian Day School Education, synod asked CRC Publications to (a) investigate the prospect of producing a curriculum to be used by churches, Christian parents, or youth leaders to help integrate faith and learning and to (b) develop a summary document of the Christian Day School synodical report.

In response to (a) above, CRC Publications is developing a worldviews course to help church leaders teach a biblical/Reformed perspective on the various areas of academic study; regarding (b) above, we are working on the summary that synod asked for.

By the time synod meets, staff will also have carried out synod's request that the CRC's ordination and installation forms be revised by CRC Publications to make the language gender inclusive.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Introduction/overview

World Literature Ministries publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages; however, most of its work is done in Spanish. This department is engaged in collaborative planning with other agencies—especially the mission agencies. The work in Spanish is done under the brand name *Libros Desafío*.

The mission of this ministry is as follows:

To serve the church and society by producing high quality, relevant, thought-provoking, creative, and life-changing Reformed literature.

Rev. Alejandro Pimentel is director/managing editor of World Literature Ministries. Since coming on staff, Rev. Pimentel has been engaged in a basic review of all aspects of this ministry. Among the things he has changed or is exploring to save costs and ensure an effective publishing program are the following:

- outsourcing the editorial function to contract editors
- seeking and promoting indigenous authors
- finding ways to reduce printing costs
- ensuring that designers are familiar with the Hispanic culture and that their work is as cost effective as possible.

The staff reports to the CRC Publications board through the World Literature Ministry Council made up of board members plus agency staff that are involved in ministry with people who are Hispanic, both in Latin America and North America.

The staff for carrying out this ministry is very small: an editor/director, a half-time marketing person, and a half-time administrative assistant. However, available expertise and budget constraints make it difficult to add staff. There is also increasing competition in the Spanish-language publishing market.

The impact of this ministry is considerable. For example, last year about thirty thousand books were sold to church leaders throughout Latin America and North America. If, for example, each person purchased two books, that means that fifteen thousand leaders were impacted by this ministry. If one takes into account all the people these leaders influence, the overall impact on God's kingdom is considerable.

2. The publishing work

Some of the significant current projects of *Libros Desafío* include the following:

- *CRC Church Order 2005* (Spanish electronic and printed editions)
- *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Pruyser)
- *The Keeping and Making of Commitments* (Smedes)
- *Myths America Lives By* (Hughes)
- *The Universe Next Door* (Sire)
- *Created in God's Image* (Hoekema), new title
- *Chaos of the Cults* (Van Baalen & Roldán), revised and expanded edition

- *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Dillard & Longman), new title
- *Acts of the Apostles* (Bruce), new edition
- *Friendship*, Year 1, new Spanish title
- *Biblical and Theological Foundations for Marriage and Family* (Maldonado), revised edition

Several years ago, CRC Publications transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. That group has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the Discover Your Bible series, into Korean. It also works closely with a Korean publisher, also called CRC Publications, in distributing these materials in Korea. In addition, it has formed relationships with people in China to publish and distribute some of these materials in that country.

The Korean Council has also translated other important CRC materials into Korean, such as the Church Order, the Heidelberg Catechism, and so on

D. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department, led by Mr. Tim Postuma, include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads and subscriptions, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting.

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

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 website continue to increase; they are now approximately 20 percent of our total sales.

It is becoming clear to staff that personal contact with churches and use of technology will be increasingly important marketing strategies in the future. We are developing plans in these areas.

We promote the *Walk With Me* curriculum to churches from a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian denominations. Our mailings in the spring normally go to approximately forty thousand churches. This year, a “Teach What You Preach” campaign will be part of the communications effort—implying that if churches are committed to being Reformed, they should also teach that perspective in their Sunday schools.

This department has seen a significant increase in “sales per marketing dollar” in recent years.

Denomination	Active customers	Percent	Sales	Percent
CRC	844	18	1,527,000	45
Other	3,338	70	1,530,000	45
Bookstores/schools/distributors	591	12	310,000	10
TOTAL	4,773	100	3,367,000	100

E. *Personnel matters*

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of just over 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; the department heads: Rev. Robert De Moor, Periodicals Department (*The Banner*); Ms. Pat Nederveld, Faith Alive Department; Rev. Alejandro Pimentel, World Literature Ministries Department; Mr. Tim Postuma, Marketing Department; Ms. Jane Ippel, Customer Service Department; and Mr. Michael Dykema from the Financial Services Department.

F. *Finances*

The CRC Publications board remains firmly 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 board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This has been traditionally true for our World Literature Ministries Department. More recently, we received substantial ministry-share dollars for the development of the *Walk With Me* curriculum, and, as of this year, for the every household *Banner*.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2004, and budgets for fiscal years 2005 and 2006. These reports have been submitted to the denominational finance director for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2006—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 2007.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

- Ms. Carrie Mulder, president
- Mr. Sidney Couperus, vice president
- Mr. Gary Mulder, director

For *The Banner*

- Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For Faith Alive

- Ms. Pat Nederveld, director

For the TNIV report

- Rev. Carl Bosma, for the Old Testament
- Dr. Emily Brink, chair
- Dr. Jeffrey Weima, for the New Testament

B. That synod designate the TNIV version of the Bible as acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

Grounds:

1. The TNIV is very similar to the NIV, a version accepted earlier by synod for use in worship. The TNIV differs from the last revision of the NIV (1984) in approximately 7 percent of the text. Thus, about 93 percent of the text of TNIV is identical to that of the NIV.
2. The TNIV contains many important improvements over the NIV, as the fruit of the ongoing work by the International Bible Society.
3. TNIV uses gender-accurate language. Because gender-inclusive language has become the approved style in contemporary English and is the style taught in the schools, it is understandable that such a version is desirable for use in both curricular materials and in worship.
4. While the committee agreed that many of the changes improved either the accuracy or the clarity of the translation, they also did prefer in some cases an alternate translation and were concerned about the lack of internal consistency in the translation of several key terms. Nevertheless, these preferences do not question the general acceptability of the TNIV.
5. In addition to the request from CRC Publications, churches are asking for advice on this matter. Some of them have studied this matter for themselves and are already using the TNIV in worship. Other churches will wait for synod to decide whether it is acceptable for use in the churches.

C. That synod recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 2007.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

CRC Publications
Gary Mulder, director

Appendix A

Report re the TNIV Translation

I. Background

In 2003, a review committee was formed by and requested to give advice to the CRC Publications board concerning the possible adoption of *The Holy Bible, Today's New International Version* (TNIV) for use in curricular materials. The members of the committee were:

- Carl Bosma, associate professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary
- David Holwerda, professor (emeritus) of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary
- Clayton Libolt, pastor of River Terrace CRC, and president of the CRC Publications board in 2004; he also has a Ph.D. in biblical studies
- Jeffrey Weima, professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary
- Michael Williams, professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary

- The late Bastiaan Van Elderen also participated in some of the committee’s meetings
- Emily Brink, retiring editor of *Reformed Worship*, served as convener for this committee, as she had for previous translation studies (of the NRSV and NKJV) when she was worship and music editor for CRC Publications

The committee met several times in 2003 and 2004 and generated reports on translation matters in both the New Testament (released in 2001) and on drafts of the Old Testament, which was not yet published. In its 2004 report to the CRC Publications board, the committee agreed, that “especially for use in curricular materials there should be no objection against using such a modest gender-inclusive translation as the TNIV.”

II. Mandate

In spite of endorsement on the part of the study committee to CRC Publications, the staff has been reluctant to begin using the TNIV in Faith Alive curricular materials unless it is also deemed acceptable for use in worship by synod. In addition to the 2003 request for a recommendation for use of the TNIV in curricular materials, the CRC Publications board had also suggested that the committee formulate a proposal with grounds asking synod to recommend this version for use in worship services. However, because the Old Testament was not yet published, the committee was not ready in 2004 for that larger recommendation; it was premature at the time to ask synod to recommend this version for use in worship services, based on synodical principles for biblical translations (see below).

When the entire TNIV was published in 2005, the CRC Publications staff raised the issue again, expressing some urgency to the CRC Publications board for direction on whether to adopt the TNIV in curricular materials unless synod also accepted it for use in worship. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of the CRCNA, and Mr. Gary Mulder, director of CRC Publications, agreed that, rather than wait for synod to ask CRC Publications to take up this matter again, they would ask the Board of Trustees’ executive committee to act on synod’s behalf and ask the CRC Publications board to review this matter again. The BOT executive committee did so at its December 20, 2005, meeting, and, on January 20, 2006, the CRC Publications board appointed a committee with the following mandate: “to develop a proposal for the CRC Publications board regarding whether it should recommend that synod designate the TNIV as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services.”

The board appointed the same committee, with one change: Dr. David Holwerda declined to serve. Therefore, Rev. Thomas Niehof was appointed; he is pastor of Trinity CRC, Ames, Iowa, with a Ph.D. in biblical studies. The committee reviewed its earlier studies and expanded its report with a focus toward the new mandate.

III. Synodical principles for biblical translations

Since 1926, when the process of recommending a version for use in worship began, synod has followed three basic principles: (1) the version must be based on the best text and accurately translated; (2) the style of translation must be appropriate for liturgical use; (3) the version must be a representative or ecumenical version used widely in other churches. The TNIV meets these principles.

The first principle—that an approved translation be a sound translation based on the best Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts—can be addressed in two ways. One is to look at the product itself: The TNIV differs from the NIV in approximately 7 percent of the text. Fully two-thirds of these changes are, in the opinion of the translation committee, improved translations, based either on better texts or on better understandings of the texts. While any translation can be questioned, our committee, in reviewing these changes, is inclined to agree with the translation committee in many if not most of the cases. Two examples of change that were questioned are the incongruence between Psalm 2:7 (“You are my son”) and its quotation in Matthew 3:17 (“You are my Son”); similarly, the word *children* rather than *son* in Revelations 21:7, which is a cross-reference to son in 2 Samuel 7:14.

A second way in which the TNIV addresses the questions of accuracy is the process by which the translation was prepared. The TNIV, like the NIV before it, is a committee translation. The translation committee is populated by leading evangelical biblical scholars and headed by the esteemed biblical scholar Dr. John Stek, professor (emeritus) of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. The TNIV is the result of the ongoing work of the International Bible Society that produced the NIV, which itself has undergone different editions (1973, New Testament only; 1978; 1984) with slight changes since it was first released. Indeed, the work of translation is always ongoing in the light of continuing study and scholarship as well as English language usage.

The second principle addresses whether the translation uses language suitable for liturgical use. The overall style of the TNIV is similar or identical to the language of the NIV (in 93 percent of the readings), a version that synod declared in 1980 as an acceptable version for use in worship. The single issue for major objection to the TNIV has been its use of gender-inclusive, or better, gender-accurate language. English language usage has changed. While in the past *man/men/mankind* were heard as being gender-inclusive terms, today they are heard by many as gender specific. Continuing to use the word *man* to refer to men and women does not communicate accurately in our culture; it is not only inaccurate but a failure of communication; often it is a hurtful failure because it can communicate exclusion. Because in many contexts the intent of Scripture includes both men and women, the TNIV corrects the translation where the biblical contexts intend such inclusiveness and / or universal applicability. Where the biblical contexts do not intend to stress gender, contemporary English translations should indicate this. In so doing, no new doctrine is introduced, and the clarity of Scripture for present English readers is enhanced.

The use of gender-accurate language accounts for less than one-third of the total number of changes from the NIV, which, as previously stated, involve about 7 percent of the total text. Most of these changes involve using *brothers and sisters* for *brothers*, *human beings* for *men*, *humankind* for *mankind*, or using the third person plural or second person plural to avoid the generic he where the context indicates that mixed company is intended. In the book of Proverbs, *son* becomes *child* or *children* and third person plurals are used to indicate the universal applicability of a saying. It is important to note that the TNIV retains gendered language for God and for Jesus.

In fact, the TNIV retains gender-exclusive language in more than twenty places where a case could be made for a more inclusive reading (e.g., Matt. 13:24; Luke 17:7-9; Acts 22:11; Rom. 8:15; Rev. 13:18). The so-called “key gender

role passages" (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Cor. 14: 33-38; 1 Tim. 2:11-15; Eph. 5:21-33; Rom. 16:7; Rom. 16:1) have hardly been changed at all in the TNIV. Hence, the grounds for the various positions taken on gender roles are as visible in the TNIV as in the NIV.

The third principle is that the version must be a representative or ecumenical version used widely in other churches. Although the TNIV is still quite new, the committee notes that Synod 1980 approved a recommendation to "designate the NIV as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services" even though the full NIV was not published until 1978. One of the grounds for that decision was, "The NIV *has potential* [our emphasis] for ecumenical acceptance." At the time, the NIV was a significantly new version and only beginning to be purchased in the churches. Similarly, there is potential for wide and ecumenical acceptance for the TNIV.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Carl Bosma (for the Old Testament), Dr. Emily Brink (convener), and Dr. Jeffrey Weima (for the New Testament), when this report is discussed.

B. That synod designate the TNIV version of the Bible as acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

Grounds:

1. The TNIV is very similar to the NIV, a version accepted earlier by synod for use in worship. The TNIV differs from the last revision of the NIV (1984) in approximately 7 percent of the text. Thus, about 93 percent of the text of TNIV is identical to that of the NIV.
2. The TNIV contains many important improvements over the NIV, as the fruit of the ongoing work by the International Bible Society.
3. TNIV uses gender-accurate language. Because gender-inclusive language has become the approved style in contemporary English and is the style taught in the schools, it is understandable that such a version is desirable for use in both curricular materials and in worship.
4. While the committee agreed that many of the changes improved either the accuracy or the clarity of the translation, they also did prefer in some cases an alternate translation and were concerned about the lack of internal consistency in the translation of several key terms. Nevertheless, these preferences do not question the general acceptability of the TNIV.
5. In addition to the request from CRC Publications, churches are asking for advice on this matter. Some of them have studied this matter for themselves and are already using the TNIV in worship. Other churches will wait for synod to decide whether it is acceptable for use in the churches.

Committee to Review the TNIV Translation

Carl Bosma

Emily Brink

Clayton Libolt

Thomas Niehof

Jeffrey Weima

Michael Williams

Appendix B

CRC Publications Proposal for Teacher and Leader Training, Conferencing, and Consulting

I. Background

Synod 2005 adopted a recommendation from the Committee to Study Church Education (appointed by Synod 2001) as follows:

6. That synod ask the BOT to instruct CRC Publications to provide program support for the denomination's discipleship efforts for all ages by:
 - a. Establishing a position of discipleship specialist to assist CRC agencies, the Children and Youth Ministry Council (CYMC), youth ministry organizations, and classical children and youth ministry personnel in integrating their discipleship programs and to serve as a discipleship consultant within the denomination.

Grounds:

- 1) The many agencies involved in discipleship ministry at the denominational, classical, and congregational levels would benefit greatly from the enhanced networking opportunities and coordination of ministry that a specialist would offer.
 - 2) This will enhance present effort and processes that are working toward the integration of discipling ministries.
 - 3) The establishment of such a position is consistent with the Denominational Ministry Plan and the denominational ministry priority of creating and sustaining healthy congregations.
- b. Submitting to Synod 2006 a plan to offer high-quality teacher and leader training, conferencing, and consulting.

Grounds:

- 1) More than one-half of the churches surveyed mentioned the need for further training.
- 2) This supports the original mandate of CRC Publications.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 720)

This proposal addresses part b above: "Submitting to Synod 2006 a plan to offer high-quality teacher and leader training, conferencing, and consulting."

At the instruction of the Board of Trustees, CRC Publications has drafted this proposal and requests that, upon its approval, the BOT submit it to Synod 2006 for action.

II. History

As is outlined in the report of the Committee to Study Church Education (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 482-528), there is presently a serious lack of denominational support provided to local churches in the area of teacher and leader training. CRC Publications traditionally provided such support as part of its overall mandate to "direct the denomination's program of church education . . ." (CRC Publications Mandate). However, because of underutilization of its teacher training network and lack of funding due to decline of resource revenues, CRC Publications discontinued its teacher training and support programs a number of years ago.

In conversation with CRC Publications, the study committee agreed that this is not a healthy state of affairs. While curriculum for members of all ages contributes significantly to a church's educational program, the ministry of teachers and leaders contributes as much or more. It is therefore necessary for CRC Publications to:

- provide meaningful teacher/leader training in ways that will be utilized and will be of sufficient benefit to the churches.
- submit a specific request to synod for the funding required to fulfill this responsibility since product revenues can no longer be expected to finance this portion of CRC Publications' mandate.

After extensive consultation with Faith Alive staff and denominational church education staff from the Reformed Church in America, CRC Publications now submits the following proposal.

III. Proposal

Unlike the former model, in which CRC Publications ran a separate network of church education consultants, the proposed model will focus on structured collaboration of a CRC Publications trainer/consultant with existing congregational, regional, classis, and denominational agencies, representatives, and initiatives. Such a model enjoys a number of important advantages over the previous structure:

- It encourages and supports local initiatives rather than competing with them.
- It is more responsive to opportunities that arise while avoiding cookie-cutter approaches.
- It is more cost effective and better utilizes the giftedness of others.
- It takes advantage of current technologies to provide training that is optimized to meet the needs and wants of teachers and other church ministry leaders today.

Here is an initial list of the kinds of initiatives that would be undertaken. They address two related concerns: (1) to raise awareness in churches of the need for teacher training, and (2) to provide fresh and creative ways of delivering such training.

- Structure a regional teacher/leader training event every five years at the time of and under the auspices of every classis in the CRC (between eight and nine such events each year). Each event would team the CRC Publications teacher trainer/consultant with classis ministry personnel and regional experts.
- Connect and team with Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian colleges, Dynamic Youth Ministries, and other denominational and parachurch ministries to present conferences and events for leaders in church education, children and youth ministry, and so forth.
- Link on a regular basis with pastors and church councils concerning their roles in leading the efforts of their congregation in providing faith nurture from cradle to grave. This could be by way of newsletter, pastors' breakfasts, training materials, and/or other means of consultation.
- Work with the Association of Christian Reformed Educators, the Association of Reformed Youth Pastors, Dynamic Youth Ministries, and the (new) Denominational Discipleship specialist to advance efforts in providing training for leaders/teachers in church education programs for children through adults.

- Develop support networks for children’s ministry directors, youth pastors, Sunday school coordinators, church educators, and small group directors.
- Provide articles for existing newsletters, publications, and websites.
- Develop a newsletter, website, blog, and/or other resources to assist and provide resources to local church educators and ministry leaders.
- Provide an expert consulting helpline.
- Sponsor an annual conference for church education directors and children’s ministry coordinators that includes curriculum-specific as well as more generalized training.
- Attend and participate in regional events such as Days of Encouragement and Sunday school conventions, among others.
- Develop a diagnostic tool for churches to use in taking the pulse of their faith; nurture-related ministries at all age levels.
- Develop workshops for pastors, youth pastors, and church educators to use with their volunteer leaders and teachers.
- Respond to requests by churches for onsite training.
- Consult with the denominational church education staff of the Reformed Church in America.
- Collaborate with CRC Publications staff in developing curriculum that best meets the needs of teachers and/or leaders as well as participants.

IV. Budget

Ongoing funding from ministry shares that are needed:

Staffing

Full-time training/ leader specialist	\$ 80,000
Office support for above	7,000
Travel	15,000
Expense account	<u>5,000</u>
	\$107,000
Program (conferences, regional events, etc.)	\$ 25,000
Total	\$132,000

Note: It is anticipated that these initiatives would not directly generate revenue for CRC Publications. While congregations, classes, and other groups would cover the expenses of their own involvement in the activities described above, CRC Publications would supply the services of the trainer/ consultant without further cost to them.

I. Introduction

A. *Our mission*

Synod has mandated Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) “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 mission 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)

The North American cultural landscape is changing, and, therefore, Christian Reformed Home Missions, along with all CRC ministries, lives in metamorphosis. In the last few years, Home Missions has been reorganizing to better carry out its synodical mandate. While our environment continues to evolve, God’s great mission and the church’s role in carrying forward God’s work remains constant: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

B. *Following Christ. In Mission Together. Home Missions’ goal and ministries*

Home Missions fulfills its purpose when local congregations and ministries are at center stage as vital agents of God’s mission.

Goals – CRHM creates and supports partnerships that pray for, equip, and multiply believers, new churches, mission-focused churches, and educational ministries. CRHM also develops resources that strengthen local ministries and their leaders.

Ministries – The ministries of CRHM include prayer, planning, training, budgeting, communication, enlisting ministry partners, and fundraising to fulfill CRHM’s threefold mandate from Synod:

- New church development
- Mission-focused church development
- Educational ministries

with two supportive strategies:

- Missional leadership development
- Prayer and small group development

C. *Home Missions organization*

1. The Home Missions binational office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is reorganized to unify resources and mission support. The former new-church, established-church, and campus ministry departments are now brought together in the Ministry Development Team. This fifteen-person

team, led by Rev. Willis (Bill) Van Groningen, integrates church planting and development, mission-focused churches (established-church support), campus ministry, small groups and prayer ministry, leadership development, and smaller-churches ministry.

The ministry teams, led by Rev. Allen Likkel, support Home Missions' regional ministry teams throughout Canada and the United States. This three-person team administers all Home Missions grants. Home Missions regional leaders (formerly intercultural directors and regional directors) are part of the ministry teams.

Home Missions' five-person ministry advancement team, led by Mr. Tom Bratt, leads Home Missions' fundraising and communications efforts.

Rev. John Rozeboom, Home Missions director, leads the agency and reports to the CRC director of denominational ministries, Rev. Gerard Dykstra, and the Home Missions board.

2. In 2005, Home Missions regional teams were formed and are working in all twelve regions of the CRC. Led by Home Missions regional leaders, these teams integrate regional Home Missions staff with local and classis leaders to cast mission vision and set goals; to support church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach; and to make budget allocation recommendations for new and continuing partnership grants. Identified regional ministry teams also have responsibility to advance Asian, black, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic ministries.

The regional teams and team leaders are:

Black and Urban, Bob Price	Korean and California South, Tong Park
Chicagoland, Peter Kelder	Native American and Red Mesa, Stanley Jim
Eastern Canada, Ben Vandezande	North Central USA, Larry Meyer
Eastern USA, Drew Angus	Western Canada, Martin Contant
Great Lakes, Ben Becksvoort	West Central USA, Jerry Holleman
Hispanic and Southeast USA, Stan Workman	West Coast, Peter Holwerda

D. CRC evangelizing growth in 2005

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,373 persons through evangelism in 2005, compared to 3,374 persons in 2004, 2,939 persons in 2003, and 2,634 persons in 2002.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 272,127 (*Yearbook 2006*, p. 179), compared to 273,220 last year, despite the fact that member additions (11,711 persons) were 4,599 more persons than reported member decline (7,112 persons). Factors other than members added or lost also impact the total membership number. For example, not all congregations report their membership numbers.

II. Home Missions board and executive committee

A. Board membership

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod's charge to guide and carry out the denominational home missions program. In 2004, the board was reorganized to include twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions) with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction.

Four board members-at-large will balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy-nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees.

	Delegates	Alternates
Region 1	Victor Chen	Henry Devries
Region 2	Phil Reinders	Ron Klok
Region 3	Sam Cooper	Peter Runia
Region 4	Gary Bomhof	Ellen Van Til
Region 5	Clair Abee	Eleanor Rietkerk
Region 6	Paul Vander Klay	Cor Pool
Region 7	Rod Hugen	Ernie Benally
Region 8	Mark Brouwer	Marcia Allspach
Region 9	D.A. Crushshon, Sr.	Harley Ver Beek
Region 10	Peter Byma	Paul Bakker
Region 11	Mary Buteyn	Jerome Burton
Region 12	Sheila Holmes	Beth Fylstra
Members-at-large		
	Charles Brown	
	Mark Feldkamp	
	Emma Kee	
	Allan Kramer	

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Dr. Mary Buteyn, president; Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (director); Rev. Sheila Holmes, recording secretary; and Mr. Rodney Hugen, assistant treasurer.

The officers of the Canada board for 2006 are Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, president; Rev. Samuel Cooper, vice president; Mr. Victor Chen, secretary; Rev. Phil Reinders, treasurer; and Mrs. Ellen Van Til, assistant secretary-treasurer.

C. Board nominations

The following slates of nominees were submitted to the respective regions for vote in the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified at Synod 2006:

Region 4

Mr. Al Martens is retired from his position as supervisor for Ontario Power Generation. He is a member of Immanuel CRC in Simcoe (Classis Hamilton) and has previously served on the Home Missions board. He is currently secretary of the classical Home Missions committee for Classis Hamilton and the chair of the local Youth for Christ drop-in center in Simcoe. He has served as deacon and elder.

Mr. Michael Talsma is manager of crop inputs logistics for twenty-one branches of his company that deals in crop protection products. He has served as member of the local Christian school society, including chair, and as member of the London Campus Ministry committee, including chair. Currently, he serves as secretary of the Classis Chatham Home Missions committee as well as a member of the North London church plant committee. He is a member of First London CRC. Mr. Talsma has served as an elder for numerous terms, as church treasurer, and clerk of council. Currently, he participates in the Eastern Canada leadership development network.

Region 5

Rev. Virgil Michael is pastor of Christ Community (CRC) in Tualatin, Oregon. He has served as Home Missions board delegate and was on the Dordt College Board. Currently, he serves as secretary of Classis Columbia’s classical Home Missions committee. The church he currently pastors was started in 1990 as a church plant.

Dr. Clifton Sanders attends Mountain Springs Community Church (CRC) in Salt Lake City, Utah. He has a Ph.D. in chemistry and is currently dean of the School of Science, Mathematics and Engineering at Salt Lake Community College. Dr. Sanders has served as copastor Calvary Chapel of Salt Lake City (1988-1989) and of Resurrection Fellowship (1990-1997); instructor in biblical interpretation, Salt Lake Theological Seminary (1998-2001); adjunct instructor in philosophical theology, Salt Lake Theological Seminary (2002-2005); and numerous projects in music, theology, and worship.

Region 9

Mr. Harley Ver Beek attends Peace CRC in South Holland, Illinois. His gifts and leadership experience are strong in education. Mr. Ver Beek has served on Classis Illiana’s Home Missions committee, the Home Missions board, and was a delegate to Synod 2005. He currently serves on the Home Missions Chicagoland regional team advisory board and is president of Peace CRC council.

Rev. Joel Zuidema is pastor of Community CRC in Roselawn, Illinois. He is involved in dynamic outreach ministry and has served in church plants. Rev. Zuidema served as a delegate to synod twice, president of council at both churches he has served, and on the youth ministry committee. Currently, he serves as secretary of Classis Illiana’s Home Missions committee.

D. Salary disclosure

Executive persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	2	2nd
15	1	2nd

III. Ministry development

A. Introduction

The ministry development team explores today’s intellectual and social trends to identify mission opportunities. Noting demographic shifts in North America as well as changing attitudes and aspirations, the team revises and refines Home Missions’ strategies and programs and identifies new resources. The goal is to help strengthen the CRC’s character and capacity for mission in North America.

The ministry development team supports CRHM regional teams, local congregations, and classes in the work of mission. It helps plant new churches, assists in developing mission-focused goals and mission organization, offers partnership support for campus ministries (including mission schools among the Navajo and Zuni peoples), identifies and helps train leaders for mission,

and equips small group leaders and prayer coordinators—all bolstered by a steady flow of consultation and encouragement.

The character of Home Missions' work reflects abiding commitments to ongoing spiritual formation for mission to be an indigenous example of the Reformed tradition here at home, to highlight that mission is always local (though situated in and supported by wider collaborations and partnerships), and to realize more fully the CRC's multicultural vision.

B. Mission-focused (established) churches

Imagine the mission impact of Christian Reformed congregations who understand that God's primary means for accomplishing his mission on earth is through his grace flowing through his people. As CRHM moves into a new chapter of ministry with congregations, Home Missions encourages them to view themselves as mission-focused churches that celebrate the outpouring of God's grace through their daily ministries.

The vision and ministry of Christian Reformed congregations are the basis for partnerships in which Home Missions provides:

- grants to twenty-six smaller churches for programs, to seventy-five smaller churches for continuing education, and to thirty-seven smaller churches for technology upgrades
- grants to two Heritage churches
- partnership staffing grants to nineteen churches
- encouragement to pastors as part of learning communities
- leadership to congregations as they discern God's leading for the future
- support for classical leadership groups
- ministry networks for smaller churches, leaders, and larger mission-focused churches.

C. Church planting and development

In its simplest form, Christian Reformed Home Missions' church planting strategy calls for churches to plant churches. Church planting is the best strategy for reaping the greatest harvest. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands us to "make disciples of all nations." The following is a modern-day example:

By Grace Alone Frankford Fellowship is a new church start in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pastored by Angel (Xiomara) Rodriguez and Gabriel (Pearl) Wang-Herrera. The Rodriguezes started a home cell group in their home and met regularly on Friday evenings. In March 2004, the Wang-Herrera family purchased a home next door to the Rodriguezes and began attending and supporting this church. Several months later, the Wang-Herrera family sensed God's call to jointly share in this ministry. In spite of concerns from extended family on both sides, the Rodriguezes and the Wang-Herreras prayerfully decided to tear down the fence that separated their properties in order to make a common worship area. They were compelled to blend their cultural perspectives and create a diverse expression of worship. In October 2005, the church held its first baptism service in the common yard between their homes.

Both couples profess that God has brought their households together, not just to exemplify life in community, but as a testament of his power to unite all peoples under the gospel of grace.

God continues to provide wonderful church planting leaders from diverse backgrounds. This year, thirteen ethnic and seven Anglo pastors were added. Twelve ethnic and eight Anglo churches were also added. While the membership of the CRC is diversifying, there is a deep sense of unity around the gospel and a desire to plant culturally relevant new churches that are both biblical and Reformed.

Gradually, the CRC has been learning to plant churches among people “where they are,” fully expecting that when they become brothers and sisters in Christ, they will be enfolded—along with their new congregations—into the Christian Reformed Church. All new churches start 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’ synod mandate).

1. Key church planting strategies

Home Missions assists church planting through the following strategies:

a. Prayer mobilizing and communication

Communicating the vision for a church planting movement and mobilizing prayer for enfolding people into fellowship with Christ and his church is a vital part of the process of church planting and development.

The *Deep Roots/New Branches* video package reinforces this mobilization. Additional prayer resources distributed to planters and /or CRC congregations are the monthly *PowerLink*, the quarterly *Networker*, various Web resources, and other materials and networks.

b. Resourcing partners, planters, and new churches

Home Missions helps classes and congregations cast vision and develop specific strategies and plans for starting new churches. One of the primary factors is selecting a qualified leader and helping that leader make a good beginning. Some of the key parts of that process are:

- Residency (for persons new to ministry or lacking planting experience)
- Coaching (wisdom, accountability, and support)
- Bootcamp (an intensive planning and training week)
- Orientation (3.5 days at the CRC Grand Rapids offices)

As the new churches develop, various denominational helps are available. Home Missions’ services include:

- *Navigating the Growth Matrix* (church planting video)
- Small group training and consultation
- Peer church planter learning forums
- Population migration and immigration trends research

Home Missions thanks God for the church planters and their families who have answered God’s call to plant new churches. The following table shows church planting results for 2005-2006 as of January 7, 2006:

Church Planting/Development	
Churches reporting	58
Main worship attendance	3,870
Total confessing members	2,701
Growth by evangelism	423

Cultural diversity of church planting ministry is shown below:

Home Missions grant-funded ministry leaders – 1988 through 2006

	European-American	Ethnic	Total	% Ethnic
1988-2001 (13 years)	95	115	210	55%
2002-2003 (2 years)	27	26	53	49%
2004-2005 (2 years)	16	19	35	54%
2006 (1 year)	7	13	20	65%
Total	145	173	318	54%

New churches – 1988 through 2006

	European-American	Ethnic	Total	% Ethnic
1988-2001 (13 years)	99	134	233	58%
2002-2003 (2 years)	16	16	32	50%
2004-2005 (2 years)	18	17	35	49%
2006 (1 year)	8	12	20	60%
Total	141	179	320	56%

c. Financial partnering for church planting

Home Missions provides grant funding for up to six years to church plants located in majority-culture communities and ethnic-language communities. For new churches in communities characterized as high need, Home Missions' funding may continue for up to twelve years, and even longer in exceptional circumstances.

The goal of "increasing our capacity to plant twenty churches a year" is in response to the potential harvest in North America. These new churches need our prayers of intercession—prayers that the Lord would send laborers to the harvest field. From a denominational perspective, ten-to-twenty new churches are needed annually to offset the loss created by congregational merges, closures, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, adding twenty-to-thirty new churches annually would aid the massive challenge to reach millions of unchurched and under-churched people in Canada and the United States.

2. New and continuing partnerships for ministry years 2005 through 2006

Frequently, as noted below, the actual start is preceded by a period of grant funding for residency prior to the launch of the new church. New-church starts, residencies, and funding conclusions for the following periods are listed below:

New Work: Ministry year 2004-2005

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Site start	Funding end
Anaheim, CA/Hope of the World	K	Sang Myeun Moon	2004	1/04	2007
Athens, ME/River of Life	A	Tony Brown	2004	7/04	2007
Blacksburg, VA/All Nations (Campus)		Chan Mun Jeong	2005	1/05	2007
Bradenton, FL/E. Bradenton CPD	A	Don Ridder	2004	7/04	2007
Cochrane, AB/Annex	A	Robin Bailey	2004	7/04	2007
Centennial, CO/E. Hills Multi-Cult.	M	Henry Serrano	2003	6/04	2006
Dover, NH/Indonesian Fellowship	I	Harold Michael Lapan	2004	1/04	2007
Holland, MI/Northern Corridor	A	Jeff Meyer	2005	10/04	2007
Kalamazoo, MI/Kalamazoo Area	A	Recruiting			
Lacombe, AB/Wolf Creek	A	Andy Geleynse	2005	10/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/Joy Community	K	David Suh	2004	1/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/Gardena City Harvest	B	Lawrence Bennett	2003	7/04	2007
Los Angeles, CA/LA Global Community	K	Theodore Lim	2004	1/04	2007
Ludington, MI/Lakeside Chapel	A	G. DeMey, G. Kett	2004	12/03	2007
Pasadena, CA/Gateway	H	Daniel Mendez	2003	8/04	2007
Paterson, NJ/Paterson Hisp	H	Guillermo Godoy	2004	10/04	2005
Richmond, BC/The Tapestry	M	Albert Chu	2004	1/04	2006
Sacramento, CA/Bridge of Life	A	David Lindner	2004	7/04	2006
Seattle, WA/Sanctuary	A	Randy Rowland	2004	4/04	2005
Traverse City, MI/Traverse City	A	Recruiting			

New Work: Ministry year 2006

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Site start	Funding end
Allegan, MI/The River	A	Jon Vugteveen	2006		2008
Ann Arbor, MI/Cornerstone CRC	K	Peter Choi	NFP		NFP
Bellflower, CA/Rosewood Hispanic	H	Samuel Flores	2006		2008
Bowmanville, ON/Discovery	A	Martin Spoelstra	2003	Res - 05	2006
Burlington North, ON/Living Mosaic	A	Leo Gatotos	2000	Res - 05	2006
Evergreen Park, IL/Evergreen Church	A	Recruiting	2006		2008
Fontana, CA/New Joy	K	Sung Chang Choi	2006		2008
Grand Rapids, MI/Living Waters Comm.	A	Paul Sausser	2006		2008
Long Beach, CA/Church on X Street	M	Ryan Verwys	NFP	Res - 03	NFP
Los Angeles, CA/Kings Chapel Harvest	B	Joseph Wright	2006		2008
Milwaukee, WI/Milwaukee CPD	A	Recruiting	2006		2008
Newaygo, MI/New Community	A	Case VanWyk	2006		2008
Northbrook, IL/N. Shore Family of Faith	A	Michael Benson	2006		2008
North Jersey, NJ/Grace Comm. Chapel	K	Jae Park	2006		2008
Orlando, FL/Heritage Community	H	Jorge Finlay	2006	Oct - 05	2008
Paoli, PA/African Christian Ministry	B	Robert Wafula	2006		2008
Plano, TX/Great Light Presbyterian	K	Myung Han Kang	2006		2008
San Diego, CA/San Diego CPD	K	Recruiting	2006		2008
Santa Ana, CA/Santa Ana CPD	H	John Gonzales	2006		2008
Santa Clarita, CA/SCV Community	K	David Kong	2006		2008
Simi Valley, CA/Remanente	H	Hector Chavez	2006		2008
Sioux Falls, SD/The Hill Prison Ministry	A	Steve Moerman	2006		2008
Thornapple Valley/Standing Stone	A	Burt Bolt	2004	Res - 04	2006
Vancouver, BC/Yaletown	M	Recruiting	2006		2008

Residencies

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Started	End
Bowmanville, ON/Rehoboth daughter	A	Martin Spoelstra	2003	2006
Burlington North, ON/Burlington-Orchard	A	Leo Gatotos	2000	2006
Folsom, CA/River Rock	A	Derek Zeyl	2002	2006
Long Beach, CA/Church on X Street	M	Ryan Verwys	Non funded	NA
Sacramento, CA/Living Stones	A	Marc Holland	2001	2006
Thornapple Valley/Standing Stone Comm.	A	Burt Bolt	2004	2006

*KEY: B = Black, F = Filipino, L = Laotian, H = Hispanic, K = Korean, C = Cambodian, N = Native American, M = Multiethnic, A = Anglo, I = Indonesian, NFP = Non-Funded Partnership Agreement

Funding conclusions: Ministry year 2004-2005

Athens, ME/River of Life Fellowship	Tony Brown	2/1/05
Azusa, CA/Azusa Comm. Harvest	Glen Garcia	9/14/04
Corona, CA/Corona Home Church	Paul Cha	9/16/04
East Hartford, CT/Hartford Hispanic	Carlos Aranguiz	12/1/04
Fruita, CO/Abundant Life	Allen Kleine Deters	3/31/05
Hamilton, ON/Hamilton Asian Comm	Salim Arthur	8/31/04
Los Angeles, CA/Abundant Life Korean	Dong Il Kim	10/26/04
New York/Lighthouse	John Kim	10/31/04
Vancouver, WA/River Rock	Bryon Van Kley	12/31/04
Ventura, CA/Bridges	Bill Garner	6/30/05
Wixom, MI/Harvest Fellowship	Vance Walker	12/31/04

D. Educational mission

Former Calvin professor George Marsden discusses the vital work of campus ministry in his book *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (Oxford, 1994):

While the work of campus ministries may provide invaluable compensation for the religious poverty of the rest of the universities . . . what goes on in the classrooms will be undermining the outlooks presented in campus religious meetings. Since universities train the next generation of academics, such attitudes are perpetuated across the generations and into the leadership positions of the entire society.

Our campus ministries are placed at the gateways of leadership in our culture. They call college students, our future leaders, to consider God's mission in their own pursuits, and seek the nurture of God's church.

1. Campus ministries

Campus ministries in the CRC are transitioning toward a deeper integration with God's mission through the church. A new generation of ministers carries this vision, even as the "old guard" retires. There is also increased emphasis on identifying and nurturing leaders for the mission of God in his world.

Campus ministry foundational documents, a current list of campus ministry locations, and a list of the personnel serving in those locations can be found on the Home Missions website (www.crhm.org).

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on more than forty campuses in Canada and the United States. Grant renewal amounts are being reduced in order to open up space for new ministries. As of September 2005, twenty-two campus ministries are supported by Home Missions' partnership-assistance grants. They are:

Chicago State University	University of Alberta
Dalhousie University	University of Calgary
Fanshawe Community College	University of Guelph
Ferris State College	University of Iowa
Iowa State University (Anglo)	University of Northern British Columbia
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Toronto
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Western Ontario
McMaster University	Western Michigan University
Michigan State University	Wilfrid Laurier University and Waterloo University
Passaic County Community College	William Paterson University
Queen's University	York University

Regular campus ministry activities include weekly Bible studies for students and faculty; one-on-one counseling; large group worship and/or teaching events; small group discussions; social activities; leadership formation; special lectures and retreats; and, in some cases, a Sunday student worship service on campus. Although many of these gatherings are small, others include hundreds of students.

Home Missions also supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and, when funds are available, partners with Calvin Theological Seminary to support ministry internships on campuses. Calvin College partners with Home Missions campus ministry to cosponsor an annual academic and mission-focused lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America.

2. Educational mission leadership (EML)

Rev. Peter Schuurman works .75 FTE as the binational educational mission leader (EML) out of Guelph, Ontario. Ms. Joyce Suh was hired in January 2005 at .25 FTE as the educational mission coordinator (USA) out of her home in San Jose, California. While Rev. Schuurman is responsible for the binational vision, Ms. Suh will help coordinate partnerships with the U.S. ministries. From these vantage points, they will consult with CRC campus ministries, employ current ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshal denominational (and other) resources for campus ministries.

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, the Home Missions EML office supports annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The EML office supports the CRC'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 ongoing mission in higher education.

In spring 2005, the EML published a vision paper for campus ministry, *Ambassadors of Christ and Laboratories of the Kingdom*, outlining the vital work of campus ministries. In one section, University of Toronto campus minister Rev. Brian Walsh decries the state of the academy today: "The ethos of the whole institution seems committed to an ideology of humanist autonomy, economic growth, technological supremacy and a careerism that knows nothing of commitment beyond the next step up the institutional or corporate ladder." The paper goes on to dream of ways in which Christian cultural discernment can be nurtured and kingdom leaders disciplined for service in the context of the church's campus ministries.

3. Educational mission support for Red Mesa schools

Home Missions assists the Red Mesa Christian Schools Association. The association fosters mutually beneficial programs of support (internal and external staff development and donor development) for all of the Red Mesa schools. The association is currently led by a volunteer coordinator, Ms. Kathy Bosscher, principal of Zuni Christian Mission School. Home Missions is privileged to continue to journey with the New Mexico Christian schools in a partnership of denominational subsidies matched by increasing local ownership.

E. *Mission-focused leadership development*

One of Home Missions’ core values declares that “raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God’s people for God’s work.”

1. Prayer

The task of mission-focused leadership development begins with prayer for harvest workers (Matt. 9:38). In addition, the *Deep Roots/New Branches* church planting venture of CRC agencies, classes, and congregations, led by Home Missions, distributes promotional materials and has developed a video for vision casting and recruiting.

2. Identification

Potential mission-focused church leaders need to be identified and encouraged early on. Home Missions encourages the identification of future leaders through cooperation with Youth Unlimited (specifically the Encounters program), small group leaders, and pastors.

3. Training

Once potential leaders are identified, Home Missions assists in their training.

a. Leadership development networks (LDN)

In classis-based partnerships, Home Missions resources fifteen LDNs. An LDN is a three- to four-year, in-ministry training program available in Spanish or English. The current locations are:

Location	Leader
Calgary	Curtis Korver
Central California	Paul Vander Klay
Chicago	Pedro Aviles
Denver	Peter VanElderen
Eastern Ontario	Ben VandeZande
	Barb VanGiesen
	Kevin DeRaaf
Heartland	Jim Hoogeveen
Maine	Bill Johnson
New Jersey	Ramon Orostizaga
Seattle	Randy Rowland
Skagit Valley, Washington	Doug Fakkema
Southern California	Al Breems
Southern California	Albino Melendez
Southern California	Andy Choh
Texas	Mike Johnson
Wisconsin	Rob Sizemore

Two new LDNs are being developed: Red Mesa LDN and Prairie LDN/Winnipeg.

b. Calvin Theological Seminary masters degree in missions

Home Missions joins Calvin Theological Seminary and Reformed Bible College to offer an online education program to bring accredited education to mission students. Home Missions supports Mr. Gary Teja for directing this program. Ten students are currently enrolled. Each was oriented for online education by taking the on-campus introduction to

church planting course taught by Rev. James Osterhouse and Mr. Gary Teja.

c. Internships

On-site training takes place through internships. Nonformal internships refer to training that is not coupled with formal education. Formal internships are crafted in conjunction with seminaries. Academic internships are available for online students.

4. "Directions" for ministry program

Once a mission-focused leader has been identified and trained, Home Missions helps determine where this person can best fulfill a missionary calling. "Directions" is an evaluation process that includes a three-day intensive assessment to determine the passion and giftedness of the individual. Home Missions also provides assessment interviews. Teams around North America have been trained to conduct these intensive four-hour evaluations.

5. New initiatives

- a. Home Missions sponsored a peer forum of leaders who excel at identifying and training leaders in the context of the local church. As a result, a paper was produced that helps leaders identify potential leaders.
- b. A task force to explore the profile of second-step pastors (pastors who can take a new church to the next level after the church planter has moved on) has also completed its work.
- c. An annual training of regional leader development specialists has equipped more people to raise more leaders.

E. *Prayer and small group development*

Stories communicate where and how God is at work in our lives. Here is how some individuals involved in small group programs expressed their experience:

- "I was reminded about the vision and purpose behind Coffee Break ministry."
- "This training experience gave me the opportunity to dream about a small group that I could start and how it would develop."
- "One thing I will take home to apply and work on is being more intentional about prayer for the people in my groups."
- "This training really redirected my focus to those in my circle of influence who are hungry for Jesus."

Home Missions prayer and small group development persons connect with and provide resources to churches and ministries through consulting with and training church leaders and members. Home Missions' website (www.crhm.org) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications. To develop an integrated look and feel, several resources were reviewed, some revised, and others discontinued. The long-standing *Connections* newsletter will be replaced with two publications: *Small Talk* (to incorporate former *LifeLine* readers, as well as all other small groups) in print and *Direct Connect* (for Coffee Break Story Hour / Little Lambs audiences) as an electronic publication. Home Missions works with CRC Publications and

Faith Alive Christian Resources to print resources on small groups, prayer, and evangelism.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism. Nearly two thousand people participated in over one hundred events in 2005. CRHM small group ministry developers throughout Canada and the United States, as part of their role on regional teams, interact with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and a variety of small group leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry. Home Missions partners with Calvin Theological Seminary, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) International, National Coalition of Men’s Ministries, the denominational Prayer Leaders Network, and the Classical Renewal Ministries Team to assist efforts in prayer, small groups, and evangelism.

Prayer and small group ministry leaders look ahead to the July 2006 Small Group Evangelism Conference in Long Beach, California, sponsored by Home Missions. This conference will welcome leaders of all types of small groups—men and women from the whole range of CRC cultures and ethnicities.

IV. Regional ministry teams and partnership grants overview

Twelve Christian Reformed Home Missions regional leaders and regional teams are currently serving the classes, churches, and members of their respective regions. Along with increased focus on spiritual formation through prayer and other spiritual disciplines, the Christian Reformed Home Missions regional teams support the work of mission-focused churches, church planting, and educational (campus) ministries. Regional teams allow Home Missions to provide increased support to the local church. As an agency, Home Missions benefits from frontline experience and input from these teams. Decision-making is strengthened as it is informed by those who are close to the ministry opportunities.

Specialists from the binational office of Home Missions gather regional staff annually for training to share best practices and to inspire and encourage one another. In this way, the regional teams and their staff can interact and support one another.

Home Missions provides financial support through partnership grants for church planting and development, mission-focused churches, educational mission, smaller churches, leadership development networks, internships, and academic scholarships.

In the current fiscal year, Home Missions provides grant funding as follows:

Church plants (Includes two parent-church grants and three residencies)	101
Mission-focused churches	
Mid-size church support-outreach staff grants	22
Smaller church support	
Heritage	2
Salary subsidy (FSC/Heritage Churches)	9
Technology/program/continuing ed	35
Educational mission	25
Leadership development networks	15
Internships	4
Academic internships	10

Plans are currently underway in each region for new proposals in order to seize mission opportunities being recognized by classes and congregations. As the reports of conversion growth and community transformation are received from across the denomination, much praise is given to the Lord of the harvest for inviting us to be engaged deeply in his mission.

The chart below shows how grants are allocated in FY 2005-2006:

Church planting	
Residency	122,000
New churches	2,719,800
Parent churches	12,000
Computer	0
Moving	0
MTF	0
Subtotal	2,853,800
Mission-focused churches	
Staff & programs	262,750
Subtotal	262,750
Smaller churches	
Technology, program, continuing education	191,000
Transition	25,000
Redevelopment	0
Insurance/pension	0
Heritage	32,412
FSC	21,493
Red Mesa churches	115,500
Subtotal	385,405
Leadership	
Formal internship	23,000
Nonformal internship	27,500
Academic internship	13,355
Leadership development Networks	152,000
Summer interns	5,000
Subtotal	220,855
Campus	
New Mexico schools	319,000
Campus ministry grants	446,800
Subtotal	765,800
Total approved	4,488,610
Total grant budget amount	4,054,147
Approved, awaiting funding	(434,463)

V. Ministry advancement

A. *Financial gifts*

Home Missions ministry share grew by 0.8 percent (\$37,672) totaling \$4,920,584. Above-ministry-share gifts dropped 5.1 percent to \$1,386,181 and estate gifts experienced a decrease of \$2,575 (0.7%). Although conference and registration fees grew \$62,240 to a total of \$114,790, the decreases erased this gain, resulting in a decrease in total revenue of 0.6 percent from the prior year. Home Missions is extremely thankful for the support of all ministry partners this year and gives thanks to God for them and their faithfulness to Home Missions.

In the first five months of FY 2005-2006 (July – November) Home Missions' ministry share grew by 7.1 percent (\$132,935) totaling \$2,000,922. Above-ministry-share gifts increased 11.8 percent to \$506,283. Estate gifts dropped by \$135,945 (73%). Overall giving to Home Missions for the five-month period is up 2 percent over last year.

B. Personnel

Mr. Tom Bratt continues to provide leadership for ministry advancement. Mr. Jim Steenbergen was hired in November 2005 and joins Mr. Corey Watt as a development officer. Rev. Jack Stulp began his forty-eighth year of ministry in the CRC. He serves as manager of church relations. Ms. Cindy Johnston serves as communications manager; Mr. Don McCrory, senior writer, left the employ of the CRCNA after fourteen years, to serve another ministry. Home Missions notes with gratitude that along with a paid staff, a number of volunteers continue to support God's mission, both in the binational office and with funded ministries.

C. Communications

Home Missions uses a variety of means to communicate with its audiences. The Internet has become an increasingly important part of the communications mix. Several publications are sent to churches, individuals, and staff by way of e-mail. *First Friday Focus*, *Pastor's Memo*, and donor appeals are some examples. The website is used to convey information such as news, prayer needs, donor opportunities, and so forth.

Worship bulletins and related material in English and Spanish are available to the churches for Easter and Reformation Day when many churches receive an offering for Home Missions. Six new ministry brochures, six *On a Mission* newsletters, and a 2006 Missions Catalog were published. In addition, a new donor video and church offertory video were produced titled "The Tangible Presence of Love." Home Missions used the pages of *The Banner* to communicate stories of God's mission work throughout North America. Material for the Prayer Guide and bulletin announcements was also provided. All Home Missions material is available at www.crhm.org.

Home Missions board members and board alternates receive a monthly e-mail newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Home Missions also provides speakers for the Missionary Union tours.

VI. Classical renewal ministry team

Home Missions is a founding partner agency with CRWRC of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team that has supported classis vision leaders with needed resources since 1992. The team builds on current experiences and practices in our renewing classes by partnering with them to share success stories and key learning about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support and other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and website—are key emphases of this work.

This past year, the team continued to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant; hosted an annual conference for eighty classis leaders in Des Plaines, Illinois; increased classis participation in the classical prayer coordinator network; and hosted two peer groups for classis staff and ministry team chairs. Further work is being planned in the areas of connecting classes to regional teams, helping classes define church planting development

goals, strengthening leadership development efforts of classes, and sponsoring key healthy classes as mentors to those that need encouragement to engage in renewal work. Rev. Thea Leunk served the team as a .75 FTE classis coach until December 31, 2005, when Mr. Frank Engelage took over as classis coach.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Mary Buteyn, Home Missions board president, and Rev. John Rozeboom, Home Missions 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.

Home Missions considers it both a challenge and a privilege to join in God's mission with Christian Reformed congregations, ministry agencies, and schools.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, director

I. Introduction

God has done amazing things in our broken world this year. Where there is war, he has brought healing to wounded spirits; where there are natural disasters, he has given solace to the suffering; where there is hatred, he has brought comfort to hardened hearts; and where there is indifference, he has brought fortitude to those with shaken beliefs. We at Christian Reformed World Missions are grateful that we have the task of leading our churches in taking the only message that brings true peace, offers a relationship with unfailing love, and provides a worldview that is necessary for long-term development.

As we work with the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church to carry out the Great Commission, we at Christian Reformed World Missions realize that the mandate is too vast for a single denomination to undertake. Furthermore, we understand that our approach must adapt to a world where the traditional pattern of missionary activity has been reversed: 60 percent of missionaries now are coming to the West, with 40 percent going from the West to evangelize abroad. The global field has changed radically, and we have adapted our mission vision and values to better meet the challenges that lie ahead (see section IX). This shift has led to the need for a new structure, which was brought before the CRWM Board of Trustees in mid-February. It has also allowed us to look at missions with fresh eyes, seeking new opportunities to maximize the efforts and impact of Christian Reformed churches around the world.

Working from this new perspective, we have strengthened our network of partners and indigenous leadership, which allows us to participate in mission fields where we otherwise might not go or be as effective. When Christians work together, God is honored, and the task is more manageable. Following are some examples of organizations that currently partner with World Missions:

In El Salvador, Seeds of New Creation offers a great example of collaboration. After that country's civil war, distrust and suspicion ran high. Seeds of New Creation began building relationships with other evangelical groups in the capital city and across the country. Now, Christians meet for fellowship, encouragement, training, and shared ministry opportunities. Seeds of New Creation is the glue that holds it all together.

All over the world, Christian Reformed World Missions collaborates with likeminded believers to tell a dying world about the living God and what he did through his Son, Jesus. Here is a partial list of organizations with which CRWM works:

- English Language Institute – China (ELIC)
- Educational Resources and Referrals – China (ERRC)
- Jian Hua Foundation
- Evergreen Family Friendship Services
- Yew Chung Education Foundation
- International Theological Education Ministries (ITEM)
- The Bible League
- East-West Ministries (Russia)

- Excelsis-secondment agreement
- Evangelical Association of Guinea
- Fédération des Associations de Jeunes de L'UEBH (FAJ)
- Haitian Partners for Christian Development (HPCD)
- Consortium de la Renforcement de l'Éducation Chrétienne en Haiti (CRECH)
- Haitian Christian Reformed Church (HCRC)
- RCJ Eastern Presbytery
- Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ)
- National Presbyterian Church of Mexico
- United Bible Societies
- Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)
- Synod Mission Board of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church of India
- Asian Theological Seminary – Bacolod
- Asian Theological Seminary – Manila
- Faith Academy (Philippines)
- Philippine CRC – Classis Metro Manila
- Association of UNELA (Costa Rica)
- The Evangelical University of Latin America (Spanish Acronym UNELA) – Costa Rica
- Nicaragua Christian Academy
- NKST (Nigeria)

The Christian Reformed Church has much to offer the world in the ongoing work to establish God's kingdom. As we join our resources with those of other churches, organizations, and peoples, we find that a global effort is increasingly necessary. The harvest is plentiful and the workers still few. The following are areas where we have identified a need:

A. Mali

One million of West Africa's twenty million Fulani people live in Mali. There are only fifty known Christians among them. Almost all the rest are Muslims. How will they hear unless someone preaches the gospel to them?

B. Japan

There are 280,000 members of the Jehovah's Witness Church in Japan and 3,900 members of the Reformed Church of Japan. Even counting cults and genuine churches, less than two percent of the population claims a Christian affiliation. The Land of the Rising Sun desperately needs to know the Risen Son.

C. France

The Roman Catholic Church is losing influence here. Baptisms of children declined from 75 percent of all children in 1970 to 20 percent in 1999. Islam is the second religion of France. Evangelical Christians are few. There are fifty million French people with no real link with a Christian church.

D. Nicaragua

Natural disasters, war, tyranny, and more have led many Nicaraguans to find hope in God. Yet, Nicaragua is a deeply divided country. The church has a huge role to play here.

E. Nigeria

As more and more Avadi people come to Christ, missionaries move into the background to do mentoring, training, and discipleship. Avadi Christians take over evangelism and outreach. Missionaries work in many areas of Nigeria; some out front, some behind the scenes, all for God's glory.

F. China

A few short years ago, we did not even know a group of believers existed in the area where the earliest CRC missionaries went to work in 1921. After decades of communism, contact was reestablished. Now, with the CRC's help, a church has opened where those missionaries labored for so long. Ongoing contact with Christians from outside has been healthy and good for this group.

G. Hungary

There are immense opportunities in Hungary after decades of communism, but the church is not prepared to respond to the new day. Training of leaders, encouragement, and vision is needed.

H. El Salvador

El Salvador had some hard years. Since then, however, it has been living up to its name, which means the Savior. In 1960, evangelical Christians were a mere 2.3 percent of the population. In 2000, they were 22 percent. Missionaries are not leading the way in El Salvador. Rather, they are partnering, offering help and encouragement in critical ways as the country seeks to extricate itself from a messy past.

II. Review of 2005

The wind of God's blessing is at our back. The work of the Christian Reformed Church through its World Missions team has borne fruit. Here are four events worth noting that took place last year:

A. The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria celebrated its centenary on November 12, 2005. In 1905, only 10 percent of the country was Christian, and most of those believers were in the south. Today, half of Nigeria's 130 million people profess faith in Jesus.

B. Covenant CRCP in Tacloban, Philippines, was organized in February 2005. This was the first church organized by CRWM or CRCP among the roughly three million Waray-Waray people. Although Protestant missionaries have been working among this group since 1904, only about 2 percent of the people are evangelical believers.

C. Two emerging congregations developed by CRWM organized and joined the Reformed Church in Japan as independent congregations, with another planning to join in 2006.

D. In Liberia, World Missions has partnered with the Christian Education Foundation of Liberia for more than twenty-five years. Through times of peace and years of war, the relationship and ministry endured. On Pentecost Sunday 2005, the partners gathered to dedicate one of the fruits of this joint work: the complete Bible in Bassa (see *The Banner*, August 2005, "God Speaks Bassa," p. 27).

III. Looking ahead

We have been strengthened this year with a renewed version of our mission, vision, and values statements, as well as a proposal for structural change. This year, we begin a journey that will take us to areas in which we have never worked. In this effort, we are continuing to explore ways in which to assist the Mizoram Synod of the Presbyterian Church in India. They already send out approximately one thousand missionaries within India and in its neighboring countries.

Another new way of partnering is providing assistance in the form of scholarships for pastors to attend a program that trains churches in holistic development in Cambodia.

Through these and similar partnerships, combined with active development of local leadership, we will strengthen our network, increase our reach, and open new opportunities for our Christian Reformed Churches.

IV. Report on mission fields and projects

During the past year, World Missions gave support to Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which are attended by approximately two million people. It also contributed staff and grants to other agencies and leadership-training institutions.

A. Africa

1. Nigeria

a. The Church of Christ among the Tiv (NKST)

Year	Worship attendance
1911	0
1936	25
1941	214
1957 (church organized)	23,000
1964	100,000
1980	200,000
2005	300,000

b. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)

Year	Worship attendance
1920	0
1957	5,600
1970	19,000
1980	60,000
2005	160,000

c. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN)

This denomination split from the CRCN. Though the two denominations were able to reconcile their relationship in 2003, they remain two denominations. Tragedy and turmoil at the leadership level resulted in a significant loss of membership in 2005.

Year	Worship attendance
1979	40,000
2004	55,000
2005	50,000

Twenty-five years ago, World Missions' ministry in Africa was almost entirely focused on the NKST and CRCN. Today, only a small fraction of World Missions' human and financial resources are engaged with these large partner churches. The bulk of World Missions' resources in Africa have been redirected to new work among unreached peoples.

d. Eastern Kambari Area

Year	Organized churches
1984	0
1995	3
1997	5
1999	8
2001	12
2002	13
2004	14
2005	20

In 2005, the emerging churches among the 200,000 Avadi in the Eastern Kambari area decided to become a classis of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria. These churches also took a big step toward meeting their leadership needs with the opening of a new Bible school with twenty-six students.

2. Guinea

Year	Worship attendance
1984	Work began
1989	3
1994	10
1999	18
2005	30

3. Mali

Year	Known Fulbe Christians related to WM's work
1984	0
2000	9
2001	14
2002	19
2003	27
2004	35
2005	50

We believe the events in Guinea and Mali parallel the early days in Nigeria. Just as there was much more happening in the early years for the NKST and CRCN in Nigeria than could be seen in the number of converts or people attending worship, much more is happening among the Fulbe than is presently seen. The Word is going out as missionaries teach Muslim Fulbe to read, as Fulbe villages watch the *Jesus* film, and as hundreds of thousands of Fulbe have opportunity to hear radio programs in their own language. In 2005, a plague of locusts created an unexpected opportunity for witness when CRWM and CRWRC jointly administered the most just food distribution people had ever seen. We are encouraged as the number of "firstfruits" continues to increase in Guinea and Mali, and we pray for a movement among the Fulbe as Fulbe Christians increasingly serve as evangelists within their culture.

4. Liberia

Though civil war forced the evacuation of missionaries from Liberia in 1990, ministry has continued through grants to our partner organization, The Christian Education Foundation of Liberia. On Pentecost Sunday, Liberians dedicated the Bassa Bible. Bassa is the first indigenous language in Liberia to have the complete Bible. Liberians at the dedication service expressed profound gratitude to the Christian Reformed Church in North America and to CRWM for providing the bulk of the funding and the personnel for the translation.

5. Sierra Leone

Year	Worship attendance
1979	0
1985	400
1990	1,000
2005	500

Church attendance is down after years of conflict and war. Nevertheless, World Missions is responding to training requests from those who survived the war with their faith intact.

B. Asia

1. Bangladesh

We partner with existing churches and institutions to enhance their ministries of theological education and Christian community development.

- The College of Christian Theology of Bangladesh is one of the largest nonresidential training institutions in the world. Our resources are focused on the development of their new master of arts program and their theological library.
- We assist CRWRC in the development of the values formation aspect of their work. This focuses on Christian principles of community development and the churches' role in it.
- A joint project with the college, CRWRC, and World Vision on Spirituality and Leadership was initiated with CRWM personnel responsible for the program development. This project trains Christians to integrate word and deed ministries.

2. China

Our purpose is to connect CRC resources with ministry opportunities in China.

- In China, we partner with North American agencies to send English teachers to Chinese universities.
- We partner with Calvin College by providing a director for their one semester off-campus program in China.
- We are involved in a number of ministries with local churches and Christian institutions. A three-year Sunday school curriculum is nearing completion.

3. Cambodia

Ministry is planned here but not yet initiated beyond the sending of volunteers to teach short-term modules in training centers.

4. Japan

Our work focuses primarily on church development in partnership with the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ).

- We work at several mission posts, mostly in the Tokyo area.
- A schedule of transfer of each post to the RCJ is being implemented.
- Emphasis is being placed on youth work, mission development, training of Sunday school teachers, and other equipping ministries within the RCJ. A youth ministry has been started; mission discovery tours to Korea, China, and the Philippines have been carried out; Sunday school teacher training materials are being translated; and teacher training sessions held.
- We provide teachers to the Christian Academy of Japan, a large international Christian school in Tokyo.

5. Philippines

Our primary partner in the Philippines is the CRC of the Philippines (CRCP).

- We have drawn to a close our direct church planting efforts.
- Asian Theological Seminary is our primary partner in formal theological education. We provided resources to both their Manila and Bacolod campuses. The Manila campus provides leadership training for people from all over Asia and is one of Asia's largest theological seminaries. Placing a teacher at Koinonia Seminary in Mindanao enables us to provide some input into the training of Christian leaders in an area of the Philippines that is primarily Muslim.
- The CRC of the Philippines ministers on five of the Philippine islands. Its total membership is nine thousand, although its active membership is less than that. CRWM's work focuses more now on assisting the CRCP in the development of its leadership and denominational structures and ministries.
- The CRCP sent its first foreign missionary to Cambodia. CRWM works with its domestic and foreign mission department. Their goal is to plant seventy churches in the Philippines by 2007.

C. Europe

1. France

After fifteen years teaching practical theology at the Reformed Seminary of Aix-en-Provence, France, Dr. Harold Kallemeyn is now focused on a leadership training program in Africa.

2. Hungary

Year	Seminary graduates
1952 - 1996	0
1997	20
1998	40
1999	60
2000	80
2001	100
2002	120
2003	136
2004	152
2005	168

After forty years of communist enforced closure, the Hungarian Reformed Seminary in Sarospatak reopened in 1992. Since 1997, approximately twenty students per year have graduated from the seminary. Most of these graduates are now ordained pastors serving in churches that had long been vacant.

3. Russia

World Missions' ministry in Russia fits into three major areas:

- maintaining and strengthening evangelical libraries (2,200 users)
- relationships with five partner organizations
- launching a Christian Teachers' Association.

In addition to overseeing these World Missions' ministries, Mr. Gary Timmerman serves as coordinator for all CRC ministries in Russia.

D. Latin America

1. Costa Rica

The Christian Reformed Church of Costa Rica has grown in its commitment and responsibility. Three churches are carrying out holistic and viable ministries in their communities by working with AIDS victims and preventive programs, meals on wheels for the poor, and ministry to elderly people who are often forgotten. The local congregations support these ministries and require very little support from CRWM.

The Evangelical University of Latin America (UNELA) launched its Doctoral Program for Latin America (PRODOLA) two years ago. This is a research-based program that offers two-week intensive in-residence courses. This program has attracted forty-five evangelical leaders from several Latin American countries. The School of Distance Learning, through partnership agreements, is providing training to hundreds of students throughout Latin America, which includes many CRWM partners. Through UNELA, the Christian Reformed Church is influencing the evangelical church in Latin America with a biblical world and life view.

- UNELA is one of the very few accredited higher learning Christian schools in Latin America.
- UNELA has over five hundred students enrolled in all its programs.
- The School of Distance Learning serves CRWM partners in Central America and the Caribbean.
- Since last summer, UNELA is offering online courses as part of its distance program.

2. Cuba

Despite many difficulties, the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba continues to grow spiritually, in leadership, and numerically. The summer programs that included summer camps for children, teenagers, young adults, and couples went very well. The Christian Reformed Church of Cuba developed a partnership agreement with UNELA to facilitate biblical education and training for its leaders. Seventeen students are enrolled in this program. Some ministry results in the CRC of Cuba are:

- twenty established congregations
- seven ordained pastors
- seventeen in-training leaders
- five thousand worshipers
- strong emphasis on holistic ministries.

3. Dominican Republic

At the Christian Reformed Schools (COCREF) Dominican and Haitian children are not only receiving a good education, they are receiving the gospel and coming to know God. This ministry makes it possible for children to receive a high quality, Christ-centered, community transforming education where typically no other educational options exist. COCREF is becoming a model educational system for all the Dominican Republic. The growth and development of this school ministry include:

- twenty-two schools
- one hundred fourteen teachers and supervisors
- four thousand students.

CRWM missionaries working with the Christian Reformed Church of the Dominican Republic continue to provide training and encouragement for the major programs on evangelism, church planting, theological education, and diaconal ministries. The goal is to work toward building organizational capacity and self-sustainability. The Christian Reformed Church of the Dominican Republic includes the following:

- two hundred congregations
- ten classes
- over nine thousand members.

4. El Salvador

Several natural disasters hit El Salvador very hard in 2005. Hurricanes with heavy rains caused mudslides; volcano eruptions and earthquakes resulted in deaths and destruction. CRCNA agencies and partners coordinated relief efforts in the most needed regions.

The country team, Seeds of New Creation, has developed the Network for Integral Missions, with about sixty pastors and church leaders participating in special training and seminars. These sessions are transforming the perspective of leaders, who are becoming agents of change in their own communities. Participants in this network are inviting others to meetings on the Christian world and life view where fellowship, training, and opportunities for collaboration are offered.

- Ministry teams have been formed in the CRC of El Salvador and are beginning to take initiative and responsibility for their areas.
- The Santa Tecla congregation has decided to step forward into a neighborhood where they can be a part of and serve the surrounding community.
- Thirty pastors and church leaders have participated in the School of Biblical Expositors offered by Seeds of New Creation and sponsored by the Latin American Theological Fraternity in El Salvador.
- Three hundred fifty people have been involved in an educational process fostering an integral view of the ministry of the church, offered by the Seeds of New Creation team.
- The Christian university student movement (MUC) in El Salvador is increasingly recognized for its contribution to the University. There is a growing interest in the gospel as something that affects all of life. Several non-Christian students have begun attending Bible study cells on campus.
- The theological education program, on the basis of the Center for Interdisciplinary Theological Study (CETI), is offering training at three different levels to more than one hundred thirty pastors and church leaders from a variety of denominations.

5. Haiti

2005 was a very violent and difficult year for Haiti. Presidential elections were postponed at least three times for lack of capacity to register all voters and produce the mandatory IDs. During the second half of the year, a wave of kidnappings occurred, averaging between eight and ten kidnappings each day. The missionary community was not spared, and some North Americans were targets as well. The motive for these kidnappings was to demand ransom.

The construction of the Ministry Center for the CRC of Haiti was possible with the help and participation of many North American work teams. This facility will provide space for trainings, worship, and fellowship among the CRC churches.

6. Honduras

In 2005, the Christian Reformed Church in Honduras celebrated its second consecutive National Assembly. A new national board was elected, as well as new commissions for the different aspects of ministry. This past year was also marked by the organization of a new classis—Classis Central. The CRC of Honduras has grown and developed as a denomination and includes:

- eighty-seven established and emerging churches
- six classes
- over four thousand members
- five seminaries for the training of church leaders, evangelists, and pastors.

7. Mexico

During 2005, Hurricane Stan devastated Southern Chiapas, and Hurricane Wilma struck Cancun in October. Recovery will be slow in both regions because the rain in Chiapas washed away towns and hundreds of

acres of mountainside farmland while the wind and waves in Cancun took twenty-five kilometers of white beach sand out to the sea and left villages under water. CRWRC and CRWM continue relief efforts in both areas.

The total population in Mexico is about 100 million people, of whom only 5.4 percent are Protestant. In 1992, the government legitimized Protestant churches and missionaries who work for them. Since then, a period of rapid evangelical growth has unfolded. Demographic information on recent church growth suggests that the Protestant population could reach 20 percent by 2030.

CRWM partners with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. This denomination, which began in 1872, has 3,200 churches with about 500,000 members. CRWM also partners with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico, a denomination with 150 churches and 16,500 members. CRWM's missionaries seek to empower both clergy and lay church leaders; to increase growth in existing churches; and to begin new churches, cell groups, and family ministries. CRWM currently has missionaries working in Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Merida, and Cancun. Good ministry is taking place in the U.S. border cities of El Paso and Tijuana.

8. Nicaragua

The Nehemiah Center continues to work for transformational development in five major sectors: church and families, community development, Christian schools, business people, and youth ministries. The Christian Reformed Church of Nicaragua is showing positive developments in terms of its outreach ministry. Some churches combine work and deed through significant diaconal outreach. Three churches have Christian schools with a combined student body of 550.

- The Nehemiah Center now has its own web page: www.nehemiahcenter.net.
- The Nehemiah Center celebrated its first graduation of thirty-two agents of transformation. These men and women are becoming important agents for change based on a biblical worldview in their churches, schools, businesses, and communities.
- The Ezra Team responsible for all trainings is made up of a capable group of Nicaraguans who are concentrating all efforts in the west corridor along the Pan-American Highway, from Managua all the way to Chinandega.
- The Nicaraguan Association of Christian Schools, birthed by the work of the Nehemiah Center, is taking more and more responsibility for organizing its own training workshops.

V. Ministry in Canada and in the United States of America

While the plans of World Missions international 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 mission mobilizers 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 long-term, short-term, and summer mission program (SMP) participants.

Of the support needed by World Missions to keep a missionary family on the field, about 40 percent comes from denominational ministry shares. An average of fourteen sending and supporting churches supply most of the other 60 percent through faith-promise and other above-ministry-share support. Some individuals also support missionaries directly. Individual support is important and will be even more important in the future. Short-term partner missionaries and SMP 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 where they serve.

All of World Missions’ fields and projects and 96 percent of its two hundred fifty 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 mission mobilizers can be found on the back pages of the World Missions calendar. They are also listed in the Directory of Agencies and Boards in the Yearbook 2006, 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 2005, World Missions honored the following for five to thirty years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

Years of service	Place	Name
5 years	Guinea	Kenneth Mohle
	Russia	Gary Timmerman
	Nigeria	James Triezenberg
10 years	Central America	Joel Huyser
	Dominican Republic	Marten VanTil

15 years	Grand Rapids Office Dominican Republic Pastorate/Lithuania/ Grand Rapids Office Mali	Luis Pellecer Stephen Brauning Steven VanZanen Everdine Smith
20 years	Grand Rapids Office Pastorate/Banner Office/ Philippines Pastorate/Philippines	Dorothy Wallinga John Suk Dwayne Thielke
25 years	Nigeria/Liberia/ Grand Rapids Office Nigeria Montreal/France Japan Mexico	Ron Geerlings Linda Horlings Harold Kallemeyn Lawrence Spalink Jan Van Ee
30 years	Mali	Larry Vanderaa

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 Theological 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 Board held its annual meeting February 14-16 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. At that gathering, the boards of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada met separately to attend to matters distinctive 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 CRWM board also meets jointly and separately in May 2006 and again in September 2006.

IX. Strategic planning

An intense process of work, prayer, and reflection yielded our new mission, vision, and values.

Mission

CRWM exists to glorify God by leading the CRC to respond obediently to our Lord's commission to witness to the good news of God's kingdom and make disciples of all nations.

Vision

We see the CRC vigorously participating in Spirit-led mission with churches and other Christian organizations throughout the world, the gospel proclaimed to more and more people who have not heard it, healthy churches emerging, and the kingdom of God advancing.

Values

Introduction: The following are the key values of CRWM. We hold one another accountable to live out these values faithfully because we believe they are needed to implement transformational strategies in pursuit of CRWM's mission. These values also make explicit our commitment to the Bible and to the ecumenical creeds, the Reformed confessions, the CRCNA governance documents, and the Denominational Ministries Plan for agencies and institutions of the CRCNA.

1. We Value Faith in God and Passion for God's Mission in the World
 - a. We mirror the Father's desire to reach the lost.
 - b. We obey Jesus' command to be His witnesses, proclaiming the gospel to all peoples.
 - c. We depend on the Holy Spirit's power to transform individual and community life through interaction with the triune God.
2. We Value a Confessionally Reformed Understanding of God's Word
 - a. We proclaim Christ as the only way to be reconciled to God and His sovereignty over all.
 - b. We proclaim the Word in faith that God, through His Spirit, will use this proclamation to penetrate cultures and enable people to accept the gospel.
 - c. We train missionaries to carry out ministries holistically.
 - d. We serve God from a Reformed world-and-life view.
3. We Value the Body of Christ
 - a. We recognize ourselves as one part of the Body of Christ serving with the rest of the Body in mission.
 - b. We are compelled by God's call to His Church to be an agent of His Kingdom in the whole world.
 - c. We encourage and challenge the Church worldwide to live out an integral mission.
 - d. We serve the Body of Christ around the world by connecting God's people locally, nationally and internationally for proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations.
4. We Value Proclaiming the Gospel to People Who Have not Heard It
 - a. We make unreached peoples a ministry priority.
 - b. We maximize the ministry potential of the Church and other Christian institutions to love and reach out to those who have not heard the gospel.
5. We Value the Image of God in all People and the Humility that Opens Us Up to Respect, Learn from and Grow With Them
 - a. We ensure that all our partnerships are beneficial for mutual learning and for the exchange of ministry resources.
 - b. We dismantle racism and address other abuses of power within our context and work with our partners to address these abuses in their contexts.
 - c. We hold peace and justice to be integral parts of the good news and essential to the witness of the Church to a world in desperate need.

6. We Value Being a Caring Community
 - a. We work for the well-being of all World Missions' employees and their families.
 - b. We are mutually accountable.
 - c. We place high priority on teams and teamwork.
 - d. We model leadership which serves.
 - e. We develop good relational skills.
7. We Value Sustainability
 - a. We live out a radical dependency on God, nurtured through prayer.
 - b. We use structures and strategies that adapt to our changing context and make best use of our unique gifts.
 - c. We work with individuals and organizations in ways that minimize their unhealthy dependence on the CRCNA for human or material resources.
 - d. We ensure the identification, enhancement and use of locally available human and material resources.
8. We Value Contextualization
 - a. We encourage partner churches and Christian organizations to contextualize the gospel.
 - b. We encourage partner churches and Christian organizations to create their own structures and guiding documents so that they are indigenous in character and in practice.
 - c. We promote a lifestyle which minimizes barriers to the contextual understanding of the gospel.
9. We Value High Standards of Stewardship
 - a. We challenge the CRCNA to use the human and material resources entrusted to them by God in ways that reflect God's passion for spreading the gospel and expanding the Kingdom.
 - b. We follow the highest standards of integrity in dealing with the resources provided to us.
 - c. We promote program effectiveness.
 - d. We maximize ministry through partners and networks, wherever possible.
10. We Value Lifelong Learning and Growth
 - a. We promote constant growth in Christ-likeness.
 - b. We develop excellent skills in the ministries to which God calls us.
 - c. We practice creativity and innovation in ministry.
 - d. We balance a zeal to teach with a zeal to learn.

This document is used to shape the annual plan and budget. We are also engaged in a significant review of ways of integrating it more closely with that of the CRC.

Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 2006 – Financial and Business Supplement*.

X. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	4	2nd and 3rd

XI. Board nominations

A. The following nominee is being presented to synod for ratification for a second three-year term:

Region 5

Rev. Loren Swier (incumbent) has a passion for missions and is willing to serve another term. He has had pastorates in South Dakota and British Columbia, and currently is serving a pastorate in Washington State. Prior to ordination, Rev. Swier volunteered in Mexico and served a one-year internship in Taiwan.

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

1. Regional board members

Region 1

Mr. Marcel deRegt currently serves as the youth pastor for First CRC, Chilliwack, British Columbia. He and his wife, Monica, have two children. Mr. deRegt began his career as a youth pastor six months ago after working for the Bible League of Canada for eleven years. His experience with the Bible League included leading cross-cultural mission trips and promoting the ministry within Canada as an area director for southwestern Ontario and the prairie provinces. Through his many travels to developing countries and working with national Christians and churches in those areas, he has developed a passion for reaching the lost for Christ, both here in Canada and worldwide.

Ms. Jacoba (Ko) Spyksma is a member of Duncan CRC, in Duncan, British Columbia. She retired after thirty-five years as a Christian school teacher and administrator. Her professional experience also includes speaking engagements on various topics to teachers, women's groups, and youth. Ms. Spyksma has served on numerous church, school, and community committees. Since retirement, Ms. Spyksma and her husband have served with Wycliffe Bible Translators for one year in Cameroon and on three occasions in Nigeria with Christian Reformed World Missions. Ms. Spyksma and her husband also serve as Christian Reformed World Missions' regional mission mobilizers for British Columbia.

Region 8 (one board member needed for a three-year term)

Mr. Ken Van Zee is a member of Faith CRC in Pella, Iowa, holding credentials at the American Institute of Business in Computers and Accounting. Mr. Van Zee is a semiretired volunteer for NGO's, World Missions Regional Mobilizer/Region 8A; a Partners Worldwide Affiliate leader for a group of business mentors that work with an affiliate of businesses in Honduras; and serves on the board of directors for Serve Our

Youth (SOY), an organization that facilitates mentoring and Bible studies for children of single parent families, children of prisoners, and children in correctional facilities. He currently is mentoring two youth. He has served as a deacon and elder of his church; on the Pella Christian School Board; the Calvary Rehabilitation Board in Phoenix, Arizona; as vice president of Vermeer Manufacturing Board; and the Board of Enduro Corporation. In addition, he serves on various committees at church.

Rev. John Knoester is pastor at Ocheyedan CRC, Ocheyedan, Iowa. He holds a BA from Calvin College and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Currently he is serving on the Ethnic Ministries Board for Classis Iakota and Classis Heartland and on the Classis Heartland Home Missions committee. He serves as vice-president of his council and has taught in Nigeria at Hillcrest School, returning there a couple of times through Calvin Theological Seminary's Internship Program.

Region 10 (one board member needed for a three-year term)

Mr. Craig Pollington is a member of Calvin CRC, Mc Bain, Michigan. He has worked in tool and die, and currently is a beef seed stock farmer and works in sales for Beef and Dairy Semen. He also works with delinquent youth near Reed City. He has served as director of the Seed Time and Harvest Mission organization in Siberia /Russia. He has served various terms as an elder and deacon in his church. Mr. Pollington has a heart for missions, is a solid prayer warrior, and has been to Siberia a number of times. He has a good perspective on issues that CRWM deals with.

Ms. Jan Stravers is a member of Evergreen Ministries, Hudsonville, Michigan. She has a BA from Calvin College and audited graduate courses at Fuller and Regent Colleges. Ms. Stavers presently serves as director of the Kids Hope Program at Evergreen Ministries. She has served as church secretary, administrative assistant at Peace CRC, South Holland, Illinois; and served as a teacher in Taiwan, the Philippines, California, and Lansing, Michigan. She has served as president of the Board of International Arts and Gifts, a nonprofit ministry in South Holland, Illinois, and has also worked closely with church councils as an administrative assistant at Peace CRC. She has a passion for reaching the lost with the good news of the gospel of Christ and has spiritual gifts of administration, hospitality, and intercession. Ms. Stravers has worked in Taiwan and the Philippines, taken groups to China for the Bible League, and traveled to twenty-five different countries.

2. At-large members

Canada at-large

Mr. Ralph Helder, a member of Barrhead CRC, holds a bachelor of arts degree in education and a masters in educational leadership. He is the director/CEO of Alberta Distance Learning Centre. Mr. Helder has served on the Habitat for Humanity Board-Edmonton Chapter and has served multiple terms as a deacon and elder at his church. He has traveled extensively to many countries and sensed the need for the CRC's mission outreach. Mr. Helder is enthusiastic about mission work and maintains contact with CRC missionaries and Wycliffe Translators.

Ms. Jocelyn Langendoen is a member of Bethany CRC, Fenwick, Ontario, and has educational credentials from Hamilton District Christian High School. She has worked as a secretary in various places and now is the secretary / treasurer of their own company: Willowbrook Nurseries Inc. Her responsibilities include preparing budgets and handling all financial aspects of the business such as accounts payable and general office management. They employ up to 130 people annually, and seasonally it drops to 60 employees. Ms. Langendoen has held various volunteer positions at her church, and she and her husband were involved in the administration of a capital campaign drive of over \$1 million for Smithville District Christian High School. She has a passion for missions and evangelism, loves administration and planning, is a visionary and creative person, has a keen business sense, and is respected and trusted in her community.

U.S. at-large

Mr. John D. Loeks, Jr. is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Wheaton College and Wayne State University Law School and is a licensed real estate broker in Michigan. Presently, he is president, CEO, and owner of Loeks Theatres, Inc., a motion picture exhibition company that does business in eleven locations in west and central Michigan. Mr. Loeks is also president, CEO, and owner of Showspan, Inc., which produces twelve consumer shows in Michigan and Wisconsin, such as boat shows, home and garden shows, and so forth. He has served on the boards of the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Grand Rapids Economic Club, the Michigan Lung Association, and Covenant College. Currently, he is serving on the boards of the Ausable Institute, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and Hospice of Michigan Foundation. His wife, Mary, whose parents served as missionaries in Japan, retires this year after twenty years as minister of education at Church of the Servant. Mr. and Mrs. Loeks are regular sponsors of the January Series at Calvin College.

Mr. Colin Watson is a member of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey. He holds graduate degrees from Union College in Schenectady, New York, Columbia University, and the University of Virginia. He has had corporate management experience at a utility company and also worked on the committee to bring the Olympics to New York City. Mr. Watson has served on a number of boards of community organizations and is a David Rockefeller Fellow of the New York City Partnership. He has also received numerous honors for leadership. Mr. Watson is semiretired, yet working on the staff as executive minister of Madison Avenue CRC and is the managing member (president) of Foundation Enterprises, LLC, a real estate investment company focused on community improvement. He is committed to and has a heart for reaching out with the gospel. He was born in Guyana.

XII. Recommendations

World Missions-Canada and World Missions-USA respectfully recommend the following:

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. John Tenyenhuis; the president of World Missions-USA, Ms. Joy Engelsman; and the World Missions director, Dr. Gary Bekker, the privilege of meeting with

appropriate advisory committees of synod and representing World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That synod elect by way of the printed ballot those slates of nominees presented for election to the Board of World Missions.

C. That synod along with the Board of Trustees 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.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Gary J. Bekker, director

I. Introduction

In the 2004-2005 fiscal year, people responded to God's call all over the world. This year was marked by one of the largest disasters in recent history. The December 26 tsunami took the lives of over three hundred thousand people and left millions homeless. Yet, this disaster also marked one of the largest responses of humanitarian aid in recent history. Thousands of people dug deep and gave of their generosity so that tsunami survivors could be helped. What an amazing example this is of responding to God's call.

At the same time, CRWRC has worked alongside leaders in 190 local churches and organizations in thousands of communities across the globe. These leaders have chosen to follow Christ into new areas of programming—including tackling the crisis of HIV / AIDS, trying out new crop varieties that can resist drought, and even educating youth to take more of an active role in society. As a result, more than 300,000 people were able to see God's love as they improved their lives.

In addition, CRWRC's work was supported by more than fifteen hundred volunteers who followed God's leading to use their time and talents to respond to disasters, rebuild homes, balance budgets, distribute emergency supplies, and provide technical expertise to CRWRC's partners. North American churches, too, committed themselves to follow God's call to advocate for those who are in need and become agents for change in their own communities. As a result, CRWRC's ministry was multiplied.

CRWRC underwent a significant leadership change in the 2005-2006 year. After almost ten years of dedicated ministry, Mr. Wayne deJong announced that he would resign his position as director of CRWRC-Canada and begin serving Habitat Humanity Canada as vice president for special programs and partnerships. While his steady and kind style will be sorely missed, the position has been filled (pending synodical concurrence) by Ms. Ida Mutoigo. Ms. Mutoigo is a leader who has honed her skills within the ministry of CRWRC, serving most recently as team leader for Eastern and Southern Africa. Her field experience, along with her strong desire to engage the church more fully in ministry, makes her selection a natural one.

All staff in CRWRC feel privileged to be serving a very supportive denomination.

II. Board matters

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to provide direction for CRWRC's ministry programs and to encourage the vision of the organization as a whole.

The CRWRC governance structure is made up of delegates from the classes, in addition to up to twenty-seven members-at-large, that constitute the Board of Delegates of CRWRC. The delegates are a vital communication link with classes and churches. They also select seven-member national boards for both the United States and Canada. The two boards together form the fourteen-member Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for CRWRC as a whole.

A. *Board of Directors of CRWRC-Canada*

Mr. Jim Romahn, president
Mr. John Richey, vice president
Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, secretary / pastoral advisor
Ms. Shirley Vandenberg, treasurer
Mr. Bany Castellanos
Mr. Dirk Veeneman
Mr. George Lubberts

B. *Board of Directors of CRWRC-U.S.A.*

Ms. Mary Dengerink, president
Mr. Wes Rozema, vice president
Ms. Gloria Ranney, secretary
Mr. Randy Hedman, treasurer (on leave of absence)
Dr. Mariano Avila, pastoral advisor
Ms. Dawn Menning
Mr. Chris Van Spronsen

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

Connecting the Christian Reformed Church in North America with communities around the world is an important part of the work of CRWRC. CRWRC does not deliver services to poor communities but builds relationships to bring change. These connections change both partners and opens the door to the gospel. Throughout this report you will learn how your donations and prayer support and advocacy are working with people and their communities to create permanent, positive change.

A. *Development regions*

1. Asia

CRWRC's goal in Asia is to achieve excellence in community transformation in Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu cultural contexts and through efforts that result in multiplication. We will accomplish this within a partnership framework that is partner and community-led. Our aim is to build vital relationships between communities, churches, Christian organizations, businesses, and governments. Wherever possible, we will engage the local church and the supporting church in North America in this process. Our goal is not only to be good facilitators of community transformation but also to share this blessing with the churches in our countries and with the church in North America.

Here are some highlights from 2005 that we hope to build on in 2006:

- In 2005, in-depth child and maternal health assessments in Laos and Bangladesh demonstrated high malnutrition rates and that CRWRC is focused on some of the poorest of the poor in Asia. (We are also focused on some of the poorest peoples of India, the untouchables and people living with AIDS.)
- Transformational community development work with (not to and not for) people builds from dialogue on peoples' values and vision—whether non-Christian or Christian—and opens bridges for knowing

Christ. In Asia, CRWRC staff work among Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and animist people groups. CRWRC is focused on contextualizing seven dimensions of transformation in this dialogical way. World Missions collaborates with us in this effort in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Laos.

- In Cambodia, we have the opportunity to work with one of the fastest growing Christian churches in the world and one of the poorest countries in the world. We are focused on community organizing, building holistic biblical foundations with Christian partners, and increasing the agricultural and income impact of our programs.
- In Indonesia, the country evaluation of October 2005 refocused CRWRC on working with Christians in the Reformed synods who will champion holistic ministry and reconciliation with justice efforts among both Muslims and Christians. We experienced the blessing and recognition of seeing CRC gifts to the tsunami survivors multiplied by matching grants from the government of Canada.
- In the Philippines, we experienced the blessing of seeing partner organizations mature in their self-sustainability and in their influence via coalitions for justice. CRWRC partners are leaders in the Micah initiative in the Philippines. We agreed with World Missions to phase out of financial support in the Philippines by 2012.
- Working within a funding cap, the CRWRC in Laos, Cambodia, and Bangladesh multiplied CRWRC funds by securing grants from other donor organizations.

2. Eastern Europe

In Eastern European communities, the work that has been carried on for years is starting to bear fruit. In one specific community, people who once were ignored by society (gypsies) now have birth certificates and IDs. They have registered with the local doctors and are able to receive the medical treatment they need. Others who have gone through skills training courses are able to find jobs. Children from disadvantaged families are now attending school and enjoying it!

Our work of identifying new partners continues in two (major) directions:

- In the Cluj area, we are developing relationships with Christian organizations that are open and willing to learn about Christian Community Development (CCD); for this we are conducting a five-session training for CCD facilitators based on the CRWRC core modules. There are fifteen participants from nine different organizations, and they are showing much enthusiasm.
- In the Bucharest area, we are developing relationships with local churches willing and open to become more involved in their communities. We have conducted a survey to assess the present situation and the level of interest for holistic ministry. The upcoming Partners' Assembly will be focused on the church's involvement in the community in a holistic way. There are some encouraging signs regarding this kind of ministry; however, many churches are very focused on themselves. Some are offering charity to help the poor, but only a very

few are thinking or doing anything about the development of the communities surrounding them.

The Fight for Child Rights: Elisabeta has 3 children: E (11), A (5), M (3), none of them have a birth certificate, none of them exist, at least not on legal terms. The (grand)mother, B, is raising the children all alone with little support from the rest of the family. Last year, the family asked the support of the social worker in order to have the three children's birth's registered. The case was complicated and required commitment and responsibility both from the social worker and the mother. B had proved to have strength all throughout the process. She would wake up at 5:00 a.m., get a ride to Cluj, and then wait nearly three hours on the street before the court hearing would begin. When it came to bringing her children to Cluj to the "medicina legala" she did it all over again carrying two of her children for hours in the rain. All this proved to have results. She now has received the court's decision and will receive the birth certificates. The children will finally receive free medical services, child allowance, social aid, and can go to kindergarten and everything else that a child is rightfully entitled to.

It is so unjust how innocent children fall under the requirements of bureaucracy, legal systems, and court procedures; the children being nothing but victims of the system. It is also interesting how the power of a piece of paper can give somebody a future or deny it. The joy is seeing that the family has strength to overcome these obstacles, ask for help, and fight for their rights and the future of their children. Calling churches to this ministry is transformational.

Gratefully, this family has been strong enough to make simple things such as their children's going to school, to kindergarten, buying clothes and school supplies, and all the other things that are so normal to us "regular people" become a dream come true, finally.

CRWRC in Eastern Europe is working with 189 participants in programs during this new phase of our ministry in Romania.

3. North America

CRWRC works with churches to transform over sixty neighborhoods in the United States. This work is advanced by church and community consultants who work as follows:

- Bringing deacons and church leaders into relationships with poor people in their communities.
- Starting new Christian Community Development Organizations (Christian nonprofit organizations that help the church do its work in the local community).
- Training churches to engage with their neighbors instead of doing programs for their neighbors.
- Training churches and community agencies to create a community agenda for change that is shared widely in the community.
- Training churches to see, value, and cooperate with other individuals, groups, churches, networks, and businesses in their community in

activities that bring new life to the community and pathways to prosperity for the poor.

- Encouraging congregations and community organizations to take a holistic view of individual and community change (moving beyond single program solutions).
- Encouraging churches and community groups to change the systems of law, governance, and aid so that the poor have a pathway out of poverty.

Canada is the only country in the world that allows the private sponsorship of refugees from overseas. For the last twenty-five years, CRWRC has been a private sponsorship holder with the government of Canada and has been encouraging Christian Reformed churches in Canada to sponsor refugees and help them resettle in Canada.

Currently, thirty-seven churches in Canada have submitted applications to sponsor individuals or families overseas and are waiting for them to arrive in Canada. Refugee families face many challenges and long waiting times before they arrive in Canada. Once they arrive, the sponsoring church helps them to work through cultural adjustments, finding homes, education, and work, and overcoming trauma that they have suffered. We praise God for the responses of generosity and love from the churches that have undertaken this ministry.

4. Latin America

Transformation is still the main focus of CRWRC's work with 36 partners in 370 communities of Latin America. Because the partners are in nine countries, there are a variety of cultures, languages, experiences, and needs among the 15,449 participants in the diverse programs. The threat of HIV/AIDS slowly became more evident in Latin America in recent years. What had been a small program in Haiti with one partner for HIV/AIDS preventive training has developed into a much larger-scale program with four partners to continue with prevention and to assist orphans and vulnerable children. A partner in Honduras is also interested in beginning HIV/AIDS awareness training.

During the past year, a new program in Ecuador focused on human rights among indigenous groups. We now have intentional justice programs in four countries.

Fundamental to all this work, though, is the transformational base—working with eight denominations and ten agencies that partner exclusively with local churches. We are thankful for God's blessing on this work, recognizing that 2006-2007 is the last year we will walk alongside two partners in El Salvador before the final phase-over of that country.

Three years ago it would have been unthinkable that a group of youth from Canada would spend a week in Nicaragua working alongside the youth from the Pedro Joaquin Chamorro community. This particular neighborhood had a bad reputation; in fact, of the 130 neighborhoods in the capital city of Managua, Pedro Joaquin consistently was ranked in the top five most dangerous by the police. Its population of 4,800 people live in 550 homes mainly constructed from recycled materials. Parents struggle to earn a living in the nearby garment assembly factory, and kids often end up

“raising themselves.” Even the police would only come here if they were wearing riot gear.

People from other parts of Managua avoided this neighborhood; that is, except for a small group of Nicaraguans called OMEC who had a vision to use their skills and contacts to renew this community.

Anyone who knows something about construction can tell you that the most important part of a building is the foundation. The youth group from Meadowvale Christian Reformed Church from Mississauga, Ontario, learned this first hand as they helped construct a community center in this community. In the intense heat and rain, the Meadowvale youth, alongside their Nicaragua counterparts, shoveled dirt and assembled iron reinforcement rods for the foundation. Even after eight days, there still was not a completed building to take a picture of—just the assurance that what will be built on top later would be well supported. In the afternoons, they organized basketball and volleyball clinics that involved many more youth from the community. Despite the language and socioeconomic differences, both groups had a profound impact on each other.

Meadowvale CRC values investing in a solid foundation in their youth. Their objective was more than a construction project; they wanted to challenge their youth’s worldview, deepen their faith, and build relationships cross-culturally. After a year of prayer, planning, and fundraising, they were one of the most prepared groups. While in Nicaragua, the church prayed for the group and their agenda every day. For the Meadowvale church, this trip was just one step in building the foundation for their youth.

Likewise, OMEC understood the importance of a solid foundation. Instead of jumping into designing programs, they deliberately started by building relationships in the Pedro Joaquin Chamorro community. The first step was identifying local leaders and pastors who had the respect of the community. A local committee emerged that was committed to prayerfully and actively engaging the youth. Things started to change, but it took three years of involving people, prayer, and empowering community leaders. This year, CRWRC and OMEC are finally starting a health and urban agriculture project, soon to be followed by a literacy program and several business projects. The gang kids are still there, but recently they were busy helping with the construction and providing security for the Canadian group. Again, this is only possible because a solid foundation had been laid.

5. East and Southern Africa

This region of Africa continues to experience political tensions in countries (such as Tanzania, Malawi, and Kenya) that held elections or referendums in 2005 or are scheduled to hold elections in 2006 (like Uganda). International pressure increases for a democratic process to be followed amidst a history of patriarchic dictatorships and corruption that makes this challenging to achieve. Too many people continue to die of HIV/AIDS, famine, and common diseases such as malaria and diarrhea. Yet, God has been actively working through his people, through CRWRC and forty-nine church partners that we work with. In this joint ministry, we have had the privilege of serving 834 communities in seven countries this past year. As a result of significant donations from CRC constituents and USAID, 3,361 families that were affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS

have been assisted, including 8,631 orphans and vulnerable children and 10,387 people living with AIDS.

One of the most exciting programs is in Mozambique where thousands of youth are now being reached with the gospel and being taught the biblical message of faithfulness in marriage relationships. With support from the Food Resources Bank (FRB), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) 15,877 families have been relieved from hunger and were able to achieve food security. Our partnership with Partners Worldwide enabled 22 Christian business associations to flourish and create 1,140 new jobs for those who were unemployed. Literacy programs have served 7,718 adults, out of which 4,642 are now able to read and write. Often their first choice for reading material is either the Bible or the prayer / song books used in church.

As Christ's compassion has been extended to and experienced by many people and communities in our region, we praise God that Muslims in Malawi and Uganda have come forward to accept Christ, and Pentecostal church partners in Uganda have committed themselves to a more holistic approach to missions. Through various exchange visits between leaders of CRWRC's church partners, more partners are now sharing their expertise and multiplying their learning. Our many prayers for peace in northern Uganda have been answered since security has greatly improved there.

As we look forward to this year ahead, our priorities focus on developing the leadership capacity of our church and community partners. We hope to focus more on discipleship interventions that emphasize stewardship and biblical worldviews because this is essential for overcoming a fatalistic "poverty of the mind" and for enabling God's beautiful people in Africa to see the many resources they already have and can use to develop themselves. Pray for peace, wisdom, and safety for all our staff and partners in the East and Southern Africa region as they work together to disciple peoples and nations to be all that God created them to be.

6. West Africa

The West Africa region did two major country evaluations in 2005—Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In both countries, we heard testimonies of changed lives and communities. One women's group was earning income by selling cakes they baked in an old metal file cabinet that they had converted to a wood oven. We enjoyed a cake made in honor of CRWRC. In both countries, the evaluation teams also brought insights from other regions, generating ideas for strengthening the work.

We are already reaping the benefits of what we learned, including CRWRC and CRWM committing to close collaboration in Sierra Leone as we work with Christian Extension Services, which is now a self-governing national organization.

Another major priority for our West Africa team is fighting HIV / AIDS and encouraging church members to care for—rather than ostracize—people living with AIDS.

In the northern band of countries in the Sahel, which are faced with periodic drought and food shortage, we help villages with ongoing food security. We also participated in famine relief in Mali and Niger in the summer of 2005—necessitated by the locust disaster in 2004.

The southern band of West African countries has been plagued by civil war and violent ethnic conflict, and we continue to address justice issues of conflict prevention and healing in Nigeria and Liberia.

CRWRC in West Africa will work with 75,298 people in 2006.

B. Justice education and advocacy

The justice education team met in Indonesia in early December to discuss work over the past year and to work on plans for the coming year. The team accomplished a great deal, along with learning about peace building work that is ongoing in Poso (Central Sulawesi), Indonesia, and the contextualization of the gospel in Bali. The team also began planning for the proposed African Convergence to deal with issues of health and HIV/AIDS.

The team identified five priority areas (based on organizational and regional plans): HIV/AIDS, peace building, gender, contextualizing antiracism (discrimination), and constituency transformation.

The Micah Challenge continues to provide many opportunities to educate the Canadian constituency on issues related to global poverty and injustice. Requests for speaking engagements are numerous. This is an excellent opportunity to encourage education and advocacy. We hope the church in the United States will respond likewise. We are very encouraged by the CRWRC board's commitment to lead on issues of advocacy in North America.

For fiscal year 2005-2006, CRWRC programming, specifically in human rights, land rights, civic education, peace building, and women's empowerment, continues to impact twenty-nine partner groups and 24,836 people.

C. Disaster relief and rehabilitation

Never before in the history of CRWRC were there so many calls for our assistance. Equally so, never before was the compassion of our constituency so manifest as in 2005. At the end of the year as we write this report, we pray that 2005 may for a long time coming stand alone in the number and severity of disasters we experienced. As we are called to follow Christ's example to follow him in reaching out to those in need, we also depend on God to guide our way as we respond.

Internationally, the tsunami response required our greatest effort. CRWRC decided to focus its response on three countries. In India, CRWRC became part of a response through our long-time partner, the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (Eficor). Assisted by matching funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), we were able to supply nonfood items to fourteen thousand people, build more than one thousand temporary shelters, and reestablish the livelihood of hundreds of families in the fishing and nonfishing sectors. Additionally, CRWRC provided food through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to more than nineteen hundred families; the opportunity to work with the caste of the untouchables, who often do not appear on government records, was a blessing. Assisting these people to step out of the shadow was a most satisfying experience.

In Indonesia, CRWRC's disaster response and rehabilitation team established an office in the city of Banda Aceh, led by two volunteer International Relief Manager couples. Our program focuses on rehabilitation of a number of villages about sixty kilometers (40 miles) south of Banda Aceh city proper. In a cash-for-work program, hundreds of acres of land were cleared of debris and sand and new crops of peanuts and peppers were planted. Fencing was

installed in twenty-two villages and more than sixteen thousand coconut seedlings were planted. Schools were repaired and children received new school uniforms, while mothers started sewing and embroidery groups. A full report has been sent to the churches and donors.

The final stage will be the building of more than 500 permanent houses. By the end of 2005, 150 houses had already been completed. This led CIDA to request CRWRC to assist the International Red Cross in building an additional 600 temporary houses to allow families to leave their leaking tents. With the Lord's blessing, we hope to complete all 500 permanent houses by the end of 2006.

Seeing villages that lost more than 70 percent of their inhabitants to the tsunami come back to life is witnessing God's love and grace to a people who have suffered so much for so many years. We pray that the peace between the Indonesian government and the Freedom for Aceh groups may hold in this country and in the hearts of its people.

In Sri Lanka, CRWRC is working on both the west and the east coasts. This area has been ravaged by the recent civil war between the Sinhalese government and the Tamil Tigers. With help from our local partners, such as the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, CRWRC focuses on the rehabilitation of groups of families living in seven villages. We initially contacted these groups during the emergency stage. We assisted with nonfood items such as pots and pans, blankets, and so forth. Next, we built small temporary houses for these families so they could leave the tents, warehouses, and classrooms in which they lived. Now, we are helping them get back into their businesses and build permanent houses. There are many challenges in Sri Lanka. We are thankful for the wonderful work done by our volunteer international relief managers and pray that the present peace between the warring parties may hold.

We are thankful for our partners who have so generously contributed to these tsunami response efforts. These include: The Diaconal Relief and Development arm of the Christian Reformed Church of Australia, The Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and the citizens of Lynden, Washington.

CRWRC was also engaged in very significant international relief programming outside of the tsunami response in 2005. This included programming through CRWRC's membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). In the most recently completed fiscal year, CRWRC was able to provide nearly \$5 million (Canadian) of food and supplies to international relief projects in seven countries; nearly \$3.5 million (Canadian) of this amount was CIDA matching funds. In addition, CRWRC received more than \$1 million in additional CFGB and CFGB member financial support for its projects over the same period. Overall, these funds supported the provision of more than five thousand metric tons of food and seed to people living in situations of profound need around the world. In Ethiopia alone, more than three thousand metric tons of food provided forty thousand people with food assistance during the hunger months this year.

Some of the highlights from CRWRC's international relief programming in 2005 include:

1. Darfur refugee crisis—Civil unrest and widespread violence in the Darfur region of Sudan has forced millions of people from their homes. These

families are now living in camps without adequate shelter, food, water, sanitary latrines, or medical assistance. CRWRC, with financial support of fellow Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) members, is responding by providing food, vegetable seed, small animals, wells, latrines, and health services to more than ninety thousand people. The phase of the project currently being implemented carries a budget of more than \$2.5 million CDN to meet the needs of displaced people in three areas of West Darfur over one year. God calls us to stand for the oppressed. Through the support of so many, we have been able to stand beside those displaced by war and help them achieve dignity in their lives as they wait for peace and the opportunity to return home.

2. Hurricanes 2005—The 2005 hurricane season was the most active one in history. This has led CRWRC to respond in several Central American and Caribbean nations to the devastation of numerous storms. These responses included: Hurricane Stan in October (Chiapas, Mexico; Guatemala; and El Salvador—emergency response and longer-term CFGB food / seed projects), Hurricane Wilma in October (Yucatan, Mexico—emergency response; Cuba—housing reconstruction), and Hurricane Beta in October (Nicaragua—emergency response and longer-term CFGB seed project). CRWRC has responded both to survivors' immediate needs and to longer-term needs of agricultural recovery to support people in reestablishing their food security.
3. Pakistan/India earthquake—A devastating earthquake struck the Kashmir border area between India and Pakistan in September 2005. CRWRC has responded to this disaster by providing assistance to survivors through various partners. CRWRC's response has included collaboration with five other Canadian Christian NGOs in obtaining matching funds from CIDA for a \$750,000 CDN project providing shelter materials and other essential nonfood items. This funding is channeled through the Swiss-based ecumenical group Action by Churches Together (ACT), and the programming on the ground is implemented by Church World Service (CWS) in Pakistan and by Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) in India. In addition, CRWRC has collaborated with Medair and Food for the Hungry International (FHI) in Pakistan and with the Evangelical Fellowship of Indian Commission on Relief (EFICOR) in India.
4. Southern Africa food crisis—Many parts of southern Africa experienced very poor harvests in spring 2005. The once-annual maize harvest is the key component in the food security of the majority of the subsistence farming populations. In Malawi, the maize harvest was the worst such harvest in more than ten years. Currently, it is estimated that nearly half of Malawi's population is in need of food assistance. CRWRC, through its Presbyterian and parachurch partners, began a major food relief response in October. This project is providing food assistance to five thousand households in two districts over seven months until the next maize harvest. In addition, the project is providing more drought-tolerant seed to farmers in an effort to work at the causes of repeated food crises in Malawi. CRWRC is also responding to the broader food crisis in Mozambique and Zambia.

Frequent droughts in vulnerable areas of Mozambique and Malawi have resulted in serious food shortages at different times during the past few

years. Between November 2004 and April 2005, CRWRC partnered with the Reformed Church of Mozambique to deliver monthly food supplements to one thousand families in three drought-affected communities in Mutarara, Mozambique. Foods Resource Bank (FRB) provided \$159,776 for this project, which targeted the most vulnerable households: those with orphaned, widowed, chronically ill, or elderly members. In exchange for supplemental food, a member of each household contributed ten days of work per month to plant trees and build and repair roads to benefit the community. This relief project is currently transitioning into a long-term food security program focused on improving soil quality through zero-till farming, composting, and better management of wetland resources.

This is not the only CRWRC program that received FRB funding in the past year. During fiscal year 2005, CRWRC received nearly \$540,000 in contributions from Foods Resource Bank. With the exception of the food relief project in Mutarara, all of these resources supported development programs focused on building long-term food security in communities where CRWRC is active.

5. North America—The year 2005 was a record-setting year for our domestic response as well. Following on the heels of the 2004 hurricane season (which was historic in its own right) there was near-record tornado activity in the United States, and then what proved to be the worst natural disaster in American history, Hurricane Katrina. She was not alone. Last year, we experienced more named tropical storms coming out of the Atlantic than any time before.

In responding to disasters for the 2004/2005 fiscal year, Disaster Response Services (DRS) was blessed with a total of 1,180 volunteers who worked 128,306 hours in the United States and Canada to help disaster survivors. We deployed a record number of Rapid Response teams, and our Needs Assessment teams visited a record number of homes (35,610). We were able to send out more construction teams than ever before. Between the summer of 2004 and the end of 2005, we rebuilt homes in Alberta, California, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and in several communities in Florida.

The best summary, however, of where DRS is today can be seen in the response to Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina was the eleventh named tropical storm, the fourth hurricane, and the first category 5 hurricane of the 2005 hurricane season. It first made landfall as a category 1 hurricane just north of Miami, Florida, on August 25, then again on August 29 along the Central Gulf Coast near New Orleans, Louisiana, as a category 4 storm with 140 mph maximum sustained winds. Its storm surge soon breached the levee system that protected New Orleans from Lake Pontchartrain. Most of the city was subsequently flooded by the lake's waters. This and other major damage to the coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama made Katrina the most destructive and costly natural disaster in the history of the United States.

CRWRC has received over \$5 million in donations to help with the long-term recovery efforts related to Hurricane Katrina. To date, we have been doing the following:

- a. Provided clothing, toys, and personal care items to over two hundred evacuees who relocated to the Grand Rapids area. After the current need was met, two truck loads of donated goods were carried by volunteers to communities from east Texas to Mississippi.
- b. Worked with fourteen Christian Reformed churches across the United States who have helped to resettle forty-six evacuees from Louisiana and Mississippi who were displaced by Katrina. We have provided some financial help in this effort, in addition to providing mentoring support with the help of Bethany Christian Services.
- c. Sent over two hundred volunteers to the gulf coast to help with clean up, temporary repairs, needs assessments, and organizational capacity building.
- d. Scheduled twenty church teams to assist with the continuing need for clean up and temporary repairs. Plans are underway for over thirty-five more teams.
- e. Initiated a program with Partners Worldwide (PW) to come alongside devastated communities in southern Mississippi, providing help with revitalization and start-up of small businesses. PW will provide mentoring, and DRS will provide matching dollars for this program. Several planning meetings have already been held in Gulfport, Mississippi.
- f. Completed needs assessments in the four counties surrounding Meridian, Mississippi (Kemper, Newton, Lauderdale, Clark). Assessments are now being scheduled for the Mississippi counties of Jones, George, Lincoln, Lawrence, Amite, Pike, and Walthall, as well as Vermilion Parish in Louisiana. We expect needs assessments for Katrina to continue well into 2006.
- g. Worked with long-term recovery committees in over a dozen communities from Mobile, Alabama, to Lake Charles, Louisiana, helping them to organize, schedule needs assessments, and make plans for rebuilding. This vital work will continue over the next several months as we continue to investigate communities for long-term reconstruction.
- h. Committed over \$2 million to reconstruction that will be used to field our volunteer teams, pay for construction materials in the communities in which we work, and provide financial support to the long-term recovery efforts where we have established partnerships.
- i. We have increased our capacity to field construction teams by adding equipment to help long-term construction efforts.
- j. In order to further support our construction efforts in January 2006, we will be hiring a full-time construction coordinator who will reside in the Gulf Coast area.

As we seek to follow Christ's call to be his hands and feet in the world today, we are blessed by our supporting communities and the communities with whom we work in order to help people to work at their own restoration. As we work together, we let our light shine around the world.

And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday. . .you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Isaiah 58:10, 12b

D. Community services

1. ServiceLink United States

ServiceLink-US has just completed its fifth and most exciting program year. CRWRC has given ServiceLink-US a very clear mandate of finding and implementing practical ways to involve our constituents in partnering with us in the work of Community Transformation. Our basic belief is that “every man, woman, and child bearing the mark of Christ can exercise their gifts to bring about transformation in lives and communities near and far.” We would like to believe that Jesus used the techniques of service learning to help his disciples understand the power God had given them.

We are thankful to God for blessing us with the gift of serving our constituents in such an exciting way. Our prayer for the upcoming year is that God will give us the wisdom and discernment to continue matching the gifts of our constituency and communities to produce a witness about the power of God to change lives.

a. Discovery Tours

This year, over eighteen CRWRC supporters from Canada and the United States participated in tours to Nigeria, Tanzania, and Romania. Discovery Tours are limited to between five and eight individuals to allow for a more intimate view of CRWRC’s and CRWM’s field work. The Discovery Tours are a great first way to engage supporters with communities and field staff over a short period of time (ten to fourteen days).

b. Program HOPE! Internships

This past year two young adults were selected to serve as Program HOPE! Interns. Their placement will begin on July 1, 2006, in the countries of Romania and Laos. It has also been exciting to see the first five interns placed in the program return this past December. Their feedback indicates they had a rewarding experience, despite some of the difficulties that occur when working and living in another culture. Interns are currently placed in Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Ferndale (Washington), and Uganda. Recruitment for new Program HOPE! Intern placements in West Africa and East South Africa will begin on August 1, 2006.

c. Volunteer placements

This last fiscal year we had an increase in long-term volunteers who served between five and twelve months. Although there was also a decrease in the number of work teams that were placed in the United States and abroad, the hours volunteers served stayed the same. With the media attention CRWRC has gained from the tsunami and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, our inquiries and applications for volunteer opportunities have tripled. We are anticipating that there will be a significant

increase in the number of volunteers placed over the next eighteen months due to an increase of relief and disaster activity.

Within the last year, 149 volunteers were placed, 15 tours and work teams were sent out, and a total of 18,049 hours were served in volunteer capacity.

2. ServiceLink Canada

ServiceLink has completed its tenth anniversary year of service to the churches and congregations across Canada. It was another busy year with many inquiries for service opportunities with the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church and its partners. People's lives were touched as 444 volunteers, 350 of whom had never served before, traveled to many different sites in twenty-three different countries around the world, including Canada and the United States. High school and university students, church groups, young adults, seniors, and all those in between, contributed a record high of over 65,400 hours to serve God by serving others. From the stories received, we know that God was instrumental in the many lives that were transformed, and so we give him our thanks.

This was a bit of an unusual year in that ServiceLink facilitated the logistics for as many as twenty-four international relief managers (IRMs) to work with CRWRC in areas of the world affected by disasters. A number of these IRMs served in response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia—others were sent to aid people in Sudan, Malawi, and Uganda. We are thankful for their contributions to serve in areas of such desperation and pray that God will continue to bestow his grace on those whose lives are so fragile.

Many other volunteers served with CRWRC ministry programs this year—255 in total making a contribution of 47,350 hours. Not only did they serve in places such as Honduras, Uganda, Cuba, Kenya, and Romania, but a number of volunteers also offered their valuable time to CRWRC's work that takes place through the home office. They were engaged in the day-to-day office activities but also in local communities advocating the ministry of CRWRC, working in donor development, and training international relief managers. CRWRC is truly blessed by the commitment of its volunteers. We thank and praise God for all of them.

E. *Classis Renewal Ministry Team*

CRWRC is a founding partner agency of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team that has supported classis vision leaders with needed resources since 1992. The team builds on current experiences and practices in our renewing classes by partnering with them to share success stories and key learning about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support as well as other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and website—are key emphases of this work.

This past year, the team continued to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant, is planning another conference for classical leaders, increased classis participation in the classical prayer coordinator network, and hosted two peer groups for classis staff and ministry team chairs. Further work is being planned in the areas of program self-assessment, promoting classical diaconal ministry, gathering new sources for classical funding of ministries, and sponsoring leadership classes as mentors to classes who need to be encouraged to engage in renewal work. Rev. Thea Leunk served the team as a

three-quarter time classis coach through December 2005. Mr. Frank Engle replaced her starting in January 2006.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history

This table displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1998-2006 (projected).

CRWRC - CONSOLIDATED
REVENUE AND EXPENSE HISTORY/BUDGETS
(Including Disasters)
(B = Budget)

	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06B
Revenue	13,613	13,344	13,661	12,471	13,759	14,114	27,495	12,727
Overseas	5,551	6,320	6,672	6,925	8,401	8,425	9,751	7,828
North America	1,143	1,313	1,511	1,446	929	872	1,159	943
Dis. Resp. Serv.	2,371	3,214	3,528	2,234	3,220	2,403	4,991	1,021
Resource Devel.	1,144	1,363	1,448	1,141	1,198	1,354	1,406	1,773
Administration	1,152	1,231	1,092	1,033	1,165	1,152	1,259	1,049
Total Expenses	11,361	13,441	14,251	12,779	14,913	14,206	18,566	12,614
Net rev./(exp.)	2,252	(97)	(590)	(308)	(1,154)	(92)	8,929	113

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
16	1	1st

C. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2006-Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Resource development

CRWRC's transformational ministry is made possible through the generous donations of churches and individuals. We are grateful to God for the way people—and the resources needed to support them—were made available in 2004-2005 to carry out ministry around the world.

The largest percentage of CRWRC support (78%) 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 \$5.8 million (US) was donated by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Partners for Christian Development, and other funding agencies, including government grants. Most of the government grants come

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. Last year, CRWRC received \$758,414 in contributions to the Joseph Fund. From the entire fund, \$780,933 was made available for CRWRC's ministry last year.

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 requesting staff and representatives from CRWRC's partner organizations to 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: Ms. Mary Dengerink, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Jim Romahn, president of CRWRC-Canada; and Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC 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.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andrew Ryskamp, 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. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan approval process and the determination of loan 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. Arie Leegwater and Mr. Ronald E. Baylor expire on June 30, 2006. Mr. Leegwater has served for two terms. Mr. Baylor 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 2009

Mr. Mike Westra is a member of Bridgeway Community CRC, Haledon, New Jersey, where he serves as treasurer. He currently serves as treasurer of the eastern Home Missions board. Mr. Westra is a graduate of Calvin College and is employed by Wayne Tile Company.

Mr. Donald Koopman is a member of Pleasant Street CRC, Whitinsville, Massachusetts, where he is a children's church teacher and has served as an elder. He has served on the board of the Whitinsville Christian School and on the Partner Management Team for the Luke Society in the Philippines. Mr. Koopman is a graduate of Calvin College and is president of Koopman Lumber in Whitinsville.

B. Position 2 – ratify second-term appointment for a three-year term through June 2009

Mr. Ronald E. Baylor is a member of the Third Christian Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he has served as a deacon and currently serves on the Benefactor's Trust Fund Board. He is a member of the Calvin College Board of Trustees. He has also served on the boards of the Kalamazoo Christian School Association, Calvin College Alumni Association, 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.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Ms. Diane Apol (2007), Rev. Julius Medenblik (2007), Mr. Ronald Haan (2008), and Mr. Scott Lee (2008).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in thirty states and in the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, 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, Washington, and Wisconsin. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2005), a total of \$17,142,047 in interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range

from one year to five years, and interest rates vary from 1.74 percent to 7.06 percent, with a time-weighted average of 3.59 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 forty loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2005, a total of \$16,379,837 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2005, two loans were seriously delinquent. The default of another resulted in a charge of \$192,000 to the loan loss reserve in 2002, which amount was recovered in 2005. The Loan Fund maintains a 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:

	2003	2004	2005
Cash and equivalent	\$7,673,514	\$8,301,638	\$5,310,302
Loans and accounts receivable	\$11,639,768	\$11,772,678	\$16,439,365
Equipment & software, less depreciation		\$6,405	\$10,780
Total	\$19,319,687	\$20,074,316	\$21,760,447
Notes and accounts	\$15,188,798	\$15,846,572	\$17,142,047
Net assets	\$4,130,889	\$4,227,744	\$4,618,400
Total liabilities and net assets	\$19,319,687	\$20,074,316	\$21,760,447

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2005, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2006—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- the sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained
- gifts and bequests made to the corporation
- an unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowings of up to \$1 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Ms. Alice Damsteegt (60% of full-time) and 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 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, 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.

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 several 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. ministers' pension plan is a "qualified" plan in the eyes of the Internal Revenue Service, which means that the plan complies with the requirements of the applicable sections of the Internal Revenue Code. It is not subject to the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), nor is it required (or allowed) to purchase insurance from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The payment of benefits must be made from the income and assets of the plan because there is no governmental guarantee that benefit payments will be made.

The Canadian ministers' pension plan is a "registered" plan under the Ontario Pension Benefits Act (PBA) and the Income Tax Act. It is registered with Ontario because the largest number of members resides in that province. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) regulates the funding of the plan under the Ontario PBA. FSCO considers the plan to be a Multi-Employer Pension Plan (MEPP) and, as such, its pension benefits are not guaranteed by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. Accordingly, in the language of these regulations, "if, on wind-up of the plan, the assets of the plan are insufficient to meet the liabilities of the pension plan, pension benefits may be reduced." This means that, as is the case with the U.S. plan, payment of benefits must be made from the income and assets of the plan; there is no governmental guarantee that benefit payments will be made.

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 Canadian pension trustees have reviewed FSCO's requirements regarding the duties and composition of pension boards. In this regard, the Canadian trustees are considered to be representatives of the members by virtue of the appointment process, the language of the plan's trust instrument, and the plan itself.

The responsibilities of both boards include long-term planning, benefit-related decision-making, and policy definition, as well as oversight of fund asset investment. The 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 Consolidated Group Insurance is provided by the Board of Trustees.

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 required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. Defined-benefit plans place the risk of providing the monthly benefit to participants with the plan and the sponsoring organization. Accordingly, when market returns and mortality assumptions are not as predicted, the plan and the sponsor face the resulting cost variance. While the primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants, the plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouses of participants if the participant dies while in active ministry, as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance company to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing that is required by the carrier.

As described later in this report, recent synods have approved several changes to the plans since they were established in 1983. Taken together, they have benefited plan participants, the denomination, and the plan itself, and they should serve to improve the plans' financial viability and staying power.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2005, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	868	241	1,109
Retired ministers	407	115	522
Spouses and dependents	130	20	150
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	91	14	105
Total	1,496	390	1,886

Ordinarily, every three years independent actuaries are employed to do a valuation of the plans. The most recent actuarial valuation of the U.S. Plan was performed as of June 30, 2003, and furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2004, 2005, and 2006. Because the Canadian Plan was less than 80 percent funded at December 31, 2005, it will be required to submit an annual valuation to the provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2007 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be released to the churches and others following Synod 2006.

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 of 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 who retire in a given year and have the same years of active participation in the plans 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 the 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.
- f. The trustees have placed high value on the 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 included an estimate of pension benefits based on actual years of credited service through the date of the statement and projected benefit amounts based on an assumption of continued service to age 65.
 - 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 for 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 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 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 while preserving principal.

The plans’ actuaries have informed us that as of June 30, 2003, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$100,000,000 for the U.S. plan and \$31,400,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the cost of the changes approved by Synod 2003 and represent the obligations that the plans have to over 1,800 active; disabled; and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2005	December 31, 2004
United States (U.S. \$)	\$97,495,000	\$94,373,000
Canada (Can. \$)	\$28,185,000	\$24,835,000

Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	2005	2004	2003	2002	5yrs	10yrs
Canada	17.4%	11.2%	12.7%	-4.4%	6.0%	8.6%
U.S.	7.2%	10.4%	20.0%	-10.5%	4.6%	10.1%

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. On balance, the pension trustees are grateful for long-term 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

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. The basic form of the plan was not altered; it retained its largely traditional defined benefit form. However, while the basic form was retained, changes were made to improve benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or changes that affect them) made by recent synods include the following:

- 1997 Changed funding for first or only pastors and chaplains from ministry shares to per-member billings.
- 1999 Increased the “multiple” used to determine benefit amounts from 1.10 percent to 1.46 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2000.
- Survivor benefit amount changed from 80 percent to 66 2/3 percent for benefit amounts determined using the 1.46 percent multiple.
- Early retirement reduction factor changed to .3 percent from .6 percent per month.
- Increased retirees’ benefits by 2 percent per year for each year of retirement during the period July 1, 1992, through December 31, 1998.
- Required that adjustments to benefit amounts be considered at least every three years.
- Performed a general rewriting of the plans to ensure that, among other things, the two plans conform to each other as much as possible.
- 2001 Approved a variety of optional benefit forms in addition to the plan’s normal form.
- Applied the plan’s 1.46 percent multiple to all service beginning January 1, 1985.
- 2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.
- Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.
- Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.
- Changed funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, to require payment of the greater of direct costs or per-member assessments.
- Linked timely payment of annual costs (the greater of participant or per-member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.
- 2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.
- Approved a rule requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised regarding the proposed action by the pension trustees.
- Amended Church Order Article 15 to include specific elements of “proper support,” including payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan.

Taken together, these changes have significantly improved the design and administration of the plan, and they benefit plan participants, the denomination as sponsor, and the plan itself. They should serve to improve the financial viability and staying power of the plans.

4. Funding

Through December 31, 1997, the plans were funded by a combination of ministry shares and direct billings. Beginning in 1998, the plans no longer participated in the ministry share system and, rather, were supported by member assessments. Under this system, pension costs associated with all first or only pastors of organized churches and all endorsed chaplains were funded by an assessment based on professing members age 18 or older.

Synod 2003 modified the plan's financing arrangements. Beginning in 2004, all organized churches are expected 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. The amount of the assessment for 2006 is \$27.84 per member in Canada and \$24.12 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$6,968 and \$5,448, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

In 2005, with the sole exception of organizations that employ endorsed chaplains, all emerging churches and other ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed quarterly, and the grant of credited service for pastors in the employ of agencies, churches, and other organizations is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed. Beginning January 1, 2006, these requirements apply equally to endorsed chaplains, with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2007 will be determined based on actuarial information that is not available to the pension trustees in time for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that these amounts will be included in the annual mailing of information regarding denominational ministry shares, offerings, and other financial data expected to be made available to the churches and others in July 2006.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees (those not ordained as ministers of the Word) of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan on a quarterly basis by participating employers 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 J.P. Morgan Chase Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Sun Life Financial Group.

At December 31, 2005, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$18,196,200 in the United States and \$2,569,800 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 375 participants in the U.S. plan and 103 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	254	56
Inactive	121	47

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies. Currently, there are 1,341 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 633 pastors and employees of local churches, 351 employees of denominational agencies, and 357 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider, and 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.

The plan continues to be affected by the significantly increasing costs of health care. Changes were made during 2001 in the United States in the provider network and in the administration of claims. In addition, certain changes were made in 2002 to the plan's eligibility provisions to protect the plan against the possibility of adverse selection. Both of these changes have helped limit the impact of these increased costs. Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

For 2006, premiums in the United States for the nonretiree group were increased a modest 3.6 percent. Premiums for participants in the U.S. plan who are retired and eligible for Medicare increased by a greater amount. This is in keeping with a policy of gradually bringing retiree premiums in line with the direct cost of claims for this segment of the plan's participant population.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement 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, 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 U.S. Board of Pensions and to Mr. John H. Bolt 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 2007 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 elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2006.

1. *Mr. Alan H. Van Noord* currently serves on the U.S. Board of Pensions investment committee. Because of his service with the U.S. Board of Pensions and his unique experience with pension plans, his name is being submitted as a single nominee. Mr. Van Noord is the Chief Investment Officer of the \$56 billion Pennsylvania Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS). In this capacity, he is responsible for the administration and management of a multiple asset class portfolio consisting of domestic and international equity, private equity, fixed income, and real estate. Prior to joining PSERS in 2002, Mr. Van Noord served for more than twenty-six years as chief executive officer and chief investment officer of the State of Michigan Retirement Systems.

Mr. Van Noord graduated from Calvin College with a bachelor of arts in business administration/economics and received a master's of business administration from Grand Valley State University. Mr. Van Noord was awarded the Chartered Financial Analyst designation in 1982. He has served on the Investment Committee of the CRC Ministers' Pension Fund since 1991 and the Barnabas Investment Committee since 2003. Mr. Van Noord is a member of River Terrace Christian Reformed Church, East Lansing, Michigan, where he has served as an elder, deacon, youth leader, and chair of numerous committees.

2. *Mr. Ray Vander Weele* 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. Mr. Vander Weele has thirty-five years of 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 Barnabas Foundation Firstfruits Committee. He is a member of Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and has served several terms as an elder.

D. That synod elect one member to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2006.

Rev. Jake Kuipers 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. Rev. Kuipers is pastor of Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, Ontario. Prior to serving in Trenton, he served congregations in Sarnia, Brampton, and Bloomfield, 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 has served on the board of Home Missions for five years in the 1980s and has been a delegate to synod on seven occasions. Currently, he serves as chairperson of the Canadian Pension Trustees.

Pensions and Insurance

John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

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: Rev. Michael De Vries (2006, second term); Mrs. Janet Sheeres, chair (2007, second term); Dr. Robert Swierenga (2007, second term); Rev. Lugene Schemper (2008, first term); and Dr. Richard Harms, secretary (ex officio).

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 assistant Ms. Heather Guichelaar; and volunteers Dr. Henry Ippel, Rev. Henry DeMots, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mr. Hendrick Harms, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, and Rev. Leonard Sweetman.

III. Archival work during 2005

A. Following a report that one of our regional representatives had died, we contacted each of the forty-seven designated representatives or stated clerks and learned that nineteen regional representative positions needed new appointments. Working with the classes, we were able to fill seventeen of these slots. In classes without a designated regional representative, we funnel our communication through the stated clerk (in some classes the stated clerk has accepted appointment as the regional representative). We maintain regular contact with each classis by way of these contact people to report on the programs of the archives.

B. Archival records from eighty-eight CRCNA congregations (five more than last year and thirteen more than two years ago) were received, microfilmed, and returned. This year, one church organized before 1950, one church organized in the 1970s, and two churches organized in the 1980s had their minutes microfilmed for the first time. 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.

Every church in the following eight classes has sent official records to the Archives to be microfilmed: Arizona, B.C. North-West, Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland. Previously, we had never had full participation by more than five classes. We are particularly gratified that the churches in Classes Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, and Thornapple Valley have been full participants in this program for three consecutive years. Due to the frequency of reports of

missing or destroyed records, these congregations and classes are to be commended for their total participation in this important work.

C. Official classical minutes were received from all forty-seven classes. This is the second consecutive year that we have had total participation in this project, and the committee thanks all the stated clerks for their cooperation. Anniversary materials were received from seventeen Christian Reformed churches.

D. This year, the records of Hope CRC in Stony Plain, Alberta, (organized in 1908) were microfilmed for the first time. All of the congregations organized before 1980 that have not had their records microfilmed continue to be contacted regularly by way of telephone, e-mail, surface mail, and personal contacts. The following, organized prior to 1970, have not had their records microfilmed and therefore, Archives staff continue to particularly encourage the officers of these congregations to make use of this service:

Exeter, Ontario (1952)

Farmington, New Mexico – Maranatha (1962)

Fountain Valley, California – Fellowship Community (1967)

Grangeville, Idaho (1927)

Portland, Oregon – Oak Hills (1965)

Portland, Oregon – Parklane (1959)

E. The Archives published its twenty-fourth annual 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. We continue the process of converting our most-used genealogical resources to file formats compatible with online availability to reduce an ever-growing reference load. The latest addition to this effort is a listing of marriages performed by Revs. Douwe J. Vander Werp and Roelof T. Kuiper while pastors in Graafschap (Michigan) CRC, and the membership records of the Perch Lake (Michigan) CRC. Links to these materials can be found at http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/in_house_resources.htm. We have completed entering the cataloging data for nearly seven thousand of our audio recordings (reel-to-reel, cassette, and compact disc formats) into a campus-wide database. This database, shared with Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin College Audio Visual department, and the Conferences and Campus Events department, is available on the web at <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/av/titles/index.htm>. Thanks to a Michigan Library Services and Technology grant and Hekman Library staff, approximately one thousand images of Michigan churches, schools, events, and places are now in digital format and can be viewed at <http://alexandria.calvin.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi4/eJDf4STXtc/255660055/503/7511>.

G. During the past year, we have processed 42 cubic feet of seminary records, 18 cubic feet of college material, and 103 cubic feet of denominational records. Among these were major additions from the general secretary's office of the Christian Reformed Church, Home Missions, and the seminary president. In addition to these 163 cubic feet of institutional records, we organized and opened for research 179 cubic feet of manuscript material from such groups as

Dynamic Youth Ministries, Christian Reformed Conference Grounds, and the Committee for Women in the Christian Reformed Church. The manuscript total also includes approximately 35 cubic feet of records from various Christian schools and other agencies related to the Dutch in North America. We also completed organizing and cataloging records of the Midwest Sunday School Association; the Back to God Hour-Guam program; the papers of Fred Klooster, John Hulst, and Nicholas B. Beversluis; and the cataloging of *Onze Toekomst* and the *Standaard*. In cooperation with the Meeter Center at Calvin College, we organized the papers of Ford Lewis Battles (33 cubic feet). He was the preeminent twentieth-century scholar of John Calvin. He left extensive notes and unfinished research. Unfortunately, much of his bibliographic research that led to publication was in a variety of obsolete machine-readable formats. Fortunately, the end products of these labors, his published books, are still in a machine-readable form.

H. We continued the translation project for early denominational and congregational minutes. Projects underway are: minutes of CRC churches in Luctor, Kansas; Manhattan, Montana; and Classis Grand Rapids East, 1892-1925.

I. We contributed to the denomination's sesquicentennial planning committee, served as members of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies and the Dutch-American Historical Commission, Calvin College's Information Services Committee, the Historical Society of Michigan Board of Directors, and the State Historic Preservation Review Board of Michigan.

IV. Publications

The *Historical Directory of the Christian Reformed Church* has been completed and is available (ISBN 0-9744529-0-4, \$34.95). The directory lists brief biographies of CRC ministers; a brief history of every CRC ministry, from organized congregations to storefront Sunday schools; lay evangelists; ministry associates (evangelists); Calvin Theological Seminary faculty; Calvin College faculty; Home Missions, World Missions, and CRWRC field staff; and chaplains. Data covers the years 1857-2002.

V. Recognition

A. The committee gratefully acknowledges the six years of faithful service to the committee provided by Rev. Michael De Vries.

B. We acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2006:

71 years	Elco H. Oostendorp
68 years	Henry DeMots
67 years	John Blankespoor
66 years	Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma

65 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom Garrett H. Vande Riet
64 years	John A. Botting Harold Dekker Nicholas B. Knoppers
63 years	Clarence Boomsma Edward Bossenbroek Bastiaan Nederlof
62 years	John H. Olthof
61 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen Jacob D. Eppinga George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
60 Years	Henry Bajema Richard R. De Ridder Bernard T. Haan David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
55 years	Isaac John Apol Gerard Bouma Willis Peter De Boer Jacob Hekman Leonard John Hofman Jacob Kuntz Myung Jae Lee John Theodore Malestein John Calvin Medendorp Leonard Sweetman Willard Van Antwerpen Lubbertus W. Van Dellen Jack Van Dyken Albert James Veltkamp Clarence John Vos Wilmer Roy Witte
50 years	Harold Bode Theodore Lloyd Brouwer James A. Bultman Sidney Cooper John Cooper Henry Morgan De Rooy Milton Roger Doornbos John Tony Ebberts Norman Edmund Jones

James Robert Kok
Edson "Bill" Taft Lewis
Farquhar John MacLeod
Calvin W. Niewenhuis
Jacob Arie Quartel
George Robert Spee
John (Jan) Van Dyk
Clarence Van Essen
John George Van Ryn

C. The Committee also reports on the following anniversaries of congregational organization:

125 years, 1881-2006	Allendale, Michigan – First Alto, Wisconsin
100 years, 1906-2006	Corsica, South Dakota Racine, Wisconsin Rehoboth, New Mexico Sheldon, Iowa – First
75 years, 1931-2006	Delavan, Wisconsin Flushing, Michigan – Good Shepherd
50 years, 1956-2006	Albuquerque, New Mexico – Chelwood Anaheim, California Bradenton, Florida Calgary, Alberta – Emmanuel Calgary, Alberta – Maranatha Gallup, New Mexico – Bethany Holland, Michigan – Calvin Holland, Michigan – Faith Hudsonville, Michigan – Hillcrest South Holland, Illinois – Cottage Grove
25 years, 1981-2006	Houston, Texas – New Life Howard City, Michigan – Pine Grove Westminster, Colorado – Family in Christ Community Wyoming, Michigan – Emanuel Hispanic

VII. Reminders

A. We urge congregations that have observed 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 way to keep a set of such materials in a secure location.

B. Of the 839 organized congregations, 659 (79%) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. Due to the ongoing and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee again strongly urges the remaining 180 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records and store them in an environmentally secure

location. Due to the personal nature of the contents in some minutes, these microfilms are stored in a vault under absolute security. No one, including archives staff, is 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 and/or consistory.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Richard H. Harms when matters pertaining to the Historical Committee's mandate come before synod.

B. That synod by way of the ballot elect one candidate to the Historical Committee for a three-year term to replace Rev. Michael DeVries, who has served the maximum of two terms:

Dr. James A. DeJong, a native of Paterson, New Jersey, lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC. Dr. DeJong is an ordained minister in the CRC, holds a doctorate from the Free University, and taught theology at Trinity Christian College and Dordt College before serving as president of Calvin Theological Seminary for twenty years until his retirement in 2003. He also taught church history at the seminary. Dr. DeJong has published extensively, with a collection of his lectures and addresses translated into Korean and has served as editor of several periodicals. His current research, a biography of Rev. H.J. Kuiper, is being considered for publication by the Origins Studies in Dutch-American History series. He has chaired the denomination's Liturgical Committee and served in several denominational capacities.

*Mrs. Angie Ploegstra (nee Pluger) is from McBain, Michigan, and is currently living in Zeeland, Michigan, where she is a member of Bethel CRC. Genealogy has been an interest of hers since 1985. Both sides of her family have ancestors that emigrated to America between 1847 and 1912, and she has traced some family branches back as far as 1765. Recently, her research with Paula Vander Hoven led to the Perch Lake CRC, of LeRoy, Michigan, a church that existed for about three years (1896-99). Together, they were able to contact living relatives of all ten families of that church and published the story of that congregation in the 2005 fall issue of *Origins*. For the last twenty-five years, Mrs. Ploegstra has managed Field's Fabrics of Holland. Recently, she has served as a Disaster Response Services volunteer for CRWRC.*

C. That synod stress to the local congregations that they diligently produce and keep minutes of the meetings of council, elders, and deacons; that synod emphasize that it is incumbent on retiring clerks to transfer to their successors all such records; and that newly appointed clerks make a specific effort to ensure that they receive a complete set of all minutes when they begin their term. The Committee notices that the frequency of individual congregations being unable to locate significant portions of these minutes (all absolutely necessary for both congregational and legal purposes) has risen from one or two per year to more than ten during the past year.

D. That synod urge congregations to contact the Archives before discarding any copies of minutes and noncurrent membership records in order that existing gaps in the archival holdings may be filled. Further, that congrega-

tions regularly contact the Archives to determine whether it is time to microfilm minutes (typically once every ten years).

E. That synod remind the stated clerks of each classis that all the records of discontinued ministries be sent to the Archives for safekeeping.

F. That synod request that all classes add the Archives to their mailing lists (surface or electronic) as the most expedient means to prevent gaps from occurring in these records.

Historical Committee
Michael De Vries
Richard Harms, secretary
Lugene Schemper
Janet Sheeres, chair
Robert Swierenga

I. Introduction

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) is privileged to represent the CRC in its ecumenical relationships. Such relationships tie the CRC to the larger Reformed family and other ecumenical communities throughout the world. Interchurch relations are heavily relational, and, therefore, the committee members have opportunity from time to time to make personal contact with representatives from other churches. At times, that happens because an IRC member is delegated to another church's assembly meeting as a fraternal delegate; at other times, like the summer of 2005, several IRC members were delegates to the Reformed Ecumenical Council meeting in Utrecht, The Netherlands; and sometimes it happens because the IRC arranges a joint meeting with a similar committee of another denomination. Whenever and however it takes place, these are meaningful experiences that make this assignment by synod an enjoyable experience.

The IRC is pleased to submit this report to Synod 2006. The report is significant in that it contains several important recommendations. It is the committee's sincere prayer that the Lord will bless synod's deliberations on this and other reports that come before the assembly.

II. Membership

The members of the IRC, along with the executive director, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, (member ex officio), with the years in which their terms expire are:

- From Canada: Ms. Louisa Bruinsma (2007); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2008); Dr. Bertha Mook (2008); Dr. James Payton (2007); Rev. Richard T. Vander Vaart (2006); Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus, president (2008).
- From the United States: Dr. Philip V. De Jonge, vice president (2007), Rev. Marvin J. Hofman (2008); Ms. Teresa Renkema (2007); Dr. David Rylaarsdam (2006); Rev. Carlos Tapanes (2006); Mr. Abraham Vreeke (2008).

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.

III. 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 has a relationship or is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) 131st General Assembly meeting in Edmonton, Alberta, June 4-9, 2005, Rev. Richard T. Vander Vaart.
2. To the Reformed Church in America (RCA) annual synod in Schenectady, New York, June 16-23, 2005, Ms. Teresa Renkema.
3. To the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) synod meeting in Kawagoe City, Japan, on October 11-13, 2005, Rev. Ken H. Lee.

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. Peter Borgdorff serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Ms. Louisa Bruinsma serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the Canadian Council of Churches. Rev. Richard Vander Vaart is also presently serving while we await the arrival of Rev. Bruce Adema to assume the office of director of Canadian ministries.
3. 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. Peter Borgdorff serves as the CRCNA's representative to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).

IV. Multilateral relationships—ecumenical organizations

A. Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)

The IRC maintains 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. The following delegates represented the CRCNA at the International Assembly of the Reformed Ecumenical Council held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, July, 12-26, 2005:

Dr. Peter Borgdorff
Dr. Bertha Mook

Ms. Teresa Renkema
Rev. Ralph Wigboldus

The Interchurch Relations Committee sent a copy of the booklet, *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist*, along with related synodical decisions to the REC for placement on the assembly's agenda in July 2005. Dr. Lyle Bierma and Dr. George Vandervelde, both members of the committee that worked on the Q. and A. 80, made a presentation of their findings to the members of REC. The assembly decided to refer the study to the member churches of REC and to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) with the request that WARC also dialogue with its Roman Catholic contacts about the findings of the report.

A joint communication was received from the president of REC and the president of WARC announcing the proposed formation of the World Reformed Communion (WRC), an organization that will absorb both REC and

WARC. A copy of the communication will be made available to synod's advisory committee on interdenominational matters. The Interchurch Relations Committee reviewed the proposal and decided that it is a step in the right direction. Therefore, the IRC recommends that synod:

Note with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the World Reformed Communion as advanced by the WARC and REC cooperation committee.

Grounds:

1. The unity of the church, especially those in the Reformed tradition is enhanced by this development.
2. Uniting together is a better testimony to the world than remaining separate.
3. The confessional basis proposed for the World Reformed Communion will be inviting for others to join the new organization.
4. The basis for the World Reformed Communion is consistent with the confessional basis of the CRC in that WRC will be based on "the Word of the triune God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Church, and written in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This communion embodies the Reformed identity articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and continued in the life and witness of the Reformed community."
5. In times of financial constraint, combining the witness of WARC and REC is responsible financial stewardship.

B. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)

The CRCNA is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The EFC, not unlike the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the United States, 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.

C. Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has had personnel on both commissions, and the CRC representatives make the CRC's voice heard in matters relating to ecumenical relations and to broad concerns within our culture and world.

D. National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)—United States

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) will gather for its annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, March 8-9, 2006. In addition to the annual event, the CRC cooperates with NAE Commissions in the area of chaplaincy ministries (especially as that relates to endorsement of chaplains issues). From time to time, the CRC is asked to participate in other NAE initiatives, but, on a day-to-day basis, there is not much contact with the functions of NAE.

E. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

The CRC's membership in WARC is now several years old and there has been regular contact with the general secretary's office of WARC throughout the year. Part of that contact is occasioned by the CRC's support for the

Mission in Unity project. Rev. Al Mulder has recently completed a book dealing with the experience of the CRC in crossing cultures in ministry that is part of that project. World Missions is now involved in another project in cooperation with WARC. CRC representatives are also invited to participate in various WARC discussions from time to time. It is fair to say that the CRC's relationship within WARC is developing and wholesome.

F. Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT-USA)

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: Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT-USA). Previously, evangelicals have only met with other evangelicals, mainline leaders have only met with other mainline leaders, and the Roman Catholic leadership has not been part of any of the ecumenical organizations. In November 2004, the Catholic Conference of Bishops in the U.S.A. decided to join CCT-USA.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC to participate in this new ecumenical organization. Dr. David Engelhard, the former representative for the CRCNA, participated in the discussions of the CCT-USA since the beginning of the organization. Presently, that role has been assumed by Dr. Peter Borgdorff. The IRC will continue to monitor the CRC's involvement, provide reports to synod, and prepare a review of our relationship with the CCT-USA for Synod 2010.

IV. Bilateral relationships—international

The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the former Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) were integrally linked as churches since the 1890s when the GKN was formed. Intellectual, spiritual, and financial assistance flowed freely from the Netherlands to North America. For many years, members of the CRC and the GKN on either side of the Atlantic Ocean felt at home in each other's churches. Sometimes the relationship was 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 tension was related to a difference of opinion on biblical hermeneutics, and, later, the tension increased when the GKN permitted gays and lesbians living in committed relationships to serve as officebearers in GKN churches. The provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship were gradually reduced from the former 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.

A significant factor affecting the GKN/CRC discussions has been the unification and merger process that has taken place among three Dutch denominations to form the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). The CRC has had a relationship with only one of the three denominations in the

merger, and even though we were somewhat familiar with the other two denominations, they had not been included in our ecumenical relationships. This merger was finalized in May 2004. The CRC's relationship is now with the PCN and not just with what was formerly the GKN.

Previous synods have extensively debated the merits of a continuing relationship versus the propriety of dissolving our relationship with the PCN. It has been a difficult discussion both for the CRC and also for the PCN. It is clear that there are differences in thinking and practice between the CRC and the PCN. The IRC, in trying to come to grips with the issues involved asked itself whether the questions that remained unanswered between the denominations are really the right questions. In other words, is the essence of ecumenical relations to be found in agreement on all important issues and view points? The fact is, of course, that only important issues matter. No one stumbles over small differences but the question remains: Is the essence of ecumenicity to be found in agreement, and should differences in viewpoint and practice keep us out of ecclesiastical fellowship? If uniformity in thought and practice is the standard to be applied, then can we be in ecclesiastical fellowship with any church? What margin of difference is acceptable? Do the differences of today between the PCN and the CRC override all other considerations? The IRC itself has struggled with these questions, and, as the proposed revision of the Ecumenical Charter indicates, the IRC believes that it is time to infuse a different perspective into the discussion. The IRC decided to:

Recommend to Synod 2006 that the PCN be restored as a church in full ecclesiastical fellowship.

Grounds:

1. The PCN is a church in the Reformed tradition with many historical, cultural, and familial connections to the CRC. Maintaining, and indeed restoring, full ecclesiastical fellowship is desirable. The IRC believes that terminating the CRC's relationship with the PCN would be a severe setback in our ecumenical ventures.
2. We are in multilateral relationship with the PCN through both WARC and REC. It would seem inconsistent to terminate a bilateral relationship while continuing in a multilateral relationship.
3. The PCN has repeatedly asked that the CRC restore the PCN to *full* ecclesiastical fellowship because the restricted fellowship imposed by Synods 1983 and 1996 is painful and unproductive.
4. It is clear that some positions taken by the PCN are in conflict with positions taken by the CRC. There is nothing in the present Ecumenical Charter that requires churches in ecclesiastical relationship to be in total agreement, even on important issues. The CRC can maintain its integrity on important issues without rejecting another church for fellowship.
5. The proposed revised Ecumenical Charter of the CRC also does not require that churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC have and maintain every position the CRC adopts for itself. Neither is the CRC obliged to endorse or agree with every position taken by a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
6. If the CRC were to terminate its relationship to the PCN, then the only remaining relationship in all of Europe would be the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC).

7. The CRC itself has experienced the pain of ecclesiastical exclusion when the member churches of NAPARC insisted that the CRC conform to their position on women serving in ecclesiastical office. The IRC believes that we must not act in similar fashion.

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.

The IRC appointed a subcommittee of the following to meet with representatives of the RCA: Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Dr. Philip DeJonge, Ms. Teresa Renkema, Dr. David Rylaarsdam, Rev. Richard Vander Vaart, and Rev. Ralph Wigboldus.

The CRC and RCA delegations are scheduled to meet in Chicago, Illinois, March 6, 2006. At a previous meeting, three items were given priority for consideration: (1) the so-called orderly exchange of ministers from one denomination to the other (now almost completed if Synod 2006 ratifies the changes in our Church Order Article 8), (2) a unified approach to dealing with the Belhar Confession as requested by The Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (on the agenda of the March 6, 2006, meeting), and (3) a concerted effort to find new ways to cooperate in ministry and among our congregations and classes (ongoing).

Our discussions with representatives of the RCA are guided by the following agreed upon items (as reported to Synod 2003):

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.

(Agenda for Synod 2003, pp. 236-37)

The RCA has made great strides toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the Belhar Confession. The CRC participants in the dialogue group encouraged the RCA to produce their study materials in a form that would allow for its use as a discussion guide in the CRC context. (Cf. the IRC's recommendation about the Belhar Confession below.)

The contact between the administration of the CRC and the RCA is a regular occurrence. Some of that contact is occasioned by the CRC/RCA partnership that exists in Faith Alive Resources, other forms of contact occur regularly because both denominations are represented in several joint projects, and there is frequent consultation between the general secretary of the RCA and the executive director of the CRC. It is fair to say that the CRC/RCA relationship is functionally closer today than it has been at any time in our collective memory.

Synod 2006 will need to ratify the change in Church Order Article 8 for the exchange of clergy agreement with the RCA to take effect. The IRC recommends the ratification.

C. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)

The Canadian subcommittee of IRC continues to be in dialogue with the PCC. This is a growing relationship and one that has promise for the future.

VI. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

A. Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist

The IRC received a report from the subcommittee that has done a tremendous amount of work dealing with the *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the*

Roman Catholic Eucharist. The report of the committee is attached (Appendix A). The IRC recommends that synod receive the committee's report and adopt the recommendations contained therein.

B. Catholic/Reformed Dialogue

Synod 2003 approved a recommendation authorizing the IRC to participate in an ongoing dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and four Reformed denominations in the United States. The topic of this dialogue is the sacramental understanding of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) and baptism.

The first meeting of the dialogue partners was held in Louisville, Kentucky, in September 2003. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and the Most Reverend Patrick Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan, were selected as cochairs of the multiyear discussion. The CRC participants are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. George Vandervelde, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

A second meeting was held in Washington, D.C., in April 2004. In October 2004, the dialogue conversation was continued at the Prince Conference Center on Calvin College's campus with the CRC as host. The next round is scheduled for April 2006.

VII. The revision of the Ecumenical Charter

Synod 2005 authorized the IRC to propose a revision of the Ecumenical Charter that guides the CRC in its relationships with other churches and ecumenical organizations. The current Ecumenical Charter is found in Appendix B for your information. The proposed revised charter is found in Appendix C. As an introduction to the revised charter, the IRC offers the following rationale for proposing the changes in the charter.

The ecumenical landscape is changing. Actually, it has been changing for some time. The modern ecumenical movement began in the 1940s and was expressed in the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its national branches named National Council of Churches (NCC). That development was followed by the formation of other ecumenical organizations such as the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and, more recently, Christian Churches Together (CCT). However, the ecumenical movement is undergoing major revision. An interest in existing ecumenical organizations, and confidence in their ability to bridge the gap that exists among Christian churches from around the world, has waned. Ecumenical budgets are under severe stress as denominations reduce their support for, and willingness to commit to, such formations.

When viewed from a binational perspective, it appears that the days of mergers of likeminded denominations, at least for now, are behind us. We are presently living in a period marked by covenants, agreements, and partnerships—all of which presuppose the existence of entities that are independent, equal, and open to a relationship.

There are other substantial changes in the way churches relate today. There was a time when ecumenical relations were initiated and maintained primarily with those who shared the same faith, viewpoints, confessions, and theological heritage. In the Christian Reformed Church, that meant that our

church-to-church relations were initiated and developed with churches that were the most like the CRC in significant respects. Initially, the ecumenical contacts for the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared a viewpoint that ecumenical partners assume a corporate responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could call to account the other partner for deviations or practices that the one found to be objectionable.

The CRC has learned that such forms of ecumenical relationships come with risks. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similarity of viewpoint exposes the CRC to the risk of being perceived as being theologically arrogant. That risk is real because the demand for a similarity of viewpoint sets up a dynamic of monitoring and control instead of the development of healthy relationships with ecumenical partners. The CRC itself has been the victim of such monitoring and controlling behavior when the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) expelled the CRC from its membership because NAPARC judged that the CRC had moved outside of the pale of theological and biblical integrity.

The changed landscape of ecumenical relationships has also caused the CRC to alter its ecumenical practices, though not yet its Ecumenical Charter. We are less insistent than we once were that our partners understand Christian, or even Reformed, truth in the same way as the CRC. This change in attitude allowed the CRC to become a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). Yet, some of the present theological trends in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) concern some so much that a continuing relationship is thought to be problematic.

Part of the problem is that we are in a period of transition, and transitions can force us to live with certain contradictions. At the same time, as we become aware of such contradictions, we need to address and correct them. If we can live with theological diversity in NAE and WARC, then why not in a church-to-church relationship such as we have with the PCN? The question obviously is not that the CRC must endorse every position taken by an ecumenical partner. Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that we can learn from each other and discuss our differing perspectives, but our relationship is built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which that gospel calls the whole church. Fundamentally, if we believe that a particular denomination is part of the universal church of Christ, then we can be in an ecumenical relationship and consider such a church an ecumenical partner, especially in areas where we have shared values and a common mission. If the CRC affirms the legitimacy of this premise, then the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC should reflect our desire for such ecumenical relationships. This would mean that some ecumenical relationships are based on a general acceptance of Christian churches, while maintaining more intentional fellowship with churches in the Reformed family.

Differing configurations of ecumenical relationships can still be retained. There are churches with which the CRC has a particular affinity. Other

fellowships may be more distant and episodic. The Ecumenical Charter needs to provide room for both types of relationships and for some variation within each classification of relationships.

It is hereby proposed that the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC reflect the changed landscape of ecumenical relationships. In effect, the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) proposes that the CRC operate with two classifications of ecumenical relationships:

- Ecclesiastical: churches with whom the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- Dialogue: churches with whom the CRC is in dialogue.

The CRC does not relinquish any of its principles or convictions by simplifying the options for ecclesiastical fellowship and churches in dialogue. Rather, by broadening the ecumenical scope, there will be increased opportunity to bear testimony to the truth as the CRC understands it. Our testimony and voice can be “at the table” as Christians together seek to be faithful to the mission of God in the world.

VIII. The Belhar Confession

As previously mentioned about the IRC’s discussion with representatives of the RCA, one matter that needs further consideration is whether the CRC is open to adopting the Belhar Confession (Appendix D) as requested by the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. A second question to be answered is whether a unified approach with the RCA in studying the Belhar is advantageous to both our synods and denominations. The RCA has already developed a study manual for use in congregations that could be adapted for use in the CRC. The IRC recommends that:

The IRC be instructed to initiate a formal process of discussion and consideration of the Belhar Confession with a view toward making a recommendation to a future synod concerning its applicability to, and compatibility with, the confessional basis of the CRC.

Grounds:

1. In our ecumenical conversations with the Reformed Church in America, the CRC was asked to study the Belhar Confession simultaneously with the RCA.
2. It fills in a gap in our confessions; we do not have a strong confession on race relations.
3. The several Reformed Churches in South Africa have asked the member churches of REC and WARC to study this confession and respond to it.

IX. Nominations for membership

Two members of the IRC are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term. However, Rev. Carlos G. Tapanes is not available for a second term and, therefore needs to be replaced. Dr. David Rylaarsdam is eligible for a second term. Rev. Richard T. Vander Vaart has admirably served the IRC and denomination for two three-year terms. The nominations needed for filling the vacancies on IRC will be presented to synod in the IRC’s supplemental report.

The following name is submitted to Synod 2006 as a nominee for a second term for IRC membership:

U.S.

Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam (incumbent nominee), a member of Alger Park CRC, Grand Rapids, is associate 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, the Dutch American Historical Commission, the Historical Resources Committee of Calvin Seminary, and as an elder.

X. IRC Hospitality Committee

The IRC has appointed a hospitality committee for fraternal delegates and observers to Synod 2006. Rev. Pieter and Mrs. Gail Tuit, Rev. Tom and Mrs. Evelyn De Vries, and Rev. Bernie and Mrs. Lydia Dokter have agreed to serve. This committee assists synod in helping visitors from other denominations feel welcome among us.

XI. Representation at synod

Dr. Philip De Jonge (vice president) and Dr. Peter Borgdorff have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 2006.

XII. Recommendations

A. That Dr. Philip De Jonge (vice president) and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the IRC are being discussed.

B. That synod note with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the World Reformed Communion (WRC) as advanced by the WARC and REC cooperation committee.

C. That the CRC retain Q. and A. 80 as part of its text of the Heidelberg Catechism (Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. It preserves the integrity of the Heidelberg Catechism as a historical document in the form in which it has been held as a confession in the CRC.
2. It keeps intact the text of the catechism used as a form of unity by other denominations in the Reformed family of churches.
3. It can function as a warning against any teachings, attitudes, and practices related to the Eucharist that deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ or contribute to idolatrous worship.

D. That in future printings of the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 be placed in brackets (Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. Q. and A. 80 does not accurately represent either official Roman Catholic teaching about the Mass or contemporary liturgical practice that is in accordance with that teaching.

2. Synod 2004 declared that “Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession.”
3. This helps to identify Q. and A. 80 as a part of the HC to which members of the CRC are no longer required to subscribe.

E. That in future printings of the CRC’s text of the Heidelberg Catechism, the following note be placed above the bracketed text of Q. and A. 80 (Appendix A):

Note: Q. and A. 80 was altogether absent from the first German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (January 1563) but appeared in a shorter form in the second German edition (March 1563). The translation below is of the expanded text of the third German edition (ca. April 1563).

At the request of Synod 1998, the CRC Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. The study, which included discussions with Roman Catholic bishops and theologians from the United States and Canada, concluded that “when the Eucharist is celebrated as approved by the Roman Catholic Church, it does not deny” the one suffering and sacrifice of Christ nor “constitute idolatry” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304). Q. and A. 80 is printed here so that the full historical text of the catechism is available for the reader and because the text continues to call attention to the dangers of idolatry and of the denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ in any celebration of the Supper of the Lord. The text has been placed in brackets, however, to indicate that members of the CRC are not required to subscribe to it (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. XXX).

Grounds:

1. This note is in keeping with the decision of Synod 2004: “Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession.”
2. This note conveys both the reason for placing Q. and A. 80 in brackets and the reason for retaining (rather than deleting) the Q. and A. 80 text.
3. This note captures the key findings of the extensive and thorough study process.
4. This note corresponds to the gravity of the charges that Q. and A. 80 levels.
5. This note honors the conversations with Catholic representatives that confirm the reports’ findings.
6. This note exemplifies the clarity and forthrightness that are the pedagogical hallmarks of the Heidelberg Catechism itself.

F. That synod receive the following minor revisions of the report entitled “Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist, Part II (2004)” (Appendix A):

1. The addition of hyphens to the page reference 418-19 (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 300, line 10), the date 1545-63 (*ibid.*, p. 302, line 9), and the date 1962-65 (*ibid.*, p. 303, line 24).

2. The replacement of the clause “that are idolatrous and that obscure the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304, paragraph lines 6-7) with the clause “that, in effect, either deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ or contribute to idolatrous worship.”

Ground: This brings the wording of this paragraph into line with what has been said in the previous two paragraphs. It is the denial, not the obscuring, of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that Q. and A. 80 continues to warn against. The report has already stated (first four lines on p. 304) that the Eucharist, even when celebrated in accordance with Roman Catholic teaching, may in significant ways *obscure* the reality of that one sacrifice.

G. That this report be included as “Part III (2006)” of the document *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist* and that the office of the executive director of the CRCNA be instructed to print all three parts of the document in a separate booklet for public distribution, taking into account the revisions in Recommendation F above (Appendix A).

H. That synod instruct the office of the executive director of the CRCNA to send the complete report and the synodical decisions to the Canadian and United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops, thanking them for engaging in dialogue with us and indicating a desire to continue dialogue on these matters, particularly by means of participation in the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States, which is currently addressing baptism and Eucharist, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Appendix A).

I. That synod instruct the office of the executive director of the CRCNA to send the complete report and the synodical decisions to appropriate ecumenical bodies, stating the need for further dialogue on matters raised by HC Q. and A. 80, dialogue both among the Reformed churches and with the Roman Catholic Church (Appendix A).

J. That synod adopt the revised Ecumenical Charter (Appendix C).

K. That synod decide to restore the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) to the status of a church in full ecclesiastical fellowship as detailed in section IV of this report.

L. That synod ratify the changes approved by Synod 2005 in Article 8 of the Church Order.

M. That synod authorize the IRC to initiate a formal process of consideration of the Belhar Confession (Appendix D).

N. That synod, by way of the printed ballot, elect members for the IRC from the slate of nominees presented above and in the supplemental report.

Interchurch Relations Committee
Peter Borgdorff, executive director

Appendix A Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist Part III (2006)

I. Background and mandate

This report is part 3 in a series of reports to synod of the Christian Reformed Church on Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist. In response to two overtures, Synod 1998 directed the Interchurch Relations Committee (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). After commissioning a subcommittee to engage in that dialogue, the IRC submitted its first report (part 1) on this matter to Synod 2002. That synod received the report and, among other things, submitted it to both the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, asking whether it “gives an accurate presentation of official Roman Catholic teaching regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist” (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 488). Responses were received from the Bishops’ Conferences in both Canada and the United States. The Bishops’ Conferences also submitted the report to officials in Rome, who responded that “the Catholic doctrine concerning the Eucharist is stated clearly and accurately in this report” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 298). The comments received from the Roman Catholic respondents led to slight revisions in the first report.

In the second report (part 2), submitted to Synod 2004, the IRC also provided advice regarding “any further action that may be needed regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism” (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 489). Synod 2004 responded to that report by making two declarations:

2. That synod declare there are significant differences between the Roman Catholic understanding of the Mass and the Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper.
3. That synod declare Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.
(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629)

Before taking further action, Synod 2004 also decided to ask for advice from various groups:

4. That synod submit the IRC reports (see *Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 277-306) and 2004 synodical decisions concerning Q. and A. 80 to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) for review at its next assembly in July 2005 and to those churches in ecclesiastical or corresponding fellowship with the CRC.
5. That synod ask each church council and each classis to review the reports and decisions relative to Q. and A. 80 and to submit their responses to the general secretary of the CRCNA by July 1, 2005, so that they can be considered by the IRC along with responses from other denominations and the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629)

Synod 2004 also gave two instructions to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC): “to evaluate the responses and propose recommendations concerning Q. and A. 80 to Synod 2006;” and “to send a progress report concerning these

matters to the Canadian and United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops, thanking them for their participation in dialogue with us, and also to appropriate ecumenical bodies" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629).

Soon after Synod 2004, the general secretary of the CRC fulfilled part of this mandate. He sent the reports and decisions to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and to churches in ecclesiastical or corresponding fellowship with the CRC. He also sent a letter and questionnaire (included as Appendices A-1 and A-2) to each church council and classis of the CRC, asking them to review the reports and decisions and to submit responses to him by July 1, 2005. In addition, he corresponded with the Canadian and United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops and with the Reformed Ecumenical Council. After the general secretary went on medical leave early in 2005, the executive director of ministries finished collecting responses from church councils, classes, and individuals. The IRC gave the task of evaluating the responses and proposing recommendations to the following subcommittee: Dr. Lyle Bierma (chairperson), Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, and Dr. George Vandervelde. This subcommittee, along with the late Dr. David Engelhard, had drafted the IRC reports of 2002 and 2004.

II. Summary of responses

Responses to the reports of 2002 and 2004 and the decisions of 2004 have come from various sources. Since the 2002 report focused on clarifying the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) on the Mass, the IRC asked official representatives of the RCC to study the report and either affirm its accuracy or point out inaccuracies. As noted in the 2004 report, officials at various levels in the Roman Catholic Church, including the Canadian and the United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops as well as representatives of the Vatican agencies responsible for both doctrine and ecumenical relations, have affirmed the accuracy of the 2002 report's description of official Roman Catholic teaching on the Mass. In 2004, the report of 2002 was edited only slightly in order to clarify some matters pointed out by the official representatives of the RCC.

The 2004 report and synodical decisions focused on whether, in the light of the study in the 2002 report, any action or changes may be needed regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Because both the report and the synod saw the need for changes, the synod recognized the need to ask for advice both from churches and classes within the CRC and from ecumenical partners with whom the CRC is in close fellowship. In doing so, synod recognized that, as part of a large body of Christians who adhere to the Heidelberg Catechism, we should ask for advice before deciding to alter a confessional document or our adherence to any part of it. Thus, the synod submitted the reports and decisions to the REC for review at its assembly in July 2005, to churches in ecclesiastical or corresponding fellowship with the CRC, and to each church council and classis in the CRC.

We have received responses from the REC, from one church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC, and from several classes, councils, and individuals. These responses are the fruit of dedicated, thoughtful work on the part of many people. We are deeply grateful for these efforts on behalf of the church and for the helpful comments and suggestions that were submitted.

A. *Responses from ecumenical partners*

The Reformed Ecumenical Council considered the reports and synodical decisions of the CRC at its assembly in Utrecht in July 2005. The REC also received a translation of a footnote that was included in the 1980s in the Indonesian edition of the Heidelberg Catechism. Quoting a statement of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, the footnote describes the Roman Catholic Eucharist as a sacrament of thanksgiving for the death and resurrection of Christ. Although Christ's death cannot be repeated, the Eucharist commemorates his self-giving on the cross and expresses belief in Christ's presence today "in a visible way in the midst of His people in order to save us." The quotation from the Bishops' Conference concludes that:

the Eucharist does not form a denial of the unique suffering and sacrifice of Christ, and moreover is not an idolatry. The Eucharist is a real and visible expression of faith in God who is present and who saves real and visible people.
(Minutes of the REC Assembly 2005, pp. 24-25)

The inclusion of this footnote in that edition is significant. It indicates that Indonesian Reformed Christians have had difficulties with both the description and the evaluation of the Roman Catholic Mass in Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

In response to the reports and decisions of the CRC, the REC adopted the following recommendations:

1. That the REC receive with appreciation the findings clarifying official Roman Catholic teaching of the Eucharist as presented in the CRC report "Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist," part I, section I-IV.A (*Agenda*, pages 382-408) and part II, section I-III.A (*Agenda*, pages 410-418).
2. That the REC send the above mentioned findings to its member Churches for consideration and appropriate action, and invite its member Churches to send reports on the results to the REC.
3. That the REC share the received reports with the member [C]hurches.
4. That the Executive Committee inform the next REC Assembly about the results of the discussions in the member Churches.
5. That the REC requests the WARC [World Alliance of Reformed Churches]:
 - a) to bring REC's discussion on H.C. 80 to the attention of the member churches of the WARC, especially those that have Heidelberg Catechism as a confessional basis;
 - b) to include the [R]eformed understanding of the Lord's Supper and the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist in the dialogue between the WARC and the Roman Catholic Church with regard to official teaching and ecclesiastical statements from both sides in the past and at present.

(Minutes of the REC Assembly 2005, pp. 23, 25)

These decisions by the REC Assembly indicate both appreciation for the work the CRC has done on this matter and determination to place Q. and A. 80 on the agenda of not only member churches of the REC but also WARC and the dialogue between WARC and the RCC. In these decisions, the REC does not, however, endorse either the reports' presentation of Roman Catholic teaching or the synod's declaration that:

Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629)

Any such endorsement would need to await further study by REC member churches and perhaps by the WARC.

In addition to the response from the REC, the CRC has received a response from Dr. J. J. Gerber, the general secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa, a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC. The letter, dated June 8, 2005, states a resolution taken by the executive of that church that “conveys its appreciation to the CRCNA for the work done on the relationship between the Reformed interpretation of the Lord’s supper and that of the Roman Catholic Eucharist” and expresses “its preliminary agreement with” the following declarations of Synod 2004:

2. That synod declare there are significant differences between the Roman Catholic understanding of the Mass and the Reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper.
3. That synod declare Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

The resolution of the Executive of the DRC continues as follows:

3. Before supplying our final response we would prefer to have the opportunity to discuss this issue with the other members of the DRC family of churches, with the Interdenominational Council (constituting churches: Reformed Churches in South Africa, Dutch Reformed Church, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk) as well as with the South African Bishops Conference of the Roman Catholic Church.
4. In the light of point 3 above we would suggest that an initial discussion on the matter take place at REC 2005 but that a decision be postponed until REC 2009.

The response of the DRC in South Africa goes beyond that of the REC in expressing “preliminary agreement” with the central decisions of Synod 2004. The DRC withholds a final response until it can discuss the matter with other Reformed churches in South Africa as well as with the South African Bishops Conference of the RCC.

The IRC is grateful for these responses from our Reformed ecumenical partners. The responses indicate gratitude for our work, acknowledgment that this matter is important, commitment to join the CRC in discussions within the Reformed family of churches as well as with the Roman Catholic Church, and, at least in the case of the DRC in South Africa, preliminary agreement with the main synodical decisions of 2004.

B. Responses from classes, church councils, and individuals

The IRC received more than two hundred thirty responses from classes, church councils, and individuals to the questionnaire on Q. and A. 80 sent out by the general secretary. Most of the responses came from church councils, with a number from individuals and a small number from classes. Many of the councils that responded used a subcommittee to review the reports and decisions of Synod 2004. Not many respondents reported using congregational discussions, adult education programs, or worship service series. No respondents reported using an ecumenical CRC-Roman Catholic discussion group.

In response to the question, “How has your church previously dealt with the meaning of Q. and A. 80?” just under one-quarter of respondents said, “We have defended it as it is.” Nearly one-third said, “We have explained it historically, but not necessarily defended it for today.” Just over one-quarter

reported having “ignored Q. and A. 80 when preaching and teaching the Catechism,” and the rest (nearly 20%) reported having used other methods.

Taking responses from classes, councils, and individuals together, respondents gave the following answers to the question, “Inasmuch as synod has concluded that ‘Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching . . .,’ what more do you think should be done to the text of the Heidelberg Catechism?”:

- 60 - Print Q. and A. 80 as it is currently, but with an explanatory footnote.
- 48 - Print Q. and A. 80 in a different font/script with an explanatory footnote.
- 40 - Remove Q. and A. 80 from the text of the Catechism, but with an explanatory footnote.
- 29 - Remove Q. and A. 80 completely.
- 59 - Other.

These numbers indicate a diversity of opinion within the CRC about what to do with Q. and A. 80. Approximately half of the respondents want to either put Q. and A. 80 into a different font and include an explanatory footnote, which the 2004 report had recommended, or remove Q. and A. 80 from the Catechism. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents want to print Q. and A. 80 as it is currently, thereby keeping it as part of the Catechism, but with an explanatory footnote. Another one-quarter had other suggestions for dealing with Q. and A. 80; these suggestions varied considerably, but often included deleting or revising either just the conclusion of Q. and A. 80 (“Thus the Mass is basically nothing but. . . .”) or the description of the Mass (“But the Mass teaches. . . .”) as well as the conclusion.

Those who wanted to keep Q. and A. 80 as it is offered comments such as this: Q. and A. 80 accurately described Roman Catholic teaching and practice not only in the sixteenth century, but also today; it offers an appropriate response to the sacrifice of the Mass and the veneration of the consecrated bread and wine; it was and remains a fitting response to the anathemas of the Council of Trent. Some noted that former Roman Catholics in their congregations agreed with Q. and A. 80. Some also advocated keeping Q. and A. 80 as it is on the grounds that it is a historical document that we do not have the right to change; among this group some indicated willingness to say that we disagree with Q. and A. 80 as long as we do not remove it from the Catechism.

Those who suggested revisions offered a variety of proposals, including the following:

- Rephrase the question, retain the positive teaching, and rewrite the second half of the answer.
- Soften or tone down the conclusion: “Thus the Mass is basically nothing but. . . .”
- Include an accurate and lovingly stated description of differences between the Lord’s Supper and current Roman Catholic teaching and practice regarding the Mass.
- Include a statement of what the Roman Catholic Church actually does teach.
- Restate the question and answer to avoid mentioning the Mass.

Among respondents who wanted to put Q. and A. 80 into a smaller font or remove it completely from the catechism, comments ranged as follows:

- We should confess what we believe and let the Roman Catholics say what they believe.
- We have bigger challenges from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, humanism, and consumerism than from Roman Catholicism.
- Q. and A. 80 is a stumbling-block to former Roman Catholics who consider joining or have joined their congregations.
- Q. and A. 80 gives an inaccurate description of the Mass that bears false witness against fellow Christians.

These responses, although widely varying, have provided the IRC with important, thoughtful observations and suggestions. The responses also indicate the high regard that members of the CRC have for the Heidelberg Catechism and for speaking the truth about and to those with whom we disagree. In addition, the responses have helped the IRC to arrive at the options and recommendations offered below.

III. Options

Having surveyed the variety of responses from the CRC's ecumenical partners and from CRC classes, church councils, and individuals, we now face the question of what action to take regarding Q. and A. 80. The appropriate place to begin is with the declaration of Synod 2004 that:

Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 629)

No explicit grounds were provided for this declaration, but certainly implied in the phrase "given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching . . ." was the conclusion reached in our study of the Mass that "the Mass, when celebrated in accordance with official Roman Catholic teaching, neither denies the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ nor constitutes idolatry" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304). The vast majority of the responses we received supported this declaration and reasoning, and among those that did not, we did not find sufficient reason to recommend a reconsideration of synod's decision.

If members of the CRC need no longer subscribe to Q. and A. 80 in its current form, what then should be done with this part of the text of the Heidelberg Catechism? There are a number of options to consider, some of which appeared on a checklist in the questionnaire sent out to CRC churches and classes. Each of the options on the checklist received at least some support, and, as we have seen, some respondents also had other suggestions. In what follows, we briefly evaluate five of these options before proceeding to our own set of recommendations.

First, we could simply delete Q. and A. 80 from the text of the HC or move it from the text into a footnote with an accompanying explanation. The latter is what the CRC did in 1985 with the "detesting Anabaptists" sentence in Belgic Confession Article 36, although that footnote contained no explanation of *why* such action was taken. This option is the clearest way to indicate that subscription to Q. and A. 80 is no longer required of members of the CRC. The draw-

back is that it destroys the integrity of the original document and ends up leaving the CRC with a slightly different text of the HC than other denominations that also subscribe to it.

Second, we could delete just the inaccurate parts of the text and leave the rest intact. Some have suggested, for example, that we remove the last two sections of the answer (A², B², A³, B³), keep the positive statement of the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper in the first paragraph (A¹, B¹), and then rephrase the question. That would certainly restore Q. and A. 80 to a form that could be held as part of our confession, but, once again, it would involve tampering with the text of a historical document. Furthermore, such a revised question and answer would not really add anything new to the explanation of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper already found in previous questions and answers.

Third, we could change all or part of the wording of Q. and A. 80. That, too, could restore the answer to confessional status but, again, only by destroying the integrity of the sixteenth-century text. Moreover, all of the substitute wordings proposed in the responses we received would either make the revised answer longer and more complex or raise new questions about its meaning. There is also the question of whether softening the form of a sharply polemical question and answer is really preferable to eliminating the question and answer altogether.

Fourth, we could leave the text of Q. and A. 80 as it is and add a footnote explaining why its descriptions and condemnations of the Mass are no longer binding. This has the advantage of preserving the integrity of the catechism as a historical document and as a form of unity shared with other Reformed denominations. The problem with this option, however, is that the binding and nonbinding parts of the HC are then left side by side without clear differentiation. Anyone failing to read the fine print in the footnote might be left with the impression that Q. and A. 80 is as much a part of our living confession as is any other part of the catechism.

Finally, we could put Q. and A. 80 in a different font or script than the rest of the text and add an explanatory footnote. This has the advantage both of preserving the textual integrity of the catechism and immediately alerting the reader to the fact that there is something different about this part of the text. However, the nonbinding status of the question and answer is still not clear apart from the explanation in the footnote.

Each of the options above, therefore, has something in its favor, but none of them is fully satisfactory. Hence, we are recommending yet another course of action that seeks at the same time to capture the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the options we have already examined. We recommend leaving the text of Q. and A. 80 in the Heidelberg Catechism where and as it is but with two additions: (1) brackets placed around the entire question and answer, and (2) an explanatory note placed right before the question and answer rather than at the bottom of the page. The text, therefore, would have the following format:

Note: Question and Answer 80 was altogether absent from the first German edition. . . .

[80 Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us. . . .

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.]

This approach has several advantages. By leaving Q. and A. 80 where and as it is, we preserve the historical integrity of the document and keep intact the text of the HC used throughout the Reformed family of denominations. Furthermore, even though it is now in brackets and no longer confessionally binding, Q. and A. 80 can still function as a warning against any teachings, attitudes, and practices related to the Eucharist that do deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ or do contribute to idolatrous worship. At the same time, however, the placement of Q. and A. 80 in brackets visually identifies it as "bracketed off" or set apart from the rest of the catechism. A note at the top rather than the bottom of the page catches the reader's eye and explains the nonbinding status of this part of the HC even before he or she encounters the text of Q. and A. 80 itself. In this way, most of the concerns of the other options above are met. We signal the nonconfessional status of Q. and A. 80 without removing it from the HC itself.

IV. Recommendations

A. That the CRC retain Q. and A. 80 as part of its text of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Grounds:

1. It preserves the integrity of the Heidelberg Catechism as a historical document in the form in which it has been held as a confession in the CRC.
2. It keeps intact the text of the catechism used as a form of unity by other denominations in the Reformed family of churches.
3. It can function as a warning against any teachings, attitudes, and practices related to the Eucharist that deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ or contribute to idolatrous worship.

B. That in future printings of the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 be placed in brackets.

Grounds:

1. Q. and A. 80 does not accurately represent either official Roman Catholic teaching about the Mass or contemporary liturgical practice that is in accordance with that teaching.
2. Synod 2004 declared that "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession."
3. This helps to identify Q. and A. 80 as a part of the HC to which members of the CRC are no longer required to subscribe.

C. That in future printings of the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism, the following note be placed *above* the bracketed text of Q. and A. 80:

Note: Q. and A. 80 was altogether absent from the first German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (January 1563) but appeared in a shorter form in the second German edition (March 1563). The translation below is of the expanded text of the third German edition (ca. April 1563).

At the request of Synod 1998, the CRC Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. The study, which included discussions with Roman Catholic bishops and theologians from the United States and Canada, concluded that "when the Eucharist is celebrated as approved by the Roman Catholic Church, it does not deny" the one suffering and sacrifice of Christ nor "constitute idolatry" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304). Q. and A. 80 is printed here so that the full historical text of the catechism is available for the reader and because the text continues to call attention to the dangers of idolatry and of the denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ in any celebration of the Supper of the Lord. The text has been placed in brackets, however, to indicate that members of the CRC are not required to subscribe to it (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. XXX).

Grounds:

1. This note is in keeping with the decision of Synod 2004: "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession."
2. This note conveys both the reason for placing Q. and A. 80 in brackets and the reason for retaining (rather than deleting) the Q. and A. 80 text.
3. This note captures the key findings of the extensive and thorough study process.
4. This note corresponds to the gravity of the charges that Q. and A. 80 levels.
5. This note honors the conversations with Catholic representatives that confirm the reports' findings.
6. This note exemplifies the clarity and forthrightness that are the pedagogical hallmarks of the Heidelberg Catechism itself.

D. That synod receive the following minor revisions of the report entitled "Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist, Part II (2004)":

1. The addition of hyphens to the page reference 418-19 (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 300, line 10), the date 1545-63 (*ibid.*, p. 302, line 9), and the date 1962-65 (*ibid.*, p. 303, line 24).
2. The replacement of the clause "that are idolatrous and that obscure the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304, paragraph lines 6-7) with the clause "that, in effect, either deny the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ or contribute to idolatrous worship."

Ground: This brings the wording of this paragraph into line with what has been said in the previous two paragraphs. It is the denial, not the obscuring, of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ that Q. and A. 80 continues to warn against. The report has already stated (first four lines on p. 304) that the Eucharist, even when celebrated in accordance with Roman Catholic teaching, may in significant ways *obscure* the reality of that one sacrifice.

E. That this report be included as “Part III (2006)” of the document *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist* and that the office of the executive director of the CRCNA be instructed to print all three parts of the document in a separate booklet for public distribution, taking into account the revisions in Recommendation D above.

F. That synod instruct the office of the executive director of the CRCNA to send the complete report and the synodical decisions to the Canadian and United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops, thanking them for engaging in dialogue with us and indicating a desire to continue dialogue on these matters, particularly by means of participation in the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the United States, which is currently addressing baptism and Eucharist, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

G. That synod instruct the office of the executive director of the CRCNA to send the complete report and the synodical decisions to appropriate ecumenical bodies, stating the need for further dialogue on matters raised by HC Q. and A. 80, dialogue both among the Reformed churches and with the Roman Catholic Church.

Q. and A. 80 Subcommittee
Lyle Bierma, chairperson
Henry De Moor
Ronald Feenstra
George Vandervelde

Appendix A-1 Letter to Church Councils re Q. and A. 80 Questionnaire

October 11, 2004

Dear Clerk of Council:

I have been requested to write all CRC councils and to ask them to review the studies and the decisions that have been made regarding Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Roman Catholic Mass. Let me explain.

About six years ago the synod received an overture requesting that Question and Answer 80 be removed from the Catechism. The request said that the reference to the Roman Catholic Mass as "a condemnable idolatry" was not accurate and was an inappropriate way to speak about other Christians. Synod was not prepared to alter the Catechism, but it did ask the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to investigate. This began the six year journey.

In 2002, the IRC presented its first study to synod. That report made clear that in two essential ways the Catechism inaccurately portrayed the Roman Catholic Mass. Synod wanted to make sure that the IRC study was accurate and so it sent the study to the Conference of Bishops in the U.S.A. and Canada for confirmation. Those bishops, as well as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Vatican, said that the CRC report accurately stated the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist/Mass.

On the basis of this positive response, the Interchurch Relations Committee began to work on the second phase of its mandate from synod, namely "to advise a further synod about any further action that may be needed regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism." The report to Synod 2004 (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 297-306) did just that. The enclosed booklet contains both the studies and synod's decisions.

Synod, however, was not ready to do everything that the IRC report suggested. It did declare, however, that "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629). What is the next step regarding Question and Answer 80 in our Catechism? That is where you come in.

Synod 2004 asked that **"each church council and classis review the reports and decisions relative to Q. and A. 80 and submit their responses to the general secretary of the CRCNA by July 1, 2005, so that they can be considered by the IRC along with responses from other denominations and the Reformed Ecumenical Council"** (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 629).

There are many different ways you can use to accomplish this request from synod. You could:

- Appoint a subcommittee of council to study the report and prepare a response.
- Ask someone to organize three to five evening discussion sessions for the congregation.
- Make the discussion of the document a part of your adult education program.
- Consider a series of sermons on the Lord's Supper at your evening worship services at which these studies are discussed.
- Consider forming a joint CRC/Roman Catholic discussion group for which your pastor and a local Roman Catholic priest could provide leadership.

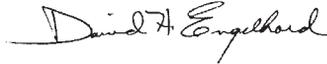
And I am sure that you can think of even other ways that are appropriate for your community. Whatever means you use, please be sure to ask someone to be responsible for preparing the response that your council will forward to synod through my office.

The specific recommendations submitted by the IRC to Synod 2004 re the formatting of Q. and A. 80 can be found on pages 32-34 of the booklet. Synod was not ready to adopt them nor did it say explicitly that the churches should only consider those possibilities. It is, however, a helpful place to begin your thinking about future actions that need to be taken.

I have also enclosed a questionnaire response form to make your task easier. Once your church's study has been completed, your council can report its response on the questionnaire.

Thank you for taking this request and processing it through your council. The Heidelberg Catechism is a vital document in the life of our churches and it is important that we confess our faith accurately and clearly. May God bless this process of discussion in our churches for His glory.

Yours in Christ's Service,



David H. Engelhard
General Secretary

Enc: Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist
Questionnaire—Question and Answer 80

Appendix A-2
Church Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE
Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 80
October 2004

Name of church: _____

Name of person completing response: _____

1. What means did you use to review this report?

- Council subcommittee.
- Congregational discussions.
- Adult education program.
- Ecumenical (CRC/Roman Catholic) discussion group.
- Worship service series.
- Other? Please explain.

2. How has your church previously dealt with meaning of Q. and A. 80?

- We have defended it as it is.
- We have explained it historically but not necessarily defended it for today.
- We have ignored Q. and A. 80 when preaching and teaching the catechism.
- Other? Please explain.

3. Inasmuch as synod has concluded that "Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching . . .," what more do you think should be done to the text of the Heidelberg Catechism?

- Print Question and Answer 80 as it is currently, but with an explanatory footnote.
- Print Question and Answer 80 in a different font/script with an explanatory footnote.
- Remove Question and Answer 80 from the text of the Catechism, but with an explanatory footnote.
- Remove Question and Answer 80 completely.
- Other? Please explain.

4. What additional suggestions were raised in your congregation about this issue that would be helpful for synod to know about?

Please return by July 1, 2005, to:
Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560
Fax: 616-224-5895

Appendix B

Current Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

I. Biblical principles on the unity of the church

A. *Made one in Christ*

From a fallen and broken humanity God gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then acted in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the foundation of the church. Unity is therefore central to the being and mission of the church. As there can be but one Lord, there can be but one church; one Head, one body; one Husband, one bride; one Shepherd, one flock (Eph. 4:5, 15; 5:25-33; John 10:16). The church is as indivisible as Christ is indivisible (I Cor. 1:13; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

Focusing on the continuation of his ministry and mission in the world, Christ prays for the unity of the church, a unity as deep and wondrous as that between him and the Father: “that all of them may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). At stake in the unity of the church is the witness in and for the world to the unity of God, the one Father of us all (Eph. 4:6).

B. *Our unity with the church of all generations and throughout the world*

The Bible speaks of the church as extending through time and place. The description “people of God” emphasizes the historical continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages, from God's choosing Israel as his special people to Jesus' calling the disciples and, by the power of his Spirit, creating the new people of God from all nations, a great multitude which no one can count (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; see also Phil. 2:10-11). This saintly multitude from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation portrays the one church throughout the world (see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

C. *Unity as gift and goal*

1. The unity of the church is a precious gift. The biblical challenge is to treasure, preserve, deepen, and demonstrate this given unity. The unity of Christ-followers is flesh-and-blood testimony to God's reconciling work in Christ.
2. For the church in New Testament times, the summons to unity had a different ring than it has today. In the New Testament context it was a call to be more fully what we are—one in Christ. But once the divisions, which Paul could not so much as contemplate (“Is Christ divided?”), fractured the body, the call to unity has taken on new and painful urgency. In the midst of today's disunity, the call to be one requires that we pray and work to overcome the scandal of division. Divisions among Christians and churches are a stumbling block to our witness to the unity of the being of God. Division contradicts the good news of reconciliation in Christ. The call to unity is a summons to manifest the unity of God himself and the reconciling power of God's love in Christ.

3. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the church at all its organizational levels. This task is especially important at the level of the local congregation, for it is there that the witnessing power of visible unity—and the counter—witness of division—is most vivid. Local congregations should seek to worship, witness, and work with neighboring churches which bear the marks of the true church (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29) and unequivocally witness to Jesus Christ.

D. Diversity in unity

Unity does not mean uniformity. Indeed, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made transparent through the church (Eph. 3: 10). It is displayed not in the obliteration but in the reconciliation of diversity. The uniqueness of tribes, tongues, customs, and culture is reflected in a rich diversity of worship, confessional forms and formulations, and church structure. It is this unity in diversity and diversity in unity that we attest when we confess “the holy catholic church” (Apostles’ Creed; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

1. Diversity in worship

Though all Christians confess one God, administer one baptism, and celebrate one Lord’s Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.

2. Diversity in confessional forms and formulations

Though all Christians confess one God, one faith, and one hope, they express this confession in different ways, in accordance with different cultural contexts, traditions, and modes of theological reflection.

3. Diversity in forms of governance

Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in different ways, depending on their understanding and application of New Testament models of ministry and in accordance with different cultural forms of social interaction and decision-making processes.

E. Unity and truth

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ. To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and to work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints.” Yet even in the company of all God’s children throughout the ages and throughout the world, we stand in wonder of the truth that is beyond our grasp (Eph. 3:17-19).

Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation, and experience. Moreover, it is distorted by sin. We know only in part and see but a poor reflection (I Cor.13:12). Divisions in the body of Christ also impoverish our understanding of the truth. We are called, therefore, to engage in a dialogue that involves mutual learning and correction in order that, in the words of the apostle, “together with all the saints, [we] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Eph. 3:18). As we come to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, we walk more consistently, more humbly, and more joyfully in its light.

In brief, the biblical witness leads us to draw two complementary conclusions:

Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere, striving for the visible oneness of the church.

Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

II. Guidelines for ecumenical work

A. The unity we seek

1. In striving for the unity of the church, we celebrate the extent to which unity is already visible in
 - a. The one, holy, written Word of God, given for us and our salvation
 - b. One baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - c. Common creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed
 - d. Common hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices
 - e. United witness to the name of Christ in evangelism
 - f. Common witness in the name of Christ in public testimony and action on ethical-social issues (such as gambling, abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, poverty)
 - g. Common confessions of faith
2. In striving for unity, we seek to make the spiritual and visible communion we already have in Christ more fully visible.
3. Because the unity of the church is a unity in Christ, it demands an ever deeper conversion to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33). As we draw closer to Christ, we draw closer to each other. Such conversion entails repentance, the reconciliation of churches now separated, and the healing of wounds and memories of the past. Questions of institutional relations and negotiations aiming at organizational merger are important only as they serve this deeper unity.

B. The path we take

1. As we draw closer through conversion and renewal, the search for greater visible unity may be pursued along various avenues and take a variety of forms, such as
 - a. Mutual understanding
 - b. Cooperation in ministry
 - c. Common witness – mission and evangelism
 - d. Collaboration in ethical-social testimony
 - e. Fellowship
 - f. Joint worship
 - g. Pulpit fellowship
 - h. Joint celebration of the Lord's Supper
 - i. Regular joint prayer for unity
 - j. Organic union

2. The pursuit of visible unity shall be guided by historical-confessional considerations.
3. The pursuit of visible unity needs to be diverse and flexible, open to surprising manifestations of the working of the Spirit in various communions.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

A. General guidelines for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

1. The CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel and insofar as is commensurate with the gospel.
2. For the purpose of pursuing the CRC's ecumenical calling, the churches of Christ may be classified into a number of groups: Reformed churches, other Protestant denominations and independent churches (evangelical), the Roman Catholic Church, and Orthodox churches. The interchurch relations of the CRC with churches of these groups may vary in depth and intensity of fellowship, determined by the degree of our affinity with them. This is true not only on the denominational level but also on the congregational level.
3. The CRC may enter into bilateral or multilateral relationships with other churches or fellowships. A bilateral relationship is established with a particular denomination or church. A multilateral relationship is established with other denominations or churches through ecumenical organizations, fellowships, or associations.
4. The CRC's ecumenical responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally).
5. Ecumenical relationships on the synodical level are initiated, promoted, and maintained by a standing committee on interchurch relations, as specified in Church Order Article 49:
 - a. Synod shall appoint a committee to correspond with other Reformed churches so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship, and shall establish the rules which govern these relationships.
6. Ecumenical relationships at the local level can be expressed by joint involvement in areas such as worship, service projects, prayer, and address to social/ethical issues.

B. *Bilateral relationships*

1. The CRCNA, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, seeks rapprochement (cordial relations) with all churches of Christ, particularly those churches which are Reformed as to confession, polity, and liturgy, as determined not only by their formal standards but also by their actual practice.
 - a. The unity of those churches which are Reformed in confession and practice should come to organizational expression.
 - b. The interim aims of rapprochement include resolution of doctrinal differences where necessary, joint action in Christian endeavors where possible, and a common Reformed witness to the world.
 - c. The shape of this organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
2. As the CRC actively seeks to promote and maintain bilateral relationships with churches which confess and maintain the Reformed faith, it shall enter into the following types of ecclesial relationships:
 - a. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

The provisions, adopted by synod, that will govern this relationship are as follows:

 - 1) This shall be a relationship with other Reformed churches and is designated as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
 - 2) The receiving of churches into ecclesiastical fellowship implies, and where possible and desirable, involves
 - a) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies
 - b) Occasional pulpit fellowship
 - c) Intercommunion (i.e., fellowship at the table of the Lord)
 - d) Joint action in areas of common responsibility
 - e) Communication on major issues of joint concern
 - f) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity¹
 - 3) Synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.²
 - b. Churches in corresponding fellowship

This category of ecumenical relationships provides for contact with other churches of Reformed persuasion with whom the CRCNA has no formal relationship. The basic requirements to establish the relationship of churches in corresponding fellowship must include

 - 1) The mutual recognition of our common basis in the Reformed faith as manifested in creedal standards
 - 2) A mutual concern for ecumenical ties³

¹*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57.

²Church Order Article 49-b.

³*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10.

This category would allow for a relationship with such churches and the possibility of moving toward ecclesiastical fellowship.

3. Churches in dialogue

The CRCNA through its Interchurch Relations Committee also will seek to maintain contact, correspondence, and conversation with a wide range of churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life and relationships and about their address to current issues, endeavoring to establish closer relationships or restore broken relationships where possible. This category of relationship will be called churches in dialogue. The dialogue may include exploration of areas for cooperation.

4. The CRCNA in pursuing its ecumenical calling shall also seek rapprochement with a wide variety of churches of Christ as circumstances and opportunities provide, fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice.

C. *Multilateral relationships*

1. The CRCNA seeks to pursue its ecumenical task

a. By participating in ecumenical organizations in which the CRCNA cooperates with other denominations of Reformed faith in accordance with Church Order Article 50

b. By participating in ecumenical organizations, fellowships, and associations that enable it to carry out its ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently

c. By developing relationships with other Christian organizations

2. The propriety of relations with such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice of this Ecumenical Charter as they bear on the nature of the organizations as articulated and demonstrated in their respective constitutions, bases, statements, activities, and practices.

3. The varying distinctives of ecumenical organizations may require that the CRC stipulate for itself diverse and restricted types of membership. The degree of the CRC's involvement and the level of intimacy of fellowship will be determined in keeping with the principles for ecumenical practice as spelled out in the Ecumenical Charter.

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Interchurch Relations Committee

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), in conformity with the provisions of this charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote interest in the worldwide church through the following relationships:

A. *Bilateral relationships*

1. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

- a. The IRC shall continue close relationships with the denominations which have been named by synod as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. The IRC shall remain abreast of current developments within those churches with whom it is in ecclesiastical fellowship to assure that such fellowship continues to be warranted.
- c. The IRC shall recommend to synod which churches are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.
- d. The IRC shall recommend which specific kinds of fellowship and cooperation shall apply to each church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

2. Churches in corresponding fellowship

The IRC shall initiate and/or pursue contact and closer relationships with churches other than those in ecclesiastical fellowship. The following elements will give substance to the CRC's relationship with churches in the category of churches in corresponding fellowship:

- a. Invitations will periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's highest assemblies, where delegates would be recognized by the assembly and given opportunity to meet with representatives of the IRC during the sessions of synod. In some instances the IRC could recommend to our synod that a visiting delegate be given the opportunity briefly to bring the greetings of the church the delegate represents.
- b. When ecumenical delegates are not exchanged, the IRC will be expected to communicate periodically with these churches and, when appropriate, to inform synod of such correspondence.
- c. Both the CRCNA and the churches in corresponding fellowship are to be alert to persons who may be available to represent them through personal contact. The IRC will collaborate with our denominational agencies, such as CRWM, CRWRC, The Back to God Hour, military chaplains, and educational institutions, to be alert to personnel that may be traveling in the areas where such churches are located and may be able to further the relationships through personal visits on behalf of the CRCNA.
- d. The IRC shall regularly send the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* (and any other relevant information) to each of these churches to keep them informed about our church and thereby to demonstrate our continuing interest in them. In turn the IRC shall encourage each church in corresponding fellowship to inform us by correspondence about itself and its activities.
- e. The IRC shall continue to explore specific ways in which we may be of service to these churches through our denominational agencies, for example, through opportunities for higher education of pastors and teachers in our educational institutions, availability of teaching and

training materials through CRC Publications, and services of our various boards and committees that could assist needy churches. Such services will require the cooperation of these agencies with the IRC. The IRC shall likewise be alert to services and help that these churches may be able to contribute to the CRCNA.⁴

3. Churches in dialogue

The IRC, in conformity with the provisions of its charter, the Church Order, and synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote an interest in the worldwide church through study and contact with other denominations as opportunity and prudence make possible. This may include communication with

- a. Churches that are involved in restructuring and the formation of relationships with other denominations
- b. Churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its Reformed theology, its polity, and its particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence
- c. Churches that have broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC or have withdrawn because of certain doctrinal, creedal, church order, or ethical decisions
- d. Churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification

B. *Multilateral relationships*

The IRC shall serve as the agency of contact with ecumenical organizations.

1. It shall serve as the agency of liaison of the CRCNA with those ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated. It is responsible
 - a. To study the activities of the ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated and present to synod reports on the work of these organizations and such recommendations as may be necessary.
 - b. To present to synod names of nominees as delegates to the Reformed Ecumenical Council.⁵
 - c. To designate those who are to serve as delegates or observers to other ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated and to their various committees.
2. It shall observe and study various ecumenical organizations with which the CRC is not affiliated, as circumstances warrant and the Ecumenical Charter envisions, and report the results of such observations and studies to synod. It shall appoint persons to attend such ecumenical organizations and their theological commissions as observers. These observers shall provide the IRC with reports on their observations and participation.

⁴*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10.

⁵Church Order Article 50-a.

C. *Annual report to synod*

The IRC shall annually present to synod in the printed *Agenda for Synod* a report of its activities, including a summary of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its mandate.

Appendix C

Proposed Revised Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Proposed changes are in *bold italics*)

I. Biblical principles on the unity of the church

A. *Made one in Christ*

From a fallen and broken humanity, God gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then acted in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the foundation of the church. Unity is therefore central to the being and mission of the church. As there can be but one Lord, there can be but one church; one Head, one body; one Husband, one bride; one Shepherd, one flock (Eph. 4:5, 15; 5:25-33; John 10:16). The church is as indivisible as Christ is indivisible (1 Cor. 1:13; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21).

Focusing on the continuation of his ministry and mission in the world, Christ prays for the unity of the church, a unity as deep and wondrous as that between him and the Father: “that all of them may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). At stake in the unity of the church is the witness in and for the world to the unity of God, the one Father of us all (Eph. 4:6).

B. *Our unity with the church of all generations and throughout the world*

The Bible speaks of the church as extending through time and place. The description “people of God” emphasizes the historical continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages, from God’s choosing Israel as his special people to Jesus’ calling the disciples and, by the power of his Spirit, creating the new people of God from all nations, a great multitude that no one can count (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; see also Phil. 2:10-11). This saintly multitude from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation portrays the one church throughout the world (see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

C. *Unity as gift and goal*

1. The unity of the church is a precious gift. The biblical challenge is to treasure, preserve, deepen, and demonstrate this given unity. The unity of Christ-followers is flesh-and-blood testimony to God’s reconciling work in Christ.
2. For the church in New Testament times, the summons to unity had a different ring than it has today. In the New Testament context, it was a call to be more fully what we are—one in Christ. However, once the divisions, which Paul could not so much as contemplate (“Is Christ divided?”), fractured the body, the call to unity has taken on new and painful urgency. In the midst of today’s disunity, the call to be one requires that we pray and work to overcome the scandal of division. Divisions among Christians and

churches are a stumbling block to our witness to the unity of the being of God. Division contradicts the good news of reconciliation in Christ. The call to unity is a summons to manifest the unity of God himself and the reconciling power of God's love in Christ.

3. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the church at all its organizational levels. This task is especially important at the level of the local congregation, for it is there that the witnessing power of visible unity—and the counter-witness of division—is most vivid. Local congregations should seek to worship, witness, and work with neighboring churches *that are part of the Christian community and unequivocally witness to Jesus Christ* (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

D. Diversity in unity

Unity does not mean uniformity. Indeed, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made transparent through the church (Eph. 3:10). It is displayed not in the obliteration but in the reconciliation of diversity. The uniqueness of tribes, tongues, customs, and culture is reflected in a rich diversity of worship, confessional forms and formulations, and church structure. It is this unity in diversity and diversity in unity that we attest when we confess “the holy catholic church” (Apostles’ Creed; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

1. Diversity in worship

Though all Christians confess one God, administer one baptism, and celebrate one Lord’s Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.

2. Diversity in confessional forms and formulations

Though all Christians confess one God, one faith, and one hope, they express this confession in different ways, in accordance with different cultural contexts, traditions, and modes of theological reflection.

3. Diversity in forms of governance

Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in different ways, depending on their understanding and application of New Testament models of ministry and in accordance with different cultural forms of social interaction and decision-making processes.

E. Unity and truth

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ.

To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and to work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints.” Yet, even in the company of all God’s children throughout the ages and throughout the world, we stand in wonder of the truth that is beyond our grasp (Eph. 3:17-19).

Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation, and experience. Moreover, it is distorted by sin. We know only in part and see but a poor reflection (1 Cor.13:12). Divisions in the body of Christ also impoverish our understanding of the truth. We are called, therefore, to engage in a dia-

logue that involves mutual learning and correction in order that, in the words of the apostle, “together with all the saints, [we] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Eph. 3:18). As we come to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, we walk more consistently, more humbly, and more joyfully in its light.

In brief, the biblical witness leads us to draw two complementary conclusions:

1. Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere, striving for the visible oneness of the church.
2. Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

II. Guidelines for ecumenical work

A. *The unity we seek*

1. In striving for the unity of the church, we celebrate the extent to which unity is already visible in
 - a. The one, holy, written Word of God, given for us and our salvation
 - b. One baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - c. Common ecumenical creeds: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed).
 - d. Common hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices
 - e. United witness to the name of Christ in evangelism
 - f. Common witness in the name of Christ in public testimony and action on ethical-social issues (such as gambling, abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, poverty)
 - g. Common confessions of faith, *especially with churches who share a Reformed heritage.*
2. In striving for unity, we seek to make the spiritual and visible communion we already have in Christ more fully visible.
3. Because the unity of the church is a unity in Christ, it demands an ever deeper conversion to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 33). As we draw closer to Christ, we draw closer to each other. Such conversion entails repentance, the reconciliation of churches now separated, and the healing of wounds and memories of the past. Questions of institutional relations and negotiations aiming at organizational merger are important only as they serve this deeper unity.

B. *The path we take*

1. As we draw closer through conversion and renewal, the search for greater visible unity may be pursued along various avenues and take a variety of forms, such as
 - a. Mutual understanding
 - b. Cooperation in ministry
 - c. Common witness – mission and evangelism
 - d. Collaboration in ethical-social testimony

- e. Fellowship
 - f. *Combined* worship
 - g. Pulpit *and table* fellowship
 - h. Regular *combined* prayer for unity
 - i. Organic union
2. The pursuit of visible unity shall be guided by *biblical principles on the unity of the church as articulated in (I) above and by both* historical and confessional considerations.
 3. The pursuit of visible unity needs to be diverse and flexible, open to surprising manifestations of the working of the Spirit in various communions.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church

A. General guidelines for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

1. The CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel.
2. For the purpose of pursuing the CRC's ecumenical calling, the churches of Christ may be classified into a number of groups: Reformed churches, other Protestant denominations and independent churches (evangelical), the Roman Catholic Church, and Orthodox churches. The interchurch relations of the CRC with churches of these groups may vary in depth and intensity of fellowship, determined by the degree of our affinity with them. This is true not only on the denominational level but also on the congregational level.
3. The CRC may enter into relationships that are *church to church* (bilateral) or into a relationship with *an ecumenical organization* (multilateral). A *church to church* (bilateral) relationship is established with a particular denomination or church. A *relationship with an ecumenical organization (multilateral) is established when the CRC joins with* other denominations or churches *for the purpose of fellowship and common witness*.
4. The CRC's ecumenical responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally).
5. Ecumenical relationships on the synodical level are initiated, promoted, and maintained by a standing committee on interchurch relations, as specified in Church Order Article 49:
 - a. *Synod directs the Board of Trustees to maintain an Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to correspond with other Christian churches (especially those that are part of the Reformed family) so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.*

- b. Synod shall decide, upon recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee, with which denominations the Christian Reformed Church shall seek to establish formal relationships, and approve the rules that govern such relationships.
6. Ecumenical relationships at the local level can be expressed by joint involvement in areas such as worship, service projects, prayer, and address to social/ethical issues.

B. Bilateral relationships

1. *The CRC, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, seeks ecumenical relationships with all churches of Christ, particularly those churches that are confessionally Reformed. With some such churches, synod may establish close relationships that are designated as “churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.” The purpose of such close relationships is to:*
 - a. *Encourage joint action in Christian endeavors, where possible, and a common Christian witness to the world.*
 - b. *Explore whether the unity we share with such churches may include various forms of organizational expression. The shape of such organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.*
 - c. *Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies*
 - d. *Engage in pulpit and table fellowship*
 - e. *Exercise mutual concern and encouragement with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity¹*
 - f. *Communicate on major issues of common concern*
 - g. *Remain abreast of current developments to assure that such fellowship continues to grow in vibrancy.*
2. *The CRC may also establish relationships with Christian churches that, though not Reformed, may nonetheless enrich the CRC’s ecclesiastical fellowship. This category of relationship is called “churches in dialogue.” The purpose of such relationships, while less intense than what pertains to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, is also to maintain contact, correspondence, and conversation. Churches in dialogue may include a wide range of Christian churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life, their relationships, and how such churches address current issues. It is the CRC’s intent to establish closer relationships or restore broken relationships where possible. In seeking such relationships, the CRC intends to be fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice. The dialogue may include exploration of areas for cooperation. Furthermore,*

¹Acts of Synod 1974, p. 57.

the following will give substance and meaning to the CRC's relationship with churches in dialogue:

- a. The CRC will dialogue with churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its Reformed theology, its polity, and its particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence.
- b. The CRC will dialogue with churches that *previously have* broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC *or have withdrawn from fellowship with the CRC* because of certain doctrinal, creedal, church order, or ethical decisions.
- c. The CRC will dialogue with churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification.
- d. *When the CRC is in dialogue with another church, it is desirable that* invitations periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's highest assemblies where delegates would be recognized by the assembly.
- e. When ecumenical delegates are not exchanged, the IRC will be expected to communicate periodically with these churches and, when appropriate, to inform synod of such correspondence.
- f. The IRC shall regularly *offer* the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* (and any other relevant information) to each of these churches to keep them informed about *the CRC* and thereby demonstrate our continuing interest in them. In turn, the IRC shall encourage each church in *dialogue* to inform us by correspondence about itself and its activities.
- g. The IRC shall continue to explore specific ways in which we may be of service to these churches through our denominational agencies; for example, through opportunities for higher education of pastors and teachers in our educational institutions, availability of teaching and training materials through CRC Publications, and services of our various boards and committees that could assist needy churches. Such services will require the cooperation of these agencies with the IRC. The IRC shall likewise be alert to services and help that these churches may be able to contribute to the CRC.²

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in formal dialogue.

C. Multilateral Relationships

1. *The CRC seeks to pursue its ecumenical task by also participating in ecumenical organizations. The purpose of such participation is to better carry out the CRC's ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently.*

²*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10.

2. *The propriety of relationships with such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice of this Ecumenical Charter as they bear on the nature of the organizations as articulated and demonstrated in their respective constitutions, bases, statements, and activities.*
3. *The varying distinctives of ecumenical organizations may require that the CRC stipulate for itself diverse and restricted types of membership. The degree of the CRC's involvement and the level of intimacy of fellowship will be determined in keeping with the principles for ecumenical practice as spelled out in the Ecumenical Charter.*

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Interchurch Relations Committee

A. *The Board of Trustees, through the maintenance of an Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), in conformity with the provisions of this charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote interest in the worldwide church. The IRC is synod's committee of contact in ecumenical relations and will advise the executive director of the CRC in fulfilling the responsibilities of representing the CRC as the ecumenical officer.*

B. *The IRC shall annually present to synod in the printed *Agenda for Synod* a report of its activities, including a summary of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its mandate.*

Appendix D Belhar Confession

1. We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for his Church by his Word and his Spirit, as He has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.
2. We believe in one holy, universal Christian Church, the communion of the saints called from the entire human family.

We believe

- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the Church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another [Eph 2:11-22];
- that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the Church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain [Eph 4:1-16];
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe; that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the Church and must be resisted [John 17:20, 23];

- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one Name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ; that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity [Phil 2:1-5; 1 Cor 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; 1 Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6; Eph 3:14-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 1 Cor 11:17-34; Gal 6:2; 2 Cor 1:3-4];
- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God [Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-11; Eph 4:7-13; Gal 3:27-28; Jas 2:1-13];
- that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this Church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace whilst believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;
- which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;
- which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the Church.

3. We believe

- that God has entrusted to his Church the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the Church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; that the Church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the Church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells [2 Cor 5:17-21; Mt 5:13-16; Mt 5:9; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21-22].

- that God by his lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity; that God, by His lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable His people to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world [Eph 4:17-6:23, Rom 6; Col 1:9-14; Col 2:13-19; Col 3:1-4:6];
- that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;
- that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

4. We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that in a world full of injustice and enmity He is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;
- that He calls his Church to follow Him in this; that He brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that He frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that He supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for Him pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that He wishes to teach His people to do what is good and to seek the right [Deut 32:4; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; Eph 2:14; Isa 1:16-17; Jas 1:27; Jas 5:1-6; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 6:20-26; Luke 7:22; Luke 16:19-31; Ps 146; Luke 4:16-19; Rom 6:13-18; Amos 5];
- that the Church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the Church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the Church as the possession of God must stand where He stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

5. We believe that,

- in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only Head, the Church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence [Eph 4:15-16; Acts 5:29-33; 1 Pet 2:18-25; 1 Pet 3:15-18].

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and To the one and only God, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever.

I. Brief overview

In 2005, the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-seven sermons that are available on the denominational website (www.crcna.org).

A number of printed sermon booklets from the last five years are still available by contacting Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg by mail at 812-800 Chieftain Street, Woodstock, Ontario, N4T 1T8; by telephone at 519-539-2117; or by email at rvanderploeg@execulink.com.

Committee member Rev. Jack Westerhof is retiring after faithfully serving two three-year terms. We thank him for freely giving of his time and effort. The following person has been nominated as his replacement:

Rev. Richard J. deLange began his ministry in Trinity CRC, St. Catherines, Ontario. He then accepted a call to his present church, the Christian Reformed Church of Aylmer, Ontario. Rev. deLange has not previously served on the Sermons for Reading Services Committee; however, he is a very able preacher.

The committee is composed of Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma (2007), chairman; Rev. Jack Westerhof (2006); Rev. John Kerssies (2008); Rev. Gordon Pols (2008); Rev. Paul Stadt (2008); and Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary / treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the sermons for reading services on the CRCNA website.

B. That synod by way of the ballot approve the appointment of Rev. Richard J. deLange for a three-year term.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Hendrik Bruinsma, chairman
John Kerssies
Gordon Pols
Paul Stadt
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary / treasurer
Jack Westerhof

I. Background

The CRC, founded in 1857, will celebrate her 150th anniversary in 2007. A celebration planning committee was formed and appointed by Synod 2001 and has met frequently since that time. The committee's membership has remained constant except that, with the illness and death of Dr. David H. Engelhard, Dr. Peter Borgdorff was appointed both as a member and to provide staff assistance to the committee. Dr. Arthur Schoonveld is also assisting in the planning for the celebrative activities that are scheduled throughout 2007. The present committee is composed of:

Dr. Peter Borgdorff	Mrs. Darlene Meyering, chairperson
Rev. Moses Chung	Dr. Arthur Schoonveld (assistant)
Rev. Michael De Vries	Mrs. Cindy Vander Kodde
Dr. Richard H. Harms	Mr. Nathan Vander Stelt
Ms. Miriam Ippel	Mr. Edward Vanderveer
Rev. Stanley Jim	Rev. Jack B. Vos
Rev. Esteban Lugo	

II. Theme and subthemes

The celebration is planned under the general theme of Grace Through Every Generation. Three subthemes will be observed throughout 2007. From January 1 through April 30, the subtheme is Remembering—a focus on the heritage that has formed us (Ps. 145:3-7; Heb. 12:1-3). From May 1 through August 31, the subtheme is Rejoicing—a focus on the manifold blessings the CRC enjoys as evidence of God's presence and grace (Ps. 36:5-9; 2 Cor. 1:18-20). From September 1 through December 31, the subtheme will be Rededicating—a focus on God's call to the CRC to serve as the people of God in our time (Eph. 3:17b-21; Ps. 78:1-7).

A. Remembering: January 1 — April 30

The committee is encouraging regional events organized in cooperation with regional committees throughout the denomination. Such committees have already been formed in more than fifty-five locations throughout the denomination. Specific sites will be posted at www.crcna.org/pages/sesquicentennial_front.cfm.

It is intended that the regional committees will function throughout 2007 as the celebration calendar progresses. It is also intended that the regional events be denominational in character with a local flavor and participation.

Remembering events are intended to focus on the stories of God's favor in the past. In developing that subtheme, it is also important to include a focus on confession. There were events in the CRC's past that, at least in retrospect, were not God-honoring and up-building. In other ways, the CRC has been abundantly blessed as it sought to be a faithful witness to the presence of God in our world through faith, life, education, economics, ecology, and politics.

Such regional events can hopefully also be occasion for gathering the members of the CRC into a shared reflective worship experience.

B. Rejoicing: May 1 — August 31

A denominational anchor event is planned for Sunday, June 10, 2007, when Synod 2007 will be in session. This event will be a worship service to be held in the Van Andel Arena (a 15,000 capacity auditorium) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is also the committee's intent that this anchor event be repeated in other regions during this Rejoicing time frame.

C. Rededicating: September 1 — December 31

The sesquicentennial celebration also has a forward-looking dimension. What will the CRC be in the next fifty years of its life? As diversity increases and our social environment is in constant flux, we should give attention to new ways of advancing our Reformed conviction. How shall the one thousand congregations of the CRC be united in mission together? What is our contribution to be to the faith life of North America? This will be the theme of the final celebratory phase in 2007. It will again be primarily based in regional events as determined by regional committees.

III. Other significant matters

A. The Sesquicentennial Committee has commissioned a sesquicentennial painting by Mr. Chris Overvoorde. It is hoped that this painting will become an artistic representation of the sesquicentennial theme.

B. Dr. Scott Hoezee has been commissioned to write a book detailing an update of CRC history since the centennial in 1957. The book is scheduled for release by Faith Alive Christian Resources in the fall of 2006.

C. The Sesquicentennial Committee has conducted two contests. The first was a logo design contest. The winning entry, created by Ms. Megan DeBoer from Oshawa, Ontario, is used on official sesquicentennial materials. The second contest is for a congregational song composition. That contest is presently in progress, and it is hoped that a selection can be made by the time Synod 2006 convenes.

D. A conference is planned for September 13-15, 2007, at Calvin College for those who are interested in exploring the contribution that the general Reformed community, and the CRC in particular, has made to faith development in North America. As is true for the sesquicentennial celebration as a whole, this conference will also look at the CRC's past and future. Dr. Richard Mouw has agreed to deliver the opening plenary address, and that opening will be followed by other plenary and small group presentations.

E. With the approval of the BOT, the committee has selected the denominational gift to be an endowment of \$5 million for the establishment of an Institute for Christian Leadership. The exact formation and location of the institute is yet to be determined and will be announced in late 2006.

F. Finally, various auxiliary activities such as heritage and historical tours will be offered throughout 2007. Not all of the auxiliary events are officially connected to the activities of the Sesquicentennial Committee, but it is hoped that such activities and offerings will enhance the overall celebration.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Ms. Darlene Meyering, chairperson; Dr. Richard Harms, secretary; and Dr. Peter Borgdorff when the report of the Sesquicentennial Committee is discussed.
- B. That synod approve the work of the committee.
- C. That synod endorse the \$5 million endowment campaign for the establishment of an Institute for Christian Leadership as a sesquicentennial gift to the CRC and encourage the churches to contribute with not less than two offerings during 2007.

Sesquicentennial Committee
Peter Borgdorff
Moses Chung
Michael De Vries
Richard H. Harms, reporter
Miriam Ippel
Stanley Jim
Esteban Lugo
Darlene Meyering, chair
Arthur J. Schoonveld
Cindy Vander Kodde
Nathan Vander Stelt
Edward Vanderveer
Jack B. Vos

I. Introduction

The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) was established by Synod 2004 in response to the recommendations advanced by the Alternate Routes to Ministry study committee. Because this report to Synod 2006 is the first extensive communication from SMCC since it was formed, the pertinent decisions of Synod 2004 are reproduced here as follows:

1. (That) synod instruct the BOT, in consultation with the study committee and Calvin Theological Seminary, to develop and implement a plan to:
 - a. Establish a Synodical Ministry Candidacy Committee (SMCC) to encourage the development of pastoral leadership, to propose standards to the synod, and to oversee the processes leading to candidacy. This committee will be empowered to recommend candidates to synod and to grant denominational licensure. In basic outline, the composition and mandate for this committee should resemble that described for it in the study committee report (with the exception listed below respecting endorsed seminaries).
 - b. Create with Calvin Seminary and the SMCC a plan to provide field education for students not in residence at Calvin Theological Seminary, to provide an introduction to the CRC along the lines of the proposed EPMC program, and for Calvin Theological Seminary to assist the SMCC in evaluating candidates.
 - c. Work with Calvin Seminary and the SMCC to develop a plan for distance learning for those who find themselves unable to relocate to Calvin Theological Seminary and to work out how and by whom the waiver of the residency requirement will be decided.
 - d. Involve councils and classes in the candidacy process, including drafting ministry readiness profiles with the students, providing mentors, encouraging the development of leaders, and providing the SMCC with their endorsements. For the purposes of this work, the classes will be encouraged to develop ministry leadership committees in consultation with the SMCC.
 - e. Propose to synod standards for Article 7 and Article 8 admissions.
 - f. In creating the plan, take into account the work already done by the study committee, the advisory committee, and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Grounds:

- 1) The training of leaders has grown more complex. There are more opportunities for training in more places along with a greater variety of potential leaders with a greater variety of needs and desires. The establishment of an SMCC, a broad-based denominational ministerial leadership committee charged with overseeing and facilitating the processes by which leaders are credentialed in the CRC, provides a central committee with a broad view to encourage the development of the various leaders that the denomination needs for the future.
- 2) The plan takes advantage of the strengths of Calvin Theological Seminary. Calvin Seminary, with its synodically approved faculty and its long experience in evaluating candidates, will provide for the SMCC the staff and services that are necessary to give new leaders the best opportunity to flourish in the CRC.
- 3) This broadly sketched plan gives the BOT, in consultation with the study committee and Calvin Theological Seminary, the opportunity to

work out the details of implementation in a more comprehensive and thoughtful way than can be done in the context of a synodical meeting.

6. That synod adopt the proposed standards for those seeking to be ordained as ministry associates and that these standards be placed in Church Order Supplement, Article 23 [see table in Agenda for Synod 2004, pp. 373-75].

Ground: The standards identify and clarify the key components for the formation of a well-equipped and well-trained ministry.

(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 616-17, 619)

II. Committee membership

The Board of Trustees (BOT) appointed the members of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) at its meeting in September 2004. The present membership is:

Roy M.A. Berkenbosch
Peter Borgdorff (also serves as staff to the committee)
Paul Bremer
Norman De Graaf
Rudy Gonzalez
Emmett A. Harrison
Henry Jonker, secretary
Duane K. Kelderman
Thea N. Leunk, chairperson
Jay J. Shim
Annalee Ward

Dr. David H. Engelhard originally served SMCC both as a member and as staff. When his illness incapacitated him in February 2005, he relinquished his membership, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff took his place.

The committee contracted with Rev. Shawn R. Brix, who served as a member of the former synodical Committee to Study Alternate Routes to Ministry Committee, to write the manual that details SMCC procedures and the CRC's ministry standards. Dr. Arthur Schoonveld, who serves as an assistant to the executive director of the CRC, also provides some staff support at this time.

III. General summary of the committee's work

SMCC will have met five times by the time Synod 2006 convenes and since it was appointed in the fall of 2004. A great deal of subcommittee and individual work is carried on by the members of SMCC between the meetings of the full committee. SMCC has also been greatly assisted by members of the faculty and staff of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) as the committee began to assume responsibility for its assignment. SMCC is now responsible for overseeing all of the ministerial candidacy processes and procedures in the CRC, a task that heretofore was the responsibility of CTS and its board of trustees. The shift of responsibility is taking more time than originally anticipated—in part, at least, because the task is substantial and some new procedures needed to be developed to implement synod's intent. For example, for many years all candidates for the ministry under Church Order Article 6 (CTS graduates as well as EPMC candidates) were examined, interviewed, and recommended to synod by the faculty and board of trustees of CTS. Those

admitted to the ministry of the Word under Church Order Articles 7 and 8 were processed through a classis.

It was Synod 2004's desire to standardize these procedures under the auspices of SMCC and to establish uniform standards for admission to the ranks of ordained ministers throughout the denomination. Admittedly, such uniform standards would need to be applied in a variety of circumstances as both the church and the way candidates come through our system diversify. Synod also wanted to preserve the meaningful participation of classes and instructed SMCC to develop such procedures that would bring about both uniformity of standards and a climate of encouragement and participation to the candidacy process.

Because it will take time to complete the transition of this responsibility to SMCC, and because the CTS board of trustees will continue to have a great interest in the candidates coming through CTS, the trustees have agreed, at SMCC's request, to continue the practice of interviewing CTS graduates and EPMC students who are seeking candidacy in the CRC. SMCC is most appreciative of the trustees' willingness to continue their participation in this practice with SMCC. Members of SMCC will also participate in the interviewing process, and, at the conclusion of successful interviews, SMCC will recommend the candidates to synod for approval.

SMCC's time has been spent primarily on developing standards for ministry and developing procedures for the candidacy track that individuals will need to follow. The standards that are already approved, and the application of these standards to the candidacy process are contained in the Appendix to this report.

Finally, when SMCC began to function in late 2004, it was given a mandate prepared by the denomination's Board of Trustees. SMCC recommends that Synod affirm that same mandate for use by SMCC as follows:

Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee Mandate

The SMCC shall:

- Foster the development of pastoral leadership in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), helping and encouraging the classes and councils to identify potential new leaders whom they can assist on their various journeys to pastoral office.
- Establish, with the approval of synod, standards that will result in consistency, fairness, and justice in applying the denomination's requirements for each person who desires to become a minister of the Word in the CRC, whether applying under Article 6, 7, or 8 of the Church Order.
- Maintain, clarify, and periodically review these standards.
- Assist the classes in the development of Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLT) by providing them with information, counsel, and resources as they encourage individuals to seek the ministry as a vocation and as they support and make decisions regarding those who are preparing for or are applying to become a minister of the Word in the CRC.

- Implement and maintain regular contact with the classes to determine who from their churches are preparing for ministry and assist them in developing a ministry readiness profile.
- Recommend candidates to the synod of the CRC upon the individual's completion of the ministry readiness profile.
- Grant denominational licensure to exhort to students studying for the ordained ministry in the CRC.
- Provide support and accountability throughout the preparatory process for women whose council or classis has not declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3 inoperative and are unwilling to encourage and oversee women applicants for ministry
- Provide resources to equip classes for the examinations required in the ordination process so that there is consistency throughout the denomination.
- Provide an annual report to synod and regular reports to the Board of Trustees for information.

IV. Toward ordination in the CRC

Attached to this report is an Appendix with the title "Toward Ordination in the CRC." This document will serve several purposes. First, it comprises a significant part of SMCC's report to Synod 2006, and, to understand this report to synod, it is essential to read the Appendix. Second, once Synod 2006 approves or amends the recommendations of SMCC, the Appendix will be developed into a manual that will guide potential candidates and others through the candidacy process. Third, the material that will be contained in the manual will be formatted to be placed on the website of the CRC.

The attachment referred to above reflects the decisions made by previous synods as well as procedures that have been decided by SMCC itself. However, the Appendix also contains several matters that need this synod's approval. The parts of the manual that need specific synodical approval are listed here below and are repeated in the Recommendation section of this report.

A. *The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC)*

It is already required that persons who seek candidacy for ministry in the CRC under Church Order Article 6 but who have an M.Div. degree from a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary, complete the EPMC process before being recommended for candidacy to synod by SMCC. While the decision of Synod 2004 makes EPMC a requirement for all Article 6 candidates, it only "encourages the classes and the EPMC to recommend the new EPMC program to those seeking to enter CRC ministry by way of Church Order Article 7 or Article 8 or to require it of some applicants" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 621). SMCC believes the EPMC process to be sufficiently important that it recommends Synod 2006 also require a modified EPMC program of all persons who seek ordination to the ministry of the Word through Articles 7 or 8. The major components of the current EPMC program that would carry over to the modified program are the two-week in-residence summer seminar, the ten-week in-residence fall quarter of study, the psychological assessment, the Bible knowledge exam, and the supervised field work (that would be planned and carried out in consultation with the classical ministerial leadership teams). The modified EPMC program would be approved by SMCC. It is also recom-

mended that this requirement become effective immediately. Finally, it is recommended that SMCC determine any exceptions to this requirement.

B. Denominational licensing procedure

Denominational licensing to exhort in the churches has heretofore been the responsibility of Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. Synod 2004 assigned that responsibility to SMCC. In making that transition, SMCC has adopted for itself the following minimum requirements for persons seeking denominational licensure to exhort: The student must complete one year of seminary coursework that includes at least two biblical exegetical courses, one course in theology, and two worship and /or preaching courses. SMCC requests synod's approval of these minimal requirements.

V. Church Order Article 22

Synod 2005 made several decisions concerning the validity of denominational administrative personnel being licensed to exhort in the CRC as follows:

That synod approve the following recommendations regarding the office of ministry associate:

- a. That synod declare that the office of ministry associate is not an appropriate office for national and international agency staff persons appointed to administrative duties.

Ground: The office is established to enhance the ministry of the local church and not intended for denominational positions with national and international responsibilities.

- b. That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches to seek a denominational license to exhort through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) (see Church Order Article 22 and its Supplement). All requests for licensure will need to be justified and supported by recommendations from the executive director of an agency, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Ground: This exception addresses the major concern of the mission agencies and permits a mission employee to lead worship in CRC congregations when asked to do so.

- c. That synod instruct the SMCC to develop guidelines for granting licensure to agency persons requesting the privilege of exhorting even though their primary responsibilities are other than serving in a congregational setting.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 783)

SMCC considered synod's instruction and came to the conclusion that it should recommend that Synod 2006 withdraw the assignment to develop licensing guidelines for administrative personnel. SMCC offers the following grounds for making this recommendation:

- a. Historically, licensure has been granted to individuals based on the need of churches and not based on the need or desire of an agency of the church.
- b. The CRC has a longstanding principle and practice of "guarding the pulpit," and the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee believes that both this principle and the practice ought to be maintained.

- c. Nonordained administrative personnel normally would have no training in exhorting, homiletics, or biblical studies.
- d. The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee was unable to develop or deduce a meaningful rationale for the statement of Synod 2005: “That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches. . . .”

VI. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Thea Leunk and Dr. Peter Borgdorff when the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee report is discussed.
- B. That synod approve the mandate for SMCC as first developed by the Board of Trustees in September 2004.
- C. That synod approve the standards (character, knowledge, and skill) as well as the functions assigned to SMCC and detailed in the Appendix to this report.
- D. That synod receive as information the sections of the manual that describe the functions of the church council and the classis in the candidacy process as detailed in the Appendix.
- E. That synod require participation in the modified EPMC program by all persons seeking candidacy in the CRC by means of Church Order Article 7 or 8. Exceptions to this requirement could only be granted by SMCC.

Grounds:

1. SMCC wishes to affirm Synod 2004’s desire that standards for ordination to the ministry of the Word be maintained. The CTS EPMC program clearly reflects those standards.
 2. SMCC will work with CTS to adapt the EPMC program to be appropriate for persons seeking ordination through Article 7 or 8.
 3. The denomination has a strong interest in every CRC minister of the Word to have a minimum orientation to CRC church history, CRC polity, Reformed theology, and Reformed hermeneutics as that is taught at the seminary of the denomination.
 4. Online course delivery systems and mentor-supported learning contracts make it possible to implement an adapted ecclesiastical program for Article 7 and 8 candidates who are unable to fulfill the residency requirement of the EPMC program.
- F. That synod withdraw the assignment that SMCC develop licensing to exhort guidelines for administrative personnel as instructed by Synod 2005.

Grounds:

1. Historically, licensure has been granted to individuals based on the need of churches and not based on the need or desire of an agency of the church.
2. The CRC has a longstanding principle and practice of “guarding the pulpit,” and the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee believes that both this principle and the practice ought to be maintained.

3. Nonordained administrative personnel normally would have no training in exhorting, homiletics, or biblical studies.
4. The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee was unable to develop or deduce a meaningful rationale for the statement of Synod 2005: “That synod permit agency personnel who might legitimately be called upon to exhort in CRC churches. . . .”

Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee
Peter Borgdorff, executive director

Appendix

Toward Ordination in the CRC

I. Introduction

In *God’s Missionary People*, Charles VanEngen writes, “During the last half century mission theorists, sociologists of religion, ecclesiologists, and mission practitioners have become increasingly aware of the urgent need for a new vision of local congregations as God’s missionary people” (p. 27). The Christian Reformed Church is also becoming more keenly aware of its apostolic mission. In 1986, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church adopted a contemporary testimony called *Our World Belongs to God*. Article 44 professes:

Following the apostles, the church is sent—
sent with the gospel of the kingdom
to make disciples of all nations,
to feed the hungry,
and to proclaim the assurance that in the name of
Christ
there is forgiveness of sin and new life
for all who repent and believe—
to tell the news that our world belongs to God.
In a world estranged from God,
where millions face confusing choices,
this mission is central to our being,
for we announce the one name that saves.
We repent of leaving this work to a few,
we pray for our brothers and sisters
who suffer for the faith,
and we rejoice that the Spirit
is waking us to see
our mission in God’s world.

As the world becomes increasingly secular, the importance of the mission God has entrusted to us continues to grow. The twenty-first century is an exciting time to be serving God in ministry! The needs of the world are great, but God has promised to equip and lead his church as it responds to the Great Commission and extends the gift of God’s grace to those who are yet apart from him.

We are grateful to God that he is continually opening new doors of opportunity for us to follow him into mission. If the Christian Reformed Church is to continue to be faithful in responding to those opportunities, we will need a broad range of leaders who belong to many kinds of communities. As the synodical Advisory Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to

Ministry noted, we need leaders “who feel at home on Wall Street, leaders who feel at home on Main Street, and leaders who feel at home on mean streets. We need Korean leaders, Hispanic leaders, African-American leaders, white American leaders, white Canadian leaders, and First Nations leaders.” The list is long, but “in its very variety, beautiful. Further, the need is not only large but also urgent. Jesus said to his followers, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’” (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 613).

We are excited that God is leading you to consider joining us in that mission. The following is intended to invite you to partner with us and to orient you to the journey toward ordination in the Christian Reformed Church.

For I know the plans I have for you,
declares the Lord,
plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you a future and a hope.
(Jeremiah 29:11)

II. Glossary of acronyms

Please note that the following acronyms are used throughout this report:

- CRC—The Christian Reformed Church in North America—the CRC is a denomination with approximately three hundred thousand members in one thousand congregations across the United States and Canada.
- SMCC—The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee—this denominational committee oversees the nurture and training of those preparing for ordained ministry in the CRC under the provisions of Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8.
- CMLT—Classis Ministerial Leadership Team—within the denominational structure, there are almost fifty groupings or “families” of CRC congregations based on geographical boundaries. Each family of congregations is known as a classis (plural: classes). The CRC synod has encouraged all classes to establish a CMLT. These CMLT’s work closely with individuals preparing for ministry in the CRC by providing support and encouragement.
- CTS—Calvin Theological Seminary—as the theological school of the CRC, CTS offers a number of degree programs, including the master of divinity program that prepares students for the ministry of the Word in the CRC.
- M.Div.—master of divinity degree—this degree, obtained at CTS or elsewhere, is the degree required by those who are preparing for the ministry of the Word in the CRC under the provisions of Church Order Article 6.
- EPMC—the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy—this program, unique to CTS, is designed to give individuals an orientation to the theology and ministry of the CRC. This program is required by all those entering the ministry of the Word in the CRC under the provisions of Church Order Article 6, but who have obtained their master of divinity degree from a seminary other than CTS. In some cases, the EPMC may also serve as a suitable means of preparation for those entering the

ministry of the Word in the CRC under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 or 8.

III. The candidate

Your interest in preparing for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) is of great significance to the denomination. Even though the call to mission goes out to every believer, God also places a specific call upon some individuals to provide leadership in the church, preparing his people for works of service. As you explore the possibility of serving as a minister of the Word in the CRC, it is our intention to encourage and support you and provide you with the appropriate materials you need in order to determine God's call upon your life.

The Church Order of the CRC describes three different routes into the Christian Reformed ordained ministry: (1) Church Order Article 6 addresses those who prepare for the ministry through academic training that leads to a master of divinity (M.Div.) degree, (2) Church Order Article 7 makes provision for those who have not obtained the prescribed theological training but who nevertheless give evidence of exceptional giftedness and a "native ability" to preach the Word, (3) and the last of these articles, Church Order Article 8, provides a means for ministers who have been ordained in another denomination to enter the ministry of the Word in the CRC. These sections of the Church Order are outlined below.

Article 6

- a. The completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word.
- b. Graduates of the theological seminary of the Christian Reformed Church who have been declared candidates for the ministry of the Word by the churches shall be eligible for call.
- c. Those who have been trained elsewhere shall not be eligible for call unless they have met the requirements stipulated in the synodical regulations and have been declared by the churches to be candidates for the ministry of the Word.

Article 7

- a. Those who have not received the prescribed theological training but who give evidence that they are singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word, may, by way of exception, be admitted to the ministry of the Word.
- b. The classis, in the presence of the synodical deputies, shall examine these men concerning the required exceptional gifts. With the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, classis shall proceed as circumstances may warrant and in accordance with synodical regulations.

Article 8

- a. Ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are eligible for call, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- b. *Ministers of the Reformed Church in America are eligible for call to serve in the Christian Reformed Church, with due observance of the relevant rules.*
- c. Ministers of other denominations, *other than from the Reformed Church in America*, desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be declared eligible for a call by a classis only after a thorough examination of their theological training, ministerial record, knowledge of and soundness in the Reformed faith, and their exemplariness of life. The presence and concurring advice of the synodical deputies are required.
- d. Ministers of other denominations who have not been declared eligible for a call shall not be called unless all synodical requirements have been met.

Synod 2000 adopted a number of standards in the areas of *character, knowledge, and skills* for those entering ministry. In adopting these standards, synod was guided by the following principles:

- The Reformed confessional heritage should be the basic foundation for all ministry-staff job descriptions. A principle of proportionality should be thoughtfully applied to all persons who fill staff positions in any Christian Reformed church. The degree of understanding and skill required to apply the confessional tradition is proportional to the level of ministry responsibility assigned. As one’s sphere of authorized service extends, so should one’s capability for understanding, articulating, and discipling others in the Christian faith and Reformed confessional tradition.
- The CRC is committed to a theologically well-trained clergy and to maintaining the expectation that “the completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word” (Church Order Article 6-a).
- The church needs to take note of the general scriptural teaching concerning personal qualifications for ministry found in passages such as Matthew 18; 20:20-28; 28:18-20; Acts 6; 2 Corinthians 4; 5; Ephesians 4; and 1 and 2 Timothy.

A. *Character standards*

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed church ministry should be:

- publicly committed to Christ and his church and submitting to its discipline.
- exemplary in piety and holy conduct of life and a humble person of prayer who trusts God’s providence.
- of good reputation and emotionally mature, honest, trustworthy, and reliable.
- caring and compassionate for the lost and the weak.
- eager to learn and grow in faith, knowledge, and love.
- joyful in affirming the goodness of God’s creation and communicating to others a delight in its beauty.
- sensitive to others in all their personal and cultural variety (see also Calvin Theological Seminary’s Personal Qualifications for Ministry, *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 345-50).

These character standards will be validated by the following means:

1. Character standards for Article 6 applicants

The necessary character standards are validated for an Article 6 applicant by:

- The person must have been a member of the CRC for a minimum of one year and had the opportunity to demonstrate their character and calling for ministry in the context of a local congregation.
- Endorsement from the person’s council.
- Endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
- Personal statement of faith.

- Criminal background check.
 - Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.
 - Evaluated psychological profile through Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy for all students obtaining their master of divinity degree at other seminaries.
 - Endorsement from the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - Examination by the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee or its designee.
2. Character standards for Article 7 applicants
- The necessary character standards are validated for an Article 7 applicant by:
- The person must have been a member of the CRC for a minimum of three years and had the opportunity to demonstrate their character and calling for ministry in the context of a local congregation.
 - Endorsement by the applicant's council.
 - Endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
 - Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy.
 - Personal statement of faith.
 - Criminal background check.
 - Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.
 - Evaluated psychological profile (from Calvin Theological Seminary or another qualified source).
 - Endorsement from mentor.
 - Classical examination.
3. Character standards for Article 8 applicants
- The necessary character standards are validated for an Article 8 applicant by:
- Testimony from previous council (or other local governing body).
 - Testimony from previous classis (or other middle judicatory).
 - Endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
 - Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy.
 - Personal statement of faith.
 - Criminal background check.
 - Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.
 - Evaluated psychological profile (from Calvin Theological Seminary or another qualified source).
 - Endorsement of council where stated supply was served.
 - Endorsement from mentor.
 - Classical examination (doctrinal conversation).

B. Knowledge standards

1. Biblical foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should:

- Know the content of the Old and New Testaments.
- Know and be able to explain the basic structure and flow of biblical redemptive covenantal history centered in Christ (promise and fulfillment).
- Be able to identify the main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, holiness) of Scripture as well as the large divisions (law, prophets, writings) and specific types of biblical literature.
- Be able to articulate the significance of the various sections, books, or types of biblical literature to contemporary issues and questions.

2. Theological foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should:

- Know and be able to explain the basic teachings of the universal Christian tradition concerning God, humanity, the person and work of Christ, salvation, the church, and the last things.
- Know, be able to explain, and be ready and willing to defend the three forms of unity and a Reformed confessional stance on key doctrines such as predestination, unity of the covenant, infant and adult baptism, millennialism, and the cosmic scope of the Reformed worldview.
- Have a rudimentary knowledge of and ability to respond to the key challenges posed to the Christian and Reformed faith in North America by the major world religions, the major cults, and the various forms of New Age spirituality.
- Know the key concepts of CRC church polity.

3. Means for validating knowledge standards

a. Knowledge standards for Article 6 applicants

The necessary knowledge standards are validated for an Article 6 applicant by:

- Demonstrated competency in biblical languages.
- Completion of the master of divinity degree.
- Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy program (for all students obtaining their master of divinity degree at a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary).
- Calvin Theological Seminary faculty recommendation to the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee.

b. Knowledge standards for Article 7 applicants

The necessary knowledge standards are validated for an Article 7 applicant by:

- Evidence of any education through official transcripts or equivalents.
- Completion of goals identified in the learning covenant.
- Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy.

- Bible knowledge examination administered through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee.
 - Classical examination.
- c. Knowledge standards for Article 8 applicants
- The necessary knowledge standards are validated for an Article 8 applicant by:
- Evidence of educational history shown through official transcripts or their equivalents.
 - Completion of goals identified in the learning covenant.
 - Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy.
 - Bible knowledge examination administered through the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee.
 - Classical examination (doctrinal conversation).

C. *Skill standards*

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should:

- Be prepared to “give an answer to everyone who asks [you] to give the reason for the hope [you] have” (1 Peter 3:15).
- Be able and willing to make a clear presentation of the gospel to an unbeliever.
- Be able to teach and disciple persons to deeper faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- Be able to prepare and deliver short biblically based messages for public occasions (i.e., nursing homes, prisons, civic occasions).
- Be capable of effectively leading a group in various tasks, including Bible studies, task completion, and resolving conflict.

These skill standards will be validated by the following means:

1. Skill standards for Article 6 applicants

The necessary skill standards are validated for an Article 6 applicant by:

- An endorsement by the applicant’s council.
- An endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
- An assessment of field education processed through the field education office of Calvin Theological Seminary.
- Examination by the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee or its designee.

2. Skill standards for Article 7 applicants

The necessary skill standards are validated for an Article 7 applicant by:

- An initial endorsement from the applicant’s council.
- An endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
- An assessment of ministry experience processed through the field education office of Calvin Theological Seminary.
- A final endorsement from the applicant’s council after a period of evaluated ministry.
- Endorsement of mentor.
- Classical examination.

3. Skill Standards for Article 8 applicants

The necessary skill standards are validated for an Article 8 applicant by:

- A Certificate of Ordination.
- Testimony from previous council (or other local governing body).
- Testimony from previous classis (or other middle judicatory).
- An endorsement from the appropriate Classis Ministerial Leadership Team.
- An assessment of ministry experience processed through the field education office of Calvin Theological Seminary.
- Evidence of experience and/or education in ministry skills (including ministry and worship).
- Endorsement of council where stated supply was served.
- Endorsement of mentor.
- Classical examination (doctrinal conversation).

IV. The council

The local congregation is often the context in which people first hear the call to a life of vocational ministry. It is through the local congregation where people are nurtured in the faith and encouraged to a life of service. A congregation and its leadership are therefore often in an ideal position to identify the requisite gifts for ministry and to give individuals the opportunity to test those gifts in real ministry settings. As a result, local congregations and councils are indispensable partners in a candidate's journey toward ordination.

Councils fulfill at least six different responsibilities in the candidacy process. These responsibilities include the following:

A. To identify persons who show natural ability and/or spiritual giftedness for ministry through consultation with pastoral staff, ministry leaders, and youth leaders. Some qualities to consider include spiritual maturity, emotional stability, leadership ability, relational skills, and intellectual capacities. As councils identify some of these qualities, they may also want to seek feedback and affirmation from the individual, his or her family members, and others.

B. To encourage such individuals to seriously consider whether God is calling them to ministry in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) through, for instance, mentoring or providing appropriate ministry opportunities.

C. To supply interested individuals with materials that will assist them in understanding the process of becoming a minister in the CRC.

D. To endorse an individual's application to begin preparing for ministry in the CRC, forwarding it to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT). Before recommending a candidate, the council should ascertain, if possible, how the applicant's gifts have been demonstrated in the context of the congregation.

E. To provide support and accountability. Where possible, the council should encourage the student in the journey toward vocational ministry by:

1. Providing support and accountability throughout the preparatory process including, for instance, mentoring, interviews, conversations, written reports, communications of encouragement, financial assistance, and so forth.

2. Maintaining contact and showing active and ongoing interest in the student's progress throughout the entire candidacy process.
3. Ensuring (where contact is not practical) that the student is an active member of a congregation and is receiving spiritual support.
4. Offering ministry opportunities (where possible), including opportunities to exhort once the individual has been granted licensure.

F. To provide an endorsement for the individual as they are nearing the completion of their preparatory process. In some cases, the final endorsement will not come from the individual's "home" council but rather from the council where the individual was most recently worshipping and/or engaged in ministry.

V. The classis

As another important partner in the candidacy process, classes play a significant role in the preparation of men and women for ordination as ministers of the Word in the CRC. Classes serve as a resource and to advise their member congregations in regard to candidacy policies and procedures. They also collaborate with students, providing financial assistance and guidance in the preparation of their ministry readiness profiles. Finally, classes function to provide the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) with the endorsements and other necessary information in order for those applying for ministry to be declared eligible candidates in the CRC.

In order to facilitate classes' role in the candidacy process, Synod 2004 urged all classes to appoint a Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT), that reflects its own particular character and geographic realities. While the membership and exact mandate of CMLTs is left to the discretion of individual classes, CMLTs should include people who have a passion for the church's ministry, who are knowledgeable about ordination issues, and who reflect the diversity of classis. No fewer than half of the members shall be ministers of the Word in the CRCNA.

In some cases, classes may find it appropriate to appoint a regional CMLT that serves more than one classis.

It is assumed that classes will seek to exercise their requested responsibilities through their classically or regionally appointed CMLTs.

The following guidelines are offered for classes' consideration in determining a mandate for their respective CMLTs:

A. Consultation

The CMLT will be a consultation and advisory resource to the member congregations of its classis, classis itself, and other interested parties (for instance, Leadership Development Networks) regarding matters related to ministerial candidacy in the CRC.

B. Information

The CMLT shall provide information and advice to the member congregations of its classis, classis itself, and other interested parties (for instance, Leadership Development Networks) concerning the candidacy process.

C. Encouragement

The CMLT shall encourage the member congregations of its classis to be proactive in identifying possible candidates for ministry in the CRC and offer resources to help people discern their calling.

D. Ministry Readiness Profile

The CMLT is to provide counsel that will help councils, classis, and those preparing for the ministry in the completion of the individual's ministry readiness profile. Such profiles will be progressive documents testifying to the candidate's development and growth in the following areas:

- Character
- Knowledge
- Skill

E. Finance

The CMLT will recommend to classis and administer the distribution of appropriate financial resources to assist those preparing for ministry (see Church Order Article 21).

F. Endorsement

Upon receiving a positive recommendation to enter the candidacy process from an individual's council, the CMLT will interview the individual and work with him or her to prepare a financial plan, as well as a study plan or learning covenant. The CMLT will then forward their endorsement to the SMCC. In the case of individuals entering the candidacy or affiliation process through Article 7 or 8, the CMLT will also request licensure on behalf of the individual to the SMCC.

G. Celebration

Assist the church and classis that initiated the study and candidacy process in appropriately celebrating the progress of those preparing for the ministry under its care, giving thanks to God for his provision of faithful and gifted leadership for his church.

VI. The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee

The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) synod, is the final partner in the process of candidacy preparation. Because the denomination has such a vital interest in the formation of ministers of the Word, Synod 2004 established the SMCC to retain, direct, and enhance the denomination's role in the process of equipping and forming its future leaders. Through the SMCC, the denomination is able to oversee the nurture and training of those preparing for ordained ministry through Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8.

The SMCC was established in 2004 by the synod of the CRC. The SMCC has been charged with the responsibility of fostering the development of pastoral leadership in the CRC, establishing standards for those preparing for ministry in the denomination, and overseeing the ministerial candidacy process. Specifically, the SMCC will serve in the following capacities:

A. *Advisory*

The SMCC will function in an advisory capacity to classes as they develop a Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT).

B. *Consultation*

The SMCC will be a consultation and advisory resource to classical CMLTs once established.

C. *Equity in financial support*

The SMCC, in consultation with CMLTs, will work to ensure greater equity in student financial assistance among the classes of the denomination.

D. *Oversight of candidacy and ordination*

The SMCC will provide oversight of the Article 6 candidacy process and the Article 7 and 8 ordination process in the CRC.

E. *Oversight of licensure*

The SMCC will provide oversight of the denominational licensure process.

F. *Recommend candidacy*

The SMCC will recommend candidacy to the synod of the CRC.

The committee's official mandate, developed and adopted by the denominational Board of Trustees, can be found below:

Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee Mandate

The SMCC shall:

- Foster the development of pastoral leadership in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), helping and encouraging the classes and councils to identify potential new leaders whom they can assist on their various journeys to pastoral office.
- Establish, with the approval of synod, standards that will result in consistency, fairness, and justice in applying the denomination's requirements for each person who desires to become a minister of the Word in the CRC, whether applying under Article 6, 7, or 8 of the Church Order.
- Maintain, clarify, and periodically review these standards.
- Assist the classes in the development of Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLT) by providing them with information, counsel, and resources as they encourage individuals to seek the ministry as a vocation and as they support and make decisions regarding those who are preparing for or are applying to become a minister of the Word in the CRC.
- Implement and maintain regular contact with the classes to determine who from their churches are preparing for ministry and assist them in developing a ministry readiness profile.
- Recommend candidates to the synod of the CRC upon the individual's completion of the ministry readiness profile.
- Grant denominational licensure to exhort to students studying for the ordained ministry in the CRC.
- Provide support and accountability throughout the preparatory process for women whose council or classis has not declared the word *male* in

Church Order Article 3 inoperative and are unwilling to encourage and oversee women applicants for ministry

- Provide resources to equip classes for the examinations required in the ordination process so that there is consistency throughout the denomination.
- Provide an annual report to synod and regular reports to the Board of Trustees for information.

VII. The journey of ministry preparation: Church Order Article 6¹

A. Calling

The individual experiences a sense of internal calling from the Lord to serve in vocational ministry. This calling is informally confirmed by others, likely including the individual's pastor, council, and family. Approximately one year before the individual anticipates beginning his or her studies, the council directs the individual to make inquiry to the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) concerning the process of ministry formation and preparation.

B. Inquiry stage: SMCC

The SMCC offers the interested individual encouragement, answers questions, and outlines the necessary steps for pursuing ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 6. The SMCC also ensures that the individual has access to all the necessary documents to welcome and orient the individual to the process of ministry preparation.

C. Affirmation and support of council

1. The individual completes a Candidates Application to Council Form, and then approaches his or her council to seek its official affirmation to begin preparing for the office of minister of the Word.
2. Council interviews the individual, completes a Council Recommendation Form, and forwards the form to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT). Along with their recommendation, they also forward to the CMLT the individual's Application to Council (including his or her autobiography and personal statement of faith).

Note: For a council to endorse an individual to prepare for ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 6, the individual has to have been a member of the CRC for a minimum of one year and had opportunity to demonstrate his or her giftedness for ministry.

3. The council inquires about the student's financial needs and considers ways the congregation may be able to assist.

D. CMLT interview and the preparation of study and financial plans

1. The individual appears before the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT), or its designated committee, for a personal interview.

¹Church Order Article 6 applies to those who prepare for the ministry of the Word in the CRC through academic training that results in the student's receiving a master of divinity degree.

2. If, as a result of this interview the individual is endorsed, then the individual will draft a study plan that he or she will review with the CMLT. This plan will indicate where the individual intends to study and how long he or she intends to take to complete their degree.
3. The individual will also draft a financial plan, indicating how he or she intends to finance the proposed education. This plan, also to be reviewed with the CMLT, will likely include several sources of funding, including: prior savings, part-time work, loans, grants, family assistance, spousal income, classical or congregational aid, scholarships, and bursaries.
4. The CMLT completes a Classis Recommendation Form and forwards this form, along with the study and financial plans, the CMLT Recommendation, and the individual's Application to Council (including his or her autobiography and personal statement of faith) to the SMCC.

E. Admission to the candidacy process

The SMCC reviews all documents and endorses the individual's study and financial plans. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the plans before they provide their endorsement. Once the plans are endorsed, the SMCC admits the individual to the candidacy process and communicates its decision in writing to both the individual and the CMLT.

F. The ministry preparation phase

1. The CMLT, in consultation with the individual, ensures that the individual has a suitable mentor. It is recommended and preferred that this mentoring relationship be with a CRC pastor, although in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to establish this relationship with someone else.
2. As the individual's studies begin, his or her council will maintain contact and show active and ongoing interest in the student's progress throughout the entire ministry preparation process. This may involve written communication and (where possible) personal contacts. The council should also provide ministry opportunities for the student within the congregation, including the opportunity to exhort once the student is licensed (where feasible).
3. The CMLT will also maintain contact with the student throughout his or her studies, showing an active and ongoing interest in the student's development. The CMLT provides financial assistance, encouragement, guidance, and accountability, also ensuring that the student is a member of a congregation where they are receiving spiritual support.
4. The CMLT also assists students with the preparation of their ministry readiness profiles and tracks the student's progress toward meeting the requirements inherent in the profile. In the case of students attending Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), and for those pre-enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC), the CTS staff and faculty will also be of great assistance in ensuring that the ministry readiness profile requirements are completed at the appropriate times. At set points throughout the student's preparation, an evaluated psychological report will be completed, a positive health certificate obtained, and a criminal background check conducted. The individual will also be asked to

make full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.

5. After having received a recommendation from the individual's CTS faculty advisor, SMCC will grant the student licensure to exhort once all the necessary requirements have been met.
6. Where there are changes to the student's financial plan or study plan, the CMLT endorses these changes and notifies the SMCC. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the plans before it provides its endorsement. Once the revised plans are endorsed, the SMCC communicates such in writing to both the student and the CMLT.
7. For students studying at seminaries other than CTS, completion of the EPMC program is required. This program provides a helpful introduction to Reformed hermeneutics, CRC church polity, CRC church history, and other courses that may not be available elsewhere. Students should enroll in the EPMC program at the very beginning of their studies.
8. At fitting points in the student's academic journey, the individual's classis finds appropriate means for celebrating and giving thanks to God for his provision of faithful and gifted leadership for his church.

G. The candidacy stage

1. The SMCC interviews the individual and declares him or her a candidate for minister of the Word in the CRC.
2. The SMCC ensures that the ministry readiness profile is satisfactorily complete and that all required endorsements have been received. Once the SMCC is satisfied that all requirements for candidacy have been met, the SMCC recommends to synod that the individual be declared eligible for candidacy.
3. Synod declares that the individual is a candidate for the minister of the Word in the CRC and is eligible for call.

Note: Where necessary, the CMLT may make arrangements with other classes nearer to the school the student attends to fulfill some or all of the above mentioned responsibilities.

Ministry Readiness Profile: Church Order Article 6

- Candidate's Application to Council, including an autobiography and personal statement of faith
- Council endorsement
- CMLT endorsement, including study and financial plan
- SMCC endorsement to enter candidacy process
- Assessment of readiness for ministry
- Copy of official seminary transcript
- Statement of psychological fitness for ministry
- Positive health certificate
- Criminal background check

- Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint
- Hebrew and Greek requirements satisfied
- Biblical knowledge requirements satisfied
- M. Div. degree
- EPMC completion (for students earning their master of divinity at a seminary other than CTS)
- Commitment to three forms of unity
- Willingness to sign the Form of Subscription
- SMCC candidacy interview and endorsement
- Synodical declaration of candidacy

VIII. The journey of ministry preparation: Church Order Article 7²

A. Calling

The individual experiences a sense of internal calling from the Lord to serve in vocational ministry. This calling is informally confirmed by others, likely including the individual's pastor, council, and family. The council then directs the individual to make inquiry to the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) concerning the process of ministry formation and preparation.

B. Inquiry stage: SMCC

The SMCC offers the interested individual encouragement, answers questions, and determines which Church Order Article would be the most appropriate one for the individual to prepare for ministry under. If it is determined that the provisions of Church Order Article 7 apply, the SMCC will outline the necessary steps for pursuing ministry under the provisions of that article. The SMCC will also ensure that the individual has access to all the documents needed to welcome and orient him or her to the process of ministry preparation.

C. Affirmation and support of council

1. The individual completes a Candidates Application to Council Form and then approaches his or her council to seek its official affirmation to begin preparing for the office of minister of the Word under the provisions of Church Order Article 7.
2. Council interviews the individual, completes a Council Recommendation Form, and forwards the form to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT). Along with their recommendation, they also forward the individual's Application to Council (including his or her autobiography and personal faith statement).

Note: For a council to endorse an individual to prepare for ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 7, the individual has to have been a member of the CRC for a minimum of three years and had opportunity to demonstrate his or her exceptional giftedness for ministry.

²Church Order Article 7 applies to those preparing for the ministry of the Word in the CRC who do not have the prescribed theological training but who nevertheless give evidence of exceptional giftedness and a native ability to preach the Word.

3. The council inquires about the individual's financial needs and considers ways the congregation may be able to assist through the ministry preparation phase.

D. CMLT interview and the preparation of a learning covenant and financial plan

1. The individual then appears before the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT), or its designated committee, for a personal interview.
2. If, as a result of this interview the individual is endorsed, and the use of Church Order Article 7 is deemed appropriate, then the individual will draft a learning covenant that she will review with the CMLT. This covenant will indicate what areas of study (biblical, theological, practical) the individual will be pursuing, and how these objectives will be met (potentially through a combination of academic study at a university or seminary, online learning, mentoring, and/or independent study). The covenant will also include participation in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC).³ Based on the individual's ministry experience, the covenant will also specify what type of additional ministry opportunities will be sought.
3. The individual will also draft a financial plan, indicating how he or she intends to finance the proposed preparation for ministry. This plan, also to be reviewed with the CMLT, may include several sources of funding, including: prior savings, part-time work, loans, spousal income, classical or congregational aid, and/or other means.
4. The CMLT completes a Classis Recommendation Form and forwards this form, along with the learning covenant and financial plan, the CMLT recommendation, and the individual's application to council (including his or her autobiography and personal statement of faith) to the SMCC.
5. The individual provides to the SMCC a criminal background check, a positive health certificate, and an evaluated psychological report. The individual also makes full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.

E. Admission to the candidacy process

The SMCC reviews all documents, and endorses the individual's learning covenant and financial plan. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the learning covenant or financial plan before they provide their endorsement. Once the plans are endorsed, the SMCC gives permission to proceed under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and communicates the decision in writing to both the individual and the CMLT.

F. The ministry preparation phase

1. The CMLT, in consultation with the individual, ensures that the individual has a suitable mentor. It is recommended and preferred that this mentoring relationship be with a CRC pastor, although in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to establish this relationship with someone else.

³In some cases, part of the EPMC program can be completed through the Korean Institute for Ministry.

2. Throughout the ministry preparation process, the individual's council will maintain contact, showing active and ongoing interest in the individual's progress. This may involve written communication and (where possible) personal contacts. The council should also provide ministry opportunities for the individual within the congregation, including the opportunity to exhort once the individual has been licensed (where feasible).
3. The CMLT also maintains contact with the individual throughout their candidacy preparation, showing an active and ongoing interest in the individual's development. The CMLT will provide encouragement, guidance, and accountability, also ensuring that the individual is a member of a congregation where he or she is receiving spiritual support. The CMLT may also find it appropriate for the classis to provide the individual some financial assistance.
4. The CMLT also assists the individual with the preparation of the ministry readiness profile and tracks the individual's progress toward meeting the requirements inherent in the profile.
5. Where there are changes to the individual's learning covenant or financial plan, the CMLT endorses these changes and notifies the SMCC. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the plans before they provide their endorsement. Once the revised plans are endorsed, the SMCC communicates such in writing to both the individual and the CMLT.
6. Upon receiving a recommendation from the individual's CMLT, the SMCC will grant the individual licensure to exhort once all the necessary requirements have been met.
7. At fitting points in the individual's preparation process, the individual's classis will find appropriate means for celebrating and giving thanks to God for his provision of faithful and gifted leadership for his church.

G. The candidacy stage

1. As the individual nears completion of his or her learning covenant, the church council best able to make an assessment gives its endorsement to the SMCC for the individual to seek candidacy.
2. The SMCC ensures that the learning covenant and ministry readiness profile have both been satisfactorily completed and that a favorable endorsement has been received from the appropriate council. Once the SMCC is satisfied that all requirements for candidacy have been met, the SMCC gives classis permission to proceed with a classical examination.
3. Upon receiving permission from the SMCC, classis then conducts a thorough classical examination in the presence of synodical deputies. Upon a positive recommendation by the classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies, the individual is declared a candidate for the minister of the Word in the CRC and is eligible for call.

Ministry Readiness Profile: Church Order Article 7

- Candidate's application to council, including an autobiography and personal statement of faith
- Initial council endorsement

- CMLT endorsement, including learning covenant, financial plan, and testimony to exceptional giftedness
- Statement of psychological fitness for ministry
- Positive health certificate
- Criminal background check
- Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint
- SMCC endorsement to begin ministry preparation phase
- Ministry evaluation(s)
- Affirmation of readiness for ministry includes a letter from mentor and, if applicable, faculty advisor
- Educational history (official transcripts or equivalent)
- Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy
- Biblical knowledge requirements satisfied
- Commitment to three forms of unity
- Willingness to sign the Form of Subscription
- Final council endorsement
- Final SMCC endorsement
- Classical exam with the concurrence of synodical deputies
- Eligible for call

IX. The journey of affiliation: Church Order Article 8⁴

A. Expression of interest

If a minister from another denomination expresses interest in entering the ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), he or she should be directed to contact the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). Alternatively, after a period of sustained effort to call a minister from within the CRC, a council may express a desire to call a pastor from another denomination. When this is the case, the council needs to contact the SMCC.

B. Inquiry stage: SMCC

The SMCC offers the interested individual (or council) encouragement, answers questions, and determines whether Article 8 is the appropriate Church Order Article for this pastor or council. The SMCC then outlines the affiliation process to enter ministry in the CRC. The SMCC will also ensure that the individual (or council) has access to all the documents needed to welcome and orient ministers to the process of affiliation.

C. Affirmation of gifts and character

1. The minister's former council (or other appropriate local governing body) submits a reference to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) testifying to the minister's character, knowledge, and skills.
2. The minister's former classis (or other appropriate middle judicatory) also submits a reference to the CMLT testifying to the minister's character, knowledge, and skills.

⁴Church Order Article 8 applies to those who wish to enter the ministry of the Word in the CRC but who have been previously ordained in a different denomination.

D. CMLT interview and the preparation of a learning covenant and financial plan

1. The minister then appears before the CMLT or its designated committee, for a personal interview.
2. If, as a result of this interview the minister is endorsed, then he or she will develop a learning covenant that will be reviewed with the CMLT. The covenant will indicate what areas of study (if any) the individual needs to pursue, and how these objectives will be met (potentially through a combination of academic study at a university or seminary, online learning, mentoring, and /or independent study). The covenant will also include participation in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC).⁵ Based on the minister's experience, the covenant will also specify what type of stated supply position will be sought and the duration of the position (ordinarily six months).
3. In addition to the learning covenant, the minister will also draft a financial plan indicating how they intend to finance the affiliation period with the CRC. This plan, also to be reviewed with the CMLT, may include several sources of funding including: prior savings, loans, and spousal income. One of the primary sources of funding is likely to be the income received through a stated supply position.
4. The CMLT completes a Classis Recommendation Form and forwards this form, along with the learning covenant, financial plan, and copies of the endorsements from prior councils and /or classes, to the SMCC.
5. The minister provides the SMCC with an autobiography, a personal statement of faith, a copy of their credentials, a copy of their academic degrees, a criminal background check, a positive health certificate, and an evaluated psychological report. The individual also makes full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint.

E. Admission to the affiliation process

The SMCC reviews all documents, and endorses the minister's learning covenant and financial plan. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the learning covenant or financial plan before providing its endorsement. Once the plans are endorsed, the SMCC welcomes the individual to the affiliation process under the provisions of Church Order Article 8 and communicates that welcome in writing to both the minister and the CMLT.

F. The stated supply phase

1. To advance the affiliation process, a period of stated supply is initiated for a period of six months. In some cases, the SMCC may need to provide assistance in finding an appropriate ministry setting.
2. The CMLT, in consultation with the minister, ensures that he or she has established a mentoring relationship with a CRC pastor.

⁵In some cases, part of the EPMC program can be completed through the Korean Institute for Ministry.

3. Upon receiving a recommendation from the individual's CMLT, the SMCC will grant a licensure to exhort for the duration of the stated supply position.
4. The CMLT maintains contact with the minister throughout the affiliation process, showing an active and ongoing interest in the individual's progress toward the goals identified in the learning covenant.
5. The CMLT also assists the minister with the preparation of their ministry readiness profile and tracks his or her progress toward meeting the requirements inherent in the profile.
6. Where there are changes to the minister's financial plan or learning covenant, the CMLT endorses these changes and notifies the SMCC. The SMCC may suggest additional changes to the plans before providing its endorsement. Once the revised plans are endorsed, the SMCC communicates such in writing to both the minister and the CMLT.
7. At fitting points in the minister's affiliation process, the classis will find appropriate means for celebrating and giving thanks to God for his provision of faithful and gifted leadership for his church.

G. The candidacy stage

1. As the minister nears the end of his or her affiliation process, the council of the congregation where the stated supply was served will provide an endorsement to the SMCC for the minister to seek candidacy.
2. The SMCC ensures that the learning covenant and ministry readiness profile have both been satisfactorily completed and that a favorable endorsement has been received from the appropriate council. Once the SMCC is satisfied that all requirements have been met, the SMCC gives classis permission to proceed with a doctrinal conversation.
3. Upon receiving permission from the SMCC, classis then conducts a doctrinal conversation in the presence of synodical deputies. Upon a positive recommendation by the classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies, the individual is declared a candidate for the ministry of the Word in the CRC and is eligible for call.

Ministry Readiness Profile: Church Order Article 8

- Endorsement of former local governing body
- Endorsement of former middle judicatory
- Autobiography
- Personal statement of faith
- CMLT endorsement including learning covenant, financial plan, and intentions regarding stated supply
- Credentials
- Academic degree(s)
- Statement of psychological fitness for ministry
- Positive health certificate
- Criminal background check
- Full disclosure of any acts of official discipline, criminal charges, or ecclesiastical complaint

- SMCC endorsement to begin affiliation process
- Affirmation of readiness for ministry including letter from mentor
- Completion of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy
- Commitment to three forms of unity
- Willingness to sign the Form of Subscription
- Council endorsement (stated supply position)
- Final SMCC endorsement
- Doctrinal conversation with concurrence of synodical deputies
- Eligible for call

X. Tool kit

Below are a number of forms and other necessary tools for all those preparing for the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) under the provisions of Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8.

A. *Church Order Article 6*⁶

1. Candidate's Application to Council Form (includes autobiography and personal statement of faith)
2. Council Recommendation Form
3. Classis Ministerial Leadership Team Recommendation Form (includes study and financial plans)

B. *Church Order Article 7*⁷

1. Candidate's Application to Council Form (includes autobiography and personal statement of faith)
2. Council Recommendation Form
3. Classis Ministerial Leadership Team Recommendation Form (includes learning covenant and financial plans)
4. Final Council Recommendation Form

C. *Church Order Article 8*⁸

1. Endorsement Form (former local governing body): Article 8
2. Endorsement Form (former middle judicatory body): Article 8
3. Autobiography and personal statement of faith: Article 8
4. Classis Ministerial Leadership Team Recommendation Form (includes learning covenant and financial plans)
5. Council Recommendation Form (stated supply position)

D. *Applications*

1. Application for Licensure (Article 6)
2. Application for Licensure (Article 7)
3. Application for Licensure (Article 8)

⁶Church Order Article 6 applies to those who prepare for the ministry of the Word in the CRC through academic training that results in the student obtaining a Master of Divinity degree.

⁷Church Order Article 7 applies to those preparing for the ministry of the Word in the CRC who do not have the prescribed theological training but who nevertheless give evidence of exceptional giftedness and a native ability to preach the Word.

⁸Church Order Article 8 applies to those who wish to enter the ministry of the Word in the CRC but who have been previously ordained in a different denomination.

Employment (List two most recent employment experiences)

Employer: _____ Position: _____ Dates: _____

Employer: _____ Position: _____ Dates: _____

Autobiography

Write a 250-500 word autobiography. Include information on your childhood, education, volunteer experiences, interests and hobbies, and other aspects of your life. Attach your autobiography to this application.

Personal Statement of Faith

Write a 500-750 word personal statement of faith. Include an indication of your love for and commitment to Christ and his church, a summary of your personal faith, and a description of your sense of calling to the ministry.

Ministry Experience

1. What gifts/strengths do you have for the ministry?

2. How have these gifts already begun to bear fruit for Christ and his church?

3. What do you believe are the most important tasks a minister performs?

4. In what areas of church life and ministry have you been involved?

References:

Provide names and addresses of three persons who could provide you with a reference:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

3. How well did the applicant carry out his or her duties in these leadership roles?

4. In what other ways has the applicant been involved with the church? Provide examples.

5. Describe the applicant's interaction with other members of the church.

6. Describe the applicant's Christian commitment and lifestyle. Provide examples.

7. Are there any matters regarding Christian doctrine or life that should be noted?

Yes No (If "yes," please explain on a separate piece of paper.)

8. Summarize what you believe are the applicant's strengths and/or gifts for ministry.

9. Summarize the areas that you believe the applicant will need to develop in order to be effective in ministry.

10. What motivates the applicant's desire to prepare for Christian ministry?

11. Do you, the church council, recommend the applicant for pursuit of Christian ministry in the CRC?

- Yes, without reservation
- Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)
- No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

12. If you are recommending this applicant for ministry in the CRC, are you proposing preparation for ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 6 (academic training that leads to a master of divinity degree) or Church Order Article 7 (those without the prescribed theological training but who give evidence of exceptional giftedness and a native ability to preach the Word)?

- Article 6
- Article 7

13. If you are proposing that this applicant prepare for ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 7, please indicate what makes this applicant's gifts exceptional and how the native ability for preaching has been expressed.

14. Has your council inquired as the student's financial needs and considered ways to assist?

- Yes
- No

15. Feel free to provide any additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

Church Information

Church Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail _____

Name of pastor or church official signing this form :

Name

Title

Signature: _____

Date: _____

After completing and signing this form, please send it to your Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT). Also include the individual's Application to Council. Thank you.

This portion is to be completed by the applicant and then given to the council or governing body of the church he or she most recently served.

Applicant's

Name: _____
Last/Family First Middle

Check one of the following boxes and sign below.

I waive my right to view this recommendation. I do not waive my right to view this recommendation

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

This portion is to be completed by the applicant's church council (or other local governing body):

Your candid assessment of the individual indicated above will be a valuable asset to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) as we evaluate his or her potential for ministry in our denomination. Thank you for your assistance in this regard.

1. How long did the applicant serve in a leadership position in your church? _____

2. What was the applicant's title? _____

3. Was the applicant ordained? _____ If yes, on what date? _____

4. What were the applicant's responsibilities in this role?

5. How well did the applicant carry out his or her duties in this leadership role?

6. Describe the applicant's interaction with members of his or her leadership team.

7. Describe the applicant's interaction with other members of the congregation.

8. Summarize the applicant's strengths and/or gifts for ministry.

9. Summarize the areas that the applicant needs to develop in order to be even more effective in ministry.

10. Describe the applicant's Christian commitment and lifestyle. Provide examples.

11. Are there any matters regarding Christian doctrine or life that should be noted?

Yes No (If "yes," please explain on a separate piece of paper.)

13. Do you, the church council (or governing body), recommend this applicant for Christian ministry in the Christian Reformed Church?

- Yes, without reservation
- Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)
- No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

14. Feel free to provide any additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

Church Information

Church Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail _____

Name of church official signing this form:

Name

Title

Signature: _____

Date: _____

After completing and signing this form, please send it to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team. The applicant will be able to provide you with the appropriate address.

4. Will the student study full-time or part-time?

- Full-Time Part-Time Other (explain below):

5. When does the student intend on obtaining M.Div. degree? _____
Year Month

6. If obtaining the master of divinity degree at a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), have you notified the student that he or she should immediately enroll in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC)?

- Yes No

7. If the master of divinity degree is obtained at a seminary other than CTS, when does the student anticipate completing the EPMC requirements?

Two Week Summer Residency: _____ Ten Week Fall Quarter Residency: _____
Year Year

8. Other comments related to the student's Study Plan:

Financial Plan

On a separate piece of paper, please indicate the following:

- The year-by-year anticipated living costs for the student (and his or her family) for the duration of the student's studies including tuition, books, housing, utilities, insurance, health care, food and clothing, travel, etc. (See CTS Website for estimate of current living costs per year.)
- The year-by-year anticipated sources of income including prior savings, part-time work, loans, grants, family assistance, spousal income, classical or other church aid, scholarships, bursaries, etc.

Endorsement

Do you, the CMLT, recommend the applicant for pursuit of Christian ministry in the CRC?

- Yes, without reservation
 Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)
 No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

Feel free to provide any additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

CMLT of Classis _____
(Classis Name)

CMLT Chairperson: _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

After completing and signing this form, please send it directly to the attention of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). Also include the individual's Application to Council, and the Council's Recommendation Form. Thank you.

Applicant's

Name: _____
Last/Family First Middle

This applicant was interviewed by the CMLT of Classis _____ on _____
(Classis Name) (Year Month Day)

1. Summarize how the applicant is "singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word" (Church Order Article 7). Attach a separate piece of paper if necessary.

2. Why are you proposing that this individual prepare for ministry under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 rather than Church Order Article 6 (academic training that leads to a master of divinity degree)?

3. Summarize the areas that you believe the applicant will need to develop in order to be effective in ministry.

4. What motivates the applicant's desire to prepare for Christian ministry?

Learning Covenant

1. What previous theological, biblical, or ministry education does the applicant have?

2. What previous ministry experience does the applicant have? Attach a separate piece of paper if necessary.

3. Given the applicant's educational background, ministry experience, and current readiness for ministry as measured by the denomination's standards for ministry, what learning/growth objectives does the CMLT require in the following areas?

Character (see character standards):

Knowledge (see knowledge standards)

Skills (see skill standards)

4. When and how does the applicant intend to meet the learning and growth objectives identified in the previous question? (Possible examples of how one might meet these objectives include independent study, online learning, mentoring, seminary study, participation in a Leadership Development Network, etc.) Please be specific as to what courses or programs of study are to be completed.

Character (see character standards):

Knowledge (see knowledge standards)

Skills (see skill standards)

5. When does the applicant anticipate completing the requirements of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy?

Two Week Summer Residency: _____ Ten Week Fall Quarter Residency: _____
Year Year

6. Other comments related to the individual's learning covenant:

Financial Plan

On a separate piece of paper, please indicate the following:

- The anticipated living costs for the individual (and his or her family) for the duration of their preparation for ministry period.
- The anticipated sources of income throughout the preparation for ministry period, including prior savings, spousal income, part-time work, classical or other church aid, etc.

Endorsement

Do you, the CMLT, recommend the applicant for pursuit of Christian ministry in the CRC?

- Yes, without reservation
- Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)
- No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

Feel free to provide any additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

CMLT Information

CMLT of Classis _____
(Classis Name)

CMLT Chairperson: _____

Address _____

City State/Province Zip/Postal Code Country

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

After completing and signing this form, please send it directly to the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). Also include the individual's Application to Council, and the Council's Recommendation Form. Thank you.

Applicant's

Name: _____
Last/Family First Middle

This applicant was interviewed by the CMLT of Classis _____ on _____
(Classis Name) (Year Month Day)

1. Summarize what you believe are the applicant's strengths and/or gifts for ministry.

2. Summarize the areas that you believe the applicant could still develop in order to become even more effective in ministry.

3. What motivates the applicant's desire to become a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church?

Learning Covenant

1. What previous theological, biblical, or ministry education does the applicant have?

2. Given the applicant's educational background, what further areas of study (if any) are being recommended?

3. When and how does the applicant intend to meet these learning objectives (independent study, online learning, mentoring, seminary study, Leadership Development Network, etc)?

4. What previous ministry experience does the applicant have? Attach a separate piece of paper if necessary.

- Yes, without reservation
- Yes, with reservation (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)
- No, we do not recommend (elaborate on a separate piece of paper)

Feel free to provide any additional comments on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form.

CMLT Information

CMLT of Classis _____
(Classis Name)

CMLT Chairperson: _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

After completing and signing this form, please send it directly to the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). Also include the recommendations from the individual's former council (or other local governing body) and from the individual's classis (or other middle judicatory). Thank you.

Application for Licensure (Church Order Article 6) Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please review the standards for student licensure to preach in the Christian Reformed Church at www.crcna.org/sbcc/licensurestandards. If you judge that you have met these standards, please attach a typed sheet with answers to questions 1 through 5.

1. Briefly describe your call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).
2. Give a succinct statement of your Christian faith and commitment.
3. Indicate the extent and nature of your engagement in church and religious work up to this time. (Include teaching Sunday school, youth programs, mission work, summer youth program, etc.)
4. Indicate your commitment to the doctrines, policies, practices, and ministries of the CRC. (Specifically declare your position on Christian day school education and catechism preaching.)
5. State briefly why you are asking for licensure and when you anticipate graduating from seminary and seeking candidacy for ministry in the CRC.

Student Signature: _____

1. Please submit the following materials to the Office of Field Education, Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546:
2. A completed Application for Licensure
3. A copy of your latest transcript
4. A list of any outstanding seminary admissions requirements
5. A written recommendation from your FFM leader (if you are a CTS student), your faculty advisor, or your Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) if you are attending another seminary.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Cumulative GPA: _____

Hours completed: _____

Hours currently enrolled: _____

Outstanding admission requirements: _____

Please list the courses you have taken in the following areas:

Biblical Exegetical Courses: (2 minimum)

Theology: (1 minimum)

Preaching and/or Worship (2 minimum):

Formation for ministry (FFM) leader recommendation: _____ (date: _____)
(or faculty advisor, mentor, or CMLT if student is attending another seminary)

Field ed. director recommendation: _____ (date: _____)

Candidacy Committee recommendation: _____ (date: _____)

SMCC decision _____ (date: _____)

Time period of this licensure: _____

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

Having recently celebrated its fifty-year Jubilee anniversary, Dordt College is now looking forward to the next fifty years. Our partnership with the CRCNA over the past half century has been essential in developing Dordt College into the strong institution of Reformed Christian higher education that we are today. That partnership is also essential to a strong future for Dordt College. We rely on the dedication and support of the CRCNA and its members to help us meet the challenges that lie before us. We realize that the Lord will present us with some challenges, and we are eager to meet them. We are also confident that the Lord will give us many opportunities to reach out in ways that were not available to us fifty years ago.

It was a different world fifty years ago when Dordt College first opened its doors. At that point, communism seemed the greatest threat to the Christian traditions of Western culture. In the intellectual arena, it seemed that secularism was on the verge of destroying the previous nineteen centuries of Christian thought. Now, just fifty years later, communism seems only a remote memory, and, all across our world, secularism seems increasingly irrelevant as the greatest battles of civilization are being fought instead over issues about which religious traditions will prevail.

This changing world scene makes it even more important that the world of higher education hear the Reformed conviction that the Word of God is the normative foundation for all of our thinking as well as our believing and living. Dordt College understands that challenge and is responding to it. We intend to remain a top quality residential campus for traditional students, but our vision is broader. Both generationally and geographically, our impact will need to increase if we are to be as faithful in our educational task in the next half century as we have been in the past.

We see opportunities to increase our impact in our local area and have taken steps to raise awareness of Dordt College and its mission among the populations of Sioux City, Iowa, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

We have increased our program options by adding an engineering technology program in collaboration with Northwest Iowa Community College. We have also received interim approval from the Iowa Board of Nursing to offer a B.S.N. (bachelor of science in nursing) completion degree beginning in the fall of 2006.

We see opportunities to move into areas yet uncharted by Reformed Christian higher education institutions. One of the opportunities set before us this year was the establishment of a football program. In October, the board of trustees voted to proceed with fundraising for a football program and to begin the search for a head coach. If all goes as planned, Dordt College will begin junior varsity competition in 2007-2008, with full varsity competition beginning in 2008-2009.

We also face challenges. To stay competitive in the many areas of study that Dordt focuses on, our graduates need access to the finest facilities we can provide for them. Some facilities, such as science labs, need regular upgrading to stay in sync with the progress made in those fields. We understand that and are making plans to ensure that Dordt College's science facilities and other campus facilities provide the quality of education that our students require.

Our new vice president for college advancement, Mr. John Baas, will play a key role in helping to meet those challenges and provide our students with an education that will produce a worldwide impact. Recent additions to our faculty in the areas of physics, music, education, and new media also help us to maintain and enlarge our world perspective.

The road ahead for Dordt College presents many challenges, but it is also filled with exciting opportunities as we broaden our vision and learn even better how to take our place in the world over which our Savior is Lord.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

From humble beginnings with one professor in a large house, the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) has grown into a recognized accredited Christian graduate school. An Ontario Ministry of Education assessment panel said of ICS:

ICS offers unique and impressive graduate programs in Philosophy. With a relatively small faculty (eight full-time), they offer rich, diverse, rigorous and intensive education for students in Philosophy in relation to a Calvinist reformed tradition. The programs are well-organized and are excellent cases of research-based graduate study, easily meeting the various standards of achievement. Not only is the range of course-work excellent, but the supervision of these (both MA and PhD) is first-rate. Moreover, the small size of ICS makes for a rigor and intensity of instruction that is worthy of emulation. Finally, ICS has achieved the formation of a community of learning that is outstanding.

In June 2005, the Ontario government gave ICS the permanent right to grant degrees in master of arts (philosophy), master of worldview studies, Ph.D. in philosophy, and the honorary degree of doctor of letters. Meanwhile, our positive affiliations with the Toronto School of Theology (within the University of Toronto) and with the Free University of Amsterdam have continued. Enrollment has steadily grown to more than fifty-five students in degree programs and to nearly one hundred occasional and distance students, including a number of students from the Toronto School of Theology who take courses at ICS.

Graduate education is intensive and expensive, requiring financial support for students who arrive after years of undergraduate expense. We value, therefore, synod's interest in our progress and our inclusion on the list of recommended educational causes. In the past year, seventy-three churches assisted us with offerings to a sum of almost \$96,000. We have gone through a lean time of financial hardship, but our members and the community at large have stepped up to encourage us with their generosity, allowing us to continue to flourish.

This is a year of transition in leadership for ICS. Dr. Harry Fernhout became president of The King's University College after presiding at ICS for fifteen years. Dr. John Suk will be installed as ICS president at our Convocation on May 26, 2006. In between, Morris Greidanus serves as interim president.

We rejoice in the CRC's renewed commitment to Christian education, for ICS is a strategic link in the chain of Christian education. Many of our alumni work and teach in key positions to help others grasp the unique features of a Christian education. Our worldview conferences, workshops, distance education, and faculty publications are also helpful to specialists and to the Christian community as each attempts to serve our Lord in all areas of life.

Synod has many reports to read, so we keep ours brief. Like most, we have a website (www.icscanada.edu) that provides much more detail. For the staff and our diverse student body (many internationals and U.S. citizens), I thank you for sending your students, your support, and your prayers.

Institute for Christian Studies
Morris N. Greidanus, interim president

I am very pleased to extend greetings on behalf of The King's University College community to the delegates to Synod 2006 of the Christian Reformed Church.

The King's has experienced some very significant transitions in the past year. The most important transition was the retirement of my predecessor, Dr. Henk Van Anandel, after more than two decades of extraordinary institutional leadership. Under Dr. Van Anandel's guidance, The King's grew from infancy into the mature, respected institution it is today. The King's experienced Dr. Van Anandel's vision, dedication, and leadership skill as a gift from God—a gift for which we are deeply grateful.

In September, I was formally installed as the third president of this institution. I was greatly encouraged by the presence of family, representatives of other academic institutions, church representatives, and members of our support constituency.

Fall enrollment stood at 630—a slight decline from the previous year. While Christian postsecondary institutions across Canada struggled to maintain enrollment, this has proven to be a particular challenge in northern Alberta, with its robust economy and plentiful well-paying resource industry jobs. Our board and staff have taken various steps to increase the scope and effectiveness of our student recruitment efforts. We have strong confidence in The King's and its mission. We believe there is great potential for growth in Christian higher education in Western Canada and elsewhere. In this regard, we covet the help of pastors, elders, deacons, and parents in urging high school students in their congregations to seriously consider Christian postsecondary education.

In September 2005, The King's launched an exciting new four-year interdisciplinary major combining the study of politics, history, and economics. The purpose of this program is to help students understand the dynamics of public life in Canada and the world (looking at how history, politics, and economics interact to shape society), with the goal of equipping students to be active Christian contributors to our culture.

In November, we dedicated our new academic building. It more than doubles our classroom space, adds faculty offices, and includes a drama theater and a facility for the training of counsellors. Our campus now has room for up to one thousand students. The dedication ceremony provided an occasion to praise God for past blessings and to look ahead with hope and expectation as we ready ourselves to make full use of the expanded facilities over the next few years.

We continue to place an increased emphasis on ensuring that the whole college experience challenges our students to develop as followers of Jesus Christ. Our dean of students and student life staff implemented various initiatives, such as a new orientation program to ease first-year students' transition into university life.

The King's University College is also grateful that Synod 2005 accepted the invitation of Classis Alberta North to meet on our campus in 2010. As I write this, the Winter Olympics have begun in Turin, and preparations are already well underway for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. While our preparations

will not be of similar Olympian proportions, we do look forward to extending a hearty Alberta welcome to a world-class gathering.

The King's is grateful for the support we receive from CRC congregations in the form of ministry shares and offerings for our institution. We value our spiritual bond with the CRC, and we ask for the ongoing prayer support of the churches as we pursue our mission on behalf of the king who is the Lord of learning.

The King's University College
Harry Fernhout, President

We praise the Lord for the blessings we have experienced over the past year and appreciate this opportunity to share some highlights with you.

Just ten years ago, our enrollment stood at 450 students. This year, we welcomed about 850 students, which is a slight decrease over last year. Three hundred ninety of these students live on campus in apartments and in our townhouse-style residences. While the causes for this decrease in enrolment are not entirely clear, this trend included not only Redeemer but also virtually all undergraduate institutions of Christian higher education across Canada. This fact is of concern to us, and we hope to see this trend turned around in the coming year.

While the majority of our students come from Ontario, about 10 percent of our students come from across Canada, ten percent from across the United States, and ten percent from other countries. Forty-five denominational backgrounds are represented among our students, as well as a diversity of racial and ethnic groups. Christian Reformed students account for 48 percent of our enrollment, while students of Reformed background make up 62 percent of the student body. The rest of our students come from evangelical (30%) or mainline (8%) churches.

Our students enjoy the vibrant spiritual atmosphere on campus and are excited about the vision of life and service they are being taught, based on the Reformed understanding of the full-orbed character of Christ's mission of reconciliation. They are also excellent service volunteers, both in downtown Hamilton and in mission trips to such places as Montreal, Amsterdam, the southern United States, and the Caribbean, all providing opportunities for learning, witness, and service.

As we add faculty and replace retiring faculty, we are encouraged that we continue to draw committed and qualified faculty who share Redeemer's vision. Our provincially accredited teacher education program, which is one of five programs at Christian institutions in all of Canada, has now grown to be our largest program. We are also considering expanding our social work program and seeking accreditation—a challenging goal that would make it the only such program in Canada.

A particular highlight this year has been the completion of the new south wing to our academic building, which houses classrooms, faculty offices, and the Peter Turkstra Library. This \$6.2 million addition is the centerpiece of our \$11.5 million capital campaign, for which \$10.25 million has been raised to date. We are now concentrating on improvements to campus roads, parking, pathways, and a special conservation and recreation park with interpretative trails. This, together with a new residence that is planned, will enable us to serve up to a thousand students.

We are very grateful for the prayer and financial support we have received from the Christian Reformed community, including the ministry shares sent to us by area Christian Reformed churches. These are essential for our mission of providing Christian university education and promoting Christian scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective.

Redeemer University College
Justin D. Cooper, president

Reformed Bible College has had an exciting school year where opportunities, changes, and a clear sense of purpose were seen as coming together in an exceptional way. The relationships, programs, and support we have in the context of the Christian Reformed Church have grown and have been a warm source of encouragement for us as well. Thank you!

Since our founding as Reformed Bible Institute in 1939, Reformed Bible College has become a major resource to the CRC in providing pastors, evangelists, youth workers, missionaries, social workers, and others with skills that equip them to work in ministry-focused areas. Through studies we made, we became aware of the depth of concern over vacant pulpits and the prospect of a large number of retiring pastors over the next few years in both CRC and Reformed churches. We take seriously our mission to locate and train students for the ministry and so have taken this on as a point of emphasis in our recruiting and contact with pastors and youth workers. This strategy forms a meaningful part of our responding well back to the denomination for the support we have and continue to receive.

The college went through its regular reaccreditation processes in January 2006. We are accredited through both the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and the Association of Biblical Higher Education. A new and specialized accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education has been achieved, making Reformed Bible College only the second Bible college in the nation to have an accredited social work program and able to grant a BSW degree. This is a very important step to us in expressing the word and deed character of our Reformed worldview.

Strategic planning and assessment have been emphasized strongly over the past year as we have increased expectations on the professional development of our academic program and support systems. Detailed goals, data gathering, analysis, accountability, and informed decision-making are concepts that more regularly form part of our daily and long-range activities. A sense of corporate ownership over this improved planning and operation at the college has resulted in increased focus, efficiency, and stewardship at all levels of the institution.

We have also determined through this process that it was time to establish a new major in music and worship. Our music program had diminished over the past several years though, more recently, we have seen a resurgence of interest in a *fuller* music program that incorporates ethnomusicology, liturgy, drama, dance, and the effective integration of these elements into the worship style our churches are seeking. We are eager to come alongside the church in providing talented, eager graduates who can provide music and worship leadership in global, urban, and traditional church settings.

Although we have emphasized and seen many academic and technical improvements with the college over recent years, our identity as a ministry-focused Christian leadership college remains clear and strong. Our primary mission, size, and the degree to which practical application of faith motivates students to come to Reformed Bible College and attracts faculty to teach here

create an atmosphere that is spiritually dynamic. We remain very aware of, and grateful for, the prayers, support, and encouragement extended to us by the denomination. We look forward to ways we can develop even closer ties as we strive to serve the Lord and his church. Blessings to you.

Reformed Bible College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Trinity Christian College continues its forward momentum with increasing numbers of students, faculty, and new initiatives. With an enrollment of 994 traditional-age students and a total enrollment of 1280 in fall 2005, the college is experiencing ongoing growth to fulfill its mission of shaping lives and transforming culture. Among the 994 traditional students enrolled, 51 percent are drawn from the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed denominations. We are thankful for the support from churches and individuals who are committed to making Christian higher education a priority for future generations of Christian leaders.

The plans for an Art and Communication Center are proceeding on a two-phase construction basis, anticipated to begin in summer 2006. This facility will provide a black-box theater, space for art and design classes, and general-use classrooms to meet the growing demand for more teaching space. Trinity also acquired an adjacent site, formerly a restaurant, which will be transformed into a bookstore/café beginning in late spring or early summer. The location will serve both Trinity and the local community as a meeting place for conversation, coffee, and an opportunity to purchase books by Christian authors as well as textbooks.

Trinity's Church Connection Initiative sponsored Faith Engaged: The Church in Today's World, a miniconference for pastors and staff, in October 2005. The conference was held in conjunction with the regular Classis Chicago South meeting of the CRCNA, and featured Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary. This program is made possible through a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The office of community partnerships, led by Ms. Felecia Thompson, continues to promote the importance of identifying and building relationships within the context of a larger community. More than twenty-five Chicago-area pastors and ministers gathered at Trinity for an informational luncheon last February, and plans are proceeding for a similar event on campus this spring.

This past year was a time of celebration and recognition at Trinity, with the social work department receiving initial accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education in recognition of its outstanding program. The college also was named among America's best colleges for 2006 by *U.S. News & World Report*, ranked within the top forty comprehensive liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. In athletics, Trinity achieved a new record for women's soccer: They were named national champions at the National Christian College Athletics Association national soccer tournament in Kissimmee, Florida, in November 2005.

Trinity's eight-member Praise Team toured Michigan, Ontario (Canada), Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey during Interim, January 10-22, visiting schools and churches in each state. The group was but one of several that traveled throughout the United States and abroad for Interim, experiencing nontraditional learning in different settings and environments. Some students stayed in the Chicago area for service-learning opportunities; others traveled to Spain, Hawaii, Egypt, Europe, Jamaica, Rwanda, and Colorado for cultural awareness, service, and working with different ages and populations.

Trinity launched the Senior Academy for Learning at Trinity (SALT) in fall 2005. The program provides opportunities for discussion and learning among retired members of the community. SALT is modeled after similar lifelong learning programs at other colleges, with two different classes held on three successive Thursday afternoons each semester. Unlike adult education courses, SALT will draw upon the talents and knowledge of the retirement community to shape course content and lead classes. SALT is a way of extending the college's mission into the community by presenting a high-quality, stimulating series of courses that appeal to senior learners. This spring's offerings include a behind-the-scenes tour of the PBS series, "Walking the Bible," and an introduction to the Internet and e-mail.

Members of the Trinity community have witnessed God's blessings upon the college in so many ways throughout this year. This summer, we anticipate hosting several groups and organizations on campus that will convene for times of worship, discussion, and fellowship. We pray for the denomination's leadership and are thankful for the support we receive from the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

The international camporee comes only once in three years, and 2005 was the year. It was an event that brought nearly thirteen hundred boys and men from across North America to Camp Diamond Trail in south-central Iowa. God blessed the men and boys there in many ways. When a speaker issued a challenge to the boys to dedicate their lives to God forever, about 80 percent walked to the front and did so. The spiritual aspect of the camporee is always a highlight and seemed more so this time.

Perhaps part of the reason was that the campers suffered through a week of unprecedented heat and humidity, and it helped bond them together. The heat index was regularly in the hundreds (Fahrenheit), and on Sunday an estimated four thousand campers and visitors worshiped God while sitting in direct sunlight on a shadeless hillside. Two television stations from Des Moines sent reporters and camera crews to our camp to cover the story, wondering if we will ever want to come back to Iowa. With blessings such as we received, we will.

The 2008 camporee is scheduled for Ontario, about 125 miles north of Toronto. Before that, however, we have annual counselors' conventions, bringing Cadet leaders and their families together for a few days of education, inspiration, and fellowship. Next month, Lord willing, we will celebrate the theme of being Shaped for Service by God. At the same time, we will be able to enjoy his creation in the majestic Rocky Mountains near Banff, Alberta. In 2007, the convention will come back to a more central area, being hosted by leaders in West Michigan.

The Lord has opened up a large opportunity for the Cadet ministry this year. The general secretary of the Reformed Church of East Africa has been in contact with us about starting pilot programs for Cadets in their churches. They have forty-two hundred congregations in Kenya and, Lord willing, we will be there this August to begin training their men. Please pray that God will use this effort to bring him glory and to grow his kingdom.

Cadet membership currently stands at 611 clubs, 77 percent of which are in Christian Reformed churches.

Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Isolation and loneliness are common feelings experienced by women and girls of all ages today. GEMS Girls' Clubs is a ministry that breaks through the isolation and seeks to develop relationships—relationships between girls and Jesus Christ, between girls and their counselors, and between girls and other girls. In the context of these meaningful and growing relationships, faith is nurtured, and when faithful women gather to serve the Lord, wonderful things happen!

We have seen many wonderful things happen in the ministry of GEMS over the last year. We continue to experience growth in both the number of

churches that we serve and in the number of girls attending clubs. More clubs have transitioned from serving only girls in the church to positioning their club as a highly effective outreach ministry—between one-third and one-half of the twenty-two thousand girls that are members of GEMS Clubs are from unchurched homes. Many churches point to GEMS as the best “side door” ministry to the church. Counselors regularly receive training in how to effectively mentor girls from both churched and unchurched homes.

The ministry has placed a special emphasis on partnering with parents this year—sharing lesson plans and discussion topics; offering discussion ideas for the home; providing helpful parenting tips on our website, as well as planning and hosting relationship-building, mother-daughter, and father-daughter events with parents. We recognize that our role as a ministry to girls is to come alongside parents and help them be the primary faith nurturers of their children.

Believin’ It Girlz Tours are large-group worship events for girls that are being held across the United States and Canada. The purpose of each tour is to provide girls with the opportunity to express praise and worship to God in meaningful and dynamic ways and to help girls know the power of God’s truth and their own true identity. Each tour has attracted between six hundred and eighteen hundred girls.

Using girls from Calvin College, Dordt College, Trinity Christian College, and Redeemer University College as counselors, Get Connected! Camp significantly impacted the lives of 188 early teen girls this year. The purpose of this international summer camp is to counter the culture’s influence by teaching critical life truths.

Believing in the importance of equipping, supporting, and inspiring counselors, GEMS continues to offer multiple training opportunities to women who serve as mentors to girls. The annual Counselor’s Leadership Conference was held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, last summer. The 500 women who attended this conference, and the nearly 3,400 women who attended a regional retreat or one of 25 area-wide fall workshops, received training in how to effectively mentor girls, use the program materials, and deepen their own relationship with God.

God has been so very good to this ministry, allowing us the opportunity to minister to more and more girls. Recently, he has created yet another opportunity for GEMS to reach even more girls by calling us to begin clubs in Africa. We look forward to the Spirit’s leading in this new work that he has called us to begin.

GEMS Girls’ Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Youth Unlimited

At Youth Unlimited, we continue to focus on helping churches challenge their youth to accept Christ and transform their world for him. This mission has sustained us throughout the years and looks to continue for generations to come. Serving the youth of the church is a privilege and is not taken lightly within our offices. We understand the importance of growing spiritual

foundations throughout the years of middle school and high school, and the programs and resources we provide are focused on that.

Spiritual Emphasis Week (SEW) has been renamed One Week. The renaming is meant to bring communities to an understanding of what these five days in their student's school is meant to be—One Week of focusing on the spiritual growth and formation of their youth. Parent's encouragement night and coffees with pastors and youth leaders at the school bridge the relationships of all those involved in the rearing of the students. School staff actively participates in these events, and the YU speaker facilitates discussions among the groups as well as time for prayer. We have been privileged to work with schools and communities throughout all parts of Canada and the United States.

The year 2006 ushers in three exciting praise and worship events. We begin with an urban conference, Where U At? Youth Unlimited has partnered with the Grand Rapids area urban leaders to plan a weekend event with main stage speakers and bands, fun and challenging workshops, and a college fair and small group materials to motivate leaders and their students to move in the direction of where God is intending that they go. This is the first event of its kind, and we look forward to all that God has planned for it in the years to come. Convention will take place in Flagstaff, Arizona. Mr. Tom Tufts and Mr. Dave Lubben will lead the teens in what it is to be ONE with The ONE. Workshop tracks for students and leaders will intentionally equip and teach in areas of high interest. Converge, a middle school large praise and worship event will debut this summer on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Illinois. Middle school students and their leaders will experience teaching from Jeff Klein and high-energy worship by Casey and the Glowworms.

Missions at Youth Unlimited continue to be an avenue of life-changing experiences for all involved. From the mundane tasks to the mighty, God's presence is experienced by the teens, the community they are serving, the SERVE and ENCOUNTER host teams, and the families back at home. There are six sites in 2006 that are SERVE and ENCOUNTER combined, as well as twice the number of middle school sites due to their high demand.

Compass 21 continues to equip and support churches in multiple stages of development with their children and youth ministries. The process and resources available continues to develop and increase with the needs of churches.

Youth Unlimited

Rachael Cooley, executive director

STUDY COMMITTEE

Outline for report

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Appendices

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Appendix I: The Responsibility to Protect

I. Background

In February 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America sent a letter to the congregations urging prayer, study, and reflection concerning issues of war and peace (Appendix A and its Addendum). In May 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America received, reviewed, and forwarded to Synod 2003 a war and peace report that was prepared for it by an ad hoc committee (Appendix B). The report presented the Board of Trustees and synod with a summary of issues that required more in-depth study. Synod adopted the recommendations of the Board of Trustees (Appendix C) and appointed a committee (Appendix D) to study the issues raised by the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Synod asked the committee to give special attention to the following:

- 1) The just war theory as an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force. This exploration recognizes that the state has been given the power of the sword.
- 2) The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- 3) The use of military force in preemptive and preventive warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- 4) The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- 5) The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 638-39)

These considerations form the mandate for this committee and for the report that follows.

II. Executive summary

The body of the report, including its recommendations, will substantiate our committee's response to the five issues identified by Synod 2003:

A. We affirm that the criteria developed over centuries for assessing justifiable warfare are necessary for evaluating a government's decision to engage in war. However, because of changes in the international context, more needs to be said about the limited conditions under which war might be justified, and this issue needs to be placed more firmly in the context of our call by God to be peacemakers.

B. Since World War II, the framework of international relations has changed dramatically with (1) an ever increasing interdependence among states and peoples, (2) the emergence of many states without adequate governments, and (3) the development of many new nonstate actors who have either a positive or a negative impact on peace and conflict in the world. This context requires renewed attention to the importance of just governance, the peaceful ordering of society, and our role as Christians in this global context.

C. In recent years, preemptive and preventive military strategies have been confused. The just-war criteria enable us to make clear distinctions between the two. Preemptive military action is justified, under limited circumstances,

when the threat of attack is imminent. However, preventive warfare, initiating military action against a country or government that poses no near-term and intended military threat, amounts to little more than illegitimate aggression by the country that initiates that military action.

D. We reaffirm the declarations of Synod 1982 that nuclear weapons should not be considered legitimate means of warfare, and we once again call on all current nuclear powers to halt the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons and reduce the stockpiles now accumulated.

E. Our report seeks to articulate the urgency of establishing and maintaining peace as a proper purpose of just governing and as part of the calling of the people of God in Christ throughout the world. Warfare, if and when justified as a last resort, can only have as its aim the overcoming of injustice that violates peace and the establishment or recovery of a just and peaceful public order. We urge the church to understand more fully the calling of Christians to be peacemakers. As agents of *shalom*, Christians seek to establish and uphold structures of just government and work for peace. We include in our report, therefore, an account of the biblical grounding of the Reformed understanding of God's calling to be actively engaged in the task of peacemaking within and among nations.

III. Prologue

Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the [children] of God*" (Matt. 5:9). The apostle Paul urged Roman Christians, "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*" (Rom. 12:18).

What does it mean for Christians to be peacemakers today in the context of conflict around the world, international terrorism, and both conventional and nonconventional war? This is the important question we need to ask even as we reconsider the long tradition of Reformed Christian commitment to the just-war framework of moral reasoning. Contemporary discussions of the circumstances in which a country might legitimately use military force often show an ignorance of just-war requirements and may ignore altogether the Christian calling to be peacemakers.

Some Christians who say they take a just-war position mean simply that they support their country's current military engagement because they believe the cause is right. On the other hand, Christians who are worried about growing militarism counter by criticizing those who find it easy to justify warfare. Among Christians who urge nonmilitary approaches to the resolution of every international conflict, some consider all warfare to be unjust and at odds with the call to peacemaking. Rather than accept an oversimplified polarization as an adequate presentation of the alternatives, we believe Christians should reevaluate contemporary issues of war and peace within a well-grounded biblical-historical framework.

The first thing we need to remember is that the church—the people of God in Jesus Christ—is a community that transcends all national and state boundaries. The calling of all believers to serve the Lord together is the proper context in which we should evaluate our own country's responsibilities for peace and war.

The Bible charges us to consider how to live at peace with others (Rom. 12:18) precisely because we find ourselves at odds with them and often come into conflict. Biblically speaking, we know that this disturbance of right relations and the resulting violence is due to sin—our disobedience to God—leading to the disregard of our neighbors and even to hating and killing our brothers and sisters. One of God’s gracious gifts to us is just governance. Because of sin, the task of government includes retributive and restorative justice, punishing offenders, breaking the cycle of violence, and restoring order in human society.

Of course, God’s gift of government is not the only word of grace from God. Jesus came to deal with sin at its root and to establish God’s kingdom of justice and peace forever—the perfect government. In the service of God’s kingdom, we are called to support and contribute to the development of just government at all levels. Governments, like every human institution, can do evil and perpetrate injustice. That is why caution; criticism; constitutional means of accountability; positive proposals for change; and, at times, civil disobedience are called for in order to encourage governments to fulfill their God-given task.

Consider the biblical record. In giving the law to Israel, God authorized Moses to govern the people through various means, including the just resolution of disputes (Ex. 18). At his father-in-law’s advice, Moses then established ranks of lower judges. The cases they handled had to do with more than punishment. Emerging under the scope of God’s law were different offices of government to uphold justice.

God gave a whole body of rules governing Israel’s relations between God and neighbor. These legislative codes include the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2-17 and Deut. 5:6-21), the code of the covenant (Ex. 20:22-23, 33), the laws in Deuteronomy (Deut. 12-26), the law of holiness (Lev. 17-26), and the priestly code (Lev. 1-17). Among the laws were those dealing with personal injury (Ex. 21:12-36), social and sexual matters (Ex. 22:16-24), property protection (Ex. 22:1-15), money lending (Ex. 22:25-27), the sabbatical year (Ex. 21: 2-6, Ex. 23:10-11), and the Jubilee Year (Lev. 25: 8-17, 23-55).

The Bible’s wisdom literature and prophets also address the responsibilities of kings and other authorities, calling them to uphold justice, that is, to practice just government, which involved more than punishing offenders. This is what Job recalls as his greatest glory: to take his seat in the public square as a governing official. The people stood in awe when he “made the widow’s heart sing,” served as “eyes to the blind and feet to the lame,” and also broke “the fangs of the wicked” (Job 29). Part of Israel’s redemptive history was to be placed under God’s good law and under governing officials whose calling was to practice just government.

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, Moses recognized the victory as God’s; it was not due to Israel’s military strength (Ex. 15). In giving the Promised Land to Israel, God did not authorize a crusade of self-aggrandizing conquest. Israel gained the land not by its own power and strength but by God’s strength and authority. Israel’s military role in God’s cleansing of the land came at God’s command and was a tool in God’s judgment on nations whose sins demanded punishment. God did not authorize the children of Israel to make holy war on their own terms whenever they chose to do so.

Israel was admonished not to take pleasure in military power; this is especially evident in the biblical record concerning horses and chariots. The horse and chariot gave an army a huge military advantage, and they were used by the thousands against Israel. In Deuteronomy 20:1, God says, "When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours do not be afraid of them." It is evident that Israel then lacked these military instruments. From a military standpoint, it was ludicrous not to have them, but there were no chariots in Israel until David acquired one hundred of them (2 Sam. 8:4), rejecting the dictum God gave to Joshua in Joshua 11:1-9. Solomon then acquired thousands of chariots and traded them with the surrounding nations (1 Kings 10:26-29). Micah 1:8-16 climaxes with verse 13, where God calls Israel's militarization by means of the horse and chariot "the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion."

The horse and chariot are the biblical symbol for military might (Ps. 20:7). The only use for a horse in the ancient Near East was to pull a chariot; it was not a beast of burden, such as a donkey or an ox. In Scripture, it is Yahweh's horses and chariots that are victorious (2 Kings 6:15-17). God's eschatological word concerning horses and chariots and his vision of peace is stated by the prophet Zechariah when he says, "On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of horses" (Zech. 14:20).

God's covenant with Israel established, among other things, an order of just government that was designed to allow all to live in peace and to fulfill their diverse responsibilities before God. The laws of the covenant included penalties for those who violated their neighbors in one way or another. The prophets made clear that Israel's kings and other officials who were responsible to uphold justice stood under God's judgment if they failed to protect the people from those who preyed on them. When Israel's own sins became too much for God and the land to bear, God brought judgment on Israel, using other nations to cleanse the land of Israel's sins. To understand Israel's role as a nation with its own government, we must see Israel's history as the unfolding of covenant history, illumined by subsequent revelations in redemptive history, and culminating in the revelation of God's purposes in Jesus Christ.

Jesus came preaching the gospel of God's kingdom and, after his resurrection, announced that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In anticipation of the fulfillment of his reign, Christ has called us, his disciples, to love our neighbors as ourselves while loving God above all. Our righteousness is to reflect God's, who sends rain and sunshine on the just and unjust alike. We have no authority to try to separate the wheat from the tares and should love even our enemies, leaving judgment in God's hand.

Governments, moreover, have no authority to try to bring about God's final judgment of the world. Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles calls for Christians to try to reestablish Israel as a political entity in the land of promise. Nor has Jesus given his followers a commission to try to create a territorial polity for Christians based on some kind of new land grant from God. No, Christians are to go into *all the world* to preach the gospel of the kingdom, the good news that the risen Jesus Christ is King and Lord of all creation.

Yet, as the New Testament authors reiterate, there continues to be an important role for governing authorities to encourage those who do good and to punish the evildoer under the all-encompassing kingship of Jesus Christ. As Paul explains in Romans 13, government's responsibility to exercise retribution is a God-ordained responsibility, different from the expression of human vengeance that Paul rejects in Romans 12. Clearly, government's use of force has a limited and restricted role in the larger context of its responsibility to govern justly and to maintain a just peace.

In the light of this revelation, the early generations of Christians had to think carefully about the meaning of their responsibility to submit to and participate in governments under which they found themselves. In diverse political settings, they began to articulate criteria of just governing that would meet New Testament demands. Among the criteria articulated over the following centuries, they recognized circumstances in which governments should, responsibly, punish lawbreakers and use force to protect those subject to them. Those criteria governing the use of force laid the foundation for what today we recognize as legally authorized and restrained police and military forces. Government's authority to use force and to threaten to use force, when done properly, is one element of just government that, of course, entails many other kinds of responsibility as well.

Just governing for the common public good is essential to peace. Peace is not simply an absence of war; it is the condition of a justly governed society in which people can fulfill their many callings before God free of the daily or hourly fear of violence and chaos.

A just government may consider going to war only as a last resort to restrain aggression and restore peaceful order. Such warfare can be justified only in limited circumstances and may be pursued only in carefully restrained ways that will, among other things, aim to protect noncombatants. These and many other criteria are part of the moral reasoning of just war. Just-war criteria hold governments accountable. This kind of reasoning has also led to cooperative efforts among states to develop international organizations and international laws to prevent and resolve conflicts, to restrain violence, and to maintain peace. From a Christian point of view, in other words, police and military forces are not tools for a government to use whenever it wants to get its way in the world, but only as the means of upholding justice, establishing right order, and advancing peace.

Much talk in the United States today about the use of force presupposes that God has called the United States to a unique, even messianic, role in history to promote freedom and restrain evil throughout the world. America is presumed to be the last defense against earthly chaos, the ultimate bastion against terrorism, and the leading authority to protect the world from evil. These assumptions imply that military force is justified primarily by reference to the ends being sought rather than by normative standards that bind and restrain any use of force. Making proper judgments about the justifiability of warfare, however, requires a wider and deeper assessment of government's responsibility to uphold a just peace. Calling Christians to this critical task also demands careful scrutiny of the government's assumptions and actions arising from these assumptions that may be at odds with the gospel of the kingdom.

For all these reasons, a reexamination of the Christian Reformed Church's past statements on justifiable warfare needs to be undertaken with the utmost care to understand how biblical revelation illumines the historical path along which we are walking in North America and the world today.

IV. Just governing and the calling to make peace

Past synodical statements on issues of war recognized a larger context in which the church's discussions must take place. That larger context is the responsibility of the members of the church of Christ to be peacemakers in this world and to insist that the state fulfill its proper function in the world as an instrument from God to establish order, justice, and peace.

In closing, Synod would urge upon all to pray for righteousness and peace in national and international affairs; to study the revealed Word for an understanding of the will of God for the guidance of the life of citizens and their government; to obey all lawfully constituted authorities for God's sake; and, if a serious conflict of duty should occur, to obey God rather than men.

(Acts of Synod 1939, p. 249)

CRC members are exhorted to be peacemakers:

We who claim his [Christ's] 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 people, 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. 558)

The exhortation to work for peace is recognized briefly in past synodical statements, but they were not developed as a focus for Christian action. Actually, the synods of the Christian Reformed Church have said much more about war than about peace. They have not discussed the role of the church as the bearer of Christ's peace and as witness to the biblical vision of a new earth in which wars will cease. Our church has not addressed adequately the responsibilities of citizens and governments to set our own nations and the international community on a path that maintains just government, prevents war, and builds lasting peace. This committee desires to bring this larger context to the fore. If the Christian Reformed Church is to obediently play the role to which God calls us in the United States and Canada, we must do all we can to make our calling as peacemakers a central element of our worship, our evangelism and outreach activities, and our congregational life.

We begin with a brief review of the doctrinal foundations of Reformed teaching. While the historic forms of unity, to which the CRC adheres, call on Christians to cooperate with just and lawful authorities, they do not directly address issues related to participation in warfare. The Belgic Confession, for example, states that God "has placed the sword in the hands of the government, to punish evil people and protect the good," in order that "human lawlessness may be restrained" (Article 36). It does not offer any specific explanation of how this relates to questions of justified warfare.

Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 105 interprets the sixth commandment as a command "not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor," and adds that "prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword." The

sixth commandment is a far-reaching command, but does it directly apply to a discussion on war? It may not explicitly do that, but it does deny us the right to take the law into our own hands and gives a responsibility to the state to prevent murder. The catechism reminds us that there are more ways to commit murder than by causing death to a person's body. It calls us to remember the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21-22).

The two passages cited in support of the answer to Heidelberg Catechism Q. 107 clearly call us to our responsibility toward our neighbors. "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom. 12:9, 10, 18 NRSV).

Additionally, "My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2 NRSV). This commandment encourages us to preserve and cherish life.

CRC doctrinal standards recognize the God-given authority of governments, which Christians are called to obey, and the centrality of the commandment for Christians to show love, even to one's enemies. However, past doctrinal statements do not provide clear guidance on two key points relating to this report: (1) the legitimacy of government's use of force to resolve disputes and (2) our duty as citizens under a government as part of the body of Christ in the world.

While our historic Reformed creeds did not develop a position on the role of government in the use of force or the calling to work for peace, our contemporary testimony, built on these foundations, does address these matters. Synod 1986 gave final approval to *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as "a testimony of faith for our times, but subordinate to our creeds and confessions." That testimony includes the following statements related to issues of war and peace:

Article 53

Since God establishes the powers that rule,
we are called to respect them,
unless they trample his Word.
We are to obey God in politics,
pray for our rulers,
and help governments to know his will for public life.
Knowing that God's people
live under many forms of government,
we are thankful for the freedoms
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;
we grieve with those who live under oppression,
and we work for their liberty
to live without fear.

Article 54

We call on governments to do public justice
and to protect the freedoms and rights
of individuals, groups, and institutions,
so that each may freely do
the tasks God gives.
We urge governments to ensure the well-being of all citizens
by protecting children from abuse and pornography,
by guarding the elderly and poor,

and by promoting the freedom to speak, to work,
to worship, and to associate.

Article 55

Following the Prince of Peace,
we are called to be peacemakers,
and to promote harmony and order.
We call on our governments to work for peace;
we deplore the arms race
and the horrors that we risk.
We call on all nations to limit their weapons
to those needed in the defense of justice and freedom.
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,
confessing that our world belongs to God;
he is our sure defense.

V. The church as the bearer of shalom

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The Zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isa. 9: 6-7).

A. Peace in creation, fall, redemption, and restoration

For the Reformed Christian, the entire redemptive-historical record in the Scriptures points to God’s desire for his creation and the image-bearing crown of that creation to live in peace, shalom. Shalom includes justice, salvation, wholeness, integrity, and health. Shalom is human beings living at peace in right relationships: with God, with self, with others, and with nature. As Nicholas Wolterstorff articulates in *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, shalom is more than right relationships. It is joy and flourishing in those relationships. A nation, for example, may be at peace with its neighbors but miserable in poverty and therefore fall short of shalom. Justice, the enjoyment of God-given rights, is indispensable to shalom. Shalom is an ethical community wounded when justice is absent. Shalom is also a responsible community where God’s laws for his creation are obeyed. Shalom goes beyond these to include delight in the unfolding of God’s creation.

Shalom, in Scripture, is both God’s purpose in the world and our human calling. While the full enjoyment of shalom will be the gift of God in the fullness of time, partial expression of it in our life on earth now is also a divine gift for which we work. We are workers in God’s cause of shalom—his peacemakers.

Christians believe that Christ came into the world as the Prince of Peace. We believe that Christ himself is our peace (Eph. 2:14). The Old Testament prophets told that the coming Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), that the kingdom established would reconcile people with God and with the elements of the world (Hos. 2:20-22), and that humans would live at peace with God and one another (Isa. 54:13). Peace is an eschatological gift of the risen Christ (John 20:19). Being a peacemaker is also our mandate as part of the body of Christ in the world. We struggle to be agents of justice and shalom in a

world where injustice and conflict continually rupture Christ's gift of shalom. Recall the promises of Psalm 85:

I will listen to what God the LORD will say;
he promises peace to his people, his saints—
but let them not return to folly.
Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other. (vv. 8-10)

Shalom is grounded in God's steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness. Shalom, peace, is from beginning to end, the gift of Yahweh. It extends to all relationships—intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural, economic, social, and international. Peace is the antithesis of disruption and alienation: "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (John 14:25-27).

The church of Jesus Christ should, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be God's lead witness to, and a bearer of, shalom. The church is called to proclaim to the world the acts of God in history, including acts of judgment as well as acts of forgiveness and reconciliation. The church's testimony is of a God reconciling the world to himself, so that peace and justice may flourish.

B. The vocation of peacemaking in relation to governments

In the broad sense of maintaining peace with God, with neighbors, and with the rest of creation, every human institution and relationship bears some responsibility. Yet, governmental institutions bear particular responsibility for public peace by enacting and upholding appropriate laws and policies. However, without the means of stopping cycles of violence and restraining those who would breach just laws, governments cannot establish and uphold peace. Just governing demands that governments control the use of force and exercise it to restrain unjust acts so that society can flourish. Public peace and order cannot be established primarily by the use of force. The responsibility to uphold an ordered peace in the public square is not only a matter of restraining and punishing those who break the law, it is also a matter of trying to reconcile those who have experienced injustice and conflict.

Public peace also has to do with encouraging and protecting those who do good (Rom. 13:3-4). In the broadest terms, this responsibility of government to encourage the good is a matter of distributive justice rather than retributive or restorative justice. Public peace is encouraged, for example, when public authorities implement fair and effective public health policies; support parents in the education of their children; and protect the free association, free speech, and religious practices of all citizens. A peaceful society is supported by laws that enable the poor to find assistance, to get jobs, and to overcome educational and other deficiencies that hold them back.

One of the most important responsibilities Christians have as peacemakers, therefore, is to support just government at all levels: local, national, and international.

C. *The Christian calling: prophet, priest, and king*

As representatives of the Prince of Peace, Christians are to serve as agents of peace as part of their calling to be prophets, priests, and kings. As prophets, Christians are called to speak out openly when governments act unjustly or foment conflict. In the tradition of biblical prophets, Christians are called to speak truth to powers that misuse their position and take advantage of other people, thereby creating grievances and great inequities between those who hold wealth and power and those who suffer poverty and live without dignity, conditions that can lead to conflict among peoples. Active engagement, for example, in the promotion of respect for human rights by all institutions of society can contribute to conflict prevention. Exercise of the prophetic role of individual Christians and churches as institutions within communities is one way to be agents of peace in society.

Following in the footsteps of Christ who came as High Priest to reconcile people with their Creator, Christians are called to be agents of reconciliation. We may be called to take up the cross by accepting great personal costs in order to restore broken relationships. Responding to threats of conflict and breakdowns in peaceful relations at all levels, Christians are called to be active agents for God and his redemptive purposes. As citizens, we should work to strengthen government's work of conflict resolution and the reconciliation of victim and offender in crime and warfare. Throughout history there are examples of both individual and corporate actions in conflict resolution that reflect and extend the work of Christ in completing his mission of reconciliation.

Christ included peacemaking in the constitution of the kingdom he outlined at the beginning of his ministry on earth. Following in the steps of Christ the King, Christians are called to an active role as citizens, especially in regimes where their governing role is acknowledged, to build peace with justice. Christian citizens can band together to help create an environment that fosters just government, while calling on governing bodies to build peace and to refrain from militarism and warmongering. When governments are weak, or deliberately reject their calling to be peacemakers, Christian citizens may need to act independently or even in protest against their own governments to work for peace.

Christians should work within their political communities, insofar as they are able, for laws and structures that establish and uphold justice and peace as the central purpose of the commonwealth. The task that God has given to those who govern is to enact laws that build the human community and promote a political community that honors human dignity, protects freedom, and provides security for all. Christians will therefore participate actively in all aspects of citizenship: voting in elections, formulating policy, reminding those who govern of their responsibilities, standing for election or political appointment when qualified, serving in the armed forces and law enforcement, and taking up vocations that assist the government in the execution of its duties. Christians should engage in honest, open dialogue with the governments that serve us, always keeping a vision of God's shalom in our minds. We should insist that government enact laws that protect the life of communities as well as individuals, so that all can worship freely and engage in political discussion and action, so that families are protected, and so that the professions and the educational disciplines can openly debate and search for truth.

Citizens are also called to promote just government at the international level, both by influencing their own government's policies and by promoting effective cooperation among states. Christians who work for peace at home and internationally need to work together, and with others, by means of civic nongovernmental organizations, to master complex issues of law and governing.

D. The growth of peace work—a gift from God

It is important to take note of the historical development of the field of peacemaking as a gift from God. Since the time of previous CRC documents on war and peace, "working for peace" has become a distinct field of expertise and professional practice. (See http://kroc.nd.edu/ocpapers/abs_21_4.htm for a concise summary on research in this area.) Expertise in peace work¹ has been developing on many fronts, such as early-warning systems, conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution, peace and conflict analysis, and peace building in postconflict contexts. Both governments and nongovernmental organizations can actively engage in the work for peace. Specific initiatives to foster peace can be undertaken and funded by governments and international development agencies. Peace and conflict analysis can be incorporated in the planning of development projects in order to reduce situations that could create conflict and maximize situations that contribute to peace. In July 2005, an international agenda for conflict prevention was adopted by governmental and citizen groups across national and continental boundaries to help shift the focus from war to conflict prevention.

Christians as individuals and groups are making significant contributions to the field of peace work. In a recent initiative, Christians from a wide variety of denominational backgrounds and with considerable experience in fields related to peace and conflict have come together to propose and develop a concept of just peacemaking. Of particular interest in this connection is the synthesis of key elements of just-war theory and pacifism in a practical program of peace initiatives. For example, *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, a collection of essays edited by Fuller Seminary ethicist Glen Stassen, offers many instructive examples of practical steps for peace that can be undertaken by individuals and congregations.

Unfortunately, the resources now devoted to these newer peace initiatives are insignificant compared with the massive investment in preparation for war. Estimated global military spending totals approximately \$1 trillion and the world's military superpowers continue to augment their capacity to wage war. Around the globe, spending on arms exceeds development aid by a factor of 20. The United States military budget request for 2006, for example, is \$419 billion, and this is expected to surpass \$500 billion by the end of the decade, a figure approximately 13 percent higher than the average military budget during the Cold War. Canada's military spending is at a much lower level, and it declined 14 percent in the 1990s, but during the same period, its overseas

¹This report will use the term *peace work* as a broad term to convey the fact that this is an area of active engagement. This term is broad enough to cover a wide range of activities. The definitions of terms are constantly under revision as this interdisciplinary discourse matures. The international community has some definitions that differ from those in other disciplines and literature. The terms include some that refer to work and actions taken to prevent conflict, some that refer to work done to restrain opposing sides in conflict, and some that refer to postconflict work.

development assistance declined by 30 percent. In the last budget, Canada made a significant reinvestment in its military—much greater than the rate of increase in international assistance, which includes conflict prevention. Part of the Christian contribution to peacemaking is a plea to the governments of the world's major economic and military powers to devote a higher percentage of tax revenues and human resources toward peacemaking. (See Appendix E.)

The cost of war should not be expressed only in fiscal terms. It must also be seen in the human costs of war. There are the visible and publicly known costs, and, then, there are those that are not so visible. These costs are difficult to measure, but they are very real. The loss of the life of a military member in combat or combat-related operations is a numerical measure that fails to account for the pain to spouses, parents, and extended family members. Those who suffer the physical wounds of war are often not visible in the civilian community. Many are housed in medical-treatment facilities and in programs for the handicapped and disabled. There can never be adequate compensation for those who have lost their lives and those whose wounds have permanently altered their lives. Then there are the wounds to the mind, soul, and spirit—wounds such as the lingering fears of latent disease from being in the toxic environment of Agent Orange or the psychic numbing that results in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Still more difficult to discern is the moral injury that comes from the taking of life or losing a friend to the bone breaking metal fragments of war's weapons. No one comes home from war unscarred. The cost is staggering (see Appendix E).

Even training for war has both a fiscal and a human cost. Military training over the years has been designed to make the battlefield more lethal. This increased lethality brings costs to the military training establishment. Training with live ammunition is better training than training with simulators or blank ammunition, but it increases the cost. Training for Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) requires elaborate costly pop-up targets in cityscape environments to insure survivability of both the military person and the innocent civilian population. Military training also has a human cost because it is designed to break down learned civilian behaviors and attitudes and replace them with military behaviors and skills. This includes training to take the life of another human being. The government has an obligation to train men and women with the skills to survive in the crucible of armed conflict. The irony is that this means the military person becomes a more lethal instrument of war—a more effective battlefield killer. Anyone who has gone through military training knows the power of that transforming training environment.

Given these costs, the Christian Reformed Church can make a contribution to building peace by encouraging its members individually and collectively to engage in positive activities that promote peace and reduce the threats and risks of armed conflict around the world. Much of this will mean engaging our own governments to more fully exercise its mandate to actively work for peace, but it may also include activities that operate alongside governments, either to create political space for peace initiatives or to step into gaps when governments do not live up to their calling in this regard. This committee calls the Christian Reformed Church to examine what it is doing through its agencies to encourage efforts to promote peace, reconcile communities, and advance the cause of justice in our nation and world. (See Appendix F.)

E. Examination of past statements

In the context of peace as our first calling, it is appropriate to reexamine the record of the Christian Reformed Church on the legitimacy of resorting to war, adopted by synod in 1939, 1977, 1982, and 1985. Reformed church polity gives these documents no special authority of their own: they derive their force from their faithfulness to Scripture and creed. Nevertheless, they serve to mark a historical path on which we continue to walk—the path of faithful obedience to the revelation of God’s will as we face some of the most difficult and damaging consequences of human rebellion. The Christian obligation to be peacemakers and workers for peace must always be uppermost in our minds. The wisdom of earlier church committees and synods helps us to see more clearly how we can live out this vocation when war and armed conflict rupture the peace and order that God wills for our political communities.

The period between 1914 and 1945 was profoundly marked by two world wars. World War I (1914-1918) was the first total war. Whole societies were mobilized in order to supply national and international armies with soldiers and weapons. While the 1920s and 1930s were fairly peaceful in Europe, important conflicts took place in Asia, particularly in China. Most significant was the civil war between the Kuomintang and the communists; the Japanese occupation of Manchuria from 1931; and, from 1937, the Sino-Japanese War.

In 1939, when the Christian Reformed Church synod first put forward a “testimony regarding the Christian’s attitude toward war and peace,” Hitler had already swept across Poland. The United States, even while maintaining neutrality, edged closer to entering another European war. The political debate in the United States was set in the context of an isolationist political inclination, a fear of a worldwide conflagration in both Europe and Asia, and a widespread movement that condemned all wars as inherently prone to the horrors that attended the First World War.

The 1939 report resoundingly condemned “militarism as an attitude of mind which glorifies war as war” (*Acts of Synod 1939*, p. 241), while warning with equal vehemence against “the evils of present-day pacifism” (p. 241). The integrity of the church’s witness for justice was endangered, synod argued, by the “insidious propaganda” (p. 243) of those who “condemn every war, and hence, refuse to bear arms under any conditions” (p. 242). This position is untenable the report insists: “he who denies the right and duty of the government to wage war on just occasions is not in harmony but in conflict with the Word of God. His conscience is seriously in error” (p. 247).

To be sure, adds the report, the duty to obey government is neither absolute nor unconditional: If faced with a choice, we must obey God rather than men. However, this leaves room for “only one kind of conscientious objector” (p. 247) to a government’s call to take up arms—that of a Christian who “is absolutely certain in light of the principles of the Word of God that his country is fighting for a wrong cause” (p. 249). However, “as a general rule the orders of the government are to be obeyed” (p. 246), and “in a sinful and imperfect world, it may even be necessary to submit to an unjust law” (p. 246). Synod said that a Christian who cannot be certain that his government is waging war justly ought therefore to do as ordered. What are the conditions that define the justified use of military force? Surprisingly, the 1939 report has scarcely anything to offer in response to this question.

By the time synod again turned to questions of war and peace in its 1977 report, the world had changed profoundly. The United Nations had been established, along with many other multilateral and international economic and security organizations (such as the IMF, the World Bank, World Health Organization, NATO, and the Warsaw Pact)—all in response to the catastrophic consequences of the two world wars. Europe had recovered at last from the devastation wrought by World War II, while European economic and political dominance had been greatly diminished both by the rise of American power and the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa. In some cases, control was not passed peacefully from colonizer to colonized, and some colonies endured long and bloody wars of liberation. This process had consequences on the number of wars fought, as well as the types of wars that were fought. During the first half of the twentieth century, most colonial wars were fought to maintain control over the colonial territory. After World War II, the number of wars of independence increased sharply. Decolonization was almost complete by the mid-1970s, with the independence of Angola and Mozambique. One war that came out of this tumultuous era developed into a great contest in the Cold War between East and West—the war in Vietnam.

As a result of the change in the types of wars after World War II, the location of wars and conflicts also changed. Before 1945, Europe was the most war-prone continent. Many of the wars in other places had European involvement because of colonization. After 1945, this changed drastically. Most of the wars were now fought in the less developed nations in Asia and Africa. There were two main reasons for this development: first, decolonization and the wars of independence that took place in Africa and Asia and, second, the Cold War from 1945 to 1989. The emergence of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, as nuclear protagonists deterred both sides from engaging in direct armed conflict in Europe. The doctrine of mutually assured destruction was the centerpiece of the superpowers' defense strategy and was believed by many to have deterred another major war in Europe. The tension between East and West was considerable. The Cold War, however, was only cold in Europe as the superpowers intervened in other places with more conventional means. The United States, its allies, and China participated in the Korean War (1950-1953). In the war in Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China provided substantial military support from the north. The USSR and the United States assisted states in the Middle East and in Africa.

In this context, the church undertook to offer guidelines for reflection on questions of war and peace that would adapt historic doctrines to present circumstances. "All wars are the result of sin," the 1977 report begins. Moreover, "when Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,' he taught that there are no exceptions to God's command to 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" There can be no unqualified obligation of obedience to governing authorities. "The Christian should obey the state when it orders him to act within the framework of righteousness. Conversely, he should disobey every order of the state to perform acts contrary to the will of God, and he may not obey such demands of government as require him to sin" (p. 569).

How this should be applied to questions of war is difficult to articulate. The complexity of international realities, the limitations of our knowledge of other nations' needs and problems, and the constant temptation to pursue personal and national interest lead people to different and at times strongly held judg-

ments and morally articulated political positions. The opening pages of the report include a heartfelt plea for mutual understanding despite disagreement:

In the face of these difficulties it is not possible for the church to arrive at a neat set of morally binding rules for her members relative to war. At best she can offer guidelines that mark out boundaries, point out directions and dangers, and stimulate the mind to thoughtful, honest evaluation of the issues at hand. Such guidelines can do no more than assist the church and her members in translating into practicality and in implementing the principles of Holy Scripture. Moreover, the church cannot expect that any set of guidelines, however carefully drawn and conscientiously employed, will necessarily result in a unanimous evaluation of any given war.

In his unrelenting opposition to all war, the committed pacifist may not despise and reject a fellow-Christian whose conscience persuades him of the legitimacy of his nation's armed response to aggression. Nor should the Christian whose conscientious patriotism readies him to take up arms against aggression scorn and condemn the Christian pacifist whose conscience forbids him to engage in or encourage any act of violence.

(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 570)

The Bible in a number of places approves passive resistance, and, although this report concludes that war is sometimes necessary, and participation therein justified, we do not hesitate to point out that Christian pacifism has a long and respected history. The difficulties inherent in the problem of war and Christian participation therein, together with the imperfect moral state and limited wisdom of every Christian, summon all members of the church to mutual understanding and tolerance of the conscientious convictions of one another.

In fact, long before 1977, the historic peace churches had led the effort to legalize conscientious objection to military service. Although the 1977 report of synod did not summarize the history and outcome of that effort, the paragraphs just quoted suggest an appreciation and approval of the public-legal right of conscientious objection.

Against this background, Synod 1977 put forward a number of "guidelines for making ethical decisions about war." These guidelines offer questions that governments must address, according to the church's long-established criteria, in order to justify the use of military power and resort to war.

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 the 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. 571-72)

These questions convey the heart of the predominant moral position of the Christian Reformed Church with regard to war: that just governing requires the establishment and maintenance of a just peace and only under rare and unusual circumstances are governments obliged to use military force to oppose violent injustice in order to restore peace.

Subsequent synodical reports—that of 1982, “Guidelines for Justifiable Warfare,” and that of 1985 concerning the church’s response to conscientious refusal to pay taxes for war—update and refine the position that was set forth in 1977.

One specific application of just-war criteria to modern warfare in 1982 deserves to be highlighted: the unparalleled destructive power of modern nuclear weaponry calls into question the very possibility of a just war today. Although “there can be no objection *a priori* to the existence of a military establishment or to the manufacture and strategic disposition of weapons calculated to deter the lawless” (p. 104), the means employed in warfare must always be suitable to the goal of “achievement of a righteous and stable political order within which concrete human values are preserved and a well-ordered human society can flourish” (p. 104). In this context, the report concludes: “Although a just war is in principle thinkable, and in the past was concretely possible, it is at least questionable whether, in view of the destructive power of modern weapons, it can any longer become actual” (pp. 104-5).

VI. The current environment

Since synod last addressed issues of war and peace, the world superpowers have continued to pursue their interests on the world stage. In 1979, Soviet forces intervened in Afghanistan to secure continued communist rule in that country. Their occupation lasted for ten years. The United States provided considerable support for the noncommunist Mujahedin forces. The Cold War reinforced the ideological dimensions of several local conflicts that may have contributed to prolonging these wars, but there are also cases when the superpowers acted as a restraining force that prevented further escalation.

The end of the Cold War had little effect on the number of wars being waged, although the statistics on armed conflict around the world vary greatly depending on the definition of *armed conflict*.² War once again returned to the European continent. The disintegration of Yugoslavia followed by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina brought war and genocide to Europe. Some

² According to the definitions of the Uppsala Conflict Data project, in the period 1946-2002 there were 226 armed conflicts. In December 2002, the conservative National Defense Council Foundation reported 53 countries struggling with conflict during 2002, six fewer than in 2001. The Stockholm Institute of Peace Research (SIPRI), the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), and the research of Johann Galtung and Kenneth Boulding, are working to make data more consistent as well as to develop more reliable mechanisms for assessing those data. The Internet will provide any curious seeker a map of the world’s conflicts and data to highlight the geography of war.

of the new states such as Georgia and Armenia have experienced continued unrest since their independence. The republic of Chechnya is involved in a war with the Russian army. Old conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, that the world hoped would be easier to solve after superpower tensions eased, now seem intractable. In Africa, the 1990s saw war break out again in South Africa, Algeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Rwanda.

The characteristics of warfare did change significantly with the end of the Cold War. These are important for governments when they consider various choices about how to respond to armed conflict. Perhaps the most crucial for this report is the increased threat to civilians. The lines between military and civilians are blurred in contemporary warfare. That makes a big difference for the application of just-war criteria.

The international environment more broadly considered is also significantly different from the context in which synod earlier considered questions of war and peace in 1939, 1977, and 1982. The following differences deserve particular attention:

1. Increasing interdependence exists in an age of globalization, characterized by instantaneous global communications; dramatic increases in the flow of goods, services, and finances across state boundaries; and increased global engagement by nonstate actors such as businesses, arms dealers, criminal elements, humanitarian agencies, international social movements, and religious organizations.
2. The historical development of human rights and humanitarian law has added new components to international relations. They are significant because they inject components of universal respect for the rights of persons as well as states, public accountability for actions taken by states, and a foundation for citizen engagement in matters of war and peace.
3. The gap has widened between nations and companies that have great wealth and power on the one hand and peoples who struggle in abject poverty with little hope for improvement on the other. Over the last thirty years, repeated international commitments have been made to help the poorest peoples, but few of these commitments have been kept. There may be signs of potential change in this regard given the increased attention by wealthier nations to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by all members of the United Nations in 2000.
4. International governing bodies play an increasingly important role in international affairs. These have developed to manage interstate relationships in a wide and growing range of areas, such as security, trade, diplomacy, health, and environmental preservation.

Since the end of the Cold War, we have been faced with a world scene that shows a high but relatively stable number of major and intermediate conflicts across the globe and an ever-rising number of minor armed disputes. The categories that were used to consider conflicts in the past fail to account for many contemporary conflicts, and these categories are less salient in explaining the moral nature of these conflicts. Most recent wars have flared up within the boundaries of developing countries and can be characterized as intranational in scope. Yet, because they spread regionally, they often become international conflicts. These conflicts are characterized by the use of small arms rather than large weapons systems.

5. A wide range of nonstate actors outside of the government sector have a growing impact on peace and security. At least three types of actors fall into this category: international criminal organizations,³ international corporations,⁴ and international civil society organizations.⁵
6. The unprecedented military power, economic resources, and political influence of the United States have significant implications for international relations. The end of the Cold War brought a shift from a bipolar division of military-political power to a context where the United States can dominate militarily even if it still requires alliances of various kinds in order to achieve its military, political, and economic goals. While the power of the United States allows it to shape events and pursue its international goals, it also makes American citizens vulnerable to attacks by those who oppose its agenda and choose to use violent means to resist American power and influence. At the same time, growing attention is being paid to the emergence of new powers that are gaining global as well as regional significance in matters of peace and conflict. Thus, many analysts point out that the United States cannot achieve its international goals without taking into account emerging regional economic and political-military powers, such as China and the European Union.
7. The existence of national governments that either cannot or deliberately choose not to maintain a reasonable standard of justice and order within

³These include international criminal organizations, such as terrorist organizations, smuggling rings, drug dealers, arms brokers, gangs, and money-laundering operations. In some situations illegal forces can gain control over an area or over groups of people and commit atrocities against innocent people. There is a growing awareness of the threat from extremist organizations that are willing to launch attacks against civilians to advance their cause. While motivations include a wide range of ideological and religious convictions, a common tactic is the deliberate targeting of civilians as part of the strategies to incite division and hatred. Terrorism of this kind is an example of the private use of force (*duellum*) that violates just-war standards and undermines the order that is necessary for peace and justice. In some cases, the resort by groups with grievances to unconventional methods is an expression of asymmetrical warfare against forces that have sophisticated, targeted weapons capabilities.

⁴These include international corporations, operating across the globe with minimal regard for borders. Many have larger budgets than small nation-states and use their power and influence to shape public policy at both national and international levels. In some cases, private corporations hire their own security forces; in other cases, agreements with governments include the use of national militaries to secure their operations.

⁵These include international civil society organizations. These are also increasing in number; in range of activities; and in influence on public policy, including issues of peace and security. Humanitarian organizations, including many Christian relief and development organizations, provide international assistance to those in need. Human rights organizations operate internationally to promote and protect the rights of civilians. Advocacy for international causes is the focus of a growing range of international social movements and environmental organizations. International mission activity by churches is also growing, with its own impact on peace or conflict. There is recognition that civil society organizations have a significant impact on factors that contribute to peace or conflict. Many such organizations are engaging in more deliberate consideration of what they impact. In some cases, steps are taken to maximize the impact of peace building and reduce anything that might contribute to conflict. Governing this sector can also be a challenge for states with limited resources.

their boundaries presents a challenge to the international community. In many cases, civilians, who are not protected by their own state, appeal to the international community for assistance. With growing international links, conflicts spread across borders and affect regional stability very quickly, making internal conflicts a matter of international peace and security.

8. The proliferation of weapons continues around the world, including small arms as well as weapons of mass destruction. Such proliferation is at odds with the goal of fostering peace and threatens untold numbers of people with potential destruction. Just governing includes a responsibility to limit arms production and the proliferation of arms that threaten the lives of the innocent.⁶

VII. The just-war tradition

Princes must be armed not only to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment, but also to defend by war the dominions entrusted to their safekeeping, if at any time they are under enemy attack . . . everything else ought to be tried before recourse is had to arms.
(John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, 4.20.11, 12)

The position taken by John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is supported by references to the Roman Stoic philosopher Cicero and the early church's greatest theologian, Augustine. A just war, Augustine wrote, is one that is undertaken at the command of a legitimate authority and in whose prosecution soldiers "serve peace and the common well-being" (*Contra Faustus*, 22). Yet, wars are "evils so great, so horrid, and so savage" that a wise man will undertake even a just war in a spirit of sorrow and lament (*City of God*, 19.7).

"The just-war tradition" is the name for a diverse body of literature that reflects centuries-long efforts to articulate appropriate moral criteria for

⁶Since synod spoke on nuclear weapons in 1982, both Pakistan and India have tested and deployed nuclear weapons. In 2002, these countries reached the brink of war, raising fears of a nuclear exchange that might kill millions. Other countries, such as North Korea and Israel, are believed to have obtained nuclear weapons as well, while additional states are developing their own weapons programs. With more countries possessing nuclear weapons, there is increased uncertainty in regard to the doctrines and procedures that will determine their possible use. The unspoken rules that governed the U.S.-Soviet Cold War competition and provided some stability are no longer operative. Further proliferation of chemical and biological agents adds to the uncertainty and fear.

Preventing proliferation is difficult and again raises a host of moral issues. The utility of economic sanctions to limit proliferation must be measured against the harm such sanctions impose on the weakest members of society, while the use of force offers no guarantees in preventing proliferation. Some argue for regime change in the most egregious cases, such as North Korea. While this may at times seem like the most viable option, regime change requires the establishment of just government afterward, a long-term effort requiring the cooperation of the international community and much political will.

Positive steps to prevent proliferation consistent with just government include security arrangements that reduce the justification for weapons of mass destruction. International structures such as the Nonproliferation Treaty need to be strengthened or reformulated as well, along with concerted international action against states and businesses that violate their international obligations. Cases such as Libya demonstrate that proliferation can be reversed if concerted international action is taken.

judging whether and when governments may justifiably go to war and how they should prosecute warfare by just means. This tradition highlights and seeks to articulate the moral obligations of citizens and rulers in relation to the use of force in restraining injustice. The just-war tradition begins with the assumption that God has given those who govern the authority to use force, when necessary, as part of their responsibility for good governing. It also emphasizes the important distinction between the routine task of maintaining domestic order through systems of law enforcement and punishment, and the resort to warfare, which may be justified only in very limited circumstances when all other means of upholding peace and justice have been exhausted.

Some Christian pacifists believe that participation in any form of violence—even that involved in domestic law enforcement—is prohibited to those who seek to conduct their lives “inside the perfection of Christ” (Schleitheim Confession, 1525). If the threat of force is indeed necessary to maintain order, they argue, Christians should be exempted from any active involvement in order to follow a higher way. Other Christian pacifists acknowledge the legitimacy of the use of force by Christians in law enforcement but not in military action. What unites these strands of pacifism, and distinguishes them from the just-war tradition, is their conviction that warfare is always wrong for a Christian. (Writings from scholars in this tradition are listed in Appendix G.)

It should be emphasized that, when it comes to particular situations of conflict, the areas of agreement between just-war defenders and pacifists are often larger than their disagreements. Both sides in this long-standing discussion acknowledge the legitimate authority of government to employ means of force when necessary, while differing over exactly when it is necessary. Both sides agree that governments must seek peace and root out injustice. Both sides also condemn every resort to warfare that is driven by greed or glory and not by the pursuit of a just order.

Ethicists and theologians in the Reformed tradition have embraced the just-war tradition and have insisted on the importance of governments taking seriously the criteria developed within that tradition as necessary moral guides for the use of force to restrain evil. Their voices have sounded a needed warning against the danger that superficial deference to, and misinterpretation of, just-war requirements may serve only to rationalize nationalist ambitions.

How, we want to ask, does just and good statecraft seek to restrain violence, and when does it countenance the application of military power as a last resort in order to do justice? What can we, as Christians, do to give voice to the victims of unjust violence? How can we overcome the tendency to complacency and silence that is too often the church’s response to the complex tangle of problems involved in a nation’s decision to conduct military operations?

It is not our purpose here to offer an exhaustive or critical commentary on the elements that have been most prominent in historical or contemporary defenses of justifiable warfare. Let us note, however, that the requirements of justified warfare have customarily been summarized under two broad headings: right resort to war, or *jus ad bellum*, and right conduct of warfare, or *jus in bello*. Under the first heading, seven distinct criteria have been articulated that must be met before the resort to military force is justifiable. These are: (1) a just cause for war, (2) declaration of war by a legitimate authority, (3) right intention in waging war, (4) proportionality of ends to means

employed, (5) exhaustion of all reasonable nonmilitary means (“last resort”), (6) reasonable hope of success in achieving the stated intent by military means, and (7) the upholding throughout hostilities of the ultimate aim of peace. Under the second heading, defenders of the just-war tradition have called for limiting the ways in which military operations may legitimately be conducted by emphasizing (1) the principles of proportionality of means to ends and (2) noncombatant immunity or protection. (See Appendix H for a summary of these criteria.)

These rules for just resort to war and just conduct in war can be traced back to Saint Augustine of Hippo in the early Christian era, who drew in turn on the reflections of Roman pagan philosophers as well as the Scriptures and the early church fathers. From the beginning, this tradition has emphasized that military force is acceptable only when it is authorized by legitimate authorities for the ends of just government. Augustine develops his moral arguments regarding the use of force, for example, in a political theory that conceives of a good society as one formed by just order and at peace both within itself and beyond its borders. Indeed, for Augustine, the ruler’s right to rule is conditioned on his moral responsibility to secure and protect order and justice in his own political community and just and peaceful relationships with other communities. In the medieval era, Thomas Aquinas argued that three conditions must be present before a war can be considered just: sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention. Each of these conditions is related to a political good—right authority is related to the political good of order, just cause is related to the political good of justice, and right intention is related to the political good of peace.

The doctrine of justified war was further refined and passed to prominent Scholastics, such as Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1704), Christian Wolff (1679-1754), and Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767). Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin embraced this tradition, and its requirements were carefully articulated by the theologically trained jurist, Hugo Grotius (1583-1646). Among the writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries who have sought to reaffirm and apply this approach to modern warfare, valuable contributions have been made by Paul Ramsey, James Turner Johnson, George Weigel, Michael Walzer, Ralph Potter, Bryan Hehir, Arthur Holmes, and Lisa Cahill. (Works by these writers are listed in the recommended readings in Appendix G.)

Among the questions that Synod 2003 asked this committee to consider is “whether just war theory is an adequate paradigm” for Christians today. Among committee members, as among members of the church, there is disagreement over the answer to this important question. We are agreed that just-war criteria must remain essential in assessing the just and unjust use of force. Their importance lies in three contributions to our political and moral reflections. First, they call attention to the moral grounds for arriving at judgments regarding a government’s use of force and set limits for legitimate efforts to restrain injustice. Second, the tradition provides concrete guidance not only to governmental authorities but also to military commanders concerning what they may do and what they must not do, when involved in a military conflict that falls within these limits. Third, the tradition provides moral guidance for citizens in deciding whether to support, or to participate in, the state’s use of military force. Because the criteria for justified war pertain

to one aspect of the larger responsibility of just governing, however, their application must always be grounded in a broader context of just government.

While reaffirming the continuing relevance of these criteria, we must not expect easy solutions to complex issues of modern warfare. The just-war tradition provides an essential basis for moral discourse and public decision-making, but it seldom generates obvious or unambiguous answers. Difficult questions surround the construction and potential use of modern weapons, the use of military power in peacekeeping operations, and the legitimacy of war to prevent future terrorist attacks. Moral theorists beginning from the same assumptions and applying the same criteria have come to sharply divergent conclusions, based on differing assessments of recent events and their context.

The applicability of just-war criteria today is complicated by three important shifts in the realities of peace and war during the past century. (We considered adding as a fourth shift the discussion on preventive and preemptive war, but elected to discuss it below on pages 406-8.) The first of these is the prevalence of civil wars in which there has been no declaration of war by one nation to restrain wrongs committed by another. In circumstances where an oppressed minority takes arms against an oppressive government, it is difficult to identify any “sovereign authority” responsible for the common good. In defining what sovereign authority means, the just-war tradition appeals to an earlier classic moral concept of sovereignty. This moral concept stands in sharp contrast to a point of view popular today, often associated with the Peace of Westphalia, that defines sovereignty in terms of territorial control, making no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate rule.⁷ This is the concept that grounds the United Nations’ definition of sovereignty. A government that brings military force to bear in order to perpetuate a situation of grave injustice cannot claim to be waging a just war, nor is every armed rebellion contrary to the principles of justice on which just-war criteria rest. To resolve some of these questions, there is an urgent need for more effective international mechanisms capable of confronting governments that misuse their power to exploit rather than to benefit their citizens.

Current proposals for reform of United Nations’ policies and structures should receive serious assessment and critique by knowledgeable Christian observers and politicians. Increasingly, an international discussion is moving toward consensus that human freedom is more than just the absence of tyranny. Rather, human freedom is the presence of possibilities for human development, the respect of human rights, and the expectation of security for all. This concept requires a serious rethinking of the responsibility of individual states to protect civilians and the acceptance of mutual accountability among states to do so. One example is the Responsibility to Protect framework discussed in Appendix I. These proposals imply some form of universally accepted human rights norms and the willingness and ability to enforce these

⁷The work by Dan Philpott suggests that there is a greater “moral concept of sovereignty” in the original Westphalian settlement than previous scholarship suggested (Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, Princeton University Press, 2001). Operationally, contemporary thinking about sovereignty as stated in the United Nations system does little to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate issues of sovereignty. However, the definition of sovereignty is changing. The modern incidents of regime change have heightened the awareness of this problem as it raises moral issues in government and the international community’s desire to protect the vulnerable and those whose human rights were threatened.

norms through appropriate international institutions. In the light of our call to be peacemakers, it is imperative that the church, individual Christians, and their elected leaders engage in and contribute to these debates as well as to related issues of international decision-making procedures and peacekeeping operations (see Appendix I).

A second change that affects the applicability of just-war criteria is the growing destructiveness of war and its extension, in some situations, to encompass entire societies. The horrors of war are not new, of course. In the U.S. Civil War, Napoleon's wars of conquest, and even in some conflicts of the ancient world, staggering numbers of dead and wounded left no family untouched. In the wars of the twentieth century, however, war became mechanized and industrialized, with devastating results. The unprecedented power of military weapons and the difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants in many circumstances have compounded the difficulties of honoring the limits of *jus in bello*. Political mobilization in support of war, conducted more effectively with the aid of modern broadcast media, often leads to the demonizing of enemies and subsequent pressure for victory by any available means.

There is also a third change in the circumstances of conflict that has far-reaching implications for the application of just-war standards: the achievement of unprecedented advances in peacemaking. During the twentieth century, numerous conflicts that appeared almost certain to break into open warfare were instead resolved through the concerted nonviolent action of ordinary citizens. The leaders of these movements include several world-renowned figures: Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) in the struggle for Indian independence, Nelson Mandela (1918-) and Desmond Tutu (1931-) who courageously advocated nonviolence even while violence and injustice raged around them in South Africa's transition from apartheid to a multiracial democracy, and Martin Luther King in the civil rights struggle in the United States. Less familiar is the story of Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) in British India, who led an army of one hundred thousand Muslims committed to nonviolence in the struggle for independence.

Other recent nonviolent movements have been led by nameless but courageous leaders such as the nuns who blocked advancing tanks in the last days of a military dictatorship in the Philippines, the thousands of men and women who banged pots and pans each evening in protest against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, and the Danish citizens who refused to cooperate with Nazi occupiers but spirited the entire Jewish population of Denmark away to safety in Sweden and elsewhere. The iron grip of Communist oligarchies across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was broken primarily by determined bands of unionists, religious leaders, and other citizens who would neither relent in their demands for open borders and free speech nor resort to violence in pursuit of their aims.

In light of the requirement that war must be a last resort, these developments show us that war can often be averted by determined and coordinated nonviolent action and other peacemaking efforts. Even if we hold open the possibility that in certain circumstances resort to war may be justified, we must explore far more vigorously than we have in the past both old and new modes of resolving conflicts and healing social divisions as demonstrated by some popular movements for justice and human rights.

The just-war tradition dominant in Reformed churches differs sharply from the pacifism of the historic peace churches, and yet we can only admire the steadfast commitment with which Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers have worked in conflict-ridden situations around the globe, at great personal risk, to bring reconciliation and healing to war-torn lands and peoples. Is it possible to reject war in principle and embrace pacifism while upholding a Calvinist understanding of government as an agent not merely for restraint of evil but for upholding good order? The committee heard and took into account the arguments of those who answered this question in the affirmative. The corrosive effects of sin on every human heart and every social institution, they maintain, provide reasons for limiting governmental use of force to domestic law enforcement and that training armies and waging wars violates Jesus' command to overcome evil with good. Others defend, on Reformed grounds, a conditional pacifist stance: war may once have been permissible, they acknowledge, but the interdependence of the world's nations and peoples and the destructive potential of modern weapons now require us to forswear military force and to create alternative institutions to combat oppression and injustice. To the objection that renouncing war amounts to tolerating grave injustice, opponents of war point to the demonstrated futility of military solutions to most global threats to peace and justice and to the gospel's promise that when we act in faithful obedience we advance the coming of shalom.

Contrary to this argument, the Christian Reformed Church has historically upheld the possibility of justified war. Against those who condemn the just-war tradition as offering no more than a thin veneer over brass-knuckled political realism, we insist on the moral seriousness of this tradition and its indispensable role in any assessment of war today. However, the circumstances of war in the contemporary world are changing so rapidly—and the failures of the church's past attempts to restrain unjust warfare are so apparent—that we need to respond to the challenge of working for peace in a humble and respectful spirit. The deeper issue at stake here is that of the legitimacy of government under the authority of Jesus Christ. Condemnation of unjust war must go hand in hand with respect for governmental authorities as instruments of God's gracious rule, not as Satan's minions. Therefore, members of the Christian Reformed Church who are pacifists or strong proponents for nonviolent action should respect the judgment of those who, out of obedience to God, serve as governing officials and participate in the conduct of war, even if their pacifist convictions lead them to plead with the soldier and the politician that "there is a better way, a way of nonviolence and reconciliation." Just as the Christian Reformed Church upholds the public-legal right of conscientious objectors not to fight in war, so the church should respect and make room for those with pacifist convictions. This call for respect is in keeping with past synodical decisions and our Reformed history.⁸

⁸This posture is consistent with the statements of Synod 1977 as quoted in our review of synodical decisions. It also acknowledges the voices of a strand of lesser known scholars in the Reformed tradition. Among the scholars who have built a case for pacifism on Calvinist premises, for example, are C. J. Cadoux (*Christian Pacifism Examined*, 1940) and Geoffrey Nuttall (*Christian Pacifism Through History*, 1958), members of the Congregational church in

VIII. North American security strategies and international policies

Canada and the United States share many things in common, including a commitment to democracy, a long undefended border, and economic cooperation with each other and Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Canada and the United States also have separate cultures and histories. They face different types of threats and have different roles in the world. As a result, Canada and the United States have security and foreign policies that are quite distinct. In light of the changed international environment, the Christian commitment to justice and peace work, and the just-war tradition, the following sections reflect on contemporary directions in the security and international policies of the United States and Canada.

A. *The United States*

As discussed earlier, the United States is in a unique position in the world in terms of its power and resources. This gives the United States a special responsibility in the world to promote good government and justice. It also demands that American Christians adopt an attitude of humility and prayerfulness, knowing that dominant power is all too easy to misuse in the pursuit of glory or greed.

In articulating the broad outlines of American strategy in the world, the 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) embraces many worthy objectives. These include promoting human dignity, diffusing regional tensions, reducing the threats from weapons of mass destruction, and expanding levels of development around the world. Nevertheless, viewed in light of our calling to be peacemakers and the requirements of the just-war tradition, the document also invites a critical assessment. In the introduction to the document, for example, President George W. Bush makes the following statement:

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. We will build defenses against ballistic missiles and other means of delivery. We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense,

England. James Barr, a leader of the evangelical wing of the Scottish Reformed churches, as a member of Parliament campaigned for temperance, abolition of capital punishment, and renunciation of war. Another Scot, George McLeod, founder of the Iona Community, embraced pacifism after serving in the First World War. McLeod served as president of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, an ecumenical pacifist organization founded in 1917. A leader of the affiliated organization in the United States was A. J. Muste, a pastor in the Reformed Church of America who became a prominent voice for Christian pacifism and social justice. Reformed pacifists seldom persuaded church bodies to renounce warfare altogether in their official statements, but they remained an important part of the conversation. One scholar observes that "all the Reformed churches I have examined on this matter . . . while respecting the convictions of [their] pacifist members, nevertheless reluctantly concluded that in time of war the government course must be followed." (Alan F. P. Sell, "Some Reformed Approaches to the Peace Question," in *The Fragmentation of the Church and Its Unity in Peacemaking*, ed. Jeffrey Gros and John D. Rempel [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 123. This essay reviews the contributions of many of the figures just mentioned.)

America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.
(National Security Strategy, September 2002)

Defenders of the just-war tradition are troubled by the assertion that “America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.” While many just-war advocates recognize the legitimacy of preemptive warfare in certain circumstances that meet just-war requirements, they make a key distinction between *preemptive* and *preventive* war. Preemptive warfare is a response to an opponent who has massed forces or advanced other means for an imminent attack. Preventive war, on the other hand, consists in initiating military action against an adversary who, it is believed, may pose a serious threat at some future date. The implicit argument of the NSS is that it is better to fight now, preventatively, rather than later, when the opponent’s strength will be greater. Such preventive warfare, however, contravenes the *jus ad bellum* requirements of just cause and last resort.

Thus, in practice, current American policy makes no systematic distinction between preemptive and preventive war, important in the context of terrorism because terrorist activity tends to blur distinctions that are significant in a just-war framework. If a strategy of preemption has validity in the current environment, it lies in planning for strikes against members of radical organizations planning terrorist attacks—organizations that have made it clear that the goal is to kill civilians and who have done so in the past. Preemptive strikes against such organizations may involve military action against states whose governments support terrorism, if such actions could meet the criteria for just war, and possibly also against such organizations in states that lack effective control over their territory. However, strengthening international policing and nonlethal security mechanisms is a preferred approach and in many cases is proving to be as effective with less destruction than large-scale military interventions. We agree as a committee, however, that the preventive-war doctrine as stated in the U.S. National Security Strategy is morally unacceptable and that any use of preemptive military force requires a moral and military justification based on an urgent, imminent attack.

A second element of the National Security Strategy that raises concern is the doctrine of dissuasion. The document asserts, “Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” This policy of dissuasion implies the necessity of perpetual American military hegemony requiring continuous increases in defense spending and weaponry; thus diverting public funds from urgent needs in the areas of economic development and peace initiatives.

Both the policy of preventive war and the strategy of dissuasion suggest a quest on the part of the American government for absolute security. Providing security for citizens is one of the state’s most important roles. Nevertheless, overreliance on military power for security is counterproductive. When one nation increases its military power in order to assure its own security, other states feel threatened and respond by building up their own armed forces and weapons inventories. The quest for absolute security is likely to lead to an excessive readiness to resort to force, ignoring or skirting just-war principles. Slowly, the standards shift from fighting in response to armed aggression to attacking a state that authorities believe one day might attack them. Most

importantly, the quest for absolute security can be a form of idolatry. True security comes not from many horses but from God.

Just governing entails more than military security for a nation's citizens. Security also involves securing the human rights articulated in the internationally accepted documents. Denial of basic human rights threatens the security of persons because denial is usually accompanied by threats and punishments should a citizen claim the opportunity to exercise those rights. The denial of the right to exercise one's faith usually results in prohibitions and persecution. The same could be said of other rights.

In a similar vein, the requirements of just governing and the just-war tradition suggest that, whenever possible, security objectives should be achieved using cooperative international policing rather than military forces. Police forces are trained to use restraint and avoid violence if possible. In the effort to defeat terrorism, police forces are less likely to promote a culture of violence and less likely than military forces to generate a backlash that, in fact, aids terrorists.

American nuclear policy also is significant. The end of the Cold War brought a decreased likelihood of a massive nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia. Nevertheless, the Defense Department's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review made it clear that nuclear weapons would continue to play an important role in American military strategy. Moreover, some strategists in the U.S. Department of Defense advocate selective upgrading of U.S. nuclear capabilities. At the same time, the United States made a foreign-policy decision to withdraw from an active role in nonproliferation treaty discussions and indeed, withdrew from certain treaties, undermining international confidence in the existing nuclear weapon control treaties. Both actions increase fears of renewal of a nuclear arms race.

In particular, new designs have been proposed for smaller weapons that can penetrate deep within the earth to destroy buried targets while releasing comparatively little radiation into the air. Weapons designers have plausibly argued that the use of such weapons, if employed for tasks such as destroying chemical weapons storage facilities, could result in less destruction to surrounding areas and fewer casualties than conventional weapons. Nevertheless, this committee recommends that the United States government refrain from developing or deploying new nuclear weapons. In addition, the United States should conduct negotiations with other nuclear powers to further reduce nuclear arsenals, with the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament as called for under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

We reaffirm synod's 1982 decision to call upon the nations of the world "to establish a framework of mutual agreement to scrap these [nuclear] weapons." If the firewall between conventional and nuclear weapons is breached and nuclear weapons are used, the results are unpredictable and could be catastrophic. Furthermore, the development of new nuclear warheads by one country encourages other states to take similar steps. The United States should use this time of military superiority to advocate reductions in nuclear weapons, not to the development of new warheads.⁹

⁹As this report was being prepared for distribution, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a draft of a revised "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" setting out conditions under which the United States will consider using nuclear weapons in response to

Another significant and related element of the U.S. Department of Defense policy is the place of conscientious objection in relation to just-war requirements. An important part of our responsibility as Christians reflecting on the morality of war is to ensure that government policies respect the ethical conclusions that citizens make as a result of deliberate moral consideration. It is impossible, of course, for any government to give individual Christians a veto power over all decisions to resort to war. What is possible—and in the modern era it has become customary—is for governments to give formal recognition to the principled refusal of individuals to participate in warfare.

The issue of selective conscientious objection, first referenced in the review of the decision of Synod 1939, needs to be revisited. Synod has revisited selective conscientious objection in 1969 and 1973. The 1969 decision was a reaffirmation of the decision of 1939. The 1973 decision affirmed the stance on selective conscientious objection and supported amnesty for individuals who objected to the Vietnam conflict (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 79-81). There is a sharp conflict between the position of the Christian Reformed Church and the policies of the federal government of the United States. Past synods have been unsympathetic to principled pacifism, regarding it as inconsistent with Reformed views concerning the authority of government and the depravity of human nature. Synodical positions lend support to those individuals who find, after careful scriptural study and prayer, that a particular war is unjust. Selective conscientious objection has been honored as a legitimate stance for a Reformed Christian to defend. However, selective objection to a particular war is not, for example, an acceptable ground for an honorable discharge from military service, under the Department of Defense Directive on Conscientious Objectors, nor was it ever accepted as a reason for exemption from conscription during the period when the United States had a military draft.

The CRC should advocate a change in the policies of the United States' defense department to make provisions in policy for selective conscientious objection to current wars, especially in an all-volunteer force. Such selective conscientious objection, articulated with reference to the requirements of the just-war tradition, is a legitimate basis for honorable discharge from military service. Current policies protect the conscience only of those who, after volunteering for military service, are converted to a position of principled pacifism. The situations of those who cannot in good conscience participate in the nation's current military operations but who believe that military force is justified under other circumstances deserve equal respect.

Finally, the situation of the United States as the major world military power in the context of emerging international and regional economic and political

nuclear or conventional military threats or anticipated future threats. This new United States military doctrine is a reaffirmation and extension of the longstanding nuclear first-strike policy, with a new emphasis on preemptive use of nuclear force. Its effect, we find, is to deemphasize international agreements for disarmament and nonproliferation and to emphasize instead the readiness of the United States to employ its nuclear arsenal not merely for deterrence but for military purposes. Military strategists argue that the threat of a preemptive nuclear strike is an element in a deterrent policy, but this contradicts the position taken in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) that deterrence is not viable against modern threats. We can only conclude, given the language of the NSS, that the new doctrine is an extension of the preventive war policy articulated in that document to encompass the use of nuclear weapons. This development lends urgency to our recommendations regarding the necessity for nuclear disarmament.

powers creates an international context with unprecedented opportunities to strengthen effective and just systems of international responsibility. Thus, American security strategies can utilize American influence, in cooperation with other countries, to build, renew, and strengthen international law and institutions to uphold norms that will foster international cooperation in solving problems such as terrorism, violence, and poverty. Just as in the past the building of international institutions was vital for the pursuit of common goals, so, too, today creativity and innovation are called for to revitalize the institutions of international cooperation.

The United States should cooperate with other nations to rebuild or revitalize international institutions because national military power is often ineffective and even counterproductive when others see it as illegitimate. International institutions, properly constructed, can legitimize the contribution of forces from different countries to joint peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. Similarly, these institutions can help provide an independent assessment of whether just-war criteria have been met before coercive measures are employed to right injustices. Moreover, there are numerous international problems that no state is willing to deal with if its direct interests are not threatened. Oftentimes wars, famines, and other disasters in seemingly faraway places are ignored by the outside world. International institutions, provided with adequate resources, in conjunction with states, churches, and other nongovernmental organizations, are often much better suited to deal with these types of problems.

B. Canada

Core ethical principles about peace and war transcend borders. The Canadian members of the Christian Reformed Church and the government of Canada live out their principles in a context driven by a different set of factors. The Canadian context provides different challenges and opportunities to be agents of God's peace.

Canadian foreign policy balances several factors: (1) close economic and historical links with the United States across the longest unguarded border in history; (2) a strong commitment to multilateralism; (3) an economy built on trade; (4) distinctness of Quebec within Canada; (5) widespread respect for a diversity of peoples and cultures coming from all over the globe; (6) a desired destination for refugees; and (7) deep-rooted perceptions that Canada has a legacy as an honest broker and peace builder.

Integration and coherence among diplomacy, defense, development, and trade form the basis for a new Canadian governmental International Policy Statement, released in April 2005. Within a framework of human security and the international rule of law, rather than state security and state sovereignty, it tries to balance multilateralism with realism about being a neighbor to the United States. Of particular interest for this report is a strong focus in the policy statement on improving government in weak, fragile, and failing states. Afghanistan, Haiti, and Sudan are held up as examples for an integrated approach to security and development. While there is an expressed commitment to human rights and human development, security and prosperity seem to be the driving forces behind the new policy.

Canada's National Security Policy, entitled "Securing an Open Society," adopted in April 2004 has three objectives: (1) protecting Canadians at home

and abroad, (2) ensuring that Canada is not a base for threats to our allies, and (3) contributing to international security.

The policy created a new Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, which integrates policing—civilian protection such as public health with military measures such as intelligence and antiterrorism activities. Reflective of a Canadian approach, the department has an advisory council of experts in public safety and a cross-cultural roundtable of representatives from minority groups and religious organizations. It established the position of a national security advisor to the prime minister, who works in the prime minister's office. Improved security focuses on marine and aviation security, border security through a "smart borders" initiative, and changes to the refugee determination system.

Internationally, Canada continues to promote treaties for nonproliferation of weapons as well as defusing conflicts as preferred modes to prevent war. In addition to the renewal and expansion of Canada's armed forces with a more focused mandate, new initiatives will attempt to use Canada's experience with "unity in diversity" to help weak, failed, and failing states in both good governing and capacity building for counterterrorism.

The fine balance between competing factors is illustrated by conflicting trends. The national security policy, for example, includes greater integration with United States security policies. At the same time, Canada leads a strong international movement to adopt and implement the principles of Responsibility to Protect, now supported in UN reform proposals. Canada decided not to join the war in Iraq, resisting intense pressure from the United States, but it is providing ongoing military leadership in Afghanistan and aid to Afghanistan and Iraq that makes these two the largest recipients of Canadian aid in history. In the context of increased integration of military forces and security policy with the United States, Canada rejected participation in ballistic missile defense because of strong public resistance to it.

For the Christian Reformed Church, it is important to understand that the level and nature of engagement by faith communities in foreign policy formation is much different in Canada than in the United States. Churches with a long tradition of social justice have had considerable influence on Canadian foreign policy, especially decisions relating to peace, war, and human rights. There are ongoing policy dialogues on thematic and geographic issues. Present at these discussions are representatives of faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), churches such as those represented by KAIROS (an ecumenical social justice coalition of churches), and the Canadian Council of Churches. Both include the CRC in their membership. Church leaders are included on peace initiatives. Project Ploughshares, supported by the Canadian Council of Churches to specialize in peace advocacy, is frequently included in official government delegations to disarmament conferences, engages in regular dialogue with government officials, and does contract work in peace-building activities. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, of which the CRC is also a member, has focused more on religious persecution but also engages in regular consultations on human rights issues and peace building.

While there is broad support for much of the new security agenda, antiterrorism legislation adopted soon after 9-11 remains contentious and is under parliamentary review; churches engaged in refugee work are concerned about

many of the military security-driven policy changes. A public enquiry into the deportation and subsequent torture of a Syrian-Canadian, Maher Arar, under antiterrorism agreements with the United States, is raising serious questions about both police and intelligence activities. Public opinion is sharply divided about deeper integration with the United States, which results in foreign policy that seems inconsistent at times.

There is considerable debate within the faith communities about the degree of integration or independence that should exist among military defense, humanitarian work, and peace-building activities. Security sector reform, with a focus on police training that includes human rights, is a Canadian niche that contributes to the good governing focus of this report. Greater ambiguity exists about the line between peace work and war making in the area of capacity building for counterterrorism. Increased resources for development and peace building are partly a result of advocacy by faith-based organizations, who continue to push for Canada to do more in this area.

IX. A learning curriculum for the church

The Christian calling to work for peace is of growing importance in modern society, and peace work is a challenging task. Preparation is necessary for this task, as it is for other aspects of Christian living. The church has a vital role to play in equipping its members to be Christ's agents of peace in the world today, as well as looking ahead and praying for the perfect peace that only Christ can bring.

This is an underdeveloped area of Christian ministry within the CRC, especially for a church that proclaims that every area of life is under Christ's rule. Some pastors informed the committee that they do not feel well-prepared to preach on the subjects of justice and peace as they apply to current historical realities, beyond general references and general prayers. This has resulted in relatively few sermons delivered on the Christian calling to work for justice and peace, even though these subjects are a prominent theme throughout the Scriptures. Although there are some well-researched books on the subject, there are few educational materials for the average church member. Worship resources, especially those that reflect a Reformed approach, are very limited. Church agency staff members who need training in peace work draw on other traditions, which are appreciated but may not fully reflect a Reformed understanding of the God-given, positive role of just governance.

There is opportunity for the Reformed branch of the Christian church to make a greater contribution to this important area of Christian living. Interest is present within the denomination, particularly among the younger generation. Our young people more readily see themselves as global citizens; they expect to spend time outside their own national borders, and they may choose careers and employment that provide opportunities to actively contribute to peace work in their areas of expertise and influence. Christian thinking in this field is essential to equip them for service to God and to their fellow human beings.

The committee suggests that a useful starting point would be the development of a learning agenda to be shared by churches; Calvin Theological Seminary; other institutions of higher learning; Christian day schools; and service agencies of the church such as CRWRC, The Back to God Hour, and mission agencies. Given modern technology and the Internet, the church is more able to engage and enter into conversation on important topics than ever

before. Therefore, we request that Synod consider establishing a process to continue and encourage conversations in the CRC.

A. Establish a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace

1. Make resources available and accessible to engage church members in life-long learning, which is possible today with modern communications technology. Creating and managing a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace as a website would make material available quickly and efficiently. Selecting the best resource materials and linking information sources would make continuing discussion more realistically possible.
2. Some Reformed scholars have reflected on the issues of justice and peace. The committee urges the church to enlist these leaders to guide discussion within the church and to inform us of our capacity to exercise Christian citizenship at all levels of society. We also urge church members to inform themselves by reading helpful material written by Reformed thinkers and others in the Christian church and then to explore avenues for action as agents of peace in our political communities locally, nationally, and internationally.
3. The broader Reformed community could assist those responsible for planning church school curricula and for selecting topics for Bible study and adult education sessions to highlight the responsibility of Christians to be agents of reconciliation and peace. Identifying and producing a series of educational materials could prepare Reformed Christians to understand and influence the forces that build and sustain peace in the contemporary world and to refrain from actions that can contribute to conflict. Possibilities of such cooperation should be included in our ecumenical discussions.
4. Our Reformed community includes devout and dedicated people working in think tanks, in research agencies, in government, in the military, and in academia, who address these issues as a part of their professional life. The church needs to identify these people and recognize their expertise, but, more importantly, we need to give these people platforms and forums in the Christian community to raise issues, debate analyses, propose solutions, and publicly voice alternatives to the use of military power. Conflict prevention is served by addressing issues that lead to conflict before they develop into threats to good government, justice, and peace.
5. The church needs to approach organizations of government, peace institutes, and other agencies and organizations to identify what resources they possess and then use these resources to help educate our membership.
6. Making peace a core concern of the church, essential to our missions of evangelism and the establishment of justice, will result in helping us as individuals and our nations to push the use of military force to a last-resort consideration. Taking the road toward peace may be a more arduous path, but it may lead to a more enduring outcome.
7. The establishment of a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace, drawing on the resources of our institutions of higher learning, would greatly facilitate, enhance, and institutionalize our efforts to equip the saints for the work of peace. The committee has identified as possible lead agencies for this service Calvin College in the United States and Kings University College in

Canada; others may also express an interest. We recommend that synod request Calvin College to take the lead role to initiate this project.

8. As part of a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace, Calvin College, and other interested parties could plan and conduct a biannual symposium on interdisciplinary approaches to peace and peace work.
9. Discuss with the Reformed Church in America and the Reformed Ecumenical Council the possibility of their partnering with the Christian Reformed Church in this venture to establish a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace.

B. A pressing pastoral concern

1. The pressures of military service are so demanding that pastoral attention needs to be brought to these issues. Most pastors do not experience military life and have little contact with people serving in the military; hence they may not have an appreciation for the human cost. We addressed this briefly in the report, but these issues deserve more attention and pastoral care.
2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a prevalent mental and physical condition for veterans of war and military service. Statistics on divorce demonstrate the negative effect of military deployments on families. Nightmares, dreams, horrible war memories, and guilt at the taking of an enemy's life or a comrade's life in a "friendly fire" incident are postwar realities for military personnel.
3. The committee identified a need to develop materials to assist pastors in counseling members of their congregations who are entering military service, who are returning to civilian status after military service, and who have served in previous wars, as well as spouses of deployed military members.
4. Refugee resettlements and our experience with the Lost Boys of Sudan highlight the need for pastoral concern for the civilian victims of war.
5. Synod should request that CRC Publications partner with the institutions of higher learning to produce these materials and place them on the CRC Virtual Institute of Peace website.

C. Open discussions and dialogue with other Christian communities on issues of peace

1. The Christian Reformed Church needs open discussions with other faith communities who have thought about conflict resolution, prevention of violent conflicts, reconciliation, and peace building. A review of the documents of other faith communities suggests the need for additional paradigms for the churches' thinking about war, peace, and justice.
2. Many religious traditions see a need to move beyond the disagreements between pacifism and the just-war tradition to a new paradigm. Many emphasize a nonviolence that works aggressively for peace with justice in the context of shalom. This aggressive nonviolence demands a deep analysis of the nature and functions of the state and of the church's relationship to government.
3. The CRC is part of those discussions, but our participation must become more transparent and accessible to the membership.

X. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Carl Kammeraad, chairman, and Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., reporter.

B. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through assemblies, congregations, and agencies to affirm the centrality of the gospel's call to Christians to be agents of peace and to encourage members to take specific and intentional steps to fulfill this calling, including the following:

1. That synod acknowledge that previous synodical statements focused more on questions of war than on our calling to be agents of peace.
2. That synod publicly express appreciation for branches of the Christian church that have made peace with justice a strong vocation and seek to work more closely with them to enhance a collective impact and learn from one another.
3. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to make our calling to be agents of peace a matter of focused attention, including both prayers for peace and specific action strategies that deepen our understanding of the implications of our Christian calling and its applications in all areas of life.
4. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to set aside time for prayerful reflection on our responsibility as peacemakers and bearers of shalom.
5. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to pray for guidance for the leaders of nations to establish just governance, maintain peace, and strengthen systems for international cooperation and conflict prevention.
6. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to pray for the safety and well-being of those who serve in military forces and for those who bear witness to peace by participating in nongovernmental missions of peace and reconciliation in conflict-ridden areas.
7. That synod urge our congregations and assemblies to participate actively in building cultures of peace at all levels of society where we individually and collectively have influence; for example, participating in government and the political process, supporting nonviolent conflict resolution, strengthening respect for human rights, and protesting against increasing militarization and other tendencies that threaten peace and justice.

C. That synod acknowledge the pressing pastoral concern (see section IX, B above) and direct the Board of Trustees to encourage CRC Publications to partner with pastoral care experts to produce materials to assist pastors in ministering to members and their families who are entering the military as well as to veterans in their congregations.

D. That synod acknowledge the historical development of the field of peace-making as a gift from God and urge the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church, such as Chaplaincy Ministries, CRWRC, CR World Missions, the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, CRC Publications, CR Home Missions, and The Back to God Hour to initiate or expand peace-related programs

and inform the Board of Trustees and the congregations of the CRC of these initiatives.

E. That synod encourage congregations to urge their members to exercise responsible citizenship by calling upon the governments of the United States and Canada to give higher priority to their calling to be agents of peace through good governing. This could include the following:

1. Give priority to developing the institutions of just government that contribute to conflict prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution, and peace work, so that these processes have greater influence in the national and international decision-making processes related to specific conflicts.
2. Develop national and international security frameworks based on concepts of human collective security.
3. Increase national budget allocations to achieve a better balance between the resources dedicated to peace work and the resources dedicated to military defense.
4. Develop military strategies, tactics, doctrines, and training to emphasize the role of the military to be defenders of peace and security; thus acting as an agent of good government.
5. Reduce existing high levels of arms and take steps to control the international trading in arms, both large and small.
6. Prevent an arms race in outer space.

F. That synod acknowledge the need for international cooperation in our world and urge the agencies and members of the CRC to promote and actively engage in international initiatives for building peace with justice.

G. That synod approve the following ethical statements and direct the executive director to communicate these ethical concerns to the U.S. government:

1. Moral clarity demands a careful distinction between preemptive warfare and preventive warfare.
2. Preventive war is inconsistent with the moral standards outlined in the just-war criteria.
3. Preemptive war needs to be justified under the accepted ethical principles of the just-war tradition.

H. That synod instruct the executive director to communicate to the U.S. government:

1. Our opposition to developing or deploying new nuclear weapons.
2. Our support for conducting negotiations with other nations to further reduce nuclear arsenals, with the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament as called for under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the recommendations of synod's report of 1982.

- I. That synod instruct the executive director to petition the President of the United States as well as the Department of Defense to change the conscientious objector policy to include selective conscientious objection when opposition to a particular conflict is justified by the criteria of the just-war tradition.
- J. That synod direct the executive director, in cooperation with other Christian denominations, to encourage the Canadian government to raise the priority of the peace-building components of its foreign policy.
- K. That synod urge the Board of Trustees to encourage the Christian Reformed churches in Canada, through its appropriate agencies and committees, to participate more actively in policy development and programs for peace building, including participation in Project Ploughshares and other interchurch policy dialogues on peace and war issues.
- L. That synod petition Calvin College to take the lead in creating a Reformed Virtual Institute of Peace in collaboration with other Reformed institutions of higher education in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. The Institute will:
1. Establish and manage a web-based guide to resources for learning about peace and justice issues.
 2. Plan and conduct a biennial symposium on interdisciplinary approaches to justice and peace.
 3. Examine the underlying non-Christian ideologies that motivate governments to resort to and justify war, such as civil religion and messianic nationalism.
 4. Assist denominational offices, agencies, and institutions associated with the CRC in exchanging information and collaborating on strategies for peace-making.
- M. That synod dismiss the committee with thanks.

Committee to Study War and Peace
Paul Bolt
Elaine Botha
Sylvan E. Gerritsma
David Hoekema
Carl Kammeraad, chairman
Herman Keizer, Jr., reporter
James Skillen
Kathy Vandergrift
Peter Vander Meulen

Appendix A

Historical Background

In the winter of 2003, tensions in the world were high and the expansion of the military response to international terrorism seemed immanent. The initial response to the terrorists' attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., was to attack the terrorists' training

camps and command and control centers in Afghanistan. This response raised the moral question of the appropriateness of military force as the proper response to terrorism. Did the international community have other moral options, and did this course of action meet the standards of international law and the criteria of the just-war tradition? While these discussions were going on, the prospect for widening the military response to the country of Iraq became a real and immediate possibility.

Suddenly, the daily conversation of citizens in Canada and the United States focused on the morality and legality of a war with Iraq. The just-war criteria for justifying war were discussed in daily conversations. Pacifists were making the case for not going to war, and others were questioning the morality of the doctrine of preemptive or preventive war as articulated by the Bush Administration in the National Security Strategy published in 2002. Debates were taking place in homes, in the media, and in the halls of government on the role of the international community in any war with Iraq, the success or failure of the United Nations arms inspections, the possibility of unilateral action by the United States, the diplomatic construction of a coalition of those willing to participate with the United States, and on the urgency of the need to remove the Iraqi regime from power.

Within the body politic and within church bodies, people were divided on whether or not going to war with Iraq was the right and just thing to do. In the Christian Reformed Church, some were completely in favor of going to war, others were completely opposed, and others were not willing to decide because they had too many questions that remained unanswered. Following a spontaneous meeting in London, Ontario, of about one hundred concerned Christian Reformed members from the United States and Canada, denominational executives mandated that an ad hoc war and peace working group, facilitated by the coordinator of the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, draft a resolution for the Board of Trustees (BOT), with recommendations for action by the Board members.

The ad hoc working group reported to the denominational executives and recommended that the Board of Trustees agree to publish a pastoral letter to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church and that the ad hoc working group continue its work of drafting a report for the trustees to send to Synod 2003. These recommendations were sent to the BOT for consideration and action. The BOT approved the pastoral letter, below, that was signed by the chairman of the Board of Trustees on February 28, 2003.

At the May meeting of the Board of Trustees, the BOT members discussed the ad hoc working group's written report and the recommendations to Synod 2003. The Board of Trustees reviewed the report, suggesting changes and a reformulation of the recommendations. The written report was sent to synod as Appendix D to the Board of Trustees Report (see Appendix B). The BOT approved the following motion:

A motion carries that the BOT recommend that synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

A. The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.

- B. The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- C. The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war-fighting in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- D. The underlining theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

(BOT Minute 2737)

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church received the War and Peace Report from the Board of Trustees, amended the recommendations, and appointed a study committee. The recommendations became the mandate for the committee (see Appendix C). Synod approved the membership of the committee (see Appendix D).

Addendum to Appendix A 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 .

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)

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 Vandever, chairman

Appendix B

BOT Ad Hoc Committee's Report on War and Peace

I. Introduction

The Cold War with its bipolar balance of power relationships has ended. That result is both a blessing and a bane for the world because a common "strategic culture" no longer exists. In its place, we have a proliferation of highly lethal and indiscriminate weapons coupled with a major change in U.S. military and security doctrines. This is a radically new situation and has major implications for the Christian church.

An important corollary to this is the all-important question of power and the use and purpose of national power. This question is in serious need of informed conversation, and for us as Christians that conversation is urgent. The questions and the answers on the exercise of political, economic, and military power are increasingly divergent. The questions of the use of power—the efficacy, morality, and purpose of national power—are not being answered with one voice. Article after article in the U.S., the Canadian, and the international presses demonstrate that this divergence has sharpened since the events of September 11, 2001, and the American-led war on Iraq.

We are a community of those who follow Christ. We are part of a world that belongs to God—part of a fallen world, ourselves broken. This world has been redeemed—bought with Christ's blood, and we who acknowledge the claim of Christ as Lord have a special passion for a special task, the task of reconciliation and peacemaking. What is Christ asking of us, gospel witnesses and reconcilers, in our time of war, terror, and great opportunities for peacemaking?

In light of significant changes in the global context, Christians are asking how they can best fulfill God's mandate to be agents of peace, as well as how they should respond to current moral questions about the use of military force. They are turning to their churches and fellow believers for guidance.

This document, then, is principally a framework for a continuation of our denominational discussion on just war as well as an opportunity to elaborate on our previous commitments to peacemaking. It is a fairly narrow document that focuses on specific changes in the international environment, including how power—especially military power—is being used in our world. An honest and open discussion of the responsible use of power to kill or protect, to destroy or to build, is a discussion we must have if we are to become a community of reconcilers and peacemakers.

II. The church on war and peace

The Christian church has not always been in agreement regarding the permissibility of war. Pacifist, crusader, and just-war perspectives have all surfaced in the course of history. The latter perspective (just war) has prevailed throughout most of history and throughout the largest portion of the Christian church.

The Christian Reformed Church, in an attempt to articulate its own position regarding war and peace, has clearly taught that "all wars are the result of sin, and though God may use wars in his judgment on nations, it is his purpose to make all wars to cease" (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 569). In the same context, CRC members were reminded that "in all circumstances the Christian believer must

live by the law of love enunciated by the sovereign Lawgiver and Judge and exemplified in his Son" (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 569).

New circumstances require a new address to old issues and questions. The CRC has addressed issues of war and peace with substantial studies in 1939, 1977, and 1982. Our present world situation requires that we remember, reaffirm, and review the essence of what was said in the past before we undertake a new study of these issues.

We affirm that

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 people, 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. 558)

We acknowledge that

because of the uniquely Christian love of peace and mission of reconciliation, Christians know that all national truculence, all inclination—surely all eagerness—to fight, all crusading spirit, every proud display of weaponry and glorying in military might, is thoroughly immoral and contrary both to the letter and spirit of everything our Lord teaches.

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 562)

We are reminded that

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 the 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*, p. 46)

And we are challenged to further action because

whether to prevent the outbreak of war, to hasten the cessation of hostilities, or to encourage support of or resistance to a given war, the assemblies of the church, by

means of public testimony or petitions addressed to the governments concerned, must give clear and courageous witness to the teachings of the Scriptures.

(Acts of Synod 1977, p. 47)

III. Summary of key questions

- A. What has changed in the international environment to cause us to rethink our statements and guidelines on war and our obligation to build peace?
- B. As the preeminent military power in the world today, is present U.S. security policy, especially with its apparent changes in the definition of preemptive war and justification for intervention, consistent with the CRC's understanding of just war?
- C. What has changed in U.S. nuclear-use policy, and are these changes consistent with our understanding of the proper conduct of a justified war?
- D. How should the members, institutions, and agencies of the CRC be more engaged as followers of Christ and citizens of nations in actively witnessing to and building capacity for peace and reconciliation in our world and among ourselves?
- E. How can the CRC reflect on these issues from the perspective of the global church and God's global kingdom?

IV. What has changed?

Much has changed in the international environment since synod last spoke on war and peace in 1982. The following discussion highlights a number of recent changes that warrant consideration in the context of revisiting existing denominational positions on war and peace.

The end of the cold war meant a shift in the global balance of power from a bipolar arrangement to the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower. At the same time, regional and international multilateral bodies have grown in importance and impact. Bodies such as the European Union, the African Union, and the International Criminal Court offer possibilities for diplomacy, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping that did not exist before.

Another piece of this changing global reality is the acceptance of a new role for nations and limitations on national sovereignty. Termed *humanitarian intervention*, this approach seeks to limit state sovereignty when the state proves itself incapable of preventing human catastrophe, and it formed the basis for the U.S.-led war in Kosovo in 1998.

Other significant changes in the international environment are a direct result of the events of September 11, 2001. This terrorist attack occasioned a thorough reassessment of threats specifically to U.S. security and the potential responses to those threats.

The United States of America issued its National Security Strategy in September 2002. It is the present administration's articulation and definition of the threats to the national security of the United States and its strategy to meet those threats.

There are at least five changes in the world that underlie the rethinking of security needs and policy:

1. The emergence of the United States as the single world superpower.
2. The increase in terrorism directed at civilian populations in the West.
3. The increasing prevalence of what are called “weak, failed, and rogue states.”
4. The increasing importance and power of nonstate actors in international affairs.
5. The continued rise of radicalism and fanaticism that views the West as both corrupt and corrupting.

The CRC spoke last on war and peace in 1982, and more substantively in 1977, just after the end of the Vietnam War. None of the five issues numbered above were even within our field of vision, much less considered relevant to our conversations and deliberations at that time.

A. *The rise of the single superpower*

The rise of the United States as the sole superpower has created an unipolar world. In the bipolar world, there was considerable continuity and predictability as the two superpowers and their allies mapped their relationships and balanced their power. In the bipolar world, the threat was clearer, and the strategy of containment had been orchestrated and rehearsed so that each side knew the rules of international politics and the limits of the use of military force. (We should note that many residents of the developing world did not see this bipolar world as either stable or healthy. Many states were pawns subject to the will and whims of one or the other superpower.)

The role the United States will play as the sole superpower is in the process of definition and, as noted above, this has created the need for a discussion by the Christian community on the responsible use of power. The question is how, and to what end, the United States will exercise its political, economic, and military power and use its place in the world.

President George W. Bush states his view in the introduction to the National Security Strategy:

Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty. By making the world safer, we allow the people of the world to make their own lives better. We will defend this just peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.

(National Security Strategy, September 2002)

In acting unilaterally, is the United States undermining the very balance of power it seeks to advance? The United States is not seeking to achieve a military balance of power as in the Cold War; so what is the balance of power it seeks to establish? Power can be used for good or ill, yet the pitfalls of unchecked power are well documented.

What are we called to do and be as citizens of the United States and Canada who hold ultimate allegiance to Jesus as Lord?

B. *Increase in terrorism*

Although the attacks on U.S. embassies, military installations, and finally the World Trade Center and the Pentagon focused North American minds on their own vulnerability to terrorists, U.S. (and other countries') political leadership views terrorism as a global and increasingly pervasive, dangerous problem:

The United States is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach. The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism—premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents.

(National Security Strategy, September 2002)

Terror, terrorism, and terrorists are labels that we need to use with care. They can function as useful terms with which to construct helpful discussions, or they can be used as slurs and epithets to vilify and demonize those struggling for causes with which we do not agree or that seem to threaten our interests—much as the term *communist* came to be used in the West during the Cold War.

The U.S. Department of State publishes a list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. In August of 2002, thirty-four organizations were on that list.

However, terror goes beyond the definitions in the National Security Strategy. Terror is having your farm seized in Zimbabwe. Terror is on the face of a young mother waiting to be stoned as an adulteress in Nigeria or on the faces of the Lost Boys of Sudan. The new religious laws in western Europe bring terror and fear to the religious minorities in France, Germany, and Austria. These terrors may not pose a threat to the security of the United States, but they threaten human dignity and the rights of human beings to live in a tranquil world.

The Christian Reformed Church works in many nations where terror occurs: Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Indonesia, the Philippines, Haiti, India, Russia, and more. Whether terrorism is the policy, or the result of a policy, the CRC works to build God's kingdom of justice and peace.

C. *Failed or rogue states, national sovereignty, and military intervention*

Weak or failed states present a unique challenge to the world. They are often repressive or disintegrating regimes that abuse and oppress rather than protect and care for their own citizens. The list of these states include Haiti, Sudan, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Congo, Bosnia, Kosovo, and more.

We must also be aware that such labels mask the root causes of such failures that in some cases may well be the result of past superpower actions and international economic forces. Nevertheless, labels such as these are used in the U.S. National Security Strategy analysis.

When boundaries change quickly, and new nations are formed, or when the traditional functions of states are not visible, then inevitably we have to rethink the meaning of nationhood. We are in the middle of an international debate on the meaning of national sovereignty.

James Turner Johnson contrasts two positions on national sovereignty. One is based on an interpretation of The Peace of Westphalia that defines sovereignty "as a particular territory and by a recognized government in control of it and its inhabitants."

The other, an older idea, sees sovereignty as:

an essentially moral construct; persons in sovereign authority are responsible for the good of their political community, for the “common weal.” This implies establishing an order that serves justice and achieves peace, along with the obligation to other political communities to support order, justice and peace in and among them. Failure to discharge these obligations removes the rights of sovereignty.

(www.fpri.org/enotes/americanwar.20021204.johnson)

Awareness of human rights and humanitarian issues have grown around the world, but the mechanisms to which people can appeal for protection are limited and weak. International intervention for humanitarian protection has been controversial when it has happened as well as when it has not happened. Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo are examples of controversial interventions while Rwanda and Liberia are examples of controversial noninterventions.

In addition, the international response to appeals for assistance by peoples caught in armed conflict lacks consistency. The strategic importance of a country to the world’s major powers seems to be a bigger factor in determining the level of response than the number of people involved, respect for human life, or protection against egregious violations of basic human rights.

Questions are being asked in international policy circles concerning the need to reexamine old paradigms based on national interests and national security and to consider concepts such as human security that would give a higher priority to the protection of persons than to the protection of national interests.¹

We must ask ourselves: What are the root causes for failed or rogue states, and how can we best respond as church mission organizations, governments, and citizens? Can we help prevent war through insisting on a human security paradigm rather than a national security paradigm?

D. Increasing importance of nonstate actors

The nonstate actors are groups who are not associated with any particular nation-state but function in our world in powerful ways—sometimes for good and sometimes for ill.

One type of threatening nonstate actor is the terrorist organization that holds no territory yet commands allegiance and uses force to achieve its goals.

In addition to groups espousing violence, there are many other groups that are acting in powerful ways for better and for worse in today’s world. The globalization of our world has increased the number and power of nonstate actors. Nonstate actors also must include international corporations—industrial and business giants that wield tremendous power and influence in the globalization of economic life in our world.

Finally, there are also positive nonstate actors emerging in today’s world. The international human rights movement or the International Criminal Court are examples of these increasingly powerful agents of change.

¹ The report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, released in December 2001, invites public debate on the concept of the responsibility to protect as a principled basis for developing alternative polices and processes for humanitarian intervention. It gives priority to human security, in keeping with the principle of respect for all human life, and addresses difficult moral questions, such as just criteria for intervention to protect people who should make such decisions as well as the process for making such decisions.

In an international system of relations based primarily on nation-states and multilateral institutions, how do we deal with these entities? How do we make nonstate actors accountable? Are we equipped with appropriate international institutions where contacts and discussions can take place between and among both states and nonstates?

E. Increase in radicalism and fanaticism

A new threat lies with extremists who are not only in possession of powerful weapons but are also motivated by a powerful and coherent philosophy and theology. Paul Berman, author of *The Philosopher of Islamic Terror*, describes radical Islam this way:

people believe that, in the entire world, they alone are preserving Islam from extinction. They feel they are benefiting the world, even if they are committing random massacres. . . . The terrorists speak insanelly of deep things. The anti-terrorists had better speak sanely of equally deep things. . . . But who will speak of the sacred and the secular? . . . Who will defend liberal principles in spite of liberal society's every failure? President George Bush in his speech to Congress a few days after the Sept. 11 attacks announced that he was going to wage a war of ideas. He has done no such thing. . . . Philosophers and religious leaders will have to do this on their own. Are they doing so? Armies are in motion, but are the philosophers and religious leaders, the liberal thinkers, likewise in motion?

(www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/magazine/23GURU.html)

What does Reformed Christianity have to contribute to this conversation?

These new international realities are influencing the shape of the National Security Strategy of the United States and are the climate within which peace and security are sought.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America, a binational church with ministries and partners all over the world, has a unique and important role to play in this conversation. We are citizens of the kingdom but also citizens of nations. As such we are responsible for their policies.

V. Changes in U.S. security policy that raise questions in just-war thinking

The apparent inability of the United States to stop or contain aggression, and the ability by others to produce, disperse, and use weapons of mass destruction, adds a sense of urgency and immediacy to the discussion of peace and security. In the introduction to the U.S. National Security Strategy, President Bush states the following:

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. We will build defenses against ballistic missiles and other means of delivery. We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed (National Security Strategy, September 2002).

In this paragraph, the phrase that is troublesome for those who defend the just-war tradition is: *"America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed."* The discussion about preemptive strike has been lively but not consistent. It raises moral questions about last resort and the two criteria of a clear and present danger necessary for a just war. Some just-war moral commentators deem preemptive force always to be wrong, whereas another

significant group says that it is a morally defensible position and has clearly defined criteria. This latter group usually makes a distinction between *preemptive* and *preventive* war. An excellent articulation of this position is the following:

From Jeffery Record in an article published in the *U.S. Army War College Quarterly* (spring 2003) entitled, "The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq,"

Preemption is an "add-on" tailored to deal with the new, non-deterrable threat. But the question does arise as to whether "preemption" best characterizes the new policy. The Pentagon's official definition of preemption is "an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent." In contrast, preventive war is "a war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve great risk." Harvard's Graham Allison has captured the logic of preventive war: "I may some day have a war with you, and right now I'm strong and you're not. So I'm going to have the war now." Allison went on to point out that this logic was very much behind the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, "and in candid moments some Japanese scholars say—off the record—that [Japan's] big mistake was waiting too long."

The difference between preemption and preventive war is important. As defined above, preemptive attack is justifiable if it meets Secretary of State Daniel Webster's strict criteria, enunciated in 1837 and still the legal standard, that the threat be "instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means and no moment for deliberation." Preemptive war has legal sanction. Preventive war, on the other hand, has none, because the threat is neither certain nor imminent. This makes preventive war indistinguishable from outright aggression, which may explain why the Bush Administration insists that its strategy is preemptive, although some Cabinet officials have used the terms interchangeably (p. 6).

A preemptive strike strategy has always been a component in American war planning. Preemptive strike strategy was true for the Cold War where first strike capability was a part of our mutually assured destruction-deterrent strategy. The indicators for using first strike were very clear, and both super-powers knew what the "triggers" would be. The current situation on the Korean peninsula has reminded the American people that in 1994 the Clinton administration had plans to preemptively strike North Korea. Once again the danger was clear and present and the criteria well established. In these cases, the guiding principle was that a "clear and present danger" was justification for such a strike. Hence, "just cause and last resort" seemed clear.

Prior to the beginning of the war in Iraq, many saw that regime as a clear danger but did not see it as a present danger. Hence, the preemptive criteria did not seem to be met. The present U.S. administration also stated that Saddam was not an imminent threat though a potentially dangerous one. Many of the nations of the world also questioned the need for a quick military response. Much of the conversation centered on this one issue.

Preventive war is not the only issue raised by this National Security Strategy. The definition of a terror event as an act of war opens the door to the use of military force. An alternative view would classify terrorist acts as crimes against humanity and not acts of war. Thus, the appropriate response would be a criminal-justice response rather than a war response.

A discussion of terror as a private use of force (duellum) would be an appropriate discussion for us as a church.

The doctrine of "overwhelming force" in the conduct of war coupled with the aversion to U.S. casualties opens many questions about proportionality

and discrimination in the conduct of America's wars. The problem of collateral damage and the acquisition of targets is also a worthy topic of discussion, even with the givens of smart-guided munitions and weapons. Overwhelming force has also given rise to a review of the nuclear weapons policy of the U.S. government. (See below, section VI.)

The existence of so many unstable states and regions raises the question of the use of military force in humanitarian crises, internal political strife, ethnic cleansing, and other acts by leaders of "sovereign" states. When is it appropriate to intervene in states that are violating human security by systematically violating the human rights of their citizens?

What do we as a Christian community have to say in this new moral climate about the use of force and the changing definition of the last resort criteria? The current definitions and conversation have been divisive, and many within the CRC look for guidance. There are serious and practical implications to this discussion, particularly for those who serve in the military, are contemplating doing so, or who wish to object within the just-war tradition to particular wars rather than to all war.²

VI. What has changed in U.S. nuclear policy?

The Congress of the United States directed the Bush administration to conduct a comprehensive Nuclear Posture Review (www.fas.org/sgp/news/2002/01/npr-foreword.html). That review was forwarded to Congress on December 31, 2001. In his forward, the Secretary of Defense states the following:

this Nuclear Posture Review puts in motion a major change in our approach to the role of nuclear offensive forces in our deterrent strategy and presents the blueprint for transforming our strategic posture.

In the Cold War, the United States faced a single, ideologically hostile nuclear superpower. This provided considerable continuity and predictability in the competition of the two global alliance systems that allowed both to prepare for a relatively limited number of very threatening possible conflict scenarios. The successful functioning of nuclear deterrence came to be viewed as predictable, ensured by a "balance of terror." The balance could be maintained as both sides negotiated the reduction of their nuclear force structures.

The new features of the international system, particularly the types of new threats, are dramatically different from the old bipolar balance of terror world. The new threat is not predictable; instead, the new era is one of uncertainty and surprise. The new threat comes from unanticipated challenges, a range of opponents with varying goals and military capabilities and a spectrum of potential contingencies that radically change the stakes for the United States and its allies. Of particular concern is the emergence of hostile regional powers armed with missiles and nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons of mass destruction. The United States sees these weapons of mass destruction increasingly in the hands of leaders who have few institutional and moral constraints and extreme antipathy against the United States and the West.

² The United States Department of Defense Conscientious Objector Policy does not recognize conscientious objection to a particular war, but only recognizes the conscientious objection of those from the pacifist tradition. The director of CRC Chaplaincy Ministries has petitioned for a policy change, which would recognize those who object to particular conflicts.

The U.S. defense preparations must now focus on a wide spectrum of potential opponents, contingencies, and threat capabilities. The U.S. political establishment believes nuclear weapons will continue to be essential, particularly for assuring allies and friends of U.S. security commitments, for dissuading arms competition, for deterring hostile leaders who are willing to accept great risk and cost to further their ends, and for holding at risk highly threatening targets that cannot be addressed by other means.

The new triad comprises a more diverse set of nuclear and nonnuclear, offensive and defensive capabilities. The introduction to the report defined this new triad:

This report establishes a New Triad, composed of:

- Offensive strike systems (both nuclear and nonnuclear);
- Defenses (both active and passive); and
- A revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats.

This New Triad is bound together by enhanced command and control (C2) and intelligence systems.

The new policy shows a determination to use nuclear weapons not only as a deterrent but also to place them in the operational force in a new expanded way. We need to think clearly about nuclear capability in the context of preventive war. The United States intends to keep and modernize its nuclear force.

The Nuclear Posture Review, at least those unclassified portions, makes no mention of the U.S. commitment under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to take concrete steps toward eliminating its nuclear arsenal—a commitment that was reaffirmed at the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review. The United States and 186 countries came to a global consensus on nuclear disarmament, declaring it the “only absolute guarantee against the use of threat of use of nuclear weapons.” Does the United States still support that policy, or has this latest policy review moved the United States to abandon this policy?

Synod 1982 said regarding this subject that:

10. The church recognizes that there exists in thermonuclear weapons and missiles a destructive power too frightful to contemplate and too sinister to tolerate. Considering the extreme difficulty, if not the impossibility, of limiting nuclear weapons if war should break out, the church enjoins upon the nations of the world their duty to establish a framework of mutual agreement to scrap these weapons, and to do so without delay under international surveillance.
11. The church recognizes that the decision to do this will not be taken if men and nations are not prompted thereto by the Spirit of God. It therefore calls upon all its members to pray for the initiation, continuation, and success of disarmament discussions, and indeed for the establishment of peace with justice.
(*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 105)

What should the CRC say now to these changes in U.S. nuclear posture?

VII. Helping to build peace and reconciliation in God’s world

Following the Prince of Peace, we are called to be peacemakers, and to promote harmony and order. We call on our governments to work for peace; we deplore the arms race and the horrors that we risk. We call on all nations to limit their weapons to those needed in the defense of justice and freedom. We pledge to walk in ways of peace, confessing that our world belongs to God; he is our sure defense.

(*Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, 55)

These principles have significant implications for international governance and the role of both national and international institutions in matters of peace, security, and protection of human rights.

We recognize with sorrow that there are situations that call for military action to bring about justice, and we have addressed such situations in the preceding discussion. Yet, our synodical statements and *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* also remind us that our ongoing purpose is to create conditions of true and lasting peace. For us as followers of the Prince of Peace, what does that mean?

In the political arena, it can mean resisting war and supporting creative alternatives. Nonmilitary measures of resolving conflict continue to expand and sharpen in expertise and effectiveness. The CRC and its members can contribute from their Reformed heritage to the task of shaping public dialog about international peace and security. We need to make sure our involvement in civil society promotes peace in every way.

Members of the Christian Reformed Church do have such involvement. They come in contact with and have influence on issues of international peace and security through a wide variety of roles: Missionaries, aid workers, public servants, and members of our military forces face these issues and their consequences as a core part of their vocations. Business people, active citizens, members of international organizations, and consumers (e.g., conflict diamonds) also have the opportunity for positive or negative influence, and, in keeping with previous synodical decisions, many seek the advice and counsel of their church in these matters.

When a situation of crisis occurs, the church has the moral authority to speak to the principles that should be guiding decision-makers.

Part of the ongoing commitment to peace involves addressing root causes of conflict and war. Poverty, oppression, and exploitation all contribute to insecurity and vulnerability and create situations where violence is perceived to be the only way to make change. Bringing security and justice to people frees them to realize their God-given potential. The truth sets us free. Love casts out terror. Christian witness can help mitigate situations of despair and make the soil less fruitful for conflict while acknowledging that there will still be other causes, other reasons, for war that cannot be remedied in this way.

Every day we have opportunities to contribute to a culture of peace and the way of reconciliation. Through the way we teach children to handle conflict at school, through our involvement with the criminal justice system, and through the way we deal with conflict in our churches or the ministries we run, we can bear witness to the God of love. In our day-to-day lives, we are to help people be reconciled to God and to each other. In the CRC community, there are individuals and agencies on the forefront of promoting this tangible way of peace.

Starting with those already leading us in this area,³ the CRC needs to elaborate on and affirm what it means to “live peaceably ourselves, furnishing to the world conspicuous examples of peace-loving, harmonious living” (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 558). Waging peace does not come naturally, and people need

³ CRWRC has programs in the area of peacemaking and reconciliation and a Peace-building Framework to guide its work. There are also two Coordinating Council for Church in Society (CCCiS) taskforces on restorative justice, as well as the experience of pastor-church relations from which to draw.

guidance, new skills, and a model for faith-based peace witness. The agencies and institutions of the CRC should play a strong role here in helping the denomination as a whole to renew and better live out our commitment to be agents of peace with justice in the world.

VIII. Recommendation

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America recommends that synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the war and peace report and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

- A. The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- B. The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- C. The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- D. The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

Appendix C

Synod's Mandate to the Committee

(From the Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 638-39)

2. War and Peace

a. Background

At its May meeting, the Board of Trustees received and reviewed the War and Peace Report (BOT Supplement, Appendix D). The report presents a summary of issues that need to be studied in more depth.

b. Recommendation

That synod appoint a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the War and Peace Report (see BOT Supplement, Appendix D) and recommend guidelines and advice for the church. Special attention should be given to the following:

- 1) The just war theory as an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force. This exploration recognizes that the state has been given the power of the sword.
- 2) The changed international environment and its implications for the CRC's position regarding the use of military power.
- 3) The use of military force in preemptive and preventative warfare and how these relate to the principles of just war such as just cause, last resort, and competent authority.
- 4) The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons as legitimate instruments of war in light of synod's declarations in 1982.
- 5) The underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping to inform the conscience and praxis of the church.

Appendix D

Membership of the Committee to Study War and Peace

Dr. Paul Bolt, faculty member at the U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries of the CRC (ex-officio)

Dr. Elaine Botha, faculty member at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario

Mr. Syl Gerritsma, a small business owner in St Catharines, Ontario

Dr. David Hoekema, faculty member of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Rev. Carl Kammeraad, pastor at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan and chaplain, U.S. Air Force Reserves

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director of Chaplaincy Ministries for the CRC and retired U.S. Army chaplain

Dr. James Skillen, president and director of the Center for Public Justice

Ms. Kathy Vandergrift, director of Public Policy for World Vision, Canada

Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator, Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action for the CRC (ex-officio)

Rev. Rick Williams, pastor at Pullman CRC, Chicago, Illinois (asked to be excused and left the committee)

Appendix E

Stories, Facts, and Figures on the Cost of War

(Compiled in August 2005 by the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action)

I. General

Since 1990, conflict has killed about 3.6 million people. Ninety percent who die or are injured are civilians.

—Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*

In 2002, there were a total of thirty-seven armed conflicts in twenty-nine countries. One fourth of the countries in Africa and the Middle East and one fifth of the countries in Asia are in conflict.

—Source: *Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflicts Report 2003*

Number of armed conflicts in 2003: thirty-six (in twenty-eight countries)

—Source: *Project Ploughshares: Swords and Ploughshares 2004*

II. Children

The estimated number of children killed in conflicts since 1990 is 1.6 million. The estimated rise in the under-five mortality rate during a “typical” five-year war is 13 percent.

—Source: UNICEF

Nanfa was only six years old when the rebels attacked her town. She fled into the bush. That first night, she curled up between a rock and a tree to sleep. She was missing for a week. When Nanfa finally found her parents, her mother asked, “How could you go to sleep next to a rock? Weren’t you afraid?” Nanfa said, “You always taught us to pray before going to bed, so that night I prayed, ‘Papa God, here I am.’”

—From CRWRC/CRWM Sierra Leone Campaign, story related by missionaries Paul and Mary Kortenhoven

“They gave me pills that made me crazy. When the craziness got in my head, I beat people on their heads and hurt them until they bled. When the craziness got out of my head I felt guilty. If I remembered the person I went to them and apologized. If they did not accept my apology, I felt bad.”

—13-year old former child soldier from Liberia, Human Rights Watch interview, Liberia, April 1994

There are an estimated three hundred thousand child soldiers worldwide.

— Source: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict

For the Ecumenical Commission for Justice and Peace (ECJP), a CRWRC partner in Nigeria, it has become evident in the last few years that the role of youth in the great picture of justice and peace in Nigeria is vital. Any sort of uprising or conflict is always swarmed with young people (high school age to 30s), who only provoke the situation, birthing violence.

In light of this realization, the Ecumenical Commission for Justice and Peace has begun two projects: (1)The Youth Development Centre—complete with a net café and recreational centre where youth also learn biblical principles and become equipped with tools for promoting justice and peace. (2)The Youth Peace Club, which is starting in three of the local secondary schools.

Recently my coworker Daniel and I went to the schools where we introduced the Peace Club, inviting students to join. We hope to encourage the students to be leaders of integrity and peace in one of the most conflict-prone areas of Nigeria. They will learn to recognize some of the warning signals of conflict and acquire skills in conflict resolution, mediation, and communication. In one school alone we had 250 students sign up!

—From CRWRC Nigeria intern, Naomi Schalm

III. Women

As many as 257,000 Sierra Leonean women and girls may have been raped during the civil war. Sexual violence was used to terrorize, punish, and subdue the civilian population.

— Source: Human Rights Watch, We'll Kill You if You Cry: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict, 2003

Up to 80 percent of displaced people worldwide are women and children.

— Source: UNIFEM

A country is more likely to become a source of trafficking victims after sudden political change, economic collapse, civil unrest, internal armed conflict, or natural disaster. Because of the economic damage caused by such upheavals, people—particularly women and children—may be one of the region's few marketable resources. Conflict and other forms of instability compound the vulnerabilities that already exist for women.

— Source: UNIFEM

Women's bodies, deliberately infected with HIV / AIDS or carrying a child conceived in rape, have been used as means to undermine, disgrace, and threaten the perceived enemy. In Rwanda, at least 250,000 — perhaps as many as 500,000—women were raped during the 1994 genocide.

— Source: *Human Rights Watch, Shattered Lives, 1996*

IV. Poverty and development

Twelve percent of the countries ranked in the top half of the UN Human Development Index (HDI) 2002 experienced armed conflicts during the ten-year period 1993-2002; forty-three percent of the countries in the bottom half of the HDI listing were at war during the same period. Forty-eight percent of the countries in the bottom third of the ranking were at war in the past decade.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares, Armed Conflict Report 2003*

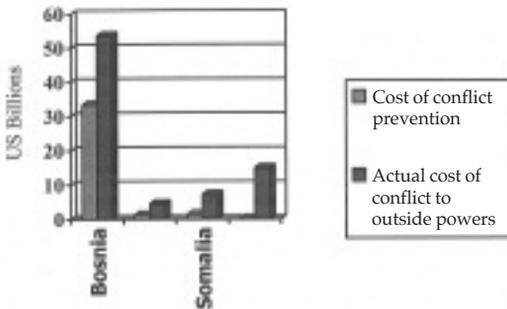
After the typical civil war, incomes are about fifteen percent lower than they would have been.

— Source: *Paul Collier, Breaking the Conflict Trap*

It is estimated that twenty-two of the thirty-four countries that are furthest away from achieving the Millennium Development Goals are affected by current or recent conflicts.

— Source: *UNDP*

V. Cost of conflict vs. prevention



The total cost of peacekeeping and postconflict relief in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Macedonia was US\$80.5 billion. If preventative measures had been taken, there would have been a savings of US\$36.5 billion.

— Source: *Carnegie Commission for the Prevention of Deadly Conflicts, The Costs of Conflict*

Worldwide military spending in 2002 was US\$842.7 billion. The UN budget for peacekeeping in 2002 was US\$2.6 billion.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares: Swords and Ploughshares 2004*

The United States level of military spending accounts for roughly 40 percent of the world's total military spending.

— Source: *Project Ploughshares: Canadian Military Spending, March 2003*

Appendix F

The Christian Reformed Church and Peace Work

(Written by Peter Vander Meulen, Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action)

The Christian Reformed Church has been more deeply engaged in peace and reconciliation work than many of its members know. Although we are not among the historical peace churches, our agencies and institutions—particularly those working overseas—have been increasingly involved in direct programs to heal the trauma of war (particularly with women and children), to resolve ongoing conflicts, and to build and strengthen peace in communities and regions. In the past, this has been done largely in cooperation with Mennonite organizations or with those agencies and groups having expertise in this area, but increasingly we are developing our own denominational capacity for peace work.

The leadership in our denomination's peace-building efforts has come from CRWRC and from staff members such as Susan Van Lopik. Because conflict and war are two of the largest producers of hunger, poverty, and human misery, it is an inescapable barrier for any organization that takes antihunger and poverty results seriously. CRWRC invests international staff time and significant resources in programs of peace and justice and has seen good results.

War and conflict also destroys the fabric of community, church, school, and family. When Christians engage in it unjustly, the name of Christ is shamed, and the gospel is sullied. Thus, our mission agency, Christian Reformed World Missions, has also had to wrestle with this awful reality on many of its fields.

The CRC denominational Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, charged with education and advocacy efforts to get at root causes of hunger and poverty, understands that peace and conflict avoidance is a prerequisite for any God-pleasing human security and development. This office also has worked in several areas of conflict resolution and peace building as well as in advocacy with our own governments to promote the work of peace and justice.

In Canada, the Committee for Contact with the Government, from time to time presents to the Canadian government analysis and positions on issues of conflict, peace, and human security.

There are also nondenominational but closely related organizations that have done excellent analytical and educational work on peace and governing. The Center for Public Justice in the United States under the leadership of Jim Skillen and Citizens for Public Justice led by Harry Kitts in Canada are two such organizations.

Below are some very specific examples of the peace work of the Christian Reformed Church taking place circa 2005 with our local partners.

Kenya: Deacons Work for Peace and Security

Sinyerere parish is home to seven local churches of the Reformed Church of East Africa. Each local church has a full council of deacons. The parish elects its full deacons council of two deacons each making a total of fourteen. In addition to their more traditional deaconal work, the parish deacons council works in peacemaking.

The Sinyerere community experiences attacks by cattle rustlers from Pokot and Baringo districts. The aggressors steal animals and rape women. They kill those who resist and abduct girls. The reasons behind the frequent and coordi-

nated attacks are historical and sociological. Pokot culture allows men to go out and steal animals so that they can pay a wedding dowry. Morans (a different people group), however, use these attacks as rights of passage to manhood.

Attacks between March and April 2005 left six people in the Sinyerere-kapsara division dead. As a result of insecurity in the area, 4200 people were displaced and 30 cattle were stolen. As tension rose, the displaced sought refuge in schools, health centers, and churches. The deacons had a hard time dealing with this emergency because it was the “hungry season.”

A peace initiative was started in the parish following various attacks by cattle rustlers. Parish deacons started peace-prayer meetings in the parish. They invited the local administration, other denominations, and the area member of parliament for talks. Together with their parish minister, they formed a liaison with the National Council of Churches of Kenya and several peace and reconciliation seminars were organized by the deacons. Continued dialogue with the government resulted in the beefing up of security in the area.

At present, the government has begun a disarmament process. As of summer 2005, the area is peaceful, but deacons are asking for continued prayer and reconciliation efforts so that there may be lasting peace and security in the area.

Kenya: Peace Work in Mount Elgon

This area is located on the border between Kenya and Uganda, and communities here suffer from attacks every year. Conflict is always between the occupants of the highlands and the lowland communities disputing land ownership.

From December 2004 to April 2005, eighteen people were killed, forty cattle stolen and twenty houses set on fire. During the attacks, nine women were raped, among them a seven-year-old girl. The attackers used sophisticated firearms they had purchased from a neighboring country.

Deacons from the Elgon West parish of the Reformed Church of East Africa formed a group called the Amani Women’s Group—meaning Women for Peace. The group is led by women deacons, but membership includes both genders.

When conflict erupted in the district’s troubled area, the deacons started prayer meetings, and joined hands with the National Council of Churches of Kenya’s rural women’s peace link. During their initial meetings, the deacons promoted dialogue among families, churches, communities, government, and society as a whole. They approached the local administration who strengthened security in the area.

Kenya Summary

The government’s disarmament response brought initial calm to the areas. The peace dialogues, meetings, and seminars enabled the communities to go back to their daily farming and trading activities with some confidence that peace could continue to grow.

The Reformed church’s step of collaborating with NCCCK (National Council of Churches of Kenya) to address insecurity in the conflict areas has been hailed by other churches who are also joining hands to promote peaceful coexistence as a response to the call of RCEA deacons for prayers for peace. The support of church leaders in the two areas that preach peace and harmonious coexistence is a strong foundation for deacons’ work in peace and security.

Nigeria: Church Leaders Risk Themselves to Bring Peace

Nigeria has witnessed a very powerful reconciliation between two warring factions of two groups of Christian Reformed Churches in the middle belt of Nigeria. The two groups of people are close neighbors and had been coexisting peacefully, even intermarrying before the crisis broke out.

The reasons for the crises center on boundary and chieftaincy disputes. The crisis became violent and led to the destruction of homes, properties, schools, hospitals, and churches. Worse, the loss of human life was unimaginable. The church had split along the same tribal lines with one group calling itself the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) and the other the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN).

The conflict became a national concern, and the Reformed Ecumenical Council along with the CRCNA's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action supported an initiative that began work on the conflict. In addition, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and World Missions supported this effort with staff time and financing.

The initiative started by identifying all the stakeholders in the conflict and brought them to the table for discussion using an external and experienced mediator. The whole process lasted for almost three years before something good came out of it.

A key to the success is the commitment of a local committee of young church leaders who worked hard and risked much to bring peace. The Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Committee (PJRC) mobilized, motivated, organized, cajoled, and persuaded people to gather and talk. This, along with the expert facilitation of Hizkias Assefa, paid for by the CRCNA, resulted in real progress toward peace and a formal peace agreement.

To mark the climax of the peace, the two churches have celebrated their coming together as one body, which has further strengthened the process.

Senegal: Women Have Power to Shame and Change Those Using Small Arms

CRWRC is collaborating with MALAO, an indigenous organization working against the use of small arms in Africa. The efforts are initiated by women, and they operate mostly in the Casamance area of Senegal. One of the exciting initiatives of this group of women was their work with the young men in the forest, urging them to give up their weapons and return to a life of peace.

Sierra Leone: Life after a Living Hell

As a result of the war, many atrocities were committed against ordinary people, leaving them traumatized, bitter, and crying for justice. In most cases, the offender had been someone they knew and who had interacted with them in the past. In addition, during this period, there had been enmity among people of the same family or community who have identified with or sympathized with different factions in the fight. The damage of war does not end when the open hostilities end. The hurt, trauma, and pain in peoples' hearts and minds continues to fester. Bitterness, malice, and desire for revenge were vividly evidenced in various ways, including verbal abuse, aggression, and death threats.

Consequently, there was a strong need for both government institutions and NGOs to work with people who needed lasting peace in their communities. The need to forgive and live with one another irrespective of what might

have transpired among community members during the war is paramount to lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

The goal of the CRWRC/CRWM trauma counseling and peace-building program (Mending Hearts) is to promote peace through training of animators in the skills to lead community workshops. Each workshop starts with an official opening ceremony to which community elders and dignitaries are invited, leading to raising awareness and sensitizing others in the community about peace. Another important feature of all workshops is time for devotions and sharing during which each participant can talk about his or her life.

Many women have received help to forgive those who committed crimes against them and have experienced at least a measure of spiritual healing in order to move on in their lives.

Indonesia: Christians and Muslims for Peace

The conflict in Poso, Indonesia, started in 1998. Since the Malino Peace Accord that was signed on December 20, 2001, there has been relative calm. The conflict began with a local political power struggle involving Muslim and Christian communities whose religious symbols were used as rallying points for the conflict. In April and May 2000, the fighting escalated and a frontal conflict between Muslims and Christians was ignited in a much larger area as well as in the city of Poso. In November 2001, there was another major attack of Muslims against five Christian villages. Two of the villages were completely destroyed. The fifth attempt at a peace agreement, the Malino Peace Accord, stands as yet another resolve of both Christian and Muslim leaders to work for peace.

The human result of the conflict is that there are around ninety thousand internally displaced people (IDP), from both sides, who are living in public buildings and small cabins. The Muslims who lived in areas where they were a minority fled to areas where Muslims were a majority. The Christians who lived in areas where they were a minority fled to areas where Christians were a majority. Some of the IDPs have been living in this condition for almost two years. Their houses were either destroyed or burned down, and rice fields and gardens left behind were damaged.

Many of the IDPs and the remaining village residents experience fear, hatred, and profound loss. Because of this, it is difficult for them to trust and to get together with people from outside their group. These feelings are tightly linked to the tremendous losses they have experienced, such as the loss of houses, places of worship, businesses, personal belongings, family ties, and friendships. There is a genuine need to heal trauma and build trust.

Peace building and trauma healing should be done by both sides. Both Muslim and Christian leadership and organizations must prepare people to live in peace and to heal. For this reason, Yayasan Sejati and the Central Sulawesi Christian Church (GKC) Crisis Center are conducting a joint action in peace-building and trauma healing. Yayasan Sejati has broad access to Muslims, while the Crisis Center has broad access to the Christian population. These two organizations have been working with the people since the conflict arose in the area. In doing this project, both institutions agree to form a commission comprised of members from each institution to implement a joint program using participatory methodology.

The goals of this interfaith project are to help communities cope with loss, bring displaced persons back to their villages, work with these communities so

that returning persons are accepted again as neighbors, and help these communities find lasting peace.

Philippines: Interfaith Coming Together

The CRC peace-building program in Mindanao is very similar to the program in Indonesia. One of the most important aspects of this program is the ability of the local organizing group to bring together both Christian and Muslim community members to build trust and rebuild communities together.

India: Educate Early and Often

In India, CRWRC funded a small pilot program to develop peace education materials for elementary schools. A recent evaluation visit to the program revealed the extent to which this program has achieved important goals. First, the materials are moving into production at a national level as a result of interest in the program from many schools across India. Second, children are able to give testimony of how things have changed in their communities as a result of the lessons they have learned and shared with their parents. In one community, Dalits (untouchables) were invited to join community meetings because children challenged their parents' behavior in shutting out the Dalit community members.

Appendix G

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Appendix H Just-War Criteria

I. Jus ad bellum: Criteria defining the right to resort to force

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Classic Statement</i>
Just Cause	The protection and preservation of value	Defense of the innocent against armed attack. Retaking persons, property, or other values wrongly taken. Punishment of evil.
Right Authority	The person or body authorizing the use of force must be the duly authorized representation of a sovereign political entity. The authorization to use force implies the ability to control and cease that use—that is, a well-constituted and efficient chain of command.	Reservation of the right to employ force to persons or communities with no political superior.
Right Intention	The intent must be in accord with the just cause and not territorial aggrandizement, intimidation, or coercion.	Evils to be avoided in war, including hatred of the enemy, implacable animosity, lust for vengeance, desire to dominate.
Proportionality of Ends	The overall good achieved by the use of force must be greater than the harm done. The levels and means of using force must be appropriate to the just ends sought.	
Last Resort	Determination at the time of the decision to employ force that no other means will achieve the justified ends sought. Interacts with other jus ad bellum criteria to determine level, type, and duration of force employed	
Reasonable Hope of Success	Prudential calculation of the likelihood that the means used will bring the justified ends sought. Interacts with other jus ad bellum criteria to determine level, type, and duration of force employed.	
The Aim of Peace	Establishment of international stability, security, and peaceful interaction. May include nation building, disarmament, other measures to promote peace.	

II. Jus in bello: Criteria defining the employment of force

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Classic Statement</i>
Proportionality of Means	Means causing gratuitous or otherwise unnecessary harm are to be avoided. Prohibition of torture, means evil in themselves—Mala in Se.	Attempts to limit weapons, days of fighting persons who should fight.
Noncombatant Protection / Immunity	Definition of noncombatant, avoidance of direct, intentional harm to noncombatants, efforts to protect them	List of classes of persons (clergy, merchants, peasants on the land, other people in activities not related to the prosecution of war) to be spared the harm of war.

Appendix I

The Responsibility to Protect

(Written by Kathy Vandergrift)

I. Alternative paradigms to national security

In response to changes in the global context and inadequacies in existing paradigms, some policymakers, diplomats, and conflict analysts are engaged in formulating new frameworks for addressing current realities. Christian organizations and churches are also considering the merits of alternative paradigms that might begin to bridge the gap between just-war thinking and pacifism. Both have deep theological roots, have made significant contributions in the public realm, but have also been found by many to be inadequate to deal with current realities.

Changes in the global context driving the search for alternative paradigms include:

- Increasing global interdependence in an age of globalization, characterized by instantaneous global communications; dramatic increases in the global flow of goods, services, and finances across state boundaries; and increased global engagement by nonstate actors, such as businesses, arms dealers, criminal elements, humanitarian agencies, and international social movements. Of particular interest for this report is also the global reach of the Christian church and increased engagement with persons of other faith commitments, such as Islam, Buddhism, and religious expressions of indigenous cultures.
- The historical development of human rights and humanitarian law as components of international relations. These were not given serious consideration, for example, in earlier reports by the CRC on war. They are significant because they inject components of universal respect for the rights of persons as well as states, public accountability for actions taken by states, and a foundation for citizen engagement in matters of war and peace.
- The changing nature of armed conflict and the increasing range of factors that foster, sustain, or exacerbate conflicts. Of thirty-eight major armed conflicts mapped by conflict analysts, over thirty are intrastate or cross-border conflicts rather than more traditional wars between states. Almost all of them include significant nonstate actors who cannot be ignored. In many cases, contributing factors are weak states unable or unwilling to protect their citizenry as much as aggressor states. In almost all cases, the lines between civilians and military actors are increasingly blurred, with increased threats to the security and rights of civilians.

II. Human security and common security as alternatives to national security paradigms

Alternative paradigms have a number of common features that are worthy of consideration by Christians in search of ways to exercise their calling to be peacemakers.

These features include:

- Security of persons is at the center rather than security for states. Some common security paradigms put protection of creation/environment at the center as well.

- Security issues are broader than traditional war, including contemporary threats of a criminal nature, e.g., terrorism and crimes against humanity and, in broader frameworks, health, environmental, and economic threats to security.
- Security definitions range from freedom from fear to include freedom from fear and freedom from want.

While national sovereignty is recognized, the purpose is refocused on responsibilities toward citizens rather than national interests, and the limits of national sovereignty receive more attention, either as checks on abuse of power or because of inability of nation-states to control some of the factors that pose threats to security.

These core concepts seem consistent with many Reformed teachings, such as God as the only sovereign authority; respect for the dignity, rights, and mutual responsibilities of all persons as image-bearers of God; recognition of the power of sin and evil to distort created good; recognition of the essential but limited role of governance; and acceptance of responsibility to use power for good balanced with need for checks to prevent misuse of power and exercise mutual accountability at all levels.

A closer look at one alternative paradigm may help to test the relative merits of investing energy in this direction in the search for peace. In response to the armed conflicts in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty was appointed with the support of several countries. Canada played a significant role in support for the commission and, along with its allies in the Human Security Network, continues to advance the concept of Responsibility to Protect, which is also the title of the commission's report. Churches in Canada, including the Canadian branch of the Christian Reformed Church, are actively engaged in discussions about the merits and usefulness of this approach.

III. Responsibility to protect

The core principle of this concept is that state sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its peoples lies with the state itself. Where a population is suffering serious harm as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression, or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of nonintervention yields to the international responsibility to protect.

The core elements of this responsibility to protect are (1) responsibility to prevent armed conflict by addressing direct causes and root causes of conflicts that put populations at risk; (2) responsibility to react with appropriate measures in situations of compelling human need, with nonmilitary measures and, in extreme cases with military intervention; and (3) responsibility to rebuild after conflict with assistance for reconciliation and reconstruction that addresses the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt.

The priorities of this responsibility to protect are (1) preventive options, which are the most important and should be exhausted before considering intervention, including more commitment and more resources; and (2) less intrusive coercive measures, which should be used before more intrusive measures.

The principles for exceptional use of military intervention include (1) meeting a high just-cause threshold, such as large scale loss of life or ethnic cleansing; (2) precautionary principles such as right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects; (3) right authority in international institutions; and (4) operational principles, such as clear rules of engagement, incrementalism in use of force, and adherence to international humanitarian law.

At the moment, supporters of the Responsibility to Protect initiative are building international support for this approach through policy dialogue on the framework and practical application of aspects of it through diplomacy and programs. One goal is to introduce it as a resolution for discussion and debate in the General Assembly, within the context of current reform initiatives within the United Nations.

The Responsibility to Protect framework makes a contribution to international policy development by first approaching war from the perspective of the people needing protection, rather than starting from the point of view of the aggressors, and including both intrastate as well as interstate conflicts. Second, it puts the focus on responsibilities and mutual accountability under universal norms through international institutions, rather than on power and control through political alliances. Third, it reorients notions of national sovereignty to address the reality of weak states and superpowers. Finally, it takes conflict prevention seriously. While the concept was developed to function within the constraints of the current Security Council, recent moves toward substantive UN reform might increase the potential for implementation and international confidence that it would be applied fairly. Critics point out the need for strengthened international institutions to make it effective, and some argue for stronger role for human rights within the framework.

SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE

Outline of the report

I. Background and mandate

II. In Loco Committee actions in preparation for the Classis Toronto meeting of September 22, 2005

III. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of September 22, 2005

IV. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of November 10, 2005

A. The decisions of Classis Toronto

B. The response of First Toronto CRC

V. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of January 19, 2006

VI. Concluding observations and recommendations

I. Background and mandate

Both the background and mandate of the First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee are described in detail in the *Acts of Synod 2005* (pp. 743-44). Synod 2005 received one overture and two communications requesting that action be taken with regard to First Toronto Christian Reformed Church and the council's alleged position with respect to homosexuality. The advisory committee reporting to Synod 2005 summarized the background to this issue as follows:

In the fall of 2002, the First CRC of Toronto made a decision that it would consider homosexuals living in a same-sex committed relationship for office in the congregation. In January of 2003, Classis Toronto urged First CRC to rescind its decision and to repent of its action. When this matter came to its attention in 2003, synod decided to trust Classis Toronto to continue to deal with the matter. In 2004, synod received an appeal, two overtures, and a communication regarding the position of First CRC, Toronto, and Classis Toronto's handling of the matter. Synod's response was:

That synod instruct Classis Toronto to investigate the allegations made in the appeal and the overtures regarding persons living in same-sex committed relationships and instruct Classis Toronto to urge First CRC to act in accordance with guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002.
(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 632)

In response, Classis Toronto sent church visitors to First CRC, and they reported to classis in January of 2005. This report did not indicate that an investigation was conducted, and there was no urging to comply with the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002. This matter has come to synod again, and it is now necessary for synod to have First Toronto CRC clarify the position and practices of its council and to ensure compliance with the guidelines of synodical reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002.

(Acts of Synod 2005, pp. 743-44)

In response to the overture and communications received, Synod 2005 appointed a synodical committee *in loco*. The mandate for this committee was established as part of the following recommendations that were adopted by Synod 2005:

1. That synod appoint a synodical committee *in loco*:
 - a. To investigate the position of the council of First CRC, Toronto, regarding persons living in same-sex committed relationships and seek a response to the serious allegations raised against the church to determine if First CRC is in compliance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002.
 - b. To report to the meeting of Classis Toronto in September 2005 and make pertinent recommendations for its deliberation and action.
 - c. If necessary, to invite Classes Quinte, Huron, Hamilton, and Toronto to attend a combined meeting of the classes to assist the committee in dealing with the issues re First CRC, Toronto.
 - d. To report to Synod 2006 by way of the printed Agenda its own actions and any classical actions taken and present its recommendations.

Grounds:

- 1) Classis Toronto did not sufficiently carry out the synodical directives of 2004.
 - 2) The seriousness and ongoing nature of the allegations warrant synod's direct involvement in the situation.
 - 3) The principles found in Matthew 18 require us to take all the steps necessary before the assemblies might go to the step of deposition. Deposition requires clear opportunity for repentance and restoration.
 - 4) This affords the council of First CRC of Toronto the opportunity to present its position to the denomination.
2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 7 and Communications 4 and 5.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 744)

II. In Loco Committee actions in preparation for the Classis Toronto meeting of September 22, 2005

The *in loco* committee arranged to meet with representatives of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church's council on two occasions. The first of these meetings occurred on August 4, 2005. Present at this meeting were current as well as former members of First Toronto CRC council (approximately seventeen in total) as well as all members of the *in loco* committee except for Dr. Peter Borgdorff who was unable to attend. The second meeting took place on September 1, 2005. At this meeting, all members of the *in loco* committee were present as well as members of the First Toronto CRC council and additional members from the congregation who had been invited to represent the position of First Toronto CRC on an *ad hoc* committee.

Every effort was made to advance an atmosphere of open and genuine discussion at the meetings of August 4 and September 1, 2005. As part of the outcome of those meetings, our committee wishes to affirm those aspects of the ministry of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church that are positive demonstrations of the church's work. However, we realize that our mandate essentially brings our focus to one issue, i.e., the stance of First Toronto CRC council with respect to homosexuality. In particular, at the September 1 meeting, the committee sought clarification and confirmation of what it had

heard in the previous meeting. This was pursued by means of discussion focused primarily in three areas involving the stance of the First Toronto CRC council pertaining to the practice of homosexuality within committed relationships, pastoral care pertaining to situations of same-gender attraction, and teaching with regard to such matters. In each of these areas, the chair of our committee read a prepared statement. Members of First Toronto CRC council were invited to respond. The prepared statements read as follows:

1. Practice of homosexuality:
“It is our perception that the council of First Toronto CRC holds that same gender sexual intimacy is not sinful in committed relationships.”
2. Pastoral care:
“It is our perception that the council of First Toronto CRC does not require the Elders, in their pastoral care guidance, to view homosexual practice as sinful.”
3. Teaching ministry:
“It is our perception that the council of First Toronto CRC does not teach that homosexual orientation is a disorder nor that homosexual practice is sinful.”

In each of these areas, the Council of First Toronto CRC did not contradict the perceptions of the committee. The statements evoked a great deal of discussion. There were many points that the council of First Toronto CRC wanted us to hear and to understand. With the first statement in particular, objections were raised with respect to the framing of the assertion. Regarding the last two statements, they stressed that their position was qualified by “committed relationships.” These discussions led us to conclude that, while desiring to remain within the CRC, the council of First Toronto CRC had serious reservations about the denomination’s position with respect to ministry to members with same-gender attraction. We concluded that the opinions and actions of First Toronto CRC council regarding same-gender relationships did not demonstrate solidarity or compliance with the denomination’s guidelines as expressed in the reports of 1973 and 2002.

Based upon its investigation, according to the mandate of Synod 2005, the *in loco* committee made the following recommendations to Classis Toronto in preparation for the September 2005 agenda:

(1) That Classis Toronto note the conclusion of the *Synod in loco* committee that the current position and practice of the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality in significant areas falls outside of the position of the denomination as summarized in the reports of 1973 and 2002.

(2) That Classis Toronto, in view of the preceding conclusion, should inform the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto that it is expected to indicate to Classis Toronto by not later than the January 2006 meeting of Classis whether the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto will conform its position and practice in order to live with integrity within the current guidelines of the denomination. We recommend the use of a statement such as this:

We, the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto, agree to conform our teaching and ministry practices to the denominationally approved recommendations in the Synodical reports of 1973 and 2002 regarding homosexual

identity and practice. We understand that in these Synodical recommendations, references to homosexual identity and practice apply to all persons with same-gender attraction, including those living in committed relationships.

Signing on behalf of Council,

(Clerk or President)

(Date)

(3) That Classis Toronto inform the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto that if it will not accept the current position of the Christian Reformed denomination with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality, the Council in effect removes the congregation of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto from the denomination. If Classis Toronto does not receive a clear indication from the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto by the January meeting of Classis that it is willing to conform to the denomination's position, this will begin a process of disaffiliation from the denomination that would be completed in the May meeting of Classis Toronto.

(4) That Classis Toronto commit to cooperate fully with the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto in the event that they decide to present an overture asking the CRC to review its position regarding homosexuality. The presentation of such an overture, however, would not alter the requirements of our recommendations #2 and #3.

The synodical in loco committee also communicated to Classis Toronto that it did not intend at that time to call together a broader assembly of neighboring classes, which was one of the possible scenarios that Synod 2005 had suggested. The synodical committee in loco was represented by the chair and reporter of the committee at all three meetings of Classis Toronto that dealt with this issue of First Toronto CRC council's stance on same-gender relationships (September 22, 2005; November 10, 2005; January 19, 2006).

III. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of September 22, 2005

The minutes of the meeting of Classis Toronto held September 22, 2005, record that the following motions were adopted:

- a) that Classis Toronto note the conclusion of the Synodical Committee *in loco*, i.e., that the position and practice of the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality in significant areas falls outside the position of the denomination as summarized in the reports of 1973, and 2002.
- b) that Classis
 - i) strike a committee to advise classis on how to respond to the report of the Synodical Committee in loco. This committee to be appointed by CIC [Classical Interim Committee] (delegates are given opportunity to suggest names for this committee).
 - ii) Meet again at 7:00 p.m. on November 10, 2005 to take up this matter again with, as far as possible, the same delegates present.
- c) that Classis ask the council of First CRC to submit to the committee of advice within the next few weeks their written response to the three perceptions of the Synodical Committee in loco, as presented on the first page of its report.

Consistent with these decisions, Classis Toronto formed an advisory committee that reviewed the relevant materials, met with representatives of the council of First Toronto CRC and prepared a report, including recommendations, for the consideration of Classis Toronto at a special meeting held on November 10, 2005.

In addition to reviewing the history of the same-gender relationship issue at First Toronto CRC, considering the recommendations of the synodical committee in loco, and meeting with the council of First Toronto CRC, the advisory committee studied the matter of how much weight and authority is to be placed upon synodical guidelines such as those found in the report adopted by Synod 1973 and 2002 regarding homosexuality and pastoral care to homosexual members.

The following paragraph, quoted from the advisory committee report, presents a summary of their conclusions:

The Advisory Committee recognizes the need to clarify the “weight” accredited denominationally to the word “guidelines.” We note from previous synodical decisions:

- *Synod 1973* speaks of “pastoral advice.”
- *Synod 1996* mentions, “pastoral recommendations.”
- *Synod 1999 art 47, 5b* (a ground) speaks of “keeping the discussion in our churches within the guidelines adopted by Synod 1973.”
- *The Committee of 2002* speaks of “guidelines” as well as the “specific pastoral guidelines of the 1973 report.”

As to the weight afforded these guidelines, we refer to *Synod 1975, Art. 46 B2b*:

“Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confession and they ‘shall be considered settled and binding’ unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (C.O. Art. 29). All office bearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances.”

We assert, therefore, that the denomination deems these statements to mean that “guidelines” are “normative” and “settled and binding unless it is proved that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order. All office bearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances.”

IV. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of November 10, 2005

A. The decisions of Classis Toronto

At the special meeting of Classis Toronto held on November 10, 2005, the advisory committee that had been appointed by Classis Toronto at its meeting of September 22, 2005, presented recommendations to Classis Toronto that were essentially in line with the guidance that had been given by the synodical committee in loco at the September classis meeting. The following motions were presented and adopted at the November 10, 2006, meeting of Classis Toronto:

- i) That Classis declare that the present issue involving First CRC and Classis Toronto and the Synod of the CRC is not about whether the churches and its members should engage in a Christ-like ministry to persons with same gender attraction but is about biblical/ethical guidelines for this ministry.
- ii) That Classis, noting that First CRC has chosen a contrary position on a significant biblical/ethical guideline, one which the denomination has carefully considered and is “settled and binding,” regretfully inform Council of First CRC that its action constitutes a breaking of the denominational covenant.

Ground: As churches of the denomination we have covenanted to abide by and uphold our commitments to Scripture, the creeds, as well as synodical pronouncements on doctrine and ethics which are considered “settled and binding unless it is proved that they are contrary to Scripture and the Church Order”

iii) That Classis instruct the Council of First CRC to provide a clear and unambiguous answer in writing to Classis in time for the agenda, December 15, 2005 for the January 19, 2006 meeting of Classis Toronto, stating that it will bring its pastoral care and teaching ministry within the guidelines of Synod 1973, (especially guideline 3) and the guidelines of 2002. "Homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture." (Page 632, Acts of Synod 1973.)

Grounds:

1. After careful studies in several reports, the CRC has stated that this practice is contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures.
2. It demonstrates First CRC's commitment to be a member church of the denomination

iv) That Classis Toronto

(1) Offer to assist First CRC in ministering pastorally to those who struggle with living within the present CRC guidelines.

(2) Commit to cooperate fully with the Council of First CRC in the event that they decide to present an overture asking the Christian Reformed denomination to review its position regarding homosexuality. Until the request for revision has been presented and processed, First CRC commits itself to submit to and abide by the guidelines of 1973 and 2002

Ground: It provides opportunity for First CRC to share its deliberation and request for the denomination's consideration, input and decisions

A fifth recommendation had been presented, with the following wording:

v) That Classis Toronto regretfully inform the Council of First CRC that if it does not accept the current position of the Christian Reformed denomination with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality, Council in effect removes the congregation of First CRC from the denomination. We pray and trust Council is aware of its awesome responsibility and plead that it not chooses to proceed on that route.

The advisory committee of Classis Toronto presented a motion: "That Classis withhold action on the fifth recommendation." The motion to withhold action on the fifth recommendation was supported from the floor and adopted.

B. The response of First Toronto CRC

The council of First Toronto CRC responded to the request of Classis Toronto "to provide a clear and unambiguous answer in writing to Classis in time for the agenda, December 15, 2005, for the January 19, 2006, meeting of Classis Toronto, stating that it will bring its pastoral care and teaching ministry within the guidelines of Synod 1973, (especially guideline 3) and the guidelines of 2002." The following statement is the response of the council of First Toronto CRC:

After extensive discussion at congregational meetings, we agree to submit the following statement: The Council of First Christian Reformed Church, Toronto, having taken into consideration the discussions at meetings with the Synodical *in loco* committee, the classical pre-advice committee, and Classis Toronto, and not wishing to contribute to further unrest in the denomination, and wanting to maintain affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church (C.R.C.), herewith declares our resolve to acknowledge the C.R.C. guidelines with respect to homosexuality as the current position of our denomination and agrees to tailor its ministry accordingly.

(Done in council, December 2005)

V. Results of the Classis Toronto meeting of January 19, 2006

Classis Toronto, meeting in Barrie, Ontario, on Thursday, January 19, 2006, adopted the following recommendation:

That Classis accept First CRC's statement as an acceptable response to the recommendations of the Synodical Committee and the Classical Advisory Committee as stated in the minutes of the November 10, 2005 classis meeting.

Based upon a conference call held by the in loco committee on December 20, 2005, Dr. Wayne Brouwer (chair) and Dr. William Koopmans (reporter), who were present at the January 19, 2006, meeting of Classis Toronto, conveyed the in loco committee's concurrence with the decision of classis to receive the statement from First Toronto CRC as an acceptable fulfilment of the requirement extended to the Council of First Toronto CRC.

Prior to the January 19, 2006, meeting of Classis Toronto, First Toronto CRC submitted an overture that requested Classis Toronto to overture synod to review the 1973 report with respect to the status and acceptance of homosexual believers in the Christian Reformed Church. With respect to that overture submitted by First Toronto, the following details are relevant:

1. The classical interim committee of Classis Toronto contacted First Toronto CRC prior to the meeting of classis to advise the Council of First Toronto to strengthen the overture by providing further background and supporting evidence for the request to review the current position, especially with respect to the biblical interpretation and the medical evidence that is alluded to in the grounds of the overture.
2. First Toronto declined to change or add to the overture or its grounds.
3. A classical advisory committee to which the overture had been assigned for consideration prior to the meeting of classis recommended that the overture not be accepted.
4. Classis debated the wisdom of accepting or rejecting the overture and then did neither—instead tabling it, with the understanding that the overture could be rewritten and resubmitted.

VI. Concluding observations and recommendations

The synodical committee in loco is grateful for the cooperation received from the Council of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church as well as the delegates and advisory committees of Classis Toronto while working through this sensitive issue. The Christian Reformed Church has advocated pastoral sensitivity and compassion as well as fidelity to Scripture. We seek to uphold both of those goals together.

We commend Classis Toronto and the council of First Toronto CRC for their actions that make it possible for First Toronto CRC to remain within the CRC. We also express appreciation to the council of First Toronto CRC for their stated intent to conform their ministry to members with same-gender attraction to comply with the current position of the Christian Reformed Church. We accept that commitment in good faith.

The First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee presents to Synod 2006 the following recommendations:

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Wayne Brouwer (chair) and Dr. William Koopmans (reporter) when this matter is being discussed.
- B. That synod approve the work of the First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee in conjunction with the actions of Classis Toronto to resolve the matter of First Toronto CRC's position regarding persons living in committed same-sex relationships.
- C. That synod declare this to be its answer to previous overtures and communications with respect to First Toronto CRC's position regarding persons living in committed same-sex relationships.

Grounds:

1. The council of First Toronto CRC has presented a signed statement to Classis Toronto indicating that it will be guided by the position of the denomination in dealing with members with same-gender attraction.
 2. Classis Toronto, with the concurrence of the First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee, has accepted the signed statement from the council of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church as fulfilment of conditions required to remain with integrity and good faith within the denomination.
- D. That synod express appreciation to Classis Toronto and to the Council of First Toronto Christian Reformed Church for the manner in which this issue has been resolved.
- E. That synod declare the work of the First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee to be completed.

First Toronto CRC In Loco Committee
Bernard Bakker
Peter Borgdorff, ex officio
Elaine Botha
Wayne Brouwer (chair)
Hector Garcia
William Koopmans (reporter)
Donald Oosterhouse
Gordon Pols
Laura Smit

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overture 1: Revise Church Order Supplement, Article 6

I. Introduction

Something has been happening at the last few synods that has received little notice—but remains an important matter nonetheless. Synod’s method of declaring candidates for the ministry has undergone several changes since 1995 when synod first allowed classes to ordain women “by way of exception.” Before 1995, this was not an issue because all of the candidates were men. When the first women were recommended as candidates, synod voted on the candidates as two groups: men and women. Some were dissatisfied with this solution, because it seemed like gender segregation, so synod next decided to approve each candidate individually. Critics of this method also were eventually successful in convincing synod to vote on all the candidates—both men and women—as one group.

Classis Zeeland is convinced that synod would serve our denomination well by adopting a rule of synodical procedure that will prevent the kind of flip-flopping that has been going on for the past ten years. Furthermore, this rule should honor the Church Order (specifically Article 3-a) and the decision of Synod 1995 that, in permitting the ordination of women, also reaffirmed the traditional position that opposes women’s ordination.

II. Background

In granting classes the right to declare the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative, Synod 1995 recognized and affirmed “that 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. 727). In allowing classes to exercise the local option, synod also reaffirmed the traditional position that the Bible opposes women in office. This position, still held by many within the CRC, was never rejected by synod.

This same synod recognized the dilemma that delegates would face when asked to approve candidates for the ministry. In addition to other restrictions, synod declared:

In the consideration of applications for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word submitted by qualified women, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates may not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates will exercise their right to abstain from voting without pressure or reprisal.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 735)

In another matter, Synod 1996 stated: “Respect for the conscience of those who oppose women in office demands that we honor the decision of Synod 1995 on this matter” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 551).

Synods 1996 and 1997 voted to approve the candidates in two groups: men and women. Synod established a precedent that did not require all delegates to vote for the candidates as a group.

In response to an overture that argued very strongly for voting for candidates as a group, Synod 1998 rejected this overture and introduced an entirely new voting procedure:

voting for each potential candidate one at a time, in alphabetical order. The advisory committee observed that voting for candidates as a block, in effect, forces those unpersuaded of women’s ordination either to abstain from voting on all candidates or to violate their consciences by voting one way or the other.

(*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 361)

Their grounds showed sensitivity to those on both sides of this divisive issue as well as appealing to synodical precedence of dealing with candidates individually.

The issue surfaced again in 1999. Though a minority report from its advisory committee argued strongly for voting for candidates as a group, synod decided to “vote on candidacy applicants individually” as recommended by the majority report (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 623). All four grounds were substantial and significant:

1. This allows synod the opportunity to decide on each candidate individually as to qualifications for ministry in the CRC.
2. This allows those who are conscientiously opposed to having women serve in ecclesiastical office to abstain from voting on female candidates and the opportunity to vote on male candidates.
3. We believe this to be in the spirit of the decision of Synod 1995, which sought to “ensure that trustees and delegates may not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).
4. As stated in the observations of the advisory committee re: Overture 12 to Synod 1998, “by proposing to vote on the candidates as a block, synod, in effect, ‘forces’ those unpersuaded of women’s ordination either to abstain from voting on all candidates or to violate their consciences by voting one way or the other” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 362).

Though no mention is made in the *Acts of Synod* of another attempt from the floor at Synod 2000 to ask synod to vote for the candidates as a group, the author of this overture remembers this attempt and the objection that he himself raised as a point of order. The motion was withdrawn and never recorded. Thus, from 1996 through 2002, synod never voted for the candidates as a group. In 1996 and 1997, synod voted for the men and women separately. From 1998 to 2002, synod voted for the candidates individually.

Synod 2003 was asked to look at this issue again—just moments before the candidates were to receive the approval of synod. With the candidates already in attendance, synod decided to depart from its precedent without any discussion, “voting for all recommended candidates as a group” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 594). This departure from precedent was the subject of a personal

appeal to Synod 2004. Without sustaining the appeal, but after considering the principle involved, synod decided to return to its past practice of voting “on each potential candidate . . . individually” (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 541). Synod’s grounds reflect its understanding of this important principle at stake:

- a. This is in keeping with the original decision of Synod 1997 that gave delegates the right to abstain from voting on individual candidates as a matter of conscience.
- b. In spite of other attempts in recent years to change this method of voting, synod has consistently upheld this policy out of respect for the conscience of each of the delegates.
- c. Voting for the candidates as a group forces some delegates to abstain (or vote no) on all of the candidates—something they should not have to do.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 541)

Disregarding this reasoned decision of the previous synod, Synod 2005 affirmed (without discussion) a ruling of its president to vote on the group of candidates as a block (see *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 718). Surprised by this proposal, was any delegate prepared to confront synod with its several previous rulings, decisions, and precedents that called for respecting consciences?

Synod’s practice of voting on the candidates has been riddled with inconsistency. Whenever synod took a good look at the principles involved, it decided to vote for candidates individually. However, whenever synod was led to believe this issue was simply a practical or procedural matter, it chose to save time and vote for the candidates as a group. Voting for candidates as a group, however, is based on the false notion that the Church Order allows for the ordination of women ministers. Church Order Article 3 still clearly forbids this practice—only its Supplement allows classes to make exceptions to this rule. Synod’s voting practices (on the candidates) ought to recognize the reality of its own Church Order and not deliberately disregard it.

For many delegates, this issue seems insignificant. The author of this overture, however, has a personal story in which he was suddenly thrust into the middle of a huge personal dilemma. He was a delegate to synod—and his own son was one of the candidates—in 2003 when synod decided for the first time to vote on all of the candidates as a group. Those who object to ordaining women were told they could abstain from voting. Not wanting to abstain from voting on his own son’s candidacy, he was left with only two options: (1) vote “yes,” which would also be a vote to approve the women candidates, or (2) vote “no” on all the candidates (because they included women)—including his own son.

This same dilemma is faced by many delegates when synod votes on the candidates as a group. How can a delegate vote to approve the male candidates without also approving of the female candidates? How can a delegate disapprove of, or abstain from voting on, the female candidates without also doing the same for the qualified male candidates?

Synod has often mentioned the “right to abstain” from either voting or participating in an activity that involves the ordination of women. The author of this overture remembers the definition once given by the Rev. Leonard Hofman, former general secretary of the CRCNA, when the question was asked at synod: “What does it mean to abstain?” Rev. Hofman responded: “To abstain is as if you are not here.” Delegates are sent by their respective classes to “take part in all deliberations and transactions of synod regarding all

matters legally before synod and transacted in agreement . . . with our Church Order” (Credentials for Synod). Why should a delegate, properly credentialed by his classis, have to abstain from voting on something as crucial as approving the candidacy of the future ministers of the Church? If synod’s voting policies reflected the reality of Church Order Article 3-a and allowed the delegates to vote on the candidates individually, no delegate would have to abstain. Neither would any delegate be forced to violate his own conscience.

III. Overture

Synod’s voting policy on candidates should not be subject to the flip-flopping mind of an annual synod’s membership or the ruling of its president. It should be a reasoned policy that takes seriously its past decisions, precedents, and our Church Order.

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2006 to add the following statement to Church Order Supplement, Article 6:

When voting to declare candidates for the ministry of the Word, synod shall vote on each candidate individually.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 validated the biblical and traditional position that opposes women’s ordination when it declared that “both (perspectives and convictions) honor the Scriptures” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Synod’s voting policies ought to recognize the validity of this biblical position.
2. Church Order Article 3 itself still prohibits women from serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Synod’s voting policies ought to recognize the status of its own Church Order.
3. Voting for candidates as a group is a serious injustice to those who hold the traditional position on women’s ordination. Synod’s voting policies ought to respect the consciences of those who hold to this position.
4. Previous decisions of synod that called for voting for candidates individually should be considered settled and binding. This voting policy was an agreeable compromise worked out in 1998 and confirmed in 1999. These previous decisions may be revised but only when “sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented” (Church Order Article 31). No new grounds were ever presented to Synod 2003 or 2005, which decided to vote for the candidates as a group. No request for such revision was presented to either Synod 2003 or 2005 and, thus, the decision of Synods 1998 and 1999 should stand.
5. Voting for candidates individually violates no one’s conscience.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 2: Reverse Decision to Vote on Candidates for Ministry in a Group Rather than Individually

I. Background

When synod opened the office of elder and pastor to women, it insured that voting was either separated by gender (1996-1997) or by individual name

(1998-2002). Synod did this for the unity of the church and to insure that he who did not support women's ordination would not be forced to vote against his conscience.

Synod 2003 made the decision to "declare candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church by voting for all recommended candidates as a group" (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 594). This decision was based on a minority report without debate on the floor of synod. In the process, one of the delegates (a father of a candidate for ministry) was forced to make a decision between voting no on his own son's candidacy or violating his conscience by voting in favor of the women candidates.

For these reasons, Classis Atlantic Northeast overtured Synod 2004, asking synod to return to its previous policy of voting on each applicant for ministry individually, as was done from 1998-2002 (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 433-35). This overture was approved by Synod 2004 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 541).

Although Synod 2004 had approved voting on candidates individually, Synod 2005 reverted back to voting on candidates as a group (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 718).

II. Overture

The council of First CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois, overtures synod to reverse the decision of the synod chair of Synod 2005 that voting on candidates for ministry be done as a group rather than individually.

Grounds:

1. Voting in a group, with one vote for both men and women candidates for ministry, as was done in 2003 and 2005, binds the conscience of those who hold the view that the offices of minister and elder belong to men only.
2. Because synod has declared that "there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scripture 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. 727), it is inconsistent not to recognize both views as being equally valid by having individual votes.
3. Voting in a group, rather than with individual votes, further alienates those who hold to the view that women are not to serve in the ordained offices of the church and will lead to further fragmentation of the CRC.
4. Allowing the work of a previous synod to be overturned by one person's declaration does not promote "the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), nor is it a practice in harmony with God's command to do everything in "a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40).
5. Voting on each applicant individually was established in 1998 and surfaced again in 1999 with the following substantial grounds (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 623):
 - a. This allows synod the opportunity to decide on each candidate individually as to qualifications for ministry in the CRC.
 - b. This allows those who are conscientiously opposed to having women serve in ecclesiastical office to abstain from voting on female candidates and the opportunity to vote on male candidates.

- c. We believe this to be in the spirit of the decision of Synod 1995, which sought to “ensure that trustees and delegates may not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).
- d. As stated in the observations of the advisory committee, re Overture 12 to Synod 1998, “by proposing to vote on the candidates as a block, synod, in effect, ‘forces’ those unpersuaded of women’s ordination either to abstain from voting on all candidates or to violate their consciences by voting one way or the other” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 362).
6. By declaring that voting will be done in a group, the diligent work and thoughtful consideration expressed by previous synods is effectively, yet inappropriately, negated.
7. Electronic voting enables synod to vote as efficiently on individuals as it does on a group.

Council of First CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois
Ted Gray, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted as an appeal to Classis Chicago South but was not adopted.

Overture 3: Revise the Examination Procedure in Church Order Supplement, Articles 10 and 23

I. Background

In September 2005, our classis conducted eight examinations, four of them at its regularly scheduled meeting and four at a special meeting. At one of those meetings, the sermon evaluation of one of the candidates cited several shortcomings and ended with a recommendation that a mentor be appointed until the candidate’s sermon-making skills showed significant improvement.

The evaluation and recommendation were not unexpected by the candidate because our classical guidelines instruct sermon evaluators to meet with candidates before their evaluation is publicly presented. The evaluation and recommendation were not unexpected by the officers of the day either because the stated clerk had informed them that these were coming. Thus, the president immediately ruled that classis would discuss the recommendation of the sermon evaluators in executive session when the motion to admit a candidate to the ministry is typically discussed. However, the evaluation and recommendation were unexpected by the rest of the delegates, the remaining candidates, and the guests who were present to hear these examinations. Needless to say, this was a very awkward moment. The reactions of guests from the host church present to hear the examination of another candidate were especially negative. For them, the way this evaluation was handled significantly marred a high point in the life of their congregation that they had come to witness.

As we reflected on this event, we observed that in the public session the only thing classis needs is a motion from the sermon evaluators that classis proceed with the examination. At classis, evaluation happens in executive session where classis, in the presence of the synodical deputies, discusses whether a candidate should be admitted to the ministry and whether any

conditions should be placed on the candidate's admission. Because the sermon evaluation is also evaluation, we believe it should be discussed in executive session. In executive session, delegates are more free to comment on the sermon itself, on the perspectives of the evaluators, and on any recommendations the evaluators might have. This would be more beneficial for the candidate being examined because, even though the candidate is aware of the evaluators' report and recommendation, a public presentation and discussion of this can be unnerving. Such a discussion can have a detrimental effect on the candidate's ability to do well on the next part of the examination—an inquiry into the candidate's biblical and theological position. Discussing the sermon evaluation in executive session would be beneficial also for other candidates who are put in an awkward position when this discussion is taking place and for guests who come to witness these exams.

We propose that the examination procedures presented in Church Order Supplement, Articles 10 and 23 (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*, pp. 33-36) be revised to require that the synodical delegates and the delegates to classis receive the report of the sermon evaluators in addition to the candidate's sermon before the meeting of classis. We propose that the evaluators be required to meet with the candidate before their evaluation is made public and that the sermon evaluation be discussed in executive session along with the rest of the evaluation of the candidate's suitability to enter the ministry.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to:

A. Make the following revisions to the examination procedure presented in Church Order Supplement, Article 10:

1. Add the requirement that the synodical deputies and the delegates to classis receive the sermon evaluation as well as the sermon, so that section 4 (p. 34) reads: "A copy of the candidate's sermon *and a copy of the sermon evaluation* shall be provided by classis to the synodical deputies and to the delegates to classis."

Ground: This will be conducive to a thorough examination of the contents of the sermon by all who are called upon to pass judgment at classis.

Note: This is the existing ground in the current procedures.

2. Add the requirement that the sermon evaluators meet with the candidate to discuss the sermon evaluation before the evaluation is presented to classis: "*The sermon evaluators shall meet with the candidate to discuss their report prior to the presentation of their evaluation to classis.*"

Grounds:

- a. This will insure that the candidate is fully informed of the judgments and recommendations of the evaluators regarding sermonizing skills and worship leadership.
- b. This will give the evaluators an opportunity to give constructive criticism in private and will give evaluators and the candidate an opportunity for clarification and response that can encourage personal growth.

3. Revise the current section 8, b, 2, Sermon Evaluation (p. 35) to reflect the fact that the sermon evaluation will take place in executive session.

Note: The current section 8 would become section 9 if A, 2 above is adopted.

This section would read:

2) *Sermon Evaluation*

- a) Before proceeding to the next area, a motion to proceed shall carry with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

Note: This is section 8, b, 2, c in the current policy.

- b) If the sermon evaluators present a motion to proceed, the sermon evaluation will be discussed when classis enters executive session at the conclusion of the examination.
- c) If the sermon evaluators do not present a motion to proceed, classis will immediately enter executive session to discuss the sermon evaluation. The examination of the candidate will proceed only if a motion to proceed carries with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

Ground: The sermon evaluation is an evaluation, and an evaluation of a candidate's suitability to enter the ministry is more appropriately done in executive session.

Note: We have used the words *sermon evaluators* instead of the words *sermon critics*. We prefer such terminology. If synod prefers such terminology, it should replace the words *sermon critics* with *sermon evaluators* in sections 5 and 7.

- B. Revise section 2, b in Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a as follows:

A copy of the sermon and a copy of the sermon evaluation shall be provided to the classical delegates. The sermon evaluators shall meet with the candidate to discuss their report prior to the presentation of their evaluation to classis. The evaluation of the sermon and of the ministry associate's manner of conducting the entire worship service will be discussed when classis enters executive session at the conclusion of the examination.

Ground: The same principles are involved in the examination of a ministry associate as are involved in the examination of a candidate.

Note 1: We have used the words *sermon evaluators* instead of the words *sermon critics*. We prefer such terminology. If synod prefers such terminology, it should also replace the words *sermon critics* with *sermon evaluators* in section 2, a.

Note 2: The procedure for the examination of a ministry associate assumes that classis will enter executive session to discuss and vote on a motion to admit the candidate to this office. If synod wishes to make that explicit, it could do that at this time

Classis Grand Rapids East
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 4: Revise Article 21 of the Church Order

I. Background

A. Early history

The ability to afford a theological education has long been a challenge in the Reformed tradition. Van Dellen and Monsma note that oftentimes in the history of the church, “some of the best qualified young men were not available to the churches because they could not go to school to prepare themselves.”¹ In the Netherlands, theological students were supported in two ways. First, following the Church Order of Dort (Article 19), “students in theology” were supported “ex bonis publicis.” As a result, student funds were commonly known as E.P.B. Funds (ex bonis publicis, meaning “out of the public goods”), funds and properties that were gathered by the state from the Roman Catholic churches that were falling as a result of the rise of the Reformed churches.² Second, larger churches would sometimes send one of its members to receive theological training with the expectation that once his studies were completed he would return to serve that congregation.³

In the United States, student support in the CRC has always been accomplished corporately. CRC congregations pooled their resources and provided assistance to needy students with no obligation to the home classis or congregation. However, most student aid has carried with it an obligation to serve the denomination for a period of time.

Until 1888, the CRC maintained a denominational student fund under the control and administration of synod. Synod decided in 1888 that, due to the size of the denomination, it was best for each classis to maintain its own student aid fund.⁴ The Church Order, however, did not reflect this new structure until the revision of 1965. From 1914 through 1965, the Church Order (Article 19) read, “The churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the Ministry of the Word.” The Church Order of 1965 changed this article (Article 22) to read, “The churches shall encourage young men to seek to become ministers of the Word and shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it. Every classis shall maintain a student fund.”

B. Recent changes

Synod 2004, in its consideration of alternate paths to ministry, studied and debated a proposal to place greater responsibility on the classes with regard to candidacy. Included in that proposal was the creation of a Classical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (CMCC) that was charged with two major tasks: (1) to identify and nurture those recommended for ministry by their local congregations and (2) to develop study and financial plans for students.⁵ According to

¹Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 86.

²Ibid, 87, 89. The close relationship between the church and the state in the Netherlands during this period allowed for the use of public funds.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid, 88.

⁵*Agenda for Synod 2004*, “Report of the Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry,” 341.

Article 58 of the *Acts of Synod 2004*, synod did not adopt the creation of the CMCC due to concerns that “some classes lack the resources to accomplish the tasks assigned to them.”⁶ Synod did adopt the creation of a Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) that was mandated to “oversee the process leading to candidacy.”⁷ Furthermore, councils and classes were encouraged to become involved in the candidacy process through “drafting ministry readiness profile[s], providing mentors, encouraging development of leaders, and providing the SMCC with their endorsements.”⁸ Of particular note is that synod made no reference to the ongoing work of classical student aid funds.

C. Discussion

Based on the decisions of Synod 2004, the CRC’s focus is on a denominationally based candidacy process. With no plans to increase an already minimal classical responsibility with regard to candidacy, it makes sense to relieve classes of their involvement with student aid and to place it where the denomination has placed the responsibility of the candidacy process. A centralized student aid process would enable the newly formed SMCC to function more effectively and more holistically with students throughout the entire seminary (and preseminary) experience, leading up to and including candidacy.

Preparation for ministry involves many facets: academic study, practical field education experiences, spiritual formation, and financial considerations. Financial considerations become more pressing for those seminarians who are pursuing a second career or who have school-age children. Using information from the student aid application, the SMCC would be able to draft “a study plan and a financial plan” with each student, as called for by the 2004 Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry. For students attending Calvin Theological Seminary, having one application for both CTS financial aid and denominational aid could further streamline the process.

While a synodical student aid fund streamlines the process and acknowledges a more holistic candidacy process, the question remains: The current classical system has served the denomination well for almost 120 years. Unless the system is badly flawed, there is no reason to change it. The question can be addressed in three parts.

First, prior to 2004, the candidacy process was under the direction of Calvin Theological Seminary and its board of trustees. The decision of Synod 2004 created, for the first time, a synodical committee to direct the candidacy process. Prior to 2004, the idea of shifting the student aid process to the denominational level was not a realistic option, because there was no agency or synodical committee to assume that responsibility. The creation of the SMCC gives the denomination a committee to direct the candidacy process from beginning to end, regardless of the seminary that a student attends. As the denomination considers new forms of student aid, such as aid for Christian day school education, the SMCC would serve the denomination well in coordinating all denominational aid.

⁶*Acts of Synod 2004*, 615.

⁷*Ibid*, 616.

⁸*Ibid*, 617.

Second, an SMCC-based student aid fund will make better use of kingdom resources. With forty-seven classical student aid fund committees currently functioning, and with three to four members on each committee, there are at least 150-200 people across the denomination working in this area. Unfortunately, some of these people (many of them pastors) are not gifted in the area of finance. By placing this responsibility within the SMCC, the committee can secure members with gifts in financial management who can counsel students and who can develop sound and standardized procedures for distributing student aid.

It is important to note that the current classical student aid committees are largely volunteer organizations, comprised of one to two pastors and one to two laypeople. Other than the cost to the local church for the pastor's time, there is little or no overhead involved in the current process, meaning that all ministry share dollars are going directly to the students. A synodical process would undoubtedly call for a paid administrator. The ministry shares paid by the churches would have to pick up the administrative costs, thus reducing the amount going to the students. While there may be some overhead costs associated with a denominational student aid fund, it is a small price to pay for the benefit of providing an integrated financial and study plan to the CRC's future pastors.⁹

Third, there are many differences in how classes administer their student aid funds. Currently, each classis student aid fund functions independently, with different budget amounts and different procedures for allocating funds (e.g., same amount to everyone, need-based, dependent on the number of students applying, and so forth). A centralized student aid process would ensure that all students are evaluated by the same criteria and that funds are distributed equitably across the denomination based on needs and circumstances. Consider the data in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1 - Classis Student Aid from 2005-2006*

Classis	# of students	Total amount	Average amount	High	Low
Chatham**	5	\$50,500.00	\$10,100.00	\$12,000.00	\$6,500.00
Georgetown	6	\$25,500.00	\$ 4,250.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$1,500.00
Holland	6	\$32,000.00	\$ 5,333.33	\$10,000.00	\$2,000.00
Illiana	5	\$19,000.00	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 5,500.00	\$1,500.00
Pacific Northwest	1	\$ 3,978.00	\$ 3,978.00	\$ 3,978.00	\$3,978.00
Quinte***	0	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Thornapple Valley	4	\$20,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$5,000.00

*Figures taken from classis minutes

** Canadian classes amounts are in Canadian dollars; U.S. classes amounts are in U.S. dollars

*** Classis Quinte gave \$4,000 (CAN) to Classis Chatham

Based on this random sampling of seven classes, three patterns and concerns are evident:

⁹Calvin Theological Seminary currently offers a financial class to first-year students sponsored by the Barnabas Foundation. Combining the financial plan with this course offering could be a very valuable tool for future pastors.

1. The number of students in each classis varies considerably.
2. At least two allocation formulas are evident: each student receiving the same amount and what appears to be need-based evaluation.
3. Budget amounts vary greatly.

An SMCC-supervised student aid fund would address each of these concerns. First, by placing all of the students into the same “pool,” students’ aid amounts would not be affected by the number of students in a classis—no advantage to being the only student; no disadvantage to being in a classis with several students. Second, the SMCC would create a needs-based formula that addresses needs and concerns for, and in relation to, all students. Third, the denominational fund would relieve the undue burden on some classes. Some classes are blessed with an abundance of resources while others are challenged in their ability to secure the resources necessary to support their students.

The inequities in the current process are not just financial. Classes also differ in determining who is eligible for financial assistance. For example, Classis Illiana currently supports students at Calvin Theological Seminary, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary. In contrast, Classis Pella only supports students attending Calvin Theological Seminary. Additionally, some classes have elected to support undergraduate education, provided that the student’s intention is to enter a ministry-related vocation.

While some may contend that a centralized, synodical process would be too “generic” or “formulaic,” and that a local, classical process would be more in touch with and better able to address local needs and circumstances, the current inequalities evident through the data cry out for a better process. The time has come for a standardized formula, both in determining eligibility and in allocating funds.

Placing student aid at the denominational level does present some risks. First, it has been shown over the years that when churches face financial challenges, congregational obligations are paid first, followed by classical ministry shares, and then denominational ministry shares. If denominational ministry shares are not paid, the student aid fund could face a shortfall that it does not currently experience at the classis level. It is unfortunate when churches make such decisions regarding ministry shares; however, providing ministers to the denomination has always been a corporate ministry task. Our churches should be reminded of the model of the early church: All the believers were together and had everything in common [45]. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need (Acts 2:44-45). As such, churches should recognize the benefit of providing funds not only for denominational agencies and programs but also for the training of its future ministers.

Second, disbanding the classical student aid committees will make classes one more step removed from the candidacy process. As the last remaining link to a home or local classis, the classical student aid committees may lose some personal contact with their students. While this is a risk, it does not have to be. Whether classes are functioning in a financial support role or not, they should be reminded of the role suggested by Synod 2004:

- drafting ministry readiness profile[s],
- providing mentors,
- encouraging development of leaders, and
- providing the SMCC with their endorsements.

Local pastors and members of congregations have the privilege and the responsibility to encourage those with gifts for ministry to consider attending seminary, and to participate in the spiritual development of seminarians who are either working in their congregations or who are members of their congregations.

In light of the evidence presented above, the benefits clearly outweigh the risks. Synod 2004 acknowledged that the denomination is facing a shortage of ministers. The denominational student aid fund, administered through the SMCC, will help to enable “some of the best qualified” people of our denomination to obtain the theological education that will prepare them to serve the CRC well for many years to come.

II. Overture

Classis Georgetown overtures Synod 2006 to update Church Order Article 21 as noted below:

A. The churches shall encourage young men to seek to become ministers of the Word and shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it. ~~Each classis~~ The SMCC shall maintain a student fund.

Grounds:

1. A denominationally based student aid fund is more consistent with the direction of Synod 2004; namely, to a denominationally based candidacy process administered through the SMCC. Placing all aspects of preparation for ministry within the SMCC produces a more holistic approach to the candidacy process.
2. The creation of the SMCC provides an opportunity to streamline the current student aid process and to provide a place to house future denominational aid, benefiting both the denomination and the students.
3. A single policy and procedure developed and implemented by the SMCC will eliminate any inequalities in the current classis fund policies (both allocation and eligibility).
4. A denominationally based student aid fund will make better use of kingdom resources. Those gifted in finance and administration will guide students through the financial aspect of their preparation for ministry. Local pastors and laypeople can focus on the spiritual growth of students during their seminary years.
5. Preparing the next generation of ministers is the corporate responsibility of the denomination. Students preparing for a lifetime of ministry will be serving the entire denomination, not just one congregation or one classis. A denominational student fund allows all classes to pool their resources and to provide for the needs of as many students as possible.

Classis Georgetown
Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 5: Permit the Delegation of Women Officebearers to Synod; Delete the Word *Male* from Church Order Article 3-a

I. Background

A. *The decisions of Synod 1995*

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). Thus, Synod 1995 permitted all congregations in the denomination to ordain women elders. In addition, all congregations in a classis that declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative were permitted to ordain women ministers and evangelists. (What was previously called the office of evangelist is now called ministry associate.) This decision was both painful and positive. A number of congregations left the denomination. A number of others began using the gifts of women in ways that were not possible in the past.

Synod 1995 also adopted regulations that ensured that the denomination's traditional practice of excluding the use of women's gifts in the offices of the church was valued more than attempts to include these gifts. Denominational agencies were not permitted to use women ministers in the work of the kingdom. Congregations who wished to call women ministers were not permitted to do so unless a majority of the delegates in their classis permitted it. Classes were not permitted to delegate women officebearers to synod. Women ministers were not permitted to serve as synodical deputies.

B. *Decisions since 1995*

Synod 2000 revised the 1995 regulation that prohibited denominational agencies from using women ministers in the work of the kingdom. Synod honored the convictions of those who wished women ministers supported by denominational agencies to serve in their classes by allowing the agencies to place them and honored the convictions of those who did not want such ministers to serve in their classes by prohibiting the agencies from placing them.

Synod 2005 revised the 1995 regulation that prohibited women ministers from serving as synodical deputies by allowing such service as long as both the synodical deputy and the alternate were not women. Synod honored the convictions of classes that wished to use the gifts of women members by permitting them to elect a women minister to serve as a synodical deputy or alternate. It honored the convictions of classes that did not wish to use the services of a woman synodical deputy by ensuring that a male deputy or alternate would be available.

C. *The delegation of women officebearers to synod*

Synod 2005 decided that synod would "revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 759). Synod was concerned that "a provision at the present time to send female delegates to synod might create a considerable strain in the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 760) and

preferred to make that decision after a majority, not a minority, of classes had opened all the offices to women.

Although Synod 2005 indicated that the Board of Trustees would recommend appropriate actions, it did not describe what those actions would be. It did create the expectation that the synodical floor would be open to women officebearers when a majority of classes declared the word *male* inoperative. That has now happened. Twenty-four of our forty-seven classes have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative. In accordance with the decision of Synod 2005, Synod 2006 will serve the church best by permitting the delegation of women officebearers to synod. In light of our denomination's thirty-five year discussion of this subject, there is no legitimate reason to delay that decision any longer.

Such a decision honors the convictions of those who believe that women officebearers should have the same responsibilities as their male counterparts. Such a decision also honors the convictions of those who cannot serve in an assembly to which women are delegated because our church polity does not obligate any officebearer to attend synod.

D. The deletion of the word male in Church Order Article 3-a

Synod 1984 deleted the word *male* from Church Order Article 3 as a qualification for a person to be nominated to the office of deacon (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 655). Although the change was not formally made, Synod 1995 essentially deleted the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a as a qualification for a person to be nominated to the office of elder when it gave permission to all congregations to elect women elders (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). Now that the majority of classes have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative, synod should delete the word *male* from that article to give all congregations the opportunity to call women to all church offices without obligating any congregation to do that.

The current denominational regulations make it extremely difficult for congregations that wish to call a woman pastor or ministry associate to follow their convictions. Either they must break ties with sister congregations in their local classis and join another classis some distance away, or they must seek the permission of their classis at one meeting to extend a call and, if the call is accepted, must wait for another meeting for an examination. These are cumbersome processes that make councils less willing to consider gifted women, that cause delay in the calling process, and that do not reflect our desire to honor each other's convictions or our interest in the well-being of sister congregations. Classes should be encouraged to strengthen and enhance the ministries of sister councils, not permitted to place barriers in their way as they follow God's leading. In the future, we will not permit classes to prohibit congregations from calling male ministerial personnel. In the present, we should not continue to permit classes to prohibit congregations from calling female ministerial personnel. Each congregation should have the freedom to follow its own convictions. This is even truer in light of the fact that Synod 2005 adopted a procedure that gives classical delegates the freedom of not participating in an examination if they choose not to do so (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 758-59).

In the last decade, it has become increasingly evident that men and women work well together in our denomination in building Christ's church through

the use of their God-given gifts. In the last decade, it has become increasingly evident that one of the ways God is answering prayers concerning our denominational shortage of ministers is by raising up gifted women who wish to give themselves in full-time service to the church, some as ministers and some as ministry associates. Synod should delete the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a so we may embrace this reality in the unity of our common faith in our common Savior.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to

A. Revise Regulation 1 in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a so that it reads:

Classes shall be permitted to delegate women officebearers to synod. Classes and synod shall ensure that officebearers will not be forced to participate in synod against their convictions.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2005 indicated that synod should revisit this matter when a majority of our classes had declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative. That has now happened.
2. Permitting classes to delegate female officebearers to synod while ensuring that male officebearers will not be forced to participate in that assembly honors both convictions present in the denomination.
3. A number of synods have encouraged the church to use the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church as much as possible (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 47; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 43; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700; *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 525-26; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555; *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 561; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 695).

B. Delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a.

Grounds:

1. The majority of classes in our denomination have declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative.
2. All councils in our denomination should have the freedom to follow their convictions in the calling of ministerial personnel.

Classis Grand Rapids East
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 6: Ensure That the Synodical Worship Service Reflects the Diversity of Our Denomination

I. Background

The growing diversity of our denomination was celebrated in a number of ways at Synod 2005. Twenty-two persons of color represented their classes as delegates—the highest number in our denomination’s history. In addition, synod made a number of decisions to increase that diversity. It encouraged

“each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748). It also requested “all classes to develop a strategy to intentionally incorporate ethnic minorities into the life and government of the local church and broader assemblies and submit their plan to the BOT [Board of Trustees] by March 15, 2007” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 755).

Unfortunately, our denomination’s desire to reflect the diversity that characterizes the church gathered around God’s throne (Rev. 7:9) was marred when a female elder was prevented from serving the Lord’s Supper in the synodical service of prayer and praise. Although the pain connected with this experience became public because it was mentioned on synod’s floor, this is not the first time that a synodical service of prayer and praise has been a source of pain.

Those who planned the joint worship service for Synod 2002 and the Multiethnic Conference did an excellent job of reflecting the ethnic diversity of our denomination. People of different nationalities extended God’s greeting, offered prayers, delivered the message, led in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and gave the benediction in ten different languages.

However, not one woman functioned in a leadership role, even though female members of the host church regularly receive the offering in their congregation. The absence of women, though not mentioned on the floor of synod, was a source of pain to some who attended that service. The absence of female participants in these services is especially striking because, over the past three decades, synod has repeatedly encouraged the church to use the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church as much as possible.

The diversity of our denomination could be easily expressed and the pain that is given by our insensitivity to fellow believers easily addressed if synod adopted a simple guideline to help the convening church think about these matters. This would be very appropriate because the planning for such services is a shared responsibility of the convening church and the denomination’s executive director.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to adopt the following guideline to assist the convening church as it plans the synodical service of prayer and praise:

As much as possible, persons who have leadership roles in the service should reflect the ethnic and gender diversity of our denomination. If necessary, please request participation from the members of your classis or from delegates from other classes who will be attending synod.

Ground: This service is a synodical service of prayer and praise and should reflect the rich diversity of our denomination.

Classis Grand Rapids East
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 7: Revise Method of Selecting Synod Officers

I. Background

The officers of the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church are considered the servants of the church, and are given great respect as significant leaders within the denomination. The officers of synod have served admirably, and their work is deeply appreciated.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon the denomination to select officers who are both capable leaders and who represent the entire denomination. While it is clear that we have selected capable leaders, it is also clear that we have not selected representative leaders. Our leaders principally represent a small geographical region of North America.

In the last 25 years (1981-2005, see table 1), there have been one hundred officers elected to serve synod in the positions of president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk.

- 49 percent of the officers have come from the nine classes in West Michigan (Georgetown, Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Holland, Kalamazoo, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland).
- 88 percent of the presidents of synod have been from West Michigan.
- None of the presidents have been from Canada.
- 26 percent of the total officers have been from Canada.
- On average, one officer is elected from Canada each year.
- 76 percent of the officers have come from either parts of Canada or West Michigan. 24 percent of the officers come from the balance of the United States.
- 38 percent of classes (18) have not been represented by an officer of synod (Alberta South/Saskatchewan, Arizona, Atlantic Northeast, B.C. South-East, Greater Los Angeles, Hackensack, Hudson, Lake Superior, Muskegon, Northcentral Iowa, Northern Illinois, Northern Michigan, Pacific Hanmi, Pella, Red Mesa, Southeast U.S., Wisconsin, and Yellowstone).

A summary of our history of selection of officers is presented in full detail at the conclusion of this overture. However, it is clear that the present system of officer selection leaves many classes in the CRCNA underrepresented.

It is our position that it is in the best interest of the church to fully represent all the classes among the officers at synod. It is our conviction that qualified leaders can be found in all regions of both countries. Further, it is our position that increasing and distributing the leadership base of synod will serve to improve participation and ownership in the denomination.

Toward the end of increasing representation, participation, and ownership, we bring an overture and a proposed structure for determining officers of synod.

II. Proposed structure

We propose that the officers of synod be chosen from a classical grouping by rotation. We suggest that the classes of the denomination be combined into the following groups:

Group 1

Alberta North
 Alberta South/Saskatchewan
 B.C. North-West
 B.C. South-East
 Huron
 Toronto

Group 4

Columbia
 Pacific Northwest
 Red Mesa
 Rocky Mountain
 Yellowstone

Group 7

Chicago South
 Holland
 Illiana
 Kalamazoo
 Northern Illinois
 Zeeland

Group 2

Eastern Canada
 Hamilton
 Niagara
 Quinte

Group 5

Arizona
 California South
 Central California
 Greater Los Angeles
 Pacific Hanmi

Group 8

Heartland
 lakota
 Lake Superior
 Minnkota
 Northcentral Iowa
 Pella
 Wisconsin

Group 3

Chatham Atlantic Northeast
 Hackensack
 Hudson
 Southeast U.S.
 Lake Erie
 Northern Michigan

Group 6

Georgetown
 Grand Rapids East
 Grand Rapids North
 Grand Rapids South
 Grandville
 Muskegon
 Thornapple Valley

We suggest that the rotation for election be as follows:

Year	President	Vice president	1st clerk	2nd clerk
2007	Group 8	Group 1	Group 5	Group 3
2008	Group 7	Group 4	Group 2	Group 6
2009	Group 1	Group 5	Group 3	Group 8
2010	Group 4	Group 2	Group 6	Group 7
2011	Group 5	Group 3	Group 8	Group 1
2012	Group 2	Group 6	Group 7	Group 4
2013	Group 3	Group 8	Group 1	Group 5
2014	Group 6	Group 7	Group 4	Group 2

Table 1

* = Elder delegate

= Canadian delegate

+ = West Michigan delegate

Year	President	Vice President	1st clerk	2nd clerk
2005	+ Holland	+ Grand Rapids South	# Hamilton	* Illiana
2004	+ Georgetown	Lake Erie	# Quinte	+ Holland
2003	+ Holland	lakota	* Illiana	# Hamilton
2002	+ Thornapple Valley	# Hamilton	# Hamilton	Central California
2001	+ Grand Rapids East	+ Georgetown	* Illiana	# B.C. North-West
2000	+ Holland	+ Thornapple Valley	* + Grand Rapids East	# Huron
1999	+ Holland	+ Grand Rapids South	* # Toronto	# Eastern Canada
1998	+ Georgetown	# Toronto	* + Holland	# Chatham
1997	+ Holland	+ Holland	* # Toronto	+ Thornapple Valley
1996	+ Grand Rapids South	# Toronto	Pacific Northwest	+ Grand Rapids North
1995	+ Georgetown	# Toronto	+ Georgetown	California South
1994	Minn. South	Central California	Heartland	# Chatham
1993	Minn. South	+ Grand Rapids East	+ Grand Rapids East	+ Grand Rapids South
1992	+ Georgetown	# Niagara	Minn. South	Central California
1991	+ Georgetown	# Niagara	+ Grand Rapids East	Minn. South
1990	+ Georgetown	+ Grand Rapids East	+ Holland	# Quinte
1989	+ Georgetown	Rocky Mountain	+ Grand Rapids East	+ Kalamazoo
1988	+ Grandville	+ Zeeland	Minn. South	# Quinte
1987	+ Grandville	# Niagara	+ Grand Rapids East	Minn. South
1986	+ Grand Rapids South	# B.C. North-West	+ Grandville	Illiana
1985	+ Grandville	Minn. South	+ Kalamazoo	# Toronto
1984	+ Grand Rapids East	# Eastern Canada	Columbia	Chicago South
1983	+ Grand Rapids South	+ Grandville	# Toronto	# Chatham
1982	+ Grand Rapids East	# Alberta North	+ Holland	Illiana
1981	Chicago South	+ Grand Rapids North	+ Grandville	# Eastern Canada

III. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to:

- A. Revise its method of selecting officers so as to ensure that all classes are represented.
- B. Make the necessary changes in the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

Grounds:

1. There are many delegates from each of the classes who are capable of serving as officers of synod.
2. The feeling of denominational connection will be enhanced when the positions of officers of synod are spread more broadly throughout the denomination.
3. This procedure continues to ensure that one of the officers of synod is from a Canadian classis.
4. This procedure does not prevent the election of elders to office.
5. This procedure still allows the delegates to synod the opportunity to elect their officers.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Timothy Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 8: Amend the Board of Trustees' Election Process

I. Background

A. *Synod 1996*

A constitution for the Board of Trustees, then a regionally constituted board, was presented to Synod 1996 for approval. One of the articles in the proposed constitution specified that the board members be elected by synod, not by the regions themselves. This election process was a departure from the way members of all other regional boards were elected. All other regional boards were elected by people in the region. The remaining boards were still classically constituted, and each classis elected its own board member.

An overture to Synod 1996 asserted that this unusual election procedure was neither necessary nor helpful. The overture asserted that the new procedure "risks the possibility of making classes feel less involved in the work of the denomination than they presently feel" (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 326). The overture requested that the normal procedure for the election of regional delegates be used and that the regions, not synod, elect members to the Board of Trustees because the regions "are uniquely qualified to do so since they are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees than are synodical delegates who live hundreds of miles away" (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 327). Synod concurred in these observations, and decided that the members of the denomination's Board of Trustees would be elected by the regions, not by synod.

B. *Synod 2000*

In response to Synod 1999's instruction that "the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board make recommendation(s) to

Synod 2000 to achieve effective bi-national ministry and governance” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 617), Synod 2000 approved a change in the makeup of the Board of Trustees. One member would be elected from each of the twelve Canadian classes and three at-large members would be elected from Canada. Twelve members would be elected from the eight regions in the United States, and three at-large members would be elected from the United States.

When the Board recommended this change, it also recommended the same election process that it had recommended to Synod 1996, namely, that all board members be elected by synod. As mentioned above, Synod 1996 had rejected this procedure as one that put too much distance between the board and the church. Now the composition of the board was coming closer to the church because, in Canada at least, one board member would come from each Canadian classis. However, the election of these persons would be very distant because most members of Synod do not know the delegates personally.

C. *Synod 2005*

When balloting began at Synod 2005, the first vote was to elect a board member from one of the Canadian classes. An elder delegate from that classis, who was also one of the nominees on the ballot, immediately informed synod, “We discussed this in our classis and decided that I would be the alternate and the other nominee would be the member. Please vote for him.” Synod willingly obliged because the vast majority of the delegates knew neither nominee. Had synod voted without being steered by this elder delegate, most probably the result of the vote would have been different because the nominee elected was listed second. Synod voted nine more times from pairs that included two men or two women. Seven of those nine times, the person listed first was elected. The fact is that the vast majority of the delegates simply do not know the persons for whom they are voting. As much as possible, voting for board members must be removed from the floor of synod to the floors of our classes.

D. *The current election process*

Though synod needs to elect the at-large members of the Board of Trustees, voting for regional and classical board members can be moved into the classes with minor adjustments to the current election process. That process is:

- 1) One (1) member shall be from each of the twelve (12) classes in Canada. One (1) or more member(s) shall be from each of the regions in the United States up to a total of twelve (12) members. In addition, three (3) members-at-large shall be from Canada and three (3) from the United States.
- 2) Each of the twelve (12) Canadian classes will be requested to submit two or more names for the position that needs to be filled from that classis. In addition, Canadian classes may submit names for at-large positions on the Board that need to be filled from time to time.
- 3) Each of the classes in the United States regions will submit names for the position that needs to be filled from among the membership of the classes in a specified region. In addition, United States classes may submit names for at-large positions on the Board that need to be filled from time to time.
- 4) The Board of Trustees will receive the names from the classes and compose a slate of two (2) names for each position that needs to be filled. The Board of Trustees will observe the synodical guidelines for balance and inclusiveness with respect to geographical distribution, ecclesiastical offices held by nominees, clergy and non-clergy, race, and gender.
- 5) If the procedure described above does not produce a sufficient number of nominees who, in the judgment of the Board, are qualified to serve as either regular or alternate members or if the Board makes the judgment that the

synodical guidelines for balancing board membership need to be invoked, the Board may then add other names to the list of nominations submitted to synod.

- 6) The BOT shall submit a complete slate of names to synod for election of Board members. Consistent with synodical practice, a nominee not elected as a BOT member will be designated by synod as the alternate BOT member.

(Acts of Synod 2000, pp. 623-24)

E. Adjustments to bring this process closer to the classes

To ensure that the election of BOT members happens in the classes (Canada) and in the regions (United States), a minor revision needs to be made in section 5) by deleting the last three words (*submitted to synod*) so the sentence ends with the word *nominations*. Revisions have to be made in section 6) so that in Canada the final step in the process is the same as that formerly used when all boards were classically constituted, and in the United States the process is the same as that of all other regional boards.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to amend the process of electing members to the denominational Board of Trustees by:

A. Revising section 5) in the election process to read:

If the procedure described above does not produce a sufficient number of nominees who, in the judgment of the Board, are qualified to serve as either regular or alternate members, or if the Board makes the judgment that the synodical guidelines for balancing board membership need to be invoked, the Board may then add other names to the list of nominations.

B. Revising section 6) in the election process to read:

The BOT prepares ballots for the respective classes. The classes vote at their spring meetings and submit their votes to the BOT, which presents the results to synod for ratification. (In Canada, the person who receives the higher number of votes in a classis will be the member; the other person will be the alternate. In the United States, the person who receives the higher number of votes from all the classes comprising the region will be the member; the other person will be the alternate. Tie votes in Canadian classes will be resolved in the classis. Tie votes in the United States' regions will be resolved at synod by the synodical delegates from the region where the tie occurred.)

Grounds:

1. This procedure furthers the goal of having local congregations and classes actively involved in the work of the denomination.
2. The classes and regions that nominate individuals to serve on the board are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees than are synodical delegates who live hundreds of miles away.

Classis Grand Rapids East
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 9: Establish an Exemption Re Ministers' Pension Fund

I. Background

Mountain Springs Community Church, Salt Lake City, Utah, does not currently have an ordained minister of the Word. Under Church Order Article 55, an unordained minister of the Word, who has been given a license to exhort by Classis Yellowstone, is currently leading Mountain Springs Community Church. Mountain Springs Community Church has, during the 2003 and 2004 meetings of synod, attempted to deal with this issue with the denominational offices, with no success. They have continued to attempt to deal with the issue through communications with Mr. John H. Bolt, director of finance and administration, also without success.

II. Overture

Classis Yellowstone overtures Synod 2006 to exempt from mandatory payment into the ordained Ministers' Pension Fund, those churches that have hired a full-time nonordained minister of the Word, and who are presently paying a minimum 9 percent of equivalent salary into the nonordained CRC Pension Fund.

Grounds:

1. It is an injustice for the denomination to "double-dip" the treasuries of small churches who cannot afford to pay into two pension funds while supporting one full-time unordained pastor.
2. There are presently no other options for considering exceptions to the expectation of all churches paying into the ordained Ministers' Pension Fund.
3. Classis Yellowstone believes this situation will continue to arise as other churches experience the issue when unordained ministers of the Word are hired.

Classis Yellowstone

Delbert D. VanDenBerg, stated clerk

Overture 10: Request to Maintain the Present Form of Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and to Add an Expanded Footnote

I. Background

Synod 2004 adopted the following with regard to Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

That synod declare Q. and A. 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession given our study of official Roman Catholic teaching and extensive dialogue with official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 629)

It is our contention that Q. and A. 80 in its present form still accurately reflects the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

II. Overture

Believing that we “should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it” (HC Q. and A. 112), Classis Grand Rapids North respectfully overtures Synod 2006 to correct the decision of Synod 2004 by adopting the following statement regarding Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

A. That synod affirms the truth contained in Q. and A. 80 in its current form as accurately reflecting the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Grounds:

1. The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is exactly as the Heidelberg Catechism in Q. and A. 80 states:

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

The following evidence supports the view that the Roman Catholic Church still holds to this position:

- a. Section 1414 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (all quotes from the Catholic Catechism are from the version published October 11, 1993) states, “As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.”
- b. Section 1393 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Holy Communion separates us from sin. The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is “given up for us,” and the blood we drink “shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.” For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins: For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord’s death, we proclaim the forgiveness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.”
- c. Section 1416 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ increases the communicant’s union with the Lord, forgives his venial sins, and preserves him from grave sins. Since receiving this sacrament strengthens the bonds of charity between the communicant and Christ, it also reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.”
- d. Section 1371 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for the faithful departed who ‘have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified,’ so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ.”
- e. The Council of Trent also affirms the propitiatory nature of the Eucharist when it states: “If any one saith, that the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . but not a propitiatory sacrifice;

or, that it profits only the recipient, and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities; let him be anathema." The Roman Catholic Church has never repudiated this statement (Sess. XXII, can. iii).

2. The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is as stated in Q. and A. 80, when it says that the Mass teaches

That Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Consider the following teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which indicate the correctness of the view of the Heidelberg Catechism:

- a. Section 1376 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: 'Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.'"
 - b. Once the bread and wine have supposedly been changed into the body and blood of Christ they are worshiped with the worship of Latria. "She (The Roman Catholic Church) has at all times paid this great Sacrament the worship known as 'latria,' which may be given to God alone" (*Mysterium Fidei*, 55, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Holy Eucharist, September 3, 1965). "The Catholic Church has always displayed and still displays this latria that ought to be paid to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, both during Mass and outside of it, by taking the greatest possible care of consecrated Hosts, by exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and by carrying them about in processions to the joy of great numbers of the people" (*Mysterium Fidei*, 56, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Holy Eucharist, September 3, 1965). "The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather in a complementary way calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament" (Section 1178, Catechism of the Catholic Church).
3. The biblical and Reformed perspective on such teaching of the Roman Catholic Church must, therefore, conclude with the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism in Q. and A. 80.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

Consider the following implication of the Roman Catholic position:

- a. If the Mass can forgive sins, which the Roman Catholic Church clearly states in its Catechism and other documents, then the sufficiency of Jesus Christ has been denied.
 - b. Hebrews 10:12 says, “But when this priest (Jesus Christ) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.” We do not need to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice. His sacrifice on the cross atoned for all sin, forever. The tabernacle and the temple did not have seats. The Old Testament priests never sat down, indicating that their work was never done. Christ “sat down” indicating that his priestly work was complete.
 - c. “While the Lord gave us the Supper that it might be distributed amongst us to testify to us that in communicating in his body we have part in the sacrifice which he offered on the cross to God his Father, for the expiation and satisfaction of our sins—men have out of their own head invented, on the contrary, that it is a sacrifice by which we obtain the forgiveness of our sins before God. This is a blasphemy which it is impossible to bear” (*Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper*, John Calvin).
 - d. The Mass is offered to God by the priest on an altar. “The design of the Mass is the confirmation of the opinion concerning works which are done, and a denial of the sacrifice of Christ” (*Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Zacharius Ursinus, p. 421, translated by Rev. G. W. Williard [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.]).
 - e. “If Roman Catholics think that Christ must become flesh and blood everyday, they deny the finality of the cross” (*Comfort and Joy*, Andrew Kuyvenhoven, p. 183).
 - f. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Lord’s Supper called a sacrifice.
4. The Heidelberg Catechism is, therefore, correct in its final assessment of the Mass as “a condemnable idolatry” (Q. and A. 80).

Consider the following in support of this judgment:

- a. Question 95 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, “What is idolatry?” The answer is, “Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in his Word.” The Roman Catholic Church clearly puts its trust in the bread and wine. “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised” (Rom. 1:25).
- b. “To prostrate ourselves before the bread of the Supper, and worship Jesus Christ as if he were contained in it, is to make an idol of it rather than a sacrament” (*Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper*, John Calvin, 43).
- c. The Old Testament is filled with accounts of idol worship from the time when Rachel stole her father’s household gods. The common concept of idolatry is the worship of statues. This is a misconception. When the Israelites had Aaron fashion the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sanai, they thought they were worshipping the God who had delivered them from Egypt through the idol. Even the worshippers of Baal did not think their idols were really gods. This is illustrated in 2 Chronicles 28 where it says that Ahaz, “walked in the ways of the

kings of Israel and also made cast idols for worshipping the Baals." The idols clearly were physical representations of the gods behind them, just as the bread and wine are in the Catholic Mass.

- d. "If they (Roman Catholics) think that the faithful should worship a Christ laid on the altars in their churches instead of the Christ who sits on the throne of his Father in heaven, they are guilty of idolatry!" (*Comfort and Joy*, Andrew Kuyvenhoven, p. 183).
- e. All idolatry should be condemned as Q. and A. 80 does.

B. That synod adopt the following footnote to replace the one proposed by the Interchurch Relations Committee to Synod 2004 (see *Agenda for Synod 2004*, III, B, 4, p. 306):

Question and answer 80 did not appear in the text of the first German edition of the Heidelberg Catechism, which probably left the publisher sometime in February 1563. It first appeared in the second German edition (March 1563) and in the official Latin translation of the Heidelberg Catechism (March 1563). It was also included, in slightly expanded form, in the third (April 1563) and fourth (November 1563) German editions, the last of which became the "textus receptus" of the Heidelberg Catechism and the basis for the 1975 CRC translation used above. The Council of Trent formulated its statement on the doctrine of the Mass in September of 1562.

The proposed footnote will make the historical progression more clear than the one offered by the Interchurch Relations Committee.

Grounds:

1. The current footnote does not make clear the close proximity among the four editions of the Heidelberg Catechism.
2. The Council of Trent formulated its statement on the doctrine of the Mass in September of 1562.
3. Zacharias Ursinus in his Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism makes the importance of this question and answer abundantly clear (*Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Zacharius Ursinus, pp. 390-424, translated by Rev. G. W. Williard [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.]).
4. The argument that Q. and A. 80 should not be included in the catechism because they did not appear in the first edition is without weight. Such reasoning would also require that we not divide the catechism into 52 Lord's Days because this was not done in the first edition.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 11: Do Not Change Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80

- Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us
that our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.

It also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,
who with his very body
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father
where he wants us to worship him.

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

I. Introduction

The Heidelberg Catechism declares that "the [Roman Catholic] Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry" (Lord's Day 30, Q. and A. 80). For various reasons, the severity of this language has proved troublesome to some, and, from time to time, synods of the Christian Reformed Church have been asked to deal with the issue.

In response to a request from Synod 1998, the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) presented a report to Synod 2002 and then presented the same report in a revised form together with a second report to Synod 2004. Synod 2004 then instructed the IRC to propose recommendations concerning Q. and A. 80 to Synod 2006. These two reports and the actions of Synod 2004 have been made available to Christian Reformed councils and classes in a booklet entitled *Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist*. References to these reports and actions of Synod 2004 in what follows will be by page number in this booklet.

In 2002, the IRC concluded on the basis of its study of Roman Catholic teaching that "significant changes in the Heidelberg Catechism may be warranted" (p. 23). In 2004 and after consultation with various Roman Catholic authorities, the IRC advanced to the point of saying that the Heidelberg Catechism was simply wrong in the sixteenth century when it was written and is wrong today in its description and evaluation of official Roman Catholic teaching on the Mass (p. 29). The IRC concludes that "it would be inappropriate for the CRC to continue, by its confession of Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism, to suggest that it accurately describes or fairly condemns either the official Roman Catholic teaching or the practices that are in accordance with it" (p. 32).

In keeping with this conclusion, the IRC recommended that Q. and A. 80 be printed in a smaller typeface than the rest of the catechism and that an explanatory footnote be appended. This footnote would point out that although the answer to Q. 80 is wrong in its evaluation and condemnation of official Roman Catholic teaching, it should be retained in a smaller typeface because it serves as a warning against erroneous “teaching, attitudes, and practices” still found among Roman Catholics in certain parts of the world.

On the basis of our own study and reflection, we have come to a different conclusion from that of the IRC. Our conclusion is that the Heidelberg Catechism accurately describes official Roman Catholic teaching concerning the Mass and that its condemnation of the Mass is warranted and fair. Therefore, we are asking that Synod 2006 make no changes either in the language or the appearance of Q. and A. 80 and that no explanatory footnote be appended. The reasons for these conclusions and recommendations are presented in what follows.

II. Background

As generally recognized, there was no Q. and A. 80 in the first edition of the Heidelberg Catechism published in 1563. Scholars debate whether or not Q. and A. 80 was formulated later that year as a direct response to certain decrees and canons of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent. In any case, the catechism addresses two doctrinal issues, one of which Trent determined only months before the catechism was published. This issue pertains to the relationship between the Lord’s Supper (the Mass) and the forgiveness of sins. The second edition of the catechism includes Q. and A. 80 in a form designed to address this issue. The third edition adds the sections dealing with the second doctrinal issue, the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. The Council of Trent had settled this matter earlier in 1551. The fourth and final edition of the Heidelberg catechism is identical with the third and places the catechism in the context of church order and liturgical matters.

We shall consider each of these two doctrinal issues—the relationship between the Lord’s Supper and the forgiveness of sins, and the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper—by considering in turn the catechism’s description of the Reformed view, its contrasting description of the Roman Catholic view, and, lastly, the Reformed condemnation of the Roman Catholic view. For statements of official Roman Catholic teaching, we rely primarily on the decisions and formulations of the Council of Trent (1543-1563) and on the contemporary Catechism of the Catholic Church promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992. The IRC is correct in saying that “official Roman Catholic teaching regarding the Mass has remained quite stable from the sixteenth century to now” (p. 29).

A. *The Lord’s Supper and the forgiveness of sins*

1. The Reformed view

The Lord’s Supper declares to us
that our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.

The forgiveness of sin lies in the foreground of our Reformed understanding of the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper. As the catechism states it, "the Lord's Supper declares to us that our sins have been completely forgiven." The forgiveness of sins immediately brings into view the doctrine of justification. In the words of John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (III.11.2), "Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness." Justification consists in the remission of sins grounded in the one act of righteousness on the cross, and justification is at the heart of the biblical gospel as well as the Protestant Reformation. That is what makes it so important to have a proper understanding of what the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is and how it functions.

How are our sins forgiven? Our Catechism says that our sins are completely forgiven "through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which he himself finished on the cross once and for all." The Scripture teaches us that by our sin we have incurred the penalty of death and eternal condemnation. The gospel is that Jesus has taken upon himself the guilt of our sin and paid the penalty of death by his death on the cross. His "sacrifice of atonement" (Rom. 3:25) is the "one act of righteousness" (5:18) that secured the forgiveness of sins, and the forgiveness of sins is ours through faith in him. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way by which a sinner can be justified in the judgment of God and saved.

The proof texts offered in the Christian Reformed edition of the Heidelberg Catechism in support of this doctrine stress the sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of this one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. In John 19:30, we hear Jesus saying from the cross, "It is finished." The Son has completed the work assigned to him by his Father in heaven. He has offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people and has thereby secured the forgiveness of their sins. There is no need for more sacrifices, and there are no more sacrifices to be offered.

This is the point in the references to a series of passages in Hebrews. Jesus does not need to offer sacrifices day after day like the priests appointed to serve under the Law of Moses. "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself" (7:27). By his blood, he obtained eternal redemption (9:12). By his sacrifice, Jesus has done away with sin. "Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:25, 26).

The emphasis falls again and again on the complete sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of the one sacrifice offered once for all that stands in radical contrast to the thousands upon thousands of sacrifices offered under the old covenant. These animal sacrifices could never take away either the penalty or the power of sin (10:4, 11; cf. Rom. 3:25). The sacrifice of the body of Christ is once for all (10:10), and there is one sacrifice for sins for all time (10:12). By this one sacrifice, "he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (10:14). When our sins have been forgiven by this one sacrifice offered once for all time "there is no longer any sacrifice for sin" (10:18).

This emphasis on the complete sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross to obtain the forgiveness of sins is an integral part of the catechism's understanding of both sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Lord's Day 25 on "The Sacraments," we learn that God promises in his gospel "to forgive our sins and give us eternal life by grace alone," and he does this "because of Christ's one sacrifice finished on the cross" (Q. and A. 66). Then, in the next question and answer the same thought is reiterated. Both the word and the sacraments are intended to focus our faith "on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation." "Our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross." Therefore, when we partake of the Lord's supper we "accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and by believing [we] receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life" (Lord's Day 28, Q. and A. 76).

The catechism's teaching on the Lord's Supper is simply a further outworking of what we confess in Lord's Day 1. Our only comfort in life and in death is our union with our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus "has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood," and on that ground we are justified (forgiven) and saved. There are no other sacrifices for sin, and there is no need for other sacrifices. He has *fully paid for all my sin* with his precious blood.

In Q. and A. 80, our catechism shows us how the Lord's Supper functions in relation to justification (the forgiveness of sins) when it begins by saying that the Lord's Supper *declares to us* that our sins have been completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered once for all on the cross. The gospel brings to us the good news that Jesus has died and is risen to save us from sin and its consequences. Through faith in Jesus, we receive the double grace of forgiveness (justification) and renewal (sanctification). The Holy Spirit produces faith in us by the preaching of the gospel and that same gospel is remembered and proclaimed in the Lord's Supper.

Thus, the Lord's Supper serves to strengthen and confirm the faith wrought in us by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lord's Day 25, Q. and A. 65). When we receive the bread and the wine in faith, we are receiving Jesus Christ by faith just as we do when we believe the gospel preached to us from the word of God. What comes to the fore in Lord's Days 28 through 30 on the Lord's Supper is the centrality of the word received by faith in our conversion and salvation. To this word, the sacraments are appended as visible signs and pledges so that our faith is confirmed and strengthened and we are assured of eternal life on the sole ground of the sacrifice offered for us once and for all time on Calvary's cross.

2. The Reformed understanding of the Roman Catholic view

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

The question here is whether this paragraph accurately describes the Roman Catholic view of the Mass. In setting out this view, the catechism makes four points.

First, the Mass is a sacrifice. The catechism says, "Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests." This offering of Christ is a sacrificial offering, and, for this reason, Roman Catholics characteristically speak of the "sacrifice of the Mass." The Mass is a sacrifice. The decrees and canons determined by Session 22 of the Council of Trent bear the title, "The Doctrine on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." Chapter 1 declares that the priesthood of Christ was not extinguished by his death in that he left to his church "a visible sacrifice" to represent and memorialize the bloody sacrifice once accomplished on the cross. Chapter 2 declares, "in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who on the altar of the Cross 'once offered Himself' in a bloody manner." The same victim who once offered himself on the cross is now offered "by the ministry of priests." Canon 1 makes this teaching abundantly clear. "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God, or that the act of offering is nothing else than Christ being given to us to eat: let him be anathema." Thus, the curse of Rome falls on any and all who deny that the Mass is truly and properly a sacrifice.

In addition, we may note the importance of a daily sacrifice of the Mass. In the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) said, "Priests fulfill their chief duty in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In it the work of our redemption continues to be carried out. For this reason, priests are strongly urged to celebrate Mass every day, for even if the faithful are unable to be present, it is an act of Christ and the Church."

Our catechism is accurate in representing the Mass as a sacrifice in which the priests offer up Christ daily.

Second, the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice designed to obtain the forgiveness of sins. The catechism says that this sacrificial offering is the way in which the living and the dead "have their sins forgiven." Trent develops this theme most fully in Session 22, chapter 2. The chapter heading reads, "The Sacrifice Is a Visible Propitiation for the Living and the Dead," and the holy synod declares that this sacrifice is "truly propitiatory."

The IRC reports, "In our conversations, the Roman Catholic representatives interpreted 'truly propitiatory' to mean that in the Mass the fruits of Christ's propitiation become ours (a transfer that happens only in the context of faith)" (p. 8).

This interpretation appears to us to be disingenuous because in effect it denies what the language of Trent clearly affirms. It is not simply the death of Christ but the Mass itself that is propitiatory. By *propitiatory*, Trent means that the sacrifice of the Mass appeases the wrath of God. Chapter 2 says, "For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins." The Mass is offered "for the sins, punishments, [and] satisfactions" of the faithful.

Further, Canon 3 places a curse on those who deny this doctrine. "If any one says that the sacrifice of the Mass is only one of praise and of thanksgiving; or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the

Cross, but not one of propitiation; or that it is of profit to him alone who receives; or that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities: let him be anathema.”

Whereas the Heidelberg Catechism says that the Lord’s Supper simply “declares to us” that we secure the forgiveness of sin through faith in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross, Trent teaches that the Mass itself is propitiatory and secures the forgiveness of sin for the faithful.

Third, the sacrifice of the Mass is necessary for the forgiveness of sin. The catechism says that according to Romanist teaching the living and the dead “do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.”

Here, the catechism recognizes the role played by the suffering and death of Christ on the cross in the forgiveness of sins according to Rome but maintains that this atonement remains fruitless for the believer without the sacrifice of the Mass. In the language of Trent (Session 22, chapter 1), the Mass is the means by which the “saving grace” of the sacrifice once accomplished on the cross is “applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit.” According to chapter 2, the fruits of the bloody oblation of the cross “are received most abundantly through this unbloody one,” that is, through the sacrifice of the Mass.

The 1992 Catechism teaches that the Eucharist cleanses us from past sins and preserves us from future sins (# 1393). “As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity *wipes away venial sins*” (# 1394; emphasis original).

The authors of the Heidelberg Catechism were well aware, of course, that in the Roman sacramental system the Mass is not the only sacrament that secures forgiveness of sin. Baptism as a sacrament of initiation secures the forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins (1992 Catechism, # 1279). The sacrament of Penance (now called the sacrament of Reconciliation) is designed to secure the forgiveness of mortal sins, sins that exclude persons from Christ’s kingdom and bring them into the eternal death of hell (1992 Catechism, # 1861). The Mass, however, is preeminent among the sacraments and is the way in which the faithful ordinarily receive the forgiveness of venial sins. Venial sins do not deprive the sinner of eternal happiness, but they must nevertheless be forgiven if he is to enjoy eternal happiness. If these sins are not forgiven while the believer is still alive, they must be forgiven after he has died. This is the function of time spent in purgatory.

The emphasis on the necessity of the Mass for the forgiveness of sins stands in marked contrast to the way in which believers receive the forgiveness of sins according to the Reformation. The suffering and death of our Lord is the sole ground for the forgiveness of sin. The suffering and death of our Lord is made efficacious for our salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. We do not need the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in addition to what Jesus has done once for all on the cross. We are justified by faith alone, not by faith plus the sacrifice of the Mass. In the Roman Catholic view, forgiveness is mediated through the sacraments and preeminently through the sacrifice of the Mass. This is what makes the sacrifice of the Mass necessary for the

forgiveness of sins. In the Reformed view, forgiveness is received directly from Christ through faith without the intervention of the sacramental system.

Fourth, the sacrifice of the Mass secures forgiveness of sin not only for the living but also for the dead. The Heidelberg Catechism says that according to Rome, “the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven . . . unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.” There can be no question but that this is an essential element of Roman Catholic teaching concerning the Mass. Session 22, chapter 2, of Trent is entitled “The Sacrifice Is a Visible Propitiation for the Living and the Dead.” It concludes by saying, “Therefore, it is offered rightly according to the tradition of the apostles, not only for the sins of the faithful living, for their punishments and other necessities, but also for the dead in Christ not yet fully purged.” Citing this passage from Trent, the 1992 Catechism declares, “The Eucharistic sacrifice is also offered for *the faithful departed* who ‘have died in Christ but are not yet wholly purified,’ so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ” (#1371; emphasis original).

In the report of 2002, the IRC denies the accuracy of the Heidelberg Catechism in this connection when it says the eternal state of those who die in the Lord is not in question. “They are simply being purified for the state of full glorification” (p. 10). The summary statement reads, “The effect of the Mass on those who die in the Lord lies not in the area of justification but of (final) sanctification” (pp. 22, 23). The report claims that whereas the Heidelberg Catechism makes the effect of the Mass on the dead to lie in the area of justification (the forgiveness of sins), the official Roman teaching makes the effect of the Mass to lie in the area of sanctification (purification). For this reason, the IRC claims that the catechism is wrong in the way that it represents Roman Catholic teaching.

The IRC errs, however, in that it takes a distinction that is of crucial importance to the Reformation and applies it as though it were also a distinction made by Rome. The Reformation distinguished between justification and sanctification and claimed that justification consisted in the remission of sins. The Council of Trent responded by declaring that justification “is not merely remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man . . .” (Session 6, chapter 7). In other words, no distinction is made between justification and sanctification. Justification is defined as a sanctifying process. Therefore, Rome can describe what happens in purgatory as a process of purification, but this sanctifying process is the forgiveness of sins. That is why Trent describes the sacrifice of the Mass as “propitiatory both for the living and the dead.” The Heidelberg Catechism is entirely accurate in representing Roman Catholic teaching as claiming that both the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven unless Christ is offered (sacrificed) for them in the Mass.

The summary conclusion of the report of 2004 is that “it would not be an accurate description of [official] Roman Catholic teaching to say that ‘the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests’” (p. 28). On the contrary, every element in this statement of the Heidelberg Catechism can be verified by reference to principal and authoritative statements of official Roman Catholic teaching as demonstrated above. The catechism is

accurate in the way that it describes Roman Catholic teaching. The difference with Rome does not arise with the catechism's characterization of Roman Catholic teaching but with the evaluation of this teaching.

3. The Reformed condemnation of the Roman Catholic view

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ

The Heidelberg Catechism condemns the Roman Catholic Mass in the strongest terms as "a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ." No doubt this was not the first time that such a charge had been made from the side of the Protestant Reformation. This is evidenced by the fact that the Council of Trent considered and dealt with this kind of complaint before the Heidelberg Catechism was written.

Far from denying the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, Trent holds that the sacrifice of the Mass does not in any way derogate or detract from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In chapters 1 and 2 of Session 22, Trent makes three points in order to support this contention.

First, Trent affirms the uniqueness of what Christ accomplished on the cross. Christ offered himself "once to God the Father upon the altar of the cross" (chapter 1). With an allusion to Hebrews 9:27, Trent says that Christ "on the altar of the Cross 'once offered Himself' in a bloody manner" (chapter 2). This is a historic event and as such is unrepeatable.

Second, the Christ who offers himself in the sacrifice of the Mass is the very same Christ who once offered himself on the altar of the cross. The only difference lies in the manner of the offering. In the cross, we have a bloody sacrifice; and in the Mass, an unbloody sacrifice. From chapter 2, "And since in this divine sacrifice, which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who on the altar of the Cross 'once offered Himself' in a bloody manner, the holy Synod teaches that this is truly propitiatory, . . ." Further in the same chapter, "For, it is one and the same Victim, the same one now offering by the ministry of the priests as He who then offered Himself on the Cross, the manner of offering alone being different."

Third, the sacramental sacrifice is the means by which the benefits of the sacrifice of the cross are conveyed to the faithful. Therefore, the sacrifice of the Mass does not detract from the sacrifice of the cross. From chapter 2, "The fruits of that oblation (bloody, that is) are received most abundantly through this unbloody one; so far is the latter from being derogatory in any way to Him [Christ]." This point is restated in Canon 4, which goes so far as to lay a curse on all who say "that blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the Cross through the sacrifice of the Mass, or that by it He is disparaged."

The same doctrine is taught in the 1992 Catechism using these same citations from chapters 1 and 2 of Session 22 (#1367).

The IRC gives extensive attention to this argumentation of Rome in the report of 2002: "Both in Trent and in the Second Vatican Council, the difference between the sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass is that the one sacrifice is offered in different manners" (p. 8). Various words

are used to describe the relationship between the once-for-all sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass. In the Mass, the one sacrifice of Christ is “re-enacted,” or “represented,” or “re-presented” (apparently in the sense of both “presented again” and “made present”). The Mass is a “perpetuation” or “memorial” of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The IRC believes that these ways of describing the connection do not jeopardize the uniqueness or indispensability of the sacrifice of the cross.

The report of 2002 records, apparently with agreement, the response of the Roman Catholic representatives in their reaffirmation of Trent: “Since the sacrifice of the Mass is a re-enactment and representation of the one final, sufficient, and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the Mass by its very nature as sacrament of that once-for-all event cannot detract from the one sacrifice of Christ” (p. 9). These representatives conclude that the Heidelberg Catechism has misconstrued Roman Catholic teaching in declaring that the Mass detracts from the sufficiency or finality of Christ’s sacrifice. The Mass does not stand in competition with the cross (p. 9).

In its stated conclusion, the IRC accepts this explanation and argumentation of Rome in determining that “the difference between the sacrifice on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass is that the one sacrifice is offered in different manners,” and that “the Eucharist sacramentally represents and perpetuates the one unique and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (p.22). This is the basis (in part) for its observation that “significant changes in the Heidelberg Catechism may be warranted” (p. 23).

Report 2004 takes the further step of declaring the Heidelberg Catechism’s “denial” as unwarranted. “Official Roman Catholic teaching affirms that Christ offered a final, sufficient, unrepeatable sacrifice on the cross and that the Mass reenacts or represents that sacrifice and suffering in an unbloody manner” (p. 28).

Now, just as the Council of Trent was aware of the kind of objection the Reformers were making to the Mass, no doubt the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism were aware of the kind of response that Rome was making to this charge. Why did they not concur with the explanation offered by Trent, as does the IRC? Why did they nevertheless insist on calling the Mass “a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ?”

The Heidelberg Catechism obviously does not intend to say that Trent denies what Trent repeatedly affirms, namely, the historical fact that Jesus died on the cross, that this occurred only once in human history, and that it never was and never will be repeated.

The catechism calls the Mass “a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ” because the Mass denies the sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of this one sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin (justification). Therefore, the Mass struck at what was at the heart of the Reformation—justification by faith alone.

As we have observed, it belongs to the essence of the Roman Catholic view to insist that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice to secure the forgiveness of sin. Although the claim is that the victim is the same, the claim is also that the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross is unrepeatable. Therefore, it is a propitiatory sacrifice distinct from, separate from, and in addition to the one unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The use of

words such as *re-enactment*, *representation*, *re-presentation*, *perpetuation*, and *memorial* cannot mask or cancel out this undeniable fact.

The distinction made between a bloody sacrifice and an unbloody one also confirms the fact that we have not one but two different sacrifices. One sacrifice cannot be both bloody and unbloody at the same time. Of course Rome does not have just two sacrifices but millions of them as priests continue to offer up Christ daily on the altars of the Roman church.

However, does this multiplicity of sacrifices of Christ amount to a *denial* of the *one* sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ?

At this point, we must recall what we find in the book of Hebrews as presented earlier in our description of the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper. In Hebrews, the emphasis falls again and again on the complete sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of the one sacrifice offered once for all. This stands in radical contrast to the thousands upon thousands of sacrifices offered under the old covenant that could never take away either the penalty or the power of sin (10:5, 11; cf. Rom. 3:25). The sacrifice of the body of Christ is once for all (10:10), and there is one sacrifice for sins for all time (10:12). By this one sacrifice, Jesus "has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (10:14). When our sins have been forgiven by this one sacrifice offered once for all time, "there is no longer any sacrifice for sin" (10:18).

In preaching the gospel and in celebrating the Lord's Supper, we are teaching sinners to have recourse to this one sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This is the explicit teaching of Lord's Day 25, Q. and A. 67, in distinction from the teaching of Rome. If, on the other hand, we ask sinners to have recourse to the sacrifice of the Mass to find the forgiveness of sin, we are asking them to look for forgiveness where it cannot be found. The Mass is admittedly an unbloody sacrifice; but the Scripture says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). The sacrifice of the Mass cannot secure the forgiveness of sins as a re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross any more than the sacrifice of bulls and goats could secure the forgiveness of sins as a *pre-presentation* of the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:4).

If the argument is that behind the sacrifice of the Mass lies the once-for-all bloody sacrifice of Christ on the cross, then we ought to send sinners directly to the cross so that they can find forgiveness in the blood of him who alone has the power to forgive sin. It is unnecessary to have other and additional sacrifices for sin. Such sacrifices not only detract from the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, they are a *denial* of the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ because they deny the sufficiency, efficacy, and finality of that one sacrifice.

By faith, we have direct access to Christ and the benefits he offers on the basis of his death and resurrection. We have that access by faith alone and not through the mediation of an ecclesiastical invention known as the sacrifice of the Mass, nor by the intervention and authority of an ordained order of human priests.

Rome claims that the Mass is simply a sacramental representation of the sacrifice of the cross and as such is a necessary means for obtaining the fruit of this one sacrifice, but this is exactly what the Reformation denied. The benefits of the cross are obtained by faith alone without any intervening

sacramental sacrifice or any other kind of sacrifice. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper serve to confirm and strengthen the faith wrought in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we were to insist on reintroducing a sacrificial system with daily bloody sacrifices offered by sinful human priests, even though at one time this system was divinely ordained, we would fall under the condemnation the apostle Paul once directed against the Galatians: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). How much more do we fall under the same word of condemnation if we approve of a sacrificial system with no warrant from the word of God and a system of sacrifices that offer the forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood.

The Roman Catholic sacramental system amounts to seeking forgiveness by humanly devised works of the law rather than by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Session 7 of the Council of Trent delivered a series of "Canons on the Sacraments in General." Canon 4 declares: "If anyone shall say that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but are superfluous, and that, although all are not necessary for every individual, without them or without the desire of them through faith alone men obtain from God the grace of justification: let him be anathema." Canon 5 adds, "If anyone shall say that these sacraments have been instituted for the nourishing of faith alone: let him be anathema." Here Rome has clearly stated the radical difference between the reformational justification by faith alone and its own doctrine of justification by works of the new law.

In the report of 2004, the IRC takes significant account of Roman Catholic "teachings, attitudes, and practices" related to the Eucharist that obscure the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and detract from proper worship of the ascended Lord" (p. 32). Because of this ongoing problem, the IRC does not propose discarding Q. and A. 80 altogether but recommends a change in the way it appears in printed form and the addition of an explanatory footnote.

The abuses in Roman Catholic practice signaled by the IRC arise directly out of its faulty teaching. The way to curb these abuses is not to affirm the official teaching that lies behind them as the IRC proposes but to do away entirely with the sacrifice of the Mass. This is exactly what the Protestant Reformation proposed and accomplished.

Our conclusion is, therefore, that the Christian Reformed Church must continue to confess and testify that the Roman Catholic Mass "is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ." This rejection of the Mass is warranted, fair, and necessary.

B. The presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

1. The Reformed view

[The Lord's Supper] also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ
who with his very body
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father
where he wants us to worship him.

In setting out the Reformed view of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the Catechism makes three points.

First, the incarnate Christ "with his very body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father." In the Incarnation, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. The divine and human natures were united in the person of Jesus Christ. This Jesus died on the cross, rose bodily from the tomb, and ascended bodily into heaven. He is and remains incarnate, and we look for his return from heaven in bodily form at the end of the present age.

Second, Christ wants us to worship him in heaven. Heaven is now the special place of his presence just as heaven is the special place of the presence of the Father. We pray to our Father in heaven. Jesus ascended into heaven where he is present with the Father in the glory that he had prior to the incarnation (John 17:3). Just as we worship the Father in heaven, so also we worship the incarnate, risen, and ascended Christ in heaven.

Third, though believers are on the earth and Christ is in heaven, we are united to the incarnate Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit who "grafts us into Christ." Just as husband and wife remain "one flesh" (Eph. 5:31) even though they may be separated by many intervening miles, so we remain united to Christ even though he is in heaven and we are on the earth. Ephesians 3:17 tells us that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. Faith is the bond of this union from our side; and the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and the Son and living both in Christ and in us is the bond of this union from the side of the Lord.

Q. and A. 80 focuses on the presence of the incarnate Christ in heaven, but this emphasis does not impinge upon a recognition of the presence of Christ everywhere as confessed in Lord's Day 18, Q. and A. 48. The IRC refers to the teaching in Q. and A. 76 that Christ "is in heaven and we are on earth" as the *extra Calvinisticum* (p. 16). It is our understanding that the *extra Calvinisticum* is actually the teaching in Q. and A. 48 that "Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds [extra] of the humanity he has taken on." The Reformed affirmed the omnipresence of Christ as to his divine nature and in this sense his presence in the Lord's Supper. The Reformed denied the presence of the flesh of Christ in the Lord's Supper in distinction from both Lutheranism (consubstantiation) and Romanism (transubstantiation).

Although the Heidelberg Catechism denies the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, it does recognize that in the institution of this sacrament our Lord said of the bread, "This is my body," and of the wine, "This is my blood." Therefore when we partake of the Lord's Supper there is, as Paul writes, a participation in the body of Christ and a participation in the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

Q. and A. 76 in Lord's Day 28 explains how this language is to be understood. "What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood?" The answer is, "It means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and by believing to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life." We commune with the body and blood of Christ, not because bread and wine have in some way become the actual body and blood of Christ but by faith as we receive and rest upon the crucified and risen incarnate Lord for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

2. The Reformed understanding of the Roman Catholic view

[The Mass] also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

In describing the Roman Catholic view of the presence of Christ in the Mass, the catechism makes two points, the second flowing out of the first.

The first point is that "Christ is bodily present in the form of bread and wine." This is the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation as defined by Trent in Session 13, chapter 4. "By the consecration of the bread and wine a conversion takes place of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. This conversion is appropriately and properly called transubstantiation by the Catholic Church."

The report of 2002 points out that the Roman Catholic theologians with whom the IRC consulted "affirmed that the Heidelberg Catechism is substantially correct in its presentation of the Roman Catholic teaching regarding Christ's bodily presence in the consecrated bread and wine." These theologians "emphasized that what is important is affirming the real presence of Christ and the change of the elements of bread and wine" (p. 17). The bread and wine retain the appearance of ordinary bread and wine to be sure, but they have been changed to become the body and blood of the Lord. This presence is not a "localized or fleshly presence" but a real presence none the less because of the change that has taken place. The whole Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity, is present under the appearance of bread and wine (p. 17).

The second point made by the Heidelberg Catechism concerning the Roman Catholic view is that Christ is to be worshiped in the form of bread and wine. By virtue of transubstantiation, the whole Christ is present on the altar and that is where he is to be worshiped. This is the teaching of Trent in Session 13, chapter 5, bearing the title, "The Worship and Veneration to Be Shown to This Most Holy Sacrament." According to Chapter 5, "There is, therefore, no room left for doubt that all the faithful of Christ in accordance with a custom always received in the Catholic Church offer in veneration the worship of *latria* which is due to the true God, to this most Holy Sacrament." Trent endorses the celebration of a special feast day in honor of the sacrament (*Corpus Christi*) and carrying the sacrament about publicly in procession so that it can be worshiped by the faithful.

With a citation from Pope Paul VI, the 1992 Catechism affirms, "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration" (#1378). The faithful genuflect or bow deeply in the presence of the consecrated hosts as a sign of faith in the real presence of Christ and adoration of him. The consecrated hosts are to be venerated not only during Mass but also outside of Mass as they are exposed to the adoration of the faithful and carried about in procession.

The IRC tells us that on this issue the Roman Catholic representatives with whom they consulted insisted along with Trent "that the holy sacrament is to be venerated with the worship of *latria*" (p. 21). *Latria* is the

worship that is due to God alone in distinction from the veneration due to the saints or the Virgin Mary.

From both the official documents and the testimony of the Roman Catholic representatives consulted, we must conclude that the Heidelberg Catechism gives an accurate description of Roman Catholic teaching concerning the presence of Christ in the Mass. He is present bodily in the form of bread and wine and is therefore to be worshiped as present on the altar in the form of bread and wine.

Again, what Rome really objects to is not the description of its view as found in the Heidelberg Catechism but the condemnation of that view.

3. The Reformed condemnation of the Roman Catholic view

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but . . .
. . . a condemnable idolatry.

The question here is whether we are warranted in condemning the Mass as idolatry. The question arises because of the worship that is offered to the sacrament (the Eucharist) as authorized and commended in official Roman Catholic teaching. Both the Council of Trent and the 1992 Catechism are quite clear that the worship that is due to “this most Holy Sacrament” is the worship due to the true God. The consecrated hosts are elevated and exhibited so that they can receive this worship.

Is this idolatry? The Roman Catholic representatives with whom the IRC consulted denied that the Mass involved the Roman Church in idolatry. They did insist that the holy sacrament (the bread and wine) is to be venerated with the worship of *latria*, but they claimed that this does not constitute idolatry because “in the adoration of the consecrated bread and wine, Christ is being worshiped, not the elements” (p. 21).

We find this response to be misleading for at least two reasons. First, this response does not fairly represent the criticism offered by the Heidelberg Catechism. The Catechism does not charge Rome with idolatry because the faithful are worshiping the elements and not Christ. The Catechism accurately describes the Roman view as holding that it is Christ who is being worshiped. The point is that he is being worshiped where he is thought to be bodily present, namely, on the altar in the form of bread and wine.

Second, the Roman Catholic response is misleading and disingenuous because it fails to take account of the identity of Christ with the elements that is an essential part of Roman teaching. According to this teaching, the bread and the wine have become the real body and blood of Christ. They have become the whole Christ (transubstantiation). Worship is, indeed, offered to the elements, and it is offered to the elements because of the belief that these elements have become the very body and blood of our Lord.

The IRC does not challenge this Roman Catholic defense of the position of Trent, and in the report of 2004 takes the further step of expressing its concurrence with it. The IRC calls the catechism’s evaluation of the Mass as a condemnable idolatry “unwarranted.” “Roman Catholic teaching holds that one is to worship the ascended Christ through the veneration or worship of the consecrated bread and wine, which have become the body and blood of Christ” (p. 28). Although the IRC rejects as erroneous the idea

that the words of our Lord, “This my body . . . this is my blood,” should be taken literally, it does come to the conclusion that “it seems inappropriate to charge Roman Catholics with idolatry when they are worshipping the ascended Christ through the consecrated elements.”

The way the IRC describes the Roman Catholic view as worship of the “ascended” Christ through the veneration of the consecrated bread and wine is gratuitous and also misleading. It is Reformed to speak of worshipping the ascended Christ, but the official Roman Catholic language cited and referred to does not speak of worshipping the ascended Christ. It speaks of worshipping Christ who is bodily present on the altar under the form of bread and wine. The IRC itself acknowledges at a later point in the report of 2004 that “by encouraging the worship of Christ through venerating or worshipping the consecrated bread and wine, the Roman Catholic Eucharist may in significant ways detract from proper worship of the ascended Lord, Jesus Christ” (pp. 31, 32).

Why does the Heidelberg Catechism condemn the Roman Catholic Mass as idolatrous?

The Roman Catholic Mass is idolatrous because the bread and the wine consecrated in the Mass are and remain exactly that—bread and wine. Although Roman Catholics sincerely believe that the bread and the wine have become the body and blood of Christ, they are sincerely mistaken. The doctrine of transubstantiation is a false doctrine. The incarnate Christ is not present on the altars of Rome.

The bread and the wine of the Mass are created elements and remain created elements. They do not become the body and blood of our Lord. When human beings take a piece of God’s good creation and call it God, and when they offer worship (*latría*) to something created on the ground that it is God, that worship is idolatry. All idolatry falls under the condemnation of God.

The rejection of the Roman Catholic Mass as “a condemnable idolatry” is both warranted and fair. In condemning the Mass as idolatrous, the Heidelberg Catechism testifies against a serious error in the Roman Church that the Christian Reformed Church must continue to warn against and reject. We confess in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession that “the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them” is one of the marks of the true church.

The IRC recognizes that there are “teachings, attitudes, and practices related to the Eucharist that are idolatrous” (p. 32) and sees the importance of testifying against these things. Again, we must realize that these abuses arise directly out of official but erroneous Roman Catholic teaching. The Mass draws attention away from the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross received by faith and focuses attention on these created elements of bread and wine as the source of forgiveness and salvation. Idolatrous attitudes and practices are bound to arise in this atmosphere. The way to combat these practices is not to soften our protest against the official teaching but to encourage Rome to abandon its errors and to reform its teaching and practices according to the word of God. This is what happened at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

III. Overture

The IRC declares that the catechism's evaluation of Roman Catholic teaching "is either accurate both now and in the sixteenth century or inaccurate in both time periods." The IRC concludes that the catechism was wrong at the time of the Reformation and that it is wrong now (p. 29).

Our own evaluation leads us to the opposite conclusion. The Heidelberg Catechism was and is accurate in its description of the Roman Catholic view of the Mass and is warranted in rejecting the Mass as both a denial of the suffering and sacrifice of our Lord and a condemnable idolatry.

Further, we believe that in the Canons of the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church has unjustly condemned biblical teaching by repeatedly pronouncing its curse (*anathema sit*) not simply on views that it rejects but specifically on the people who hold the views we confess in the Heidelberg Catechism.

Therefore, the council of Central Avenue CRC, Holland, Michigan, overtures Synod 2006 to leave Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism unchanged and that this be declared synod's answer to the overtures concerning Q. and A. 80 submitted to Synod 1998.

Grounds:

1. The Heidelberg Catechism presents a fair and accurate description of both the Reformed view of the Lord's supper and the Roman Catholic view of the Mass;
2. Official Roman Catholic teaching warrants our continued rejection of the Roman Catholic Mass as "a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry."

Council of Central Avenue CRC, Holland, Michigan
Morris Gort, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Holland but was not adopted.

Overture 12: Retain Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 in Its Present Format

I. Background

The Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRCNA (IRC) has been studying the question of whether or not Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 should be retained in the catechism as the official teaching of the Christian Reformed Church. A report offered to Synod 2002 was revised in 2004 and published and distributed among the churches for study. The report was also sent to certain Roman Catholic authorities who affirmed that it accurately describes the Roman Catholic position.

The IRC concludes that if its report is accurate, the Heidelberg Catechism is wrong in declaring that the Roman Catholic Mass denies the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and that venerating the bread and wine constitutes idolatry. The IRC believes that the catechism was wrong in making these statements with respect to the Roman Catholic teaching and practices of the sixteenth century and that it is wrong with respect to the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Mass now. It does acknowledge that practices

in some places of the world today are not in accord with official Roman Catholic teaching, and, therefore, Q. and A. 80 may be useful in opposing these teachings.

The committee therefore recommended that Synod 2004 revise our confession of faith as stated in the Heidelberg Catechism. They would retain the wording of Q. and A. 80 in the catechism in a different font but with asterisks and footnotes that acknowledge the alleged errors (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp.304-6). Synod 2004 did not adopt the committee's proposals but did declare that we would not be able to retain Q. and A. 80 in its current form (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 627-29). Churches were able to review these recommendations and submit responses to the IRC by December 1, 2005. The committee is receiving responses and will propose recommendations to Synod 2006. However, as of our final classis meeting preceding Synod 2006, the recommendations to be proposed to Synod 2006 have not been made available to the churches. We do not know the nature of those proposals and are unable to respond directly to those proposals—a situation that we protest considering we are dealing here with the matter of revising one of our confessional statements. Not knowing what will be proposed by the IRC, we feel compelled to overture synod regarding the original recommendations, especially in light of the conclusion of Synod 2004 that we will not be able to retain Q. and A. 80 in its current form.

We believe that if synod amends the catechism along the lines recommended in 2004, the Christian Reformed Church would in effect be in danger of abandoning or at least weakening our commitment to the very teaching that was upheld by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. This teaching concerns the sufficiency of the once-for-all sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross, justification by faith alone through Christ alone, and the assurance that the dead in Christ actually have the complete forgiveness of their sins. The Reformers also explicitly rejected the Roman Catholic teaching of the transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and the veneration or worship of these elements. The Christian Reformed Church would then be adopting a most confusing position with respect to the current teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. A review of the documents cited in the IRC report indicates that the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church has not changed significantly since the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic bishops agree. The declarations of the Council of Trent have in fact been reaffirmed by Vatican II, by Pope Paul VI in 1965, and by the new Catechism of 1992. The declarations of the Council of Trent pronounce anathemas upon those who (1) fail to acknowledge that the Mass is a sacrifice offered to God in an unbloody manner and who (2) fail to worship Christ through the adoration of the bread and wine. In addition, the teaching that the dead must still be purified and justified has not been removed. Our conclusion is that the revisions of the catechism recommended by the IRC are based on error and that the grounds drawn up by the committee do not support these recommendations.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2006 to retain Q. and A. 80 in its present format and in its present location in the Heidelberg Catechism without changes in font and without footnotes that essentially take away its teaching.

Grounds:

1. The Interchurch Relations Committee has *not* brought to light a new and more accurate understanding of Roman Catholic teaching than that possessed by the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism (Z. Ursinus and C. Olevianus) and by the early Reformers. (See section III, A below for evidence supporting this ground.)
2. The claim in the concluding lines of Q. and A. 80 that the Mass is “nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ” does not reflect a misunderstanding by the catechism’s authors that each Mass is a separate, additional atoning sacrifice (as opposed to a re-presenting or applying of Christ’s one sacrifice). The authors of the catechism understood the nuances of Roman Catholic teaching on the Mass. Yet, they correctly evaluate the Roman Catholic teaching that a believer is forgiven (justified) only when a priest sacramentally re-presents Christ’s sacrifice to the Father day after day as amounting to “a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of [i.e., offered on our behalf by] Christ.” (See section III, B below for amplification on this ground.)
3. By its erroneous claim that the bread and wine are in substance changed into the body and blood of Christ, the Mass leads those partaking of it into unintentional, yet de facto, idolatry. That which is not God (bread or wine) is treated with adoration and veneration as though it were Christ himself. The IRC claims that the veneration of the elements is not a condemnable idolatry because the Roman Catholic Church *believes* that *Christ* is being worshiped, not the elements themselves. This belief reveals little more than that Roman Catholics do not intend to practice idolatry. The “nothing but” language of Q. and A. 80 reflects the authors’ correct concern to declare what the practice actually amounts to. (See section III, C below for amplification on this ground.)

III. Amplification on the above grounds

A. The Interchurch Relations Committee has not brought to light a new and more accurate understanding of Roman Catholic Church teaching than that possessed by the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism (Z. Ursinus and C. Olevianus) and by the early Reformers. The understanding that celebrations of the Mass are not regarded by the Roman Catholic Church as distinctly separate, additional sacrifices but as re-presentations of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross would not be news to the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism or the early Reformers. In the literature of the day, this was often called the “perpetuation of Christ’s sacrifice.”

1. Ursinus reveals his accurate understanding of Roman Catholic teaching in the discussion of Q. and A. 80 in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*. He cites (and goes on to deny) the objection: “The Mass is an application of the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore it ought not to be abolished” (*Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, translated by G.W. Williard, 2nd American ed., Columbus, 1852, reproduced by Eerdmans, 1954).
2. Later, he responds to the objection of the Roman Catholic Church “that they do not slay, but only offer and exhibit the Son to the Father, that he may

remit unto us our sins for the sake of Christ, so that they merely in this way apply that one sacrifice of the Son of God" (*Commentary*, pp. 422-23). Ursinus understood the claim that they were only "apply[ing] that one sacrifice of the Son of God."

3. Ursinus also answers the objection of his opponents, "There must necessarily be a perpetual sacrifice in the church." He responds: "The [perpetual] sacrifices of the Christian church are eucharistical" (i.e., sacrifices of thanksgiving). He adds: "The Fathers never dreamed that the Supper was a propitiatory sacrifice" (*Commentary*, pp. 423-24).

We are convinced that the authors of the catechism *did* understand the Roman Catholic Church doctrine of the Mass as a perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice, or as it was also described, as "an application of the one sacrifice of Christ." They understood this claim, and yet they rejected it.

B. The IRC correctly links the concluding language of Q. and A. 80, "Thus the Mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ" to the earlier statement, "But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is offered for them daily by the priests. What, though, is the connecting link between these two?"

1. The IRC focuses on the "one sacrifice" and sees a link by way of contrast back to "Christ is offered . . . daily." It concludes that the authors of the catechism must have misconstrued the Roman Catholic act of "offering Christ daily." The catechism's authors must have taken the daily offerings of Christ in the Mass to be distinctly separate and additional sacrifices with fresh atoning merit (which, the IRC rightly points out, is not what the Mass aims to do). The IRC seems to understand the reasoning behind the catechism's final lines as this: because these multiple sacrifices deny that our sins were fully paid for on the cross, the Mass is "a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ." Yet, the IRC reports, in fact, the Roman Catholic Church is not teaching that each Mass is a separate, additional sacrifice. Thus, the catechism is wrong in saying the Mass denies the one sacrifice of Christ.

We are not convinced that the IRC has correctly portrayed (1) the understanding and (2) the reasoning held by the catechism's authors and embodied in Q. and A. 80. As we have shown above, the authors of the catechism *did* understand the Roman Catholic claim that, in the Mass, the priests were merely "applying the one sacrifice of Christ" and "only offering and exhibiting the Son to the Father."

2. If they understood this, why did they reject the Mass as "nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ?" Some defenders of Q. and A. 80 believe that the authors understood the Roman Catholic Church's claim that the Mass was simply a re-presenting or applying of the one sacrifice of Christ; yet they refused to "buy" that claim. These defenders make the case: The Roman Catholic Church says the Mass is simply a re-presenting or applying of Christ's one sacrifice, but when you look closer, you discover that the Mass is called a sacrifice, and that the Roman Catholic Church teaches it is a propitiatory sacrifice designed to obtain the forgive-

ness of sins. Further, the Mass is necessary in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins. This is why the catechism's authors conclude that the Mass (despite Roman Catholic claims) amounts to nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ.

We believe there is much merit to the case made by these defenders of Q. and A. 80. Yet, there is an alternate way to argue the case—a way that allows us to avoid a fresh debate between whether the Mass amounts to one sacrifice or multiple sacrifices.

3. We believe that the best way to understand the reasoning in Q. and A. 80 is to not simply focus on the sacrifice per se (the payment earned) but also on the offering of Christ's sacrifice to the Father (the payment offered or applied).

When we speak of a sacrifice, there is a certain ambiguity present because it is the nature of a sacrifice that it encompasses, at one and the same time, both the earning of the payment (the giving of life blood) and the presenting of that payment to God. Furthermore, a sacrifice (payment/propitiation) is not just made—it is made on behalf of one or more parties.

In their claim that the Mass merely applies or re-presents the one sacrifice of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church agrees with Reformed churches (or at least appears here to agree) that the payment earned by Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay for all our sins. From this point on is where we part company. The Roman Catholic Church appears to be thinking along the lines that Christ's payment was put on account with the Father—in a general sort of way, as money held by a bank in one central account. Payment has been earned and offered to the Father for sin, but payment has not been made for my sins and your sins (i.e., for the sins of each person who belongs to Christ by faith). So, in the words of Q. and A. 80, "the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have their sins forgiven through the suffering of Christ unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests."

This is key: The payment Christ made to the Father does not become payment for our sins until the priests offer (i.e., apply or re-present) Christ's payment to the Father day after day as payment on *our* account, as payment for the sins we committed that day or that week. The way the priests offer Christ—i.e., Christ's one sacrificial payment—to the Father on our behalf and apply his one payment to *our* account (as propitiation for our sins) is by giving 'Christ' to us in the form of the consecrated bread and wine (or alternatively, the priests may partake of the Mass on our behalf).

The Roman Catholic Church's teaching that our forgiveness comes only as the priests daily "offer Christ" or daily "apply the sacrifice of Christ" on our behalf was a teaching to which the authors of the catechism strongly objected. Ursinus declares in his commentary, "The mass is opposed to the priesthood of Christ. Christ alone has the power of offering himself" (*Commentary*, p. 422).

Very much in the picture here is "justification through faith alone" versus "justification (the complete forgiveness of all our sins) through a priest's sacramental act of applying the one sacrifice of Christ to the Father, now on *our account*. In his commentary discussion on Q. and A. 80, notice

how Ursinus responds to the objection of the Roman Catholic Church: “The Mass is an application of the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore it ought not to be abolished.” He responds: “We deny the antecedent, for the reason that the merits of Christ are applied to us by faith alone, as it is said, ‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith’ (Eph. 3:17)” (*Commentary*, p. 423).

It was the conviction of the Reformers that “the one sacrifice and suffering of Christ” (emphasis added) encompassed more than Christ’s earning of the necessary payment for sin (i.e., Christ as the *object* sacrificed—the bloody sacrifice itself). The “one sacrifice of Christ” is also to be taken in the subjective genitive sense. Christ was the subject, the one who made the necessary offering of payment to the Father for you and for me. The one sacrificial offering that Christ presented to the Father was not deposited in a general account for later distribution. That one sacrificial offering was a sacrificial payment Christ himself offered to the Father on your behalf and my behalf—as direct payment on your account and mine. As the opening sentence of Q. and A. 80 declares, “our sins have been completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which he himself finished on the cross once for all.” The one sacrificial offering presented by Jesus to the Father on our behalf effectively yields the complete forgiveness of a believer’s sins (we are justified by faith in Christ alone). To say that additional offerings are required (whether understood as supplemental sacrifices or as the same sacrifice offered additional times) is to deny the effectiveness of the one sacrifice of Christ.

In summary, we do not believe that this Q. and A. reflects a misunderstanding that each Mass is a distinct, separate, additional atoning sacrifice, rather than a re-presenting or applying of Christ’s one sacrifice on the cross. The authors of the catechism correctly evaluate the Roman Catholic teaching that a believer is forgiven (justified) only when a priest sacramentally re-presents Christ’s sacrifice to the Father day after day as amounting to “nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of [i.e., offered on our behalf by] Christ.”

4. The IRC report appears inclined to take the edge off of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that our sins are not forgiven unless the priests offer Christ to the Father on our behalf in the celebration of the Mass by observing that Reformed theology also assigns to the church a role in mediating salvation. We protest that the difference in the forms that this mediation takes in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Reformed churches is huge. In Reformed theology, the church mediates salvation by the preaching of the gospel, which, in conjunction with the work of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the hearer. Simply put, we lead the hearer to Jesus. If, by the work of the Spirit, that person comes to faith in Christ, nothing more is needed for that person to be completely forgiven of all his sins.

In Roman Catholic teaching and practice, Christ’s sacrificial payment is not applied to the believer apart from the mediation of the priest. A person may be bonded to Christ by faith and yet that person’s sins are not forgiven unless the person participates in the Mass (or a priest celebrates Mass on that person’s behalf). The difference in the roles played by the church according to Roman Catholic teaching and Reformed teaching is a very

large and deeply significant difference. The only real similarity is that we both believe the church plays a role.

C. The IRC also claims that the veneration of the elements is not a condemnable idolatry because the RCC believes that Christ is being worshiped, not the elements themselves. Since, in fact, the elements are still bread and wine (as we believe along with the Reformers), this veneration amounts to nothing but idolatry when all is said and done. By its erroneous claim that the bread and wine are in substance changed into the body and blood of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church unintentionally leads those partaking of the Mass into what is, in fact, idolatry. That which is not God (bread and wine) is treated with adoration and veneration as though it were Christ himself. This is what the catechism elsewhere calls “having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in his Word” (Q. and A. 95).

We grant that viewed within the Roman Catholic doctrinal constructs, the Mass would not be thought of as idolatrous. If the bread and wine truly become Christ, to adore these elements is not idolatrous. The Roman Catholic Church does not intend to engage in idolatry. However, we are convinced that the teaching of transubstantiation is in error and must draw our conclusions based on the truth as God has revealed it to us. Speaking the truth in love, we need to lovingly bear testimony to the Roman Catholic Church that their doctrinal error is leading those who partake of the Mass to idolatrously give to bread and wine the adoration and veneration due to God alone. Although unintentional idolatry is less condemnable than intentional idolatry, surely all idolatry is rightly to be condemned.

D. A series of lengthy conversations with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church cannot blunt the fact that the early Reformers and those who composed the Heidelberg Catechism were fully aware of the nuances of understanding within the Roman Catholic Church. Q. and A. 80 was added already during the very year the Heidelberg Catechism was first printed—within months of the initial printing—and it has been included in all versions of the catechism ever since. The Roman Catholic Church continues to pronounce a curse upon those who hold to the views we confess in our catechism. The admirable courtesy extended in holding lengthy conversations with these representatives does not remove the legitimate need to testify in love to the Roman Catholic Church that all our sins are completely forgiven purely through faith in the sacrifice Christ offered to the Father, without the need for the mediation of human priests in and through the Mass. Retaining Q and A 80 in its present place and wording is a powerful testimony to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone and of justification by faith alone. We need also to lovingly testify that their adoration of Christ is misplaced when that adoration is directed to him through the adoration of the consecrated bread and wine.

E. If synod believes an explanatory footnote would be beneficial to clarify the concluding lines of Q. and A. 80, we suggest adding the following to the present footnote to explain these lines (instead of renouncing them):

*Q. and A. 80 were altogether absent from the first edition of the catechism and were present in a short form in the second edition.

The translation here given is of the text of the third edition. Its strong

tone reflects the setting in which the catechism was written. Synod 2006 adopted the following as an accurate explanation of the concluding sentence:

- a. The teaching that our sins are not forgiven unless a priest through the Mass repeatedly offers, applies, or re-presents the one sacrifice of Christ to the Father on our behalf denies the teaching of God's Word that a believer is completely forgiven of all sin (i.e., justified) purely and simply by faith in Christ's sacrificial offering of himself to the Father on our behalf, which he did once for all on the cross.
- b. By its erroneous claim that the bread and wine are in substance changed into the body and blood of Christ, the Mass leads those partaking of it into an unintentional, yet de facto, idolatry. That which is not God (bread or wine) is treated with adoration and veneration as though it were Christ himself.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 13: Instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to Proceed with a Strategy and Process for Congregations, Classes, and Synod to Study and Adopt the Belhar Confession as a Fourth Standard of Unity

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to proceed with all deliberate speed to outline a strategy and a process for congregations, classes, and synod to study and consider adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth standard of unity. The IRC is further directed to coordinate our denominational efforts with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and to recommend synodical action by 2010.

I. Background

The Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa was formed in 1881 as a daughter church of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The DRMC, also known as "The Slave Church," was established for Reformed Colored believers. The establishment of the DRMC was preceded by a decision taken by the DRC in 1857. Freely translated from Afrikaans, this synodical decision reads as follows:

Synod sees it as desirable and according to Scripture that our members from the heathen be taken up and incorporated into our existing congregations wherever it is possible: but where such measures, due to the weakness of some, will hinder the advance of the cause of Christ among the heathen, the congregations erected from the heathen or those to be erected must enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building or establishment.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) was organized in 1951. It was also a daughter church of the DRC, this one for Blacks.

The CRC has been in continuous ecclesiastical fellowship with the DRMC since 1982 and with the DRCA since 1983.

In 1982, the DRMC, in the midst of its painful struggle with apartheid, formulated the Belhar Confession as its guide for reconciliation and unity and offered it for consideration to other Reformed churches with whom it was in ecclesiastical fellowship.

In 1994, the DRMC and the DRCA joined to form the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA). The URCSA, today composed of some 750 congregations and 500,000 members, adopted the Belhar Confession in 1994.

The Black population was the victim during most of South African history and particularly under apartheid. However, since the overthrow of apartheid in 1994 the Black majority government has taken the lead in working toward national healing and unity to a significant extent through the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Similarly, the Black Reformed Church, through the DRMC, the DRCA, and the URCSA have taken the lead toward church reconciliation and unity through development of the Belhar Confession and through tireless and continuing unity, dialogue with Reformed churches in South Africa and other parts of the world.

The DRMC, the DRCA, and the URCSA have requested consideration and adoption of the Belhar Confession by the CRC and other Reformed churches with whom they are in ecclesiastical fellowship. They consider this a most important step for their brothers and sisters to acknowledge the evils of injustice and racism past and present and the critical importance of reconciliation and unity among fellow followers of Jesus.

Response to these requests from the Black churches by congregations in the Reformed Community may be summarized as follows:

1. The Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)—In 1988, the REC requested its affiliated members to examine Belhar and to be prepared at REC's 1992 assembly to approve or disapprove a constitutional change that would allow Belhar to be added to its listing of approved confessions that include the Gallican Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession. Although the CRC synod instructed its delegates to support the amendment as did a majority of other voting denominations, the amendment required a two-thirds supporting vote and failed.
2. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)—The WARC traditionally leaves the adoption of creeds and confessions to its member churches. However, in 1997 in a pastoral letter to the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, the 23rd General Council in Debrecen, Hungary, stated,

As the officers of the Alliance indicated during the 1993 visit to South Africa, we believe that your engagement in the unification process is itself a significant mark of your turning away from apartheid. Through that engagement and particularly your church's study of the Belhar Confession, we believe that you will continue to grow' in your understanding of the reasons why the churches of the world felt it necessary to declare status confessions against the theological justification of apartheid. We eagerly await the day when you will be able to confess the Belhar Confession with conviction as your confession as a United Church.

(Appendix 23 of the Proceedings of the 23rd General Council of WARC, Debrecen 1997, p. 248)

3. The Reformed Church in America (RCA)—In 2000, the Commission on Christian Unity (CCU) was instructed by the RCA Synod “to commend the Belhar Confession to the church over the next decade for reflection, study, and response, as a means of deepening the RCA commitment to dealing with racism and strengthening its ecumenical commitment to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and Other Reformed bodies.” The CCU was given the task of helping the RCA “unwrap” the Belhar.

This unwrapping was announced to the RCA synod of 2005. The CCU is nearing completion of a study guide to “help congregations to explore the nature of the Belhar and why the RCA needs the Belhar.”

4. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC)—The CRC started its formal journey with the Belhar Confession in 1982 when the Interchurch Relations Committee began “giving careful consideration to the synodical decisions of the DRMC/NGSK at its meeting in 1982, particularly the New Confession which it adopted.”

In 1984, the IRC report, adopted by synod, stated,

the confession adopted by the DRMC/NGSK can only be judged to be in essential accord with the declarations on race issued by the REC and by the synods of the CRC. . . . In view of the relation of ecclesiastical fellowship that exists between the CRC and the DRMC/NGSK and other Reformed churches in South Africa, including the RSCSA/ GKSA, and in view of the ecumenical relationship of the CRC with the Reformed churches of South Africa, in the RES, it is incumbent on the CRC, out of integrity toward those relationships to judge of the rightness of the judgment of the DRMC/GKSA concerning apartheid (that it is a sin) and the “moral and theological justification of it” (that it is a theological heresy) and concerning the faithfulness of the Reformed confessions and Scripture of the new confessional statement. As for the latter, it is our judgment that the new confessional statement is in accord with the decisions of several synods of the CRC.

(Acts of Synod 1984, pp. 602-603)

In 1988 and 1989, the IRC studied the Belhar Confession further and formulated the following declarations adopted by synod in 1990: “That synod endorse the IRC’s evaluation (pp. 217-19) which judges 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; and, therefore, that synod declare that it has no objections to its inclusion in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution” (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625).

In 1999, the IRC reported after meeting with the URCSA synodical commission in South Africa that, “our churches were challenged to adopt the Belhar Confession as their own. . . . The URCSA’s challenge to the CRC to adopt the Belhar Confession needs further reflection. . . . The URCSA believes it is necessary that the Belhar Confession be accepted as part of the confessional basis of a new and unified church in South Africa. To the URCSA this is a non-negotiable condition” (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 197, 198, 200).

In 2003, the IRC reported as follows:

The general secretary of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) reiterated what he had told the JRC 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 JRC 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.

(Agenda for Synod 2003, p. 235)

“Synod 1990, however, did not say anything about the Belhar Confession’s status with the CRC itself, and that is the kind of decision the URCSA would like the CRC to consider” *(Agenda for Synod 2003, p. 246)*.

In 2005, the IRC reported as follows:

The CRC and RCA delegation first met in December 2002. Three items were given priority for consideration: (1) the so-called orderly exchange of ministers from one denomination to the other, (2) a unified approach to dealing with the Belhar Confession as requested by the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa, and (3) a concerted effort to find new ways to cooperate in ministry and among our congregations and classes. . . . Our discussions with representatives of the RCA have been guided by the following agreed upon items (as reported to Synod 2003): . . . 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 two denominations to formulate a united statement of agreement on it. That would be a powerful statement to the URCSA.

(Agenda for Synod 2005, p. 240)

The RCA has made great strides toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the Belhar Confession. The CRC participants in the dialogue group encouraged the RCA to produce their study materials in a form that would allow for its use as a discussion guide in the CRC context.

(Agenda for Synod 2005, p. 241)

After twenty-three years of study and discussion, it is time for the CRC to move forward with an organized plan to adopt the Belhar Confession as a living confession. Such action not only responds to repeated pleas from our brothers and sisters in the URCSA, but it also provides guidance to the church in addressing contemporary issues of racism, injustice, unity, and reconciliation.

Grounds:

1. Consideration and adoption of the Belhar Confession would provide a powerful statement and give great encouragement to the Black South African Churches with whom we have been in ecclesiastical fellowship since 1982.
2. This action by the CRC (and possibly the RCA) will give significant assistance and encouragement to the URCSA in its continuing efforts toward reconciliation and unity with the other Reformed Churches on the African continent.
3. Various IRC reports and synodical decisions regarding the Belhar Confession have been positive, indicate a need to act, and assert that it:
 - Is in accord with the decisions of several synods of the CRC.
 - Is in harmony with the Reformed faith as a body of truth articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and in basic

- agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades.
- Is the IRC's intent to make . . . a recommendation to synod about its status sometime in the future.
 - May be possible for our two denominations to formulate a united statement of agreement on it. That would be a powerful statement to the URCSA.
4. Other Reformed denominations including the RCA and the DRC, the mother church of URCSA, have acknowledged that the Belhar Confession is consistent with Scripture and does not contradict the other three standards of unity.
 5. The issues addressed by the Belhar Confession—Christian unity, reconciliation, injustice, and racism—are as relevant for the Reformed Church in North America and the world today as they were for the Reformed churches in South Africa under apartheid. Church splits continue, proliferating new denominations, often pitting brother against brother. The evils of racism following centuries of slavery, discrimination, and abuse of minorities linger in most facets of North American society. Growing poverty and injustice are major worldwide issues affecting billions of people in nations around the globe.
 6. There is historical precedent for the church to assertively move forward to inform and enlighten its constituency regarding the response required of Christians to the significant contemporary issues it faces. (The Canons of Dordt, for example, were formulated in the early 1600s in response to the teachings of Armenianism extant in Europe at that time.)
 7. In our reluctance to move forward from our attitude of awe and respect for traditional confessional formulations, the church must not avoid its responsibility to lead as Christians struggle with the application of the Scriptures to contemporary events and issues. We diminish ourselves and the power of the Holy Spirit if we act as though confessional formulation must end with Guido de Bres or the delegates to Dordrecht. In hindsight, the Reformed church should have stood up forcefully for the Barman Confession in the Nazi era and for the Belhar Confession during the era of apartheid.
 8. Moving forward with the discussion and adoption of Belhar would provide a dramatic means and a practical answer to the longstanding search of the CRC and its component parts to address the issues of church unity, racism, discrimination, and injustice. The last twenty-five editions of the *Acts of Synod* are replete with evidence of the quest by synod and its various committees to find ways to move our people to bring salt and light to these contemporary issues.
 9. There is no mention in the classical confessions of the central biblical principle of God's justice and special care for the poor and suffering. The Belhar fills this gap in the standard confessions.
 10. The unity of the church, reconciliation of people in Christ, and God's justice and care of the suffering and poor are fundamental biblical principles that lie at the core of the Reformed faith.

11. The Belhar Confession is the only confession the global church has from Africa and the southern hemisphere.
12. Moving forward to address Belhar in cooperation with the RCA, provides an unprecedented opportunity to accomplish the objectives outlined over the past several years by synods of both denominations to move toward unity, reconciliation, and cooperative efforts in ministry.
13. The RCA has already prepared a study guide for use by congregations, classis, synod, and any other denominational components.
14. The Contemporary Testimony of the CRC addresses the issues of racism, power, and injustice in Articles 12, 17, 30, 41, 43, 44, and 53. Because the Contemporary Testimony is not a confession, adoption of the Belhar Confession would give confessional status to what the CRC has already declared in a testimony.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Timothy B. Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 14: Instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to Work with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) to Reconsider the Belhar Confession

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to work within the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) structure to achieve early reconsideration for including the Belhar Confession in the approved listing of confessions in article 2 of the REC constitution.

1. In 1988, the REC requested its affiliated members to examine Belhar and to be prepared at REC's 1992 assembly to approve or disapprove a constitutional change that would allow Belhar to be added to its listing of approved confessions that include the Gallican Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Canons of Dordt, and the Westminster Confession. Although the CRC synod instructed its delegates to support the amendment as did a majority of other voting denominations, the amendment required a two-thirds supporting vote and failed.
2. Since 1992, the REC has experienced membership changes that may well increase support for Belhar that has always been significant.
3. The REC's reconsideration of this issue can take place through the initiative of the executive committee or a member church.

Grounds:

- a. Synod has already approved similar action in its decision in 1990 (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625).
- b. Reconsideration and adoption of Belhar by a worldwide ecumenical organization such as REC would amplify the message of encouragement and hope that is so urgently needed by the URCSA in its continuing

efforts toward reconciliation and unity with other Reformed churches on the African continent.

- c. Other Reformed denominations including the RCA and the DRC, the mother church of URCSA, have acknowledged that the Belhar Confession is consistent with Scripture and does not contradict the other three standards of unity.
- d. There is historical precedent for the church to assertively move forward to inform and enlighten its constituency regarding the response required of Christians to the significant contemporary issues it faces. (The Canons of Dordt, for example, were formulated in the early 1600s in response to the teachings of Armenianism extant in Europe at that time.)
- e. In our reluctance to move forward from our attitude of awe and respect for traditional confessional formulations, the church must not avoid its responsibility to lead as Christians struggle with the application of the Scriptures to contemporary events and issues. We diminish ourselves and the power of the Holy Spirit if we act as though confessional formulation must end with Guido de Bres or the delegates to Dordrecht. In hindsight, the Reformed church should have stood up forcefully for the Barman Confession in the Nazi era and for the Belhar Confession during the era of apartheid.
- f. There is no mention in the classical confessions of the central biblical principle of God's justice and special care for the poor and suffering. The Belhar fills this gap in the standard confessions.
- g. The unity of the church, reconciliation of people in Christ, and God's justice and care of the suffering and poor are fundamental biblical principles that lie at the core of the Reformed faith.
- h. The Belhar Confession is the only confession the global church has from Africa and the southern hemisphere.

Classis Pacific Northwest

Timothy B. Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 15: Declare the New Living Translation (NLT) Version of the Bible to Be Acceptable for Use in Worship Services in the Christian Reformed Church

I. Background

A. History of Bible translation recommendations in the CRC

The guidance given by the CRC Worship Committee as summarized from the *Agenda for Synod 1998* is to adhere to the following three longstanding principles when recommending a Bible version for use in worship services: "(1) the accuracy of the original language of the text, (2) the quality of the English translation, and (3) the ecumenical acceptance of the version" (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 87).

In 1926, synod recommended the American Standard Version (ASV) to the churches because it was based on a more accurate Greek text than was the King James Version (KJV). Although synod thought the ASV would replace the KJV for use in worship outside the CRC, it never did. In 1934, a request was made to reverse the decision of 1926. That request was denied because "Synod

reminds the churches of the fact that Synod of 1926 explicitly declared that it refrained from *adopting* either the Authorized [King James] or the American Standard Version . . . " (*Acts of Synod 1934*, p. 103).

Synod 1969 recommended the Revised Standard Version (RSV) based on the same three principles mentioned above.

Subsequently in declaring the NIV [New International Version] (1980) and the NRSV [New Revised Standard Version] (1992) as acceptable for use, synod based its actions on the same three principles: (1) fidelity to the earliest recoverable original—language texts, (2) readability, and (3) ecumenical acceptance.

(*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 87)

B. CRC evaluation of the NIV (1980)

In 1980, the Bible Translation Committee wrote a review of the NIV, which had its first printing as a whole Bible two years earlier in 1978 (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 252-64). The committee noted that the NIV enlisted the services of more than a hundred scholars from various countries and from more than a dozen evangelical denominations "ranging from Baptist to Presbyterian to Episcopalian to Mennonite—including several from the Christian Reformed Church." It was noted that "all of the scholars who participated in the project are conservative/evangelical in their theological position and are committed to the 'authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's word in written form'" (p. 253).

In reviewing the quality of the translation, the committee determined it was "necessary to review the principles of translation actually used, the adequacy of the text adopted, and the accuracy of translation" (p. 254).

In section A of the Bible Translation Committee Report 8 (pp. 252-65), it was noted that "the translators made their choice of readings according to the accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism," and the Bible translation committee felt it had "been done well" (p. 255).

In section B, it was noted that:

The translator must decide in advance whether to stay as close as possible to a word-for-word translation, or try instead to give the meaning of the original in the best English possible. . . . No readable version could ever be completely a word-for-word translation. . . . Some do so to a greater degree than others. . . . More recent versions adopt to some degree what has been called "the principle of dynamic equivalence." . . . [The] NIV has decided also that it makes more sense not to restrict to using the same English word for a given word in Greek or Hebrew" (p. 257).

The Bible Translation Committee judged the NIV's use of dynamic equivalence as "very contemporary and helpful" (p. 258).

In section C, it was noted that "when the principle of dynamic equivalence is adopted, accuracy no longer requires word-for-word translation. Whether or not certain words are omitted is determined primarily by what constitutes good English style. An English translation need not literally reproduce items that are clearly only a matter of Greek or Hebrew idiom. NIV is in general a highly accurate and articulate version" (p. 258).

In section D, the committee asked, "how contemporary is the NIV? It was noted that the "NIV contains fewer archaic expressions than the RSV." "Thee," "thou," and other old English forms have been removed. The Bible Translation

Committee wrote, “the style is sufficiently simple to be enjoyed by the average reader without sacrificing the dignity of Scripture” (p. 262).

In section E, the Bible Translation Committee concluded that:

The New International Version is a translation, not a paraphrase, yet it does not limit itself to a word-for-word translation. There is freedom in translation which contributes to ease of reading and understanding. But the freedom is restrained and NIV cannot be accused of imposing any strong bias on the translation. Although it uses the principle of dynamic equivalence more extensively and consequently is less of a word-for-word translation than the RSV, it remains an accurate translation.

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 263)

“Can it ever become the international and ecumenical version for the English-speaking world? That is hard to say. It must compete primarily with the RSV and the NEB [New English Bible]” (p. 263). Later the committee noted, “Although the RSV is today the most widely used of the versions, the problem is that no English version can claim exclusively to be the ecumenical version.” They went on to state,

The committee report which recommended the use of the RSV did not suggest that the church should bind itself exclusively to the RSV. Instead that “the desire for uniformity in the use of Bible versions in the church is good, but may prove increasingly to be an impossible goal. Many new versions are appearing, and several of these are very good and may some day prove to be liturgically acceptable” (*Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 278).

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 264)

C. Synod approval of the NIV and NRSV (1980, 1992)

The NIV was approved in 1980 by synod as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services.

Grounds:

1. The NIV, like the RSV, is superior to the King James Version and the American Standard Version, both of which have been considered acceptable for use in the public worship of the Christian Reformed Church.
2. The NIV is a contemporary and accurate translation, characterized by the dignity required for liturgical use.
3. The NIV appears to have the potential for becoming a representative version used widely in English-speaking Christian churches.

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 264)

The NRSV was approved in 1992 by synod as one of the versions acceptable for use in worship services.

Grounds:

1. The NRSV appears generally to be a significant improvement over the RSV, which was designated by Synod 1969 as one of the versions acceptable for use in Christian Reformed worship services.
2. The NRSV addresses current linguistic sensitivities through the choice of gender-inclusive language and contemporary vocabulary.
3. The NRSV makes use of recent critical scholarship in providing a reasonably accurate textual translation.

(*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 671)

D. Recommendation to synod to study the NLT for possible use in the CRC (1999)

In 1999, the advisory committee recommended “that synod accede to Classis British Columbia North-West and request the denominational Worship

Committee to study the New Living Translation of the Bible for possible use in the churches.

Grounds:

1. The translators of the Old Testament of the NLT depended upon the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as their standard text as found in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* edition, 1977. They also used the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and many other ancient versions and manuscripts to shed light on the textual problems.

The translators of the New Testament of the NLT worked from the *Greek New Testament* published by the United States Bible Society (1993) and from the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (twenty-seventh edition, 1993). The vast majority of scholars consider the sources used to be the best basic texts.

2. The NLT is a gender-inclusive, up to date, fresh, highly readable translation. Its translators put a high value on its use in public reading.
3. The NLT is rapidly gaining in popularity among Christians of many traditions to such an extent that it appears to be well on its way to becoming an ecumenical translation.
4. A number of scholars in the Christian Reformed Church have lent their expertise to this translation, including Dr. David H. Engelhard (General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America), Dr. Raymond Van Leeuwen (Eastern College), and Dr. Al Wolters (Redeemer College).

(*Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 556-57)

Synod 1999 defeated the recommendation from the advisory committee and no grounds were attached for defeating the motion. It is clear from listening to the taped discussion that took place on the floor of Synod 1999 that only one speaker spoke and only one issue was raised.

Dr. David Holwerda spoke on the floor of synod in 1999 and stated, "I have nothing against the NLT and certainly nothing against the members who participated in it, with such a stalwart group I hate to say anything negative against this recommendation." Then he reminded synod that "ever since the adoption of the American Standard Version in 1926, one of the criteria for synod's acts has been that it is supposed to have been a translation in ecumenical usage. We do not want to get stuck with a private usage of a certain version. . . so it's nothing against this version, it may be a wonderful version, it has only been out for three years or four years. It's not in ecumenical usage, lots of people may like it and that's fine. . . . One of the criteria has been it ought to be a version used widely in the Christian church. Three years is not enough time for that and I would recommend that we not approve this and have people go through all this work of reviewing something when it sort of at this point will not qualify on the basis of that long-standing principle. Thank you." The chair asked "Further discussion?" There was none and the chair called for the vote. The recommendation was defeated.

II. Observations

A. The ASV of 1901 is essentially the American edition of the British Revised Bible, which in turn was an update of the KJV to less archaic spelling and greater accuracy of translation. Synod 1926 recommended it to the churches with the thought that it might become ecumenical, but it never did.

B. It should be noted that the CRC Worship Committee clearly acknowledges that the KJV does not meet the first principle outlined by synod (fidelity to the

earliest recoverable original-language texts), and the ASV does not meet the third principle (ecumenical acceptance), and yet both remain on synod's list of recommended versions, which the Church Order calls "synodically approved Bible versions."

C. The RSV was published in 1952 and recommended to the churches by Synod 1969. It should be noted that when it was recommended the committee did not suggest that the "church should bind itself exclusively to the RSV. Instead, it stated that 'the desire for uniformity in the use of Bible versions in the churches is good, but may prove increasingly to be an impossible goal'" (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 264).

D. The NIV was published in 1978 and was recommended to the churches for public worship just two years later by Synod 1980.

E. The NRSV, which was an improvement over the RSV, came out in 1989 and was recommended to the churches just three years later in 1992.

F. The NLT was published in 1996, but when Classis B.C. North-West over-tured Synod 1999 to "study the NLT for possible usage in the churches," their request was defeated, and the only concern raised was that three years was not enough time to determine if the NLT was in ecumenical usage.

G. Church Order Article 31 states, "a request for revision of a decision shall be submitted to the assembly which made the decision. Such a request shall be honored only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented."

H. The new grounds are that the NLT was published in 1996. Nine years have passed since it was first published. Six years have passed since the motion was defeated. Since that time, the NLT rotates between being the second and third largest-selling Bible in North America.

I. The NLT's publisher, Tyndale House, boasts that it has 20 percent of the Bible market. When Mr. Jeffrey W. Smith, director of marketing, Tyndale House, was asked, "Is this translation ecumenical in usage?" he wrote, "Churches in every major denomination have purchased New Living Translation pew Bibles since the NLT's release in 1996."

J. Not only does the NLT have the potential to become a representative version used widely in English-speaking Christian churches, but this version is used widely in the Christian church worldwide. It more than meets the longstanding requirement of being a translation in ecumenical usage.

K. It should also be noted that the NLT also meets the denomination's longstanding principle of being a quality English translation. In making the NLT, the publisher had each book of the Bible translated by three or more scholars and provided a senior editor for each section. These translators set out to render the message of the original text of scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so they kept the concerns of both formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear and natural English text . . . on the other hand, the translators rendered the text more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, misleading,

or yielded archaic or foreign wording . . . the result is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful. (NLT, p. a15)

L. In Mark 16:15 we read: “Go into all the world and preach the Good News.” As in many metropolitan settings, the churches in Toronto face a new reality. We do not need to go into all the world to find cultures needing to hear the Good News . . . that world has come to us! Toronto is a multicultural community made up of new immigrant Canadians. Fifty-one percent of the population of Toronto speaks English as a second language. In order for Willowdale CRC to live into its mission more fully of sharing Jesus Christ with our neighbors, it must place a high value on intelligibility, that is, it needs a Bible that is accurate, easy to read, and easy to understand.

M. When Dr. Al Wolters, a biblical scholar with professional experience in Bible translation, was asked which version would best meet our specific needs, he recommended the NLT.

III. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod to:

A. Declare the New Living Translation (NLT) to be acceptable for use in worship services in the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

1. The NLT meets the longstanding requirement of accuracy of the original language of the text.
 - a. Like the NIV, the NLT translators made their choice of readings according to the accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism and used the best available Greek and Hebrew texts, ensuring accuracy of the original language of the text.
 - b. The NLT is a translation of the original text, not a paraphrase of an English translation.
2. The NLT is a contemporary and accurate translation that meets the longstanding requirement of being a quality English translation.
 - a. The NLT makes use of recent critical scholarship in providing a reasonably accurate textual translation.
 - b. The NLT enlisted the services of more than ninety scholars from various countries and evangelical denominations and, as noted in 1999, a number of scholars in the Christian Reformed Church have lent their expertise to this translation, including Dr. David H. Engelhard (general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America), Dr. Raymond Van Leeuwen (Eastern College), and Dr. Al Wolters (Redeemer University College) (*Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 556-57).
 - c. Since the NLT was first released in 1996, a group of about ninety scholars have spent eight years working on improving the English translation—producing a second (more accurate) edition of the NLT that was published in 2004.
 - d. Although the NLT, like the NIV, uses the principle of dynamic equivalence, it remains an accurate translation.
 - e. The NLT is an up-to-date, fresh, and highly readable translation that uses fewer archaic expressions than the NIV, NRSV, RSV, ASV, or KJV.

- f. Its translators put a high value on its use in public reading. As a result, the NLT is an accurate translation characterized by the dignity required for liturgical use.
 - g. The NLT is a translation that is accessible for seekers, inquirers, and new immigrants who speak English as a second language to read and understand and, thus, may serve local churches well in reaching out to their communities.
3. The NLT meets the longstanding requirement of the ecumenical acceptance of the version.
 - a. The NLT rotates between being the second or third largest selling Bible in North America and is used widely in the Christian church.
 - b. Churches in every major denomination have purchased the New Living Translation pew Bibles since the NLT's release in 1996.
- B. Instruct the Board of Trustees to inform the churches by way of a Banner article regarding both the strengths and the weaknesses of the NLT.

Classis Toronto
Hendrik P. Bruinsma, stated clerk

Overture 16: Appoint a Study Committee to Examine the Admission of All Baptized Members to the Lord's Supper and to Consider the Nature and Practice of Profession of Faith Both in the Life of Individuals and the Church

I. Background

Synod has considered the issue of who should be admitted to the Lord's Supper at least two times in the past twenty years. Both times there have been strong arguments made in favor of admitting all baptized members to the Lord's Supper. The lengthy reports from 1988 and from 1995 are both the result of splits in committees that have been appointed to consider the issue. In both cases, some members of the committees argued that children ought to be admitted to the Lord's Supper simply by their status of being members of the covenant.

Continued discussion regarding this matter has occurred throughout the denomination along with a renewed sense that ministry and worship ought to be intergenerational. As members of the Christian Reformed Church consider what this means, the issue of what membership in the CRC actually is comes to the fore again. There seems to be little argument, theologically, for the idea that there is more than one kind of member of the covenant. This confusion was reflected in the appointment of the committee that reported to Synod 1995. Their task was, specifically, to make recommendations regarding how we ought to instruct the churches regarding this confusing situation in which children are brought to the Table of the Lord through a simple profession of faith but yet not to full participation in the life of the church.

The theological, historical, and biblical background to this issue has been explored at great length in the reports to Synods 1988 and 1995, and it is not our intention to reproduce all that excellent work here. There are, however,

additional points that merit consideration and that lead us to ask that this issue once again be addressed by synod.

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to appoint a study committee to examine the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper and to consider the nature and practice of profession of faith both in the life of individuals and the church.

Grounds:

1. In their reports to Synod 1988 (Report 26, *Agenda for Synod 1988*, pp. 260-316) and 1995 (Clarification for Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children, Reports A and B, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 265-303), the study committees are clearly not of one mind on this issue. The majority report of 1988 builds a strong case for the inclusion of children at the Lord's Table. The recommendations, suggesting that some sort of profession be required for participation, do not flow naturally from the report, something that was noted by three of its authors. This, along with the additional reasons given herein, suggests that there is room for further consideration of this issue. The 1988 report states that "there is no basis in the theology of the Covenant or theology of the sacraments for denying to growing children the Lord's Supper which repeatedly signs and seals to them continuation in that union and communion already sealed to them in baptism. The only basis for denying them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not their youth or the immaturity of their faith but covenantal unfaithfulness, disloyalty and rebellion" (*Agenda for Synod 1986*, p. 283). The report also makes explicit the connection between the Passover and the Lord's Supper and makes the point that membership in the covenant is the foundation for participation in both sacrificial meals.

Recommendation 2 of the 1988 report, however, states that "participation in the Lord's Supper is an act of faith on the part of those communing" and that only those who "evidence both the capacity and the desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death should be admitted to the table." Recommendation 4 gives specific wording for Church Order Article 59-a to reflect the inclusion of children after a profession of faith is made. These recommendations are not supported in the text of the report.

There is nothing in the majority report until the summary recommendations on page 285 to suggest that any sort of profession is required. The report correctly asserts that it is not parents "who decide that their children will be numbered among the children of the covenant. It is the Lord who asserts his sovereign claim and according to whose command and prescription the sacrament of baptism is administered to believers and their children" (p. 281). The arguments found in the majority report of 1988 and also in report B from 1995 give ample reason for allowing all baptized children to come to the Table of the Lord.

2. Any discussion of this issue must include a discussion of 1 Corinthians 11—Paul's admonition to the church in Corinth regarding their inappropriate celebration of this sacrament. Recent work regarding the reading

of this passage indicates that the passage regarding “recognizing the body of the Lord” is better understood to refer to the church as the body of Christ rather than the sacrifice of Christ’s physical body on the cross. Throughout this epistle, the apostle Paul addresses the sin of division in the body of Christ—the church (cf: 1:10ff, 3:1ff). When he says pointedly in 3:16, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” He is speaking of the church. In 10:1-5, Paul states that all members of the old covenant community ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink from Christ, the spiritual rock. A few verses later, Paul indicates that in the Supper of the new covenant, to eat the bread is to participate in the body of Christ; he adds: “because there is one loaf, we, who are many are one body” (10:16-17).

Concern for the unity of the body of believers is also central to the apostle’s discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter 12. There, he insists that all members of the body of Christ are necessary; in fact, “the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and . . . are treated with greater respect” (12:23).

This great emphasis on the unity of the body in chapters 10 and 12 is also found in Paul’s critique of Corinthian practices at the Lord’s Supper in chapter 11. Early Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper as part of a meal. Paul hears that when Christians in Corinth come together, there are divisions among them (11:18). Rich Christians who have houses are celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a way that humiliates those Christians “who have nothing” (11:22). The rich are abusing the poor. Paul asks in verse 22, “Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?” Such an abuse of the body of believers is also an abuse of Christ himself, the One through whose death and resurrection the Corinthians had been formed into his body, the church. Because the Corinthians abuse Christ’s body and therefore Christ himself, Paul needs to take them back to the words of institution (11:23-26). He wants to restore the right meaning of the food in their meal. The Lord’s Supper is intended to “proclaim the Lord’s death” (11:26). Divisive behavior at the meal undermines this gospel because it fails to proclaim that Christ’s death has created a new and united community; a community that is one body is partaking of one loaf. By humiliating the poor at the Supper, wealthy Corinthians are failing to practice unity and to proclaim what Christ has done. Because the way in which the Corinthians celebrated the Lord’s Supper contradicts the message proclaimed by the Supper, they are hypocrites, and Paul says they are “eating and drinking judgment” (11:29).

What is the solution to abusing Christ and destroying the gospel? The Corinthians must “discern the body” (11:29), that is, the church. Paul commands them to “examine” their attitude and behavior toward one another at the Supper. Those who eat and drink in an “unworthy manner” (i.e., without discerning the body of believers) put themselves under the same condemnation as those who originally crucified Christ (11:27). With tragic irony, they are liable for the very death that they are supposed to proclaim as salvation in the Lord’s Supper. Now Paul applies this argument specifically to the abuse of the poor. His pastoral solution is straightforward and simple: “when you come together to eat,

wait for each other” (11:33). This final imperative sums up well Paul’s greatest concern in the passage, namely, that believers at the Lord’s Supper examine their attitude and behavior toward one another, especially those who are not wealthy.

How can Paul’s concerns for unity of the body at Communion be applied to exclude baptized children? The apostle’s concerns actually suggest the opposite, namely, that all members of the covenant community should be included at the Table rather than having some who remain spiritually hungry.

3. The partnership between the preached Word and the sacramental Word is undermined by withholding the Lord’s Supper from covenant children. Calvin and the Reformed confessions typically emphasize continuity between preaching and the sacraments. Both argue that the preached Word and the sacramental Word do the very same thing, that is, they proclaim the gospel and unite us to Christ. For example, Article 33 of the Belgic Confession states: We believe that our good God, mindful of our crudeness and weakness, has ordained sacraments for us to seal his promises in us, to pledge his good will and grace toward us, and also to nourish and sustain our faith. He has added these to the Word of the gospel to represent better to our external senses both what he enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts, confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us. Preaching proclaims the gospel audibly, whereas the sacraments do so more tangibly. Calvin advocated weekly communion because he did not want the preached Word without the sacramental Word (*Institutes* 4.17.44). They belong together in the worship of the covenant community.
4. The historical reasons for the separation of baptism and the Lord’s Supper in the medieval church were not fully explored in the 1988 report. There were a number of developments that contributed to the gradual split of these two sacraments. Many of these were an effort to conserve the church hierarchy and reflect an emphasis on the individual rather than on the community and do not serve as a reasonable justification for barring covenant children from the Lord’s Table.
 - a. There was often no bishop available to confirm someone’s baptism, causing a period of waiting between someone’s baptism and their confirmation. The Western church insisted that without a bishop there could be no confirmation.
 - b. The doctrine of transubstantiation formulated during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to fear that the elements would be dropped or spilled by a child.
 - c. Many parents were not bothering to have their children confirmed, leading the hierarchy to bar access to church for those parents. The church also denied the Lord’s Supper to those children who had not been confirmed.
 - d. The church of the late Middle Ages insisted on confession and penance in order to receive communion.

It is also noteworthy that there is additional historical precedent for admitting children to the Table. As the 1988 report to synod noted (p. 262), the entire church did not restrict children from the Lord’s Table

during the early period. Following the split between the Eastern and Western churches in 1054, the Eastern church did not separate the two sacraments during the medieval period and continues the practice of offering communion to baptized children to this day.

5. The current understanding of profession of faith is confusing and inconsistent:
 - a. Membership in the church as it is presently understood is not well defined. Our desire to include younger children more fully in the spiritual life of the church has led us to create a system that is muddy and confusing. When a child makes profession of faith, he or she is not really welcomed into the full life of the church. Children are not expected, for example, to vote at congregational meetings. They may not serve on church council, and they do not participate in other parts of the church life that are traditionally and appropriately reserved for adult members.
 - b. A two-tiered system of membership, distinguishing between those who are baptized and those who have made profession of faith, is not theologically or biblically sound for Reformed Christians who believe in the covenant.
 - c. A two-tiered system of membership contributes to a two-tiered system of church discipline in which nonprofessing baptized members are held less accountable for their way of life, and professing members over eighteen are held less accountable for continued learning through church education.
 - d. Participation in the Lord's Supper does not negate the importance of one or possibly many public professions of faith along the spiritual journey of each individual.
 - e. Synod 1995's process for implementation of profession of faith for young children did not clearly address the inherent problems in this two-tiered membership system.

Classis Holland
Anthony L. Louwse, stated clerk

Overture 17: Appoint a Committee to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Marriage and Family Institute

I. Background

Statistics in our culture as well as in our denomination clearly indicate that our interpersonal relationships are increasingly assaulted and battered. Being faced with a chronic 50 percent divorce rate in our society is devastating enough, but what is even more appalling is the fact that we accept such a state of affairs as normal. There is no outcry in the mainstream news media about this rampant dysfunction. While a few SARS or bird-flu cases set alarm bells jangling all around the globe, our disastrous marital and family explosions have generated little public outcry. Sad to say, even the body of believers, whose marriages are frequently bursting apart as well, has gradually become inured to the agonizing marital disintegration all around us.

If anyone ought to be concerned, it is the Christians who emphasize covenant teaching, because the Hebrew word for *covenant* means “a loving bond” with God and, therefore, with others. For that very reason, our covenant community should be at the forefront in deliberately fostering relational well-being for marriage and family life in order that our congregations as well as our surrounding society may blossom more profusely.

Furthermore, relational well-being is inseparable from emotional well-being, but our emotions, including our sexual feelings, are frequently shunned. Our church families are superb in caring for their members when physical crises afflict them, but they are often at a loss in assuaging emotional hurts and addressing sexual aberrations. Our reluctance to deal with the hidden hurts from unmet emotional needs is a significant factor in our family quarrels, in our congregational tussles, and even in our occasional theological spats. Moreover, our hedonistic environment incessantly discharges emotional and relational toxins that are also worming themselves into our homes today. Therefore, it is high time that our denomination courageously grapples with relational floundering, emotional reticence, and sexual promiscuity.

We must pool together our denominational resources, insights, and wisdom to find ways to assist our local churches in living out the new life in Christ in all our relationships, beginning with our marriages and families. Healthy congregations flow from vibrant marriages and families, which need constant emotional and spiritual nurturing, for emotional and spiritual well-being are also exquisitely interwoven. While it is wonderful to devise effective mission strategies and development plans for service in other nations, we also need to create effective communal strategies to fight the relational erosion, the emotional contamination, and the sexual confusion in our own homes.

Like muscles that atrophy if not exercised regularly, loving relationships wither if they are not constantly cultivated and not deliberately nourished. Unfortunately, the priorities that feverishly fuel today’s society are material well-being and technological advancement. Our steady striving for a higher income or improved company profits often results in longer hours at work. A distressing consequence is that we usually have even less time and less energy for strengthening healthy family relationships, and our emotional and relational resources are depleted.

Moreover, our knowledge of or insight into what constitutes healthy husband-wife, parent-child, and sibling-sibling relations does not come automatically. While we are required to pursue years of education and training in career preparation, we are very inadequately equipped to understand the nature of child development and character building, as well as the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, sexuality, conflict resolution, and male-female differences in communication (i.e., knowledge that is so crucial for optimal marriage and parenting). Many of us, therefore, are insufficiently prepared for our most foundational task of all: the fostering of healthy interpersonal relationships at home, at work, and at church.

If the CRCNA wants to promote healthy congregations, we urgently need to address this poverty in relational knowledge, wisdom, and skill that frequently saps the vitality of our members. The stronger and the more wholesome our marital and family relationships become, the more luxuriantly our congregational life will blossom and the more attractive and inviting it will become to unbelievers.

Finally, in 2004, Dr. Rodger Rice, professor emeritus of Calvin College and the former Director of its Social Research Center, conducted a survey in which a total of 178 questionnaires were mailed to a number of Christian Reformed pastors. Three pastors were randomly selected in each classis, except in the case of Classis Holland (U.S.) and Classis Quinte (Canada). All pastors in these two classes received questionnaires. The results of this selective survey in which one hundred pastors returned a completed questionnaire (a respectable return rate of 56 percent) clearly indicated the compelling urgency for providing practical assistance to help people in local churches strengthen their marriages and families.

II. Overture

Classis Quinte overtures Synod 2006 to appoint a study committee that investigates the feasibility of establishing a denominational Marriage and Family Institute that:

- researches from a covenantal point of view the complex nature of marriage and family relationships, including such topics as preparation for marriage and parenting, child development, marriage and family life cycles, triangulation, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication impediments, sibling position, gender differences, generational transmission of behavior disorders, and interpersonal boundaries;
- effectively promotes a marriage and family culture in harmony with a comprehensive covenantal vision for emotional and relational well-being;
- trains pastors, leaders of pastoral caregiver teams, and marriage mentors in understanding emotional needs, in discerning significant marriage or family difficulties, and in dealing pastorally with these before they become catastrophic;
- is funded by foundation grants and/or ministry shares.

Grounds:

1. Jesus constantly linked proclaiming the kingdom with healing. This dual task of the church is even more crucial today as emotional dysfunction and relational disintegration increases.
2. Being a *covenant community* means that we have a loving bond with God as well as with his people. These two relational strands are inseparable, for the one directly influences the other, but usually relational failures with each other short-circuit our connection to God. Our loving relationships need constant nurturing if they are to stay healthy and vigorous. Thus, while we nurture our relationship with God, we also must foster emotional and relational well-being within the marriages and families of our local churches. Only then will we become a more vibrant covenant community—a beckoning light in our cultural darkness.
3. This integral proclaiming-and-healing approach within a covenant community also forms the basis for a wholesome word-deed witness to coworkers in our workplace and to acquaintances in our community, for the healthier we are emotionally and the more joyful we are in our family relations, the more inviting and effective our witness will become. Additionally, the more relational wisdom we acquire in shaping healthier family life, the more convincing wounded healers we become for

colleagues and acquaintances, so that they, in turn, will become attracted to our Lord's winsome message of love for God and neighbor.

4. To love others more meaningfully, God's people need to learn how to "bind up the brokenhearted" by deepening their insights into emotional and relational health and by improving their understanding and skill in dealing with emotional anguish and anger as well as in resolving conflict. Paul reminds us in Philippians 1:9: "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best [also in the area of relationship-building]. . . ."
5. The vitality and exuberance of living the new life in Christ at home and at church is intrinsically connected to our emotional health and our wholesome interpersonal relationships. Emotional fitness and spiritual vigor are delicately intertwined. Broken relationships with people easily result in a broken relationship with God, for "[A]nyone who does not love his brother [sister, father, mother, husband, wife] whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).
6. The recently conducted denominational survey by Dr. Rice reinforces the significance of this overture's recommendations. Some of the foremost needs for which the surveyed pastors desired training were in the area of marital conflict resolution and parenting issues.
7. This overture is integral to and crucial for developing the healthy congregations priority and initiative of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, adopted at its meeting of February 26, 2004.
8. Synod 2005 acknowledged "the deeply painful issues raised in the overture of Classis Quinte and the paramount importance of addressing them" and requested "that any new overture provide a clear and specific mandate for a possible study committee."

Classis Quinte
Irene Bakker, stated clerk

Overture 18: Revise Recommendation J in the Committee to Study War and Peace Report

I. Background

The synodical Committee to Study War and Peace has done our denomination a tremendous service in urging the churches to focus carefully and deliberately on God's call to shalom. We affirm the committee's work as a step in the CRC's mission to pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life and heartily endorse it as worthy of careful reflection and responsive action.

The report, as presented to CRC churches, contains a number of specific recommendations for advocacy communications with the U.S. and Canadian governments. These recommendations, if accepted by synod, will facilitate the expression of a prophetic call to justice, peace, and hope in cultures dominated by a spectre of fear and an ideology of security. This message is deeply relevant to the political contexts of both Canada and the United States.

Further to action and reflection specific to the Canadian context, we offer the following comments regarding Recommendations J and K. The recommendations read as follows:

J. That synod direct the executive director, in cooperation with other Christian denominations, to encourage the Canadian government to raise the priority of the peace-building components of its foreign policy.

K. That synod urge the Board of Trustees to encourage the Christian Reformed churches in Canada, through its appropriate agencies and committees, to participate more actively in policy development and programs for peace building, including participation in Project Ploughshares and other interchurch policy dialogues on peace and war issues.

(Agenda for Synod 2006, p. 417)

We certainly affirm the encouragement to collaborate with churches and ecumenical bodies in peace-building policy development and foreign policy initiatives. Our concern is specific to the first clause of Recommendation J and has implications for the content of both J and K. The executive director of the CRCNA will, we presume, work from the United States. From the perspective of ecumenism and interaction with government in the Canadian context, it would be preferable that collaboration and communication regarding national policy originate from Canada itself (i.e., from the desk of the director of Canadian ministries [DCM]). This would reflect the current reality as we understand it; the office of Canadian ministries has participated in peace-building advocacy in cooperation with Kairos, the Canadian Council of Churches, and through the specific work of the Committee for Contact with the Government and CRWRC. In this light, it would be advisable to revise Recommendation J to ensure that the DCM take the public role in Canadian ecumenical collaborations and government relations regarding peace-building.

Appropriate consultations on such matters are, of course, important. In matters of government relations relevant to peace-building, the DCM would, we presume, consult with the Committee for Contact with Government and CRWRC. In matters of ecumenical collaboration, the DCM should consult with the Interchurch Relations Committee and ecumenical partners, and, in appropriate circumstances, the DCM should also consult with the executive director and the Board of Trustees. In any case, this work needs to be done with sensitivity to the subtleties of Canadian policy. Therefore, we consider it expedient to locate the work and responsibility in the office of the DCM with the suggested consultations above in full view.

II. Overture

Classis Hamilton overtures Synod 2006 to revise Recommendation J of the report of the Committee to Study War and Peace to read as follows:

That synod instruct the director of Canadian ministries, in consultation with appropriate denominational supervisory bodies, agencies, and committees, and in cooperation with other Christian denominations and ecumenical agencies, to persist in encouraging the Canadian government to raise the priority of the peace-building components of its foreign policy.

Grounds:

1. Replacing the reference to *executive director* with *director of Canadian ministries* places cooperation and communication on specific Canadian foreign policy matters in appropriate national context. In both ecumenical and government relations, this has strategic importance.

2. These revisions reflect current practice of government relations and ecumenical collaboration in the CRC in Canada.
3. These revisions encourage consultation throughout the church (denominationally and ecumenically) on matters of peace and justice. This collective wisdom can enhance the quality and effectiveness of CRC interaction with the Canadian government, thus furthering the goals of this synodical report.

Classis Hamilton
Peter Zwart, stated clerk

Overture 19: Refer Report of the Committee to Study War and Peace Back to the Churches

Classis Hackensack overtures Synod 2006 to refer the Committee to Study War and Peace report back to the churches for further reflection, discussion, and reaction.

Ground: This study raises significant long-term issues that require further study.

Classis Hackensack
Douglas Bratt, stated clerk

Overture 20: Not Adopt Recommendation I of the Committee to Study War and Peace Report

I. Background

We appreciate the overall theme of the study re war and peace. However, we have strong concerns about expanding the use of the conscientious objector rule. We believe that allowing such a broad use of the conscientious objector rule as recommended by the committee would completely undermine military authority.

The report was written, and must be read, in the context of our current war in Iraq. That conflict, we believe, shows exactly why we should not expand the rule. The grounds for going to war were the build up of weapons of mass destruction. Currently, it appears that the intelligence on that issue was somewhat faulty, but even now we do not know if weapons are still hidden or if they were moved out of the country prior to the invasion. We do not believe the intelligence was fabricated as a reason to go to war. However, even debating that topic is a luxury for those of us at home, not for the soldier under orders.

For ground troops to begin making objections to war based on the very limited information to which they have access would be absurd. Knowing they could get out of a given conflict without giving up their military career and benefits would completely cripple our armed forces and the integrity of the command structure. The current conscientious objector clause is remarkable enough. There is no draft, so everyone joins of his or her free will. If after that their worldview changes so that they cannot participate in any armed conflict, they are allowed to leave honorably. To allow any soldier (used

generically for all armed service men and women) to decide on his or her own whether any given conflict meets his own standards shows lack of understanding as to how the military is run.

A recent book, *One Bullet Away: The Making of a Marine Corps Officer*, was written by a Marine Corps Lieutenant who led troops into Afghanistan and Iraq. He writes with great detail and candor about the difficulty of some of the decisions he had to make—some of which cost the lives of other people. He often had to obey orders from above that seemed outrageous at the time, but he was able to recognize that those who gave the order were looking at a bigger picture than he was, and so he followed the orders, even at great risk to himself and his platoon. He does not sugar coat the realities on the field. Sometimes the orders he received were not for the best, but he recognized that in battle, an order must be followed right away and to the best of one's ability. The only exception is an order contrary to law. If he were to second guess every order given by his superiors, based on limited information, the war would not have succeeded, and we would have seen much higher casualties. That is exactly the scenario to which Recommendation I would lead in innumerable situations.

We are thankful that the Christian Reformed Church is taking proactive steps in working for peace in the world. That is exactly what churches should be doing. In this case, the target of Recommendation I is misplaced. We believe the existing conscientious objector rule and the general rule not to follow unlawful orders is sufficient for anyone serving in our military. Broadening it as they suggest would not promote peace; it would undermine our military and put the servicemen and women (and ultimately us) at greater risk.

II. Overture

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to not adopt Recommendation I of the report of the Committee to Study War and Peace, which reads:

That synod instruct the executive director to petition the President of the United States as well as the Department of Defense to change the conscientious objector policy to include selective conscientious objection when opposition to a particular conflict is justified by the criteria of the just-war tradition.

(Agenda for Synod 2006, p. 417)

Grounds:

1. Current policy allows for a person to serve in the military with a clear conscience.
 - a. Military personnel are obligated to obey all and only lawful orders.
 - b. Current conscientious objector policy allows military personnel to either leave the military for alternative service or serve in a noncombat capacity based on moral or religious conviction.
2. The proposed expansion would undermine military command and operation, putting servicemen and women (and ultimately us) at greater risk.
3. The proposed expansion of the conscientious objector policy would allow military personnel to be relieved from serving in a specific conflict *based on the limited intelligence information available to them at the time* (filtered through their personal convictions about just war).

Classis Wisconsin

Robert M. Brenton, stated clerk

Overture 21: Amend Section X, B of the Committee to Study War and Peace Report

I. Background

In May 2003, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America received, reviewed, and forwarded to Synod 2003 a war and peace report that was prepared for it by an ad hoc committee. The report presented the Board of Trustees and synod with a summary of issues that required more in-depth study. Synod adopted the recommendations of the Board of Trustees and appointed a committee to study the issues raised by the war and peace report. The Committee to Study War and Peace issued its report, which includes numerous recommendations. These recommendations overlook the role that our children and youth can play in the future as agents of peace.

II. Overture

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtures synod to amend section X, B of the Committee to Study War and Peace report to include an additional section B, 8 as follows:

B. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through assemblies, congregations, and agencies to affirm the centrality of the gospel's call to Christians to be agents of peace and to encourage members to take specific and intentional steps to fulfill this calling including the following: . . .

8. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through assemblies, congregations, and agencies to teach our children and youth about our calling to be agents of peace; and develop and distribute study materials to assist pastors, church leaders, teachers, and parents in presenting a consistent and complete instruction to our children on being agents of peace.

Grounds:

1. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons [children] of God" (Matt. 5:9). Our children and youth are literally future agents of peace. The values that shape the beliefs of our children are learned at a young age. The earlier children are taught about working for peace, the greater the likelihood that they will embrace our Christian calling to be agents of peace.
2. Children who grow up in an environment of war are more likely to embrace a culture of war. This only perpetuates the cycle of conflict, war, and terrorism.
3. Waiting until our youth are in college to instill the importance of being agents of peace could result in fewer of our children accepting our calling to be agents of peace.
4. Pastors, church leaders, teachers, and parents, in their role of instructing our children and youth, need comprehensive support materials about our calling to be agents of peace.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
Durk De Jong, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Heartland

Outline of Communication

I. Introduction

II. The Interchurch Relations Committee recommendations and our objections

III. Denial of the one sacrifice of Christ: The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ is “re-sacrificed” in the Mass

- A. *The meaning of sacrifice*
- B. *The RCC’s teaching of the Eucharist’s sacrificial character*
- C. *Objections*

IV. Does the veneration of bread and wine in the Roman Catholic Mass constitute idolatry?

- A. *The meaning of idolatry*
- B. *The teaching of the RCC*
- C. *Objections*

V. The consequences of adopting the IRC recommendations

VI. Conclusion

I. Introduction

Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered the wrath of his Father for our sake, atoned for our sins and sufficiently satisfied God’s justice when he obediently went to the cross, sacrificed himself and declared “It is finished,” and gave up his spirit (John 19:30). This sacrifice was whole and complete, and Q. and A. 80 boldly affirms this scriptural truth and rejects the contrary teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Mass.

II. The Interchurch Relations Committee recommendations and our objections

In its report, the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) concludes that:

[A]lthough Reformed Christians continue to have genuine and significant differences with Roman Catholics on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist (citations omitted) the differences are not such that Reformed Christians are warranted in calling either Roman Catholic teaching or the proper expression of that teaching in practice “a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. . . .

(*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 303-4)

The IRC therefore recommends that synod declare two things: that the Roman Catholic Mass, when practiced in accordance with official Roman Catholic teaching, neither (1) denies the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ nor (2) constitutes idolatry.

(*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 304)

It is the IRC’s conclusion and two recommendations stated above to which we object. The goal of the remainder of this communication shall be to provide grounds for those objections.

III. Denial of the one sacrifice of Christ: The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ is “re-sacrificed” in the Mass

A. The meaning of sacrifice

Sacrifice is defined as, “The act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage. . . .” (see *American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd College ed., p.1083 [1985]). In the Old Testament, the often-stated purpose of the sacrifices that were offered was “to atone.” The verb *kipper* used in Leviticus to describe such sacrifices may be explained in three ways: “to cover,” “to wipe away,” and “to ransom by a substitute” (see *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., p. 1052. In the New Testament, the sacrifice of Christ is one of the chief themes. Christ is spoken of as the slain Lamb of God, whose precious blood takes away the sin of the world [*New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., p. 1053, citing John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 5:6-10; 13:8). Thus, it follows that any characterization by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) that the Eucharist is a sacrifice necessarily involves atonement for sin. This alone implies that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is insufficient to atone for sinners.

B. The RCC’s teaching of the Eucharist’s sacrificial character

According to the IRC report, the RCC indeed affirms that a sacrifice is present in the Mass (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 282-83). The RCC claims that the one sacrifice of Christ is made present in the offering of the Mass, while the RCC still affirms that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is an unrepeatable event. Furthermore, the RCC teaches that the Mass is a “true and proper sacrifice” and “truly propitiatory.” The RCC interprets *truly propitiatory* to mean that in the Mass the fruits of Christ’s propitiation become ours (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 283). Thus, it appears that the sacrifice involved in the Mass must be offered repeatedly to atone for one’s sins. This appears to be the case even though the RCC affirms the “unrepeatability” of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Apparently, the RCC ascribes the term *re-enactment* of Christ’s sacrifice to the Mass, believing that the use of such term avoids any attempt to charge the RCC with repeating an unrepeatable event.

C. Objections

It should be noted that the IRC, rightly so, challenged the RCC’s teaching on this subject, asserting that as a re-enactment of Christ’s sacrifice that

mediates forgiveness, the Mass detracts from the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 283). The RCC responded that the Mass by its very nature as a sacrament of that once-for-all event cannot detract from the one sacrifice of Christ. Disappointingly, the IRC must have found this response to be convincing and satisfactory. We, however, do not.

Despite the RCC's claim that it believes that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is an unrepeatable event and despite the RCC's claim that the Mass is a representation of the one final, sufficient, and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ on the cross (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 283), the RCC also claims that the eucharistic sacrifice perpetuates the sacrifice of Christ (p. 284). In common language, *perpetuate* is defined as "to make perpetual," and *perpetual* is defined as "ceaselessly repeated or continued without interruption" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd College ed., pp. 924-25). By perpetuating Christ's sacrifice, the Mass, by definition is repeating that sacrifice, and it follows then that Christ's sacrifice cannot be final if it must be repeated.

The same inconsistent arguments were made by the RCC in the sixteenth century that are made today in the twenty-first century. John Calvin points out such inconsistency in his *Institutes* where in addressing Roman Catholic responses he states: "The more subtle try to make their escape by a still narrower loophole—viz. that it is not repetition but application" (see *Institutes*, II.4.8.3).

Calvin's description sounds strikingly similar to the RCC's present-day teaching that "the one sacrifice is offered in different manners" (p. 295). Calvin refutes this teaching by reasoning that: "Christ did not offer himself once, in the view that his sacrifice should be daily ratified by new oblations, but that by preaching of the gospel and the dispensation of the sacred supper, the benefit of it should be communicated to us" (*Institutes*, II.4.8.3).

The IRC report has shown Reformed Christians the inconsistent and unsystematic theology of the Roman Catholic Church as it relates to the Mass. However, this same observation was made by Louis Berkhof (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941) over one-half century ago while addressing the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace:

Roman Catholic controversialists sometimes give the impression that this sacrifice has only a representative or commemorative character, but this is not the real doctrine of the Church. The sacrifice of Christ in the Lord's Supper is considered to be a real sacrifice and is supposed to have propitiatory value. When the question is raised, what this sacrifice merits for the sinner, Roman Catholic authorities begin to hedge and speak inconsistent language.
(*Systematic Theology*, p. 655)

Only one conclusion can be drawn from the inconsistent teachings of the RCC. The Mass attempts to re-sacrifice Christ daily and through this re-sacrifice impart to sinners atonement, thus denying the one, sufficient, and meritorious sacrifice of Christ on the cross just as Q. and A. 80 exclaims.

IV. Does the veneration of bread and wine in the Roman Catholic Mass constitute idolatry?

A. The meaning of idolatry

Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 95 defines idolatry thus: "Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in his Word."

In addressing the second commandment, Q. and A. 97 also instructs us, "God forbids making or having such images if one's intention is to worship them or serve God through them."

Discussing the relationship between idolatry and God's prohibition in the second commandment, John Calvin explains: "The grossest vice here prohibited is external idolatry. This commandment consists of two parts: The former curbs the licentious daring which would subject the incomprehensible God to our senses, or represent him under any visible shape. The latter forbids the worship of images on any religious grounds" (*Institutes*, I.2.8.17).

B. The teaching of the RCC

According to the IRC report, the RCC teaches that in the consecration of bread and wine, the substance of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the body and blood of Jesus Christ (p. 296). The RCC also teaches that those consecrated elements should be venerated and adored (p. 296). Despite these teachings, the RCC insists that this veneration does not constitute idolatry and insist that Christ is being worshipped, not the elements (p. 295).

C. Objections

Reformed doctrine does not accept the view of the RCC as correct. Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper is spiritual. The root of this doctrine is that Christ has ascended to the right hand of the Father and has poured out his spirit to the church here on earth. The IRC report concludes that the RCC holds that the ascended Christ is to be worshipped through the adoration of his body and blood, which is what it believes the consecrated bread and wine have become (pp. 300-301). Reformed churches do not believe the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.

Therefore, the RCC makes a grievous error in its doctrine, which results in idolatrous practice. From the Reformed point of view, because the elements are not changed to Christ's body and blood, then only two possibilities exist regarding the RCC's practice of the Mass. At worst, the RCC has substituted the elements of bread and wine for God. At best, the RCC is seeking to worship the true Christ through the visible and material elements of bread and wine. Both are violations of the first or second commandments and thus constitute idolatry. Because Reformed doctrine does not accept transubstantiation as taught by the RCC, then in the RCC practice of the Mass the bread and wine are merely representations of Christ under a visible shape that Calvin explains is forbidden by the second commandment.

V. Consequences of adopting the IRC recommendations

The RCC teaching and practice of the Mass is the single most significant doctrinal and practical difference between Reformed Christians and the RCC.

Removing the CRC's condemnation of that significant doctrinal and practical difference will have serious unintended, but not unexpected, consequences.

If Q. and A. 80 is removed, how will Reformed Christians now view the Mass? If the CRC makes no condemnation of it, CRC members will likely begin to view the difference between our celebration of communion and the Mass as insignificant. Obviously, our own members interact daily with Roman Catholic parishioners and develop friendships and acquaintances. When occasionally attending Roman Catholic services (i.e., funerals, weddings, and so forth) where the Mass is performed, our own members will likely find it perfectly permissible to participate in such a ritual.

The consequences of adopting the IRC recommendations extend beyond CRC members' occasionally participating in the Mass, however. Members will likely begin to view the RCC as a whole to be "not much different" than Reformed Christianity. This will have a major impact upon our members' developing intimate and ultimately marital relationships with members of the RCC, particularly among our young members. Although removing Q. and A. 80 would certainly make the CRC's relationship with the RCC more comfortable and promote ecumenical relations, this is not sufficient reason to compromise our Reformed doctrine.

VI. Conclusion

The fact that the RCC believes that Christ is sacrificed in the Mass, albeit a perpetuation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, demonstrates that to hold such a view cannot ascribe sufficiency and finality to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The RCC attempts to circumvent this reality by assigning terms such as *re-enactment* of an unrepeatable event while at the same time claiming such sacrifice to be both perpetual and final. Q. and A. 80 accurately describes the Roman Catholic Mass to be a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ.

The RCC doctrine of transubstantiation is contrary to the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper in that the Reformed do not believe that the bread and wine are converted to the physical body and blood of Christ. Thus, any attempt by the RCC to worship Christ through the earthly elements of bread and wine violates the second commandment and constitutes idolatry.

For these reasons, we believe that Synod 2006 should maintain Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 as it is written.

Classis Iakota
M. Dale Fopma, stated clerk

Communication 2: Council of Cottage Grove CRC, South Holland, Illinois

The council of Cottage Grove CRC, South Holland, Illinois, wishes to communicate to Synod 2006 its support for the overture from the Central Avenue CRC, Holland, Michigan, which asks synod to leave Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism unchanged. We find the overture to be compelling as it demonstrates that the Heidelberg Catechism has not misunderstood the Roman Catholic Mass as is evidenced by official Roman Catholic statements from the Council of Trent and from the more recent Catechism of the Catholic

Church. We believe that Q. and A. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism should remain intact in the catechism as it has for over four hundred years.

Council of Cottage Grove CRC,
South Holland, Illinois
Marvin Schaap, clerk

Communication 3: Classis Illiana

I. Introduction

We appreciate all the study and thought that has gone into this report, as well as in previous studies. We have a long history of thinking through the issue of dealing with conflict that dates back to the Reformation and is reflected in four extensive denominational studies before this one, the first in 1939, just before WW II.

We recognize that the committee members are involved and informed on this issue in various ways and respect their insights and experience. We do not take issue with the body of the report. We think it was helpful to differentiate among three motivations for entering into war—defensive, preemptive, and preventive. Thankfully, we are not arguing about aggressive or imperialistic war. It is important to affirm our just-war position over against a pacifist point of view. We agree with the emphasis on the biblical mandate that we are to be peacemakers. We confess we have not always done all we could in this area.

We agree with the basic direction and emphasis of the recommendations. We appreciate the emphasis on justice as the foundation for peace, but we wonder if the recommendations are not stated too idealistically. Military action is never the preferred approach, but sometimes this way of dealing with an enemy that is unwilling to desist and negotiate is necessary in an evil and broken world.

Who in the church is privy to the highly classified information on which many military decisions are based? We understand the debate about nuclear weapons and the goal and ideal of world disarmament. We understand the argument that a policy of U.S. superiority could stimulate other nations to build their arsenals. We understand the argument that a reliance on military power with a goal of absolute security is idolatry. We also believe that it can be argued that a build up of weapons has served as a practical deterrent to war. If peace-loving nations and the super power United States does not maintain the upper hand in power, will that not invite aggression?

Similarly, we question whether we have the information to tell our government that they may not develop more sophisticated nuclear weapons or advance our defense program in order to maintain a balance of power and to keep an aggressor from initiating war.

We are concerned that making broad statements with incomplete information will undermine our credibility as a church that seeks to be a voice and influence in society.

Finally, we are concerned that promoting this perspective too strongly may undercut support for our political leaders and military and threaten our national security.

We recognize the need for checks and balances. We agree that the church's voice needs to be heard in the public arena. We want to make sure that what we say is both biblical and credible.

We request that synod take our concerns into consideration when it is dealing with this report and the following five recommendations in particular:

II. Comments on the report's recommendations

A. Make the pursuit of peace a core concern of the CRC (section IX, A, 6)

Comment: We strongly agree that peace needs to be grounded in justice and that the use of military force needs to be a last resort. We would want to make sure that we do our educating and pursuing of peace within the just-war tradition.

B. Work to prevent an arms race in outer space (section X, E, 6)

Comment: In principal, we do not disagree with this assertion. We would prefer that all our resources would be able to be spent on feeding the hungry, promoting justice, and building a better world for all. We lament the incredible waste of resources to finance war. Our concern is with a total prohibition. Perhaps someday this will be a necessary step for defending peace and providing security.

C. Condemn all preventive war (as distinguished from preemptive war) (IX, G, 2)

Comment: Our concern is that prevention is important in today's world. Governments have the responsibility to protect their citizens and seek peace. The committee protests our National Security Strategy that says, "the United States will act against emerging threats before they are fully formed." In today's small world, there are fast-acting terrorist groups. How long are they to be allowed to develop and plan attacks before they are stopped. The report itself allows for the possibility of validity for this policy with respect to "radical organizations planning terrorist attacks . . . that have made it clear that the goal is to kill civilians and who have done so in the past." The authors hold the opinion that "strengthening international policing and non-lethal security mechanisms is a preferred approach and in many cases is . . . as effective. . . ." If that works, great! Some groups, however, (terrorists, often with a fanatical religious basis) have evidenced that reason will not work. We do not want the United States to be an aggressor nation, but in today's climate we might need to give government more flexibility in *preventing* attacks.

D. Unequivocal opposition to developing or deploying of new nuclear weapons (section IX, H, 1)

Comment: Have we envisioned every possible situation? (IX, H, 1). The report even describes possibilities of "new designs for smaller weapons that can penetrate deep within the earth to destroy buried targets while releasing comparatively little radiation in the air. Weapons designers have plausibly argued that the use of such weapons, if employed for tasks such as destroying chemical weapons storage facilities, could result in less destruction to surrounding areas and fewer casualties than conventional weapons." Still it

recommends stopping all such development. We disagree. If a certain weapon results in *fewer* casualties, ought we not perhaps be in favor of it? What other issues need to be considered? We are concerned about the committee's opposition to all possibilities. We believe that our government needs to be given the flexibility of responding to situations in the best possible way.

E. Selective conscientious objection (see Recommendation IX, I)

Comment: In an all-volunteer army, recruits need to know that when they sign up, they will be expected to follow orders when they are called into battle. As Reformed Christians, we understand that God gives governments the authority to take up the sword (Rom. 13:4). Anyone considering signing up needs to think through their perspectives and commitment before signing up.

Effective military systems run on obedience, loyalty, and discipline. This recommendation seems to say that a government must prove its case before a soldier needs to act in accordance with orders. This practice could cause disunity in our military, hamper our ability to fight quickly, and encourage all soldiers to be commanders-in-chief: "Do I agree with this policy? Convince me that this war is necessary."

The option always exists that when a soldier truly has conscientious objections, he or she can refuse to serve, be court-martialed, and pay the consequences for his or her convictions. This puts the burden of proof on the soldier rather than on the government.

Classis Illiana

Steven Van Eck, stated clerk

Communication 4: Classis Columbia

Classis Columbia sends this communication to Synod 2006 to consider amending or deleting portions of the recommendation found in section X in the report on War and Peace.

1. Section X, B, 7: "and protesting against increasing militarization and other tendencies that threaten peace and justice."

We recommend striking this phrase. Increases in militarization may be necessary at various points in time to defend the freedoms of our civilization, and a general call out to protest all such increases is an inappropriate position for the Christian Reformed Church to take.

The concept that an increase in military strength is antithetical to peace and particularly to justice is not accurate. The application of justice and often the bringing of peace come only at the hand of a capable military force (see Romans 13:17; "for the authority does not bear the sword in vain . . .").

2. Section X, D: "urging the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church . . . to initiate or expand peace-related programs."

We believe this suggestion is too vague. It gives no limits or boundaries to what is being authorized by synod. While we are not against such programs in general, we believe that the nature of these plans is such that a more limited and structured framework needs to be presented and approved by synod if this section is to be accepted.

3. Section X, E, 2: "Develop national and international security framework based on concepts of human collective security."

Put simply, this phrase is meaningless. Essentially all treaties are based on the concept of collective security. We recommend deleting this subsection.

4. Section X, E, 3: "Increase national budget allocation to achieve a better balance between the resources dedicated to peace work and the resources dedicated to military defense."

It is unclear in this recommendation whose idea of balance is being used to define how much should be spent on peace work. The only example used in this section of the report is from a pacifist. Pacifist positions are often extreme and impractical in the real world. No amount of peace work deters Islamist terrorists. A more appropriate phrasing of the statement might include the suggestion to "increase spending on peace work," but we disagree with the implication that some unmeasured balance needs to be achieved.

5. Section X, E, 4: "Develop military strategies . . . to emphasize the role of the military to be defenders of peace and security."

First, in regard to the United States and Canada, these strategies are already in place and to suggest that they need to be developed shows an exceeding self-righteousness or simple lack of awareness on the part of the authors. A review of current events will show how much the military efforts in Afghanistan and particularly in Iraq have at their heart a desire to restore dignity to the people of those countries and to give them peace, security, and freedom.

We are not sure how the authors would define the current emphasis of military versus the proposed role of being "defenders of peace and security." Without a stated comparison, we cannot support the inclusion of this subsection in the recommendations and recommend that it be stripped from any position taken by synod.

6. Section X, G, 2: "Preventive war is inconsistent with the moral standards outlined in the just-war criteria."

We disagree. We are in favor of clarity and stated policies on when and where preventative war is applied, but we do not see an ethical distinction between preemptive and preventative war. Especially in this day and age of shadowy, terrorist organizations and the convoluted ties to the states that support them, there is a need to bring justice under circumstances that would not meet the nineteenth century description of open warfare. To do nothing in the name of avoiding preventative warfare is for government to abdicate its responsibilities to protect its citizens and the innocent citizens of other countries from the seemingly random violence of terrorist states.

7. Section X, H, 1: "Our opposition to developing or deploying new nuclear weapons."

The United States' ceasing to develop and research new nuclear weapons will not prevent other rogue nations and terrorist elements from doing so. For the United States and Canada to remain ignorant will not protect our citizens or the innocent citizens of the world community. Furthermore, ignorance is contrary to Reformed thinking and our biblical

commitments. Our goal should not be to remain ignorant; rather, as the church of Jesus Christ, we ought to encourage our respective nations to research, develop technology, and gain knowledge while calling on them to make moral and biblical decisions with the new knowledge and capabilities our nations possess.

There is no fundamental difference between nuclear weapons and conventional weapons in regard to ethics.

The best way to reduce the risks associated with nuclear weapons is to continue research in those areas. Research not only brings new capabilities to bear, it also increases our knowledge about the risks of exercising the nuclear arsenal, and it increases our abilities to detect such weapons and to prevent their use more effectively in the future.

8. Section X, I: “petition the president of the United States . . . to change the conscientious objector policy to include selective conscientious objection.”

This is impractical. We recommend this section be rejected in its entirety.

The military forces of Canada and the United States are already all-volunteer services. No one enters the military without understanding that they may be expected to actively participate in war. Those who have such qualms should not volunteer.

The appropriate place for assuring that wars are just is not in the military but in the hearts and minds of the people of each country and, in this particular application, within the congregations of the CRC. No democratic country will be successful at pursuing an unjust war if its people do not support it. The policy suggested in section I is one that would be used by those who politically disagree with a war or military action and who cannot accomplish their plans through the democratic process.

Classis Columbia

Howard Spaan, stated clerk

Communication 5: Council of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa

I. Background

We are grateful for the denomination’s attempt to revisit anew our church’s stance on war and peace, as demonstrated in the report by the Committee to Study War and Peace. In particular, we believe that the report’s commitment to shalom, which must orient our work in God’s world, rightly shapes much of the discussion. Nevertheless, we find the report by the Committee to Study War and Peace to be deficient in several ways, and we recommend that the report by the Committee to Study War and Peace be sent back to the committee for further work.

II. Elaboration

A. The report fails to fully relate just-war thinking. First, at the level of theory, much has been done to further define the situations in which a preemptive attack is morally acceptable. In particular, Vitoria, Grotius and Pufendorff (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 402), provided several criteria that would have helped the committee better direct the Christian Reformed community

discussion over justified preemptive war. As summarized by Yale graduate student Mark Totten, they include: (1) certainty of intent, (2) sufficient means, (3) active preparation, (4) magnitude of harm, (5) probability of harm, and (6) last resort. The report's focus on the sole (and undefined) criteria of imminence (Appendix A, p. 417) shortchanges the tradition's contributions to our current discussion.

Second, the report's discussion of the "doctrine of justified war" (p. 402) sidelines input of right authorities engaged in the prudential judgments required during times of acute crisis. Here, we note two significant omissions. First, the report omits important qualifications that the President has made, including the restriction of the war against terror to terrorists of global reach. Second, we note that the absence of input on the part of Reformed political leaders, most notably that of then Congressman Peter Hoekstra and Congressman Vern Ehlers, both of whom are known to the committee as dedicated to the Reformed tradition. Because the tradition of just war includes a concern for prudence as well as principle, these omissions are serious and regrettable. For example, the report's brief analysis of the National Security Strategy (pp. 406-7), the doctrine of dissuasion (p. 407), and the comparative capacities of military and policing forces (p. 408), would benefit from further discussions with political authorities who have experience in these matters.

Third, the report sets up a dichotomy between war and peace, which the tradition of just war itself denies. Because just war seeks to contribute to a just peace, it rejects the absence of conflict as an adequate starting point, or "context," in the words of the report. Jean Bethke Elshtain, the widely published Lutheran scholar, rightly highlights the distinction this way: "For pacifists, the reigning word is *peace*. For realists, the reigning word is *power*. For just war thinking, the reigning word is *justice*." The tradition recognizes that war and peace are acceptable only to the extent that they promote shalom—just peace.

B. The report equivocates regarding the meaning of *peace*. Early on, the report correctly recognizes that "peace is not simply an absence of war; it is the condition of a justly governed society in which people can fulfill their many callings before God free of the daily or hourly fear of violence and chaos (p. 386)." Many subsequent references, particularly those that tie justice and peace together, refer back to this understanding of shalom (cf. p. 391).

However, this larger, shalomic understanding of peace does not operate throughout the report. For example, only one page later, the report bluntly states that it seeks to reposition the discussion in terms of the larger context of "peacemaking" (p. 387). Again, within "the context of peace as our first calling" in mind, the committee urges the denomination to revise our stance toward pacifism and the current context (p. 394). The extended discussion on peacemaking in section IX avoids the deeper questions that the term *shalom* brings out. We submit that the very title partakes in this confusion and prefer that the report be rewritten under the title: Committee to Study Shalom through War and Peace.

C. The report does not adequately account for sin in the current global context. This is clear in the report's easy use of the "international community." Such a claim fails to account for the deep divisions in moral perspective that divide the post-fall human community. When used flippantly, the phrase

international community serves as a shibboleth that must be uttered to gain entrance to the halls of political correctness, not a term that carries meaning for Christians aware of the Fall's morally divisive effects.

The report fails to recognize the utter incapacity of the primary institutional mechanism of this illusory international community (pp. 410, 418), the United Nations, to adequately respond to grave moral injustices. This has been the case recently in Bosnia, Rwanda, and continues in refugee camps where U.N. workers themselves have preyed upon the very people they were sworn to protect. The repeated passing of ineffectual resolutions and the U.N. oil-for-food scandal further demonstrate the moral ineptness of this once-promising institution and the great need for a morally credible presence within the international community.

Further, the report fails to recognize the difficulties involved in negotiations with terrorists motivated by Islamic fascism. This is clear in the flip discussion of terror in Appendix B (p. 425) where no serious attempt to define terrorism is made. To equate the deliberate and indiscriminant killing of noncombatants with the "new religious laws in western Europe" is simply silly and smacks of the corrupt moral-equivalence arguments that asserted the moral equivalence between the United States and the Soviet Union. Likewise, such statements trivialize our churches' voice for those threatened by terrorism just as Cold War equivocations undermined the moral credibility of the West in the eyes of people abandoned behind the Iron Curtain.

The report focuses only on the possible sins of commission by the West. This means the deliberate targeting of noncombatants by Islamic terrorists. This is clear in the omission of the costs of nonintervention. Thus, the report provides an indiscriminant list of harms that attend war (in Appendix E), but nothing on the costs of nonintervention. Hence, we hear nothing about the failure to intervene in Rwanda, or the European Union's willingness to long tolerate the butchery by Slobodan Milosovic, or the United States' willingness to engage only through high-altitude and indiscriminant bombing.

D. The report does not account for salutary changes in American foreign policy. Beginning with the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the United States has increasingly repudiated the realpolitik of Nixon and Kissinger in favor of a foreign policy animated by moral norms drawn from the Christian tradition. The report fails to recognize this shift in thinking and hence too easily suggests that American policy is animated by imperial design or other un-Christian motives.

Council of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa
Wilbur Mass, clerk

Communication 6: Council of New Life CRC, Guelph, Ontario

I. Introduction

New Life CRC sends this communication to Synod 2006 regarding the action of synod through its in loco committee requiring First Toronto CRC to comply with the pastoral advice regarding homosexuality of Report 42 (*Acts of Synod 1973*), and with the report on Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members (*Agenda of Synod 2002*). We believe that such a demand is contrary to the intent

of Report 47 (*Acts of Synod 1975*), contrary to the spirit of the words with which Synod 2002 spoke, contrary to the practice of the CRC in regard to other synodical decisions, and contrary to the Scriptures. The intent of Synod 1975 is to create some room for congregations to disagree with pastoral advice or ethical guidelines, and the in loco committee takes away the freedom to register a negative vote.

II. Our understanding

A. *Re synod*

1. On the actions and decisions of synod

In 1973, the same year that Report 42 was adopted, a committee was appointed by synod “to study the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 65). That committee gave a preliminary report in 1974 (*Acts of Synod 1974*, Report 36) and a final report that synod adopted in 1975 (*Acts of Synod 1975*, Report 47). These reports seek understanding of the implication of Church Order Article 20 that declares synodical decisions to be settled and binding unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order, and they seek to understand how the authority of Scripture, the confessions, and synodical pronouncements are related to each other. The conclusion of synod is that, while Scripture, the confessions, and synodical pronouncements all have authority, authority is not equal. Synodical pronouncements are subject to the confessions and to Scripture; the confessions are subject to the Scriptures, which alone have final authority or prime authority (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 601). Report 36 points out that “the terms which synod has advisedly used in formulating its decisions have been terms which suggest something less than that which is absolute and final. It has repeatedly used terms such as guidelines, pastoral advice and testimony” (*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 499).

Report 47 (*Acts of Synod 1975*) applies this principle by pointing out that synod said of Report 44 (*Acts of Synod 1972*) that it “contains guidelines for a better understanding of the authority of Scripture, and should not be interpreted as a binding creedal statement” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 600). The same report (Report 47) says that the “seven points of pastoral advice of 1972 remain ‘settled and binding’ as synodical decisions, but their use and function is that of ‘pastoral advice’ and while they are related to the confessions, they ‘should not be interpreted as a binding creedal statement’” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 600). The same, we submit can and should be said of the eleven statements of Pastoral Advice on Homosexuality (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 631-33). According to Synod 1974, this pastoral advice is “something less than that which is absolute and final,” yet the action taken against First CRC Toronto suggests that the decision of Synod 1973 is absolute and final, to the extent that a congregation can be considered to have disaffiliated itself from the denomination by not agreeing with this advice.

Synod 1973 adopted pastoral advice on homosexuality. This advice is not a binding creedal statement and cannot, we submit, be used as a test of orthodoxy or as a matter on which membership in the denomination

hinges. Synod itself, in reflecting upon the measure of agreement that can be expected of synodical decisions, said:

full agreement with the *confessions* is expected from all members of the church and subscription to the confessions is required of all office-bearers by signing the Form of Subscription. While *synodical decisions* are “settled and binding,” subscription to synodical decisions is not required. Registering a negative vote with regard to a synodical decision is permissible, although this is not tolerated with respect to the confessions. . . . Guidelines for study, pastoral advice and other decisions of this nature allow for varying measures of agreement. Office-bearers are expected to “abide by” certain specified deliverances of synod as well as to synodical decisions in general. The well being of the church is fostered when there is substantial unity with regard to all the decisions of synod. *Yet the difference between the confessions and synodical pronouncements is evident in the measure of agreement that is expected.*

(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 601-2; Italics added)

The classis advisory committee, reporting to Classis Toronto on November 10, 2005, referred to the 1975 decision of synod and read that report to conclude that Synod 1975 simply said that all decisions of synod are settled and binding and that for this reason First Toronto must comply with the advice of the synod of 1973. However, if that is all that synod wanted to say, it could merely have referred to Article 20 of the Church Order, thereby ending the discussion. The whole thrust of Report 47 is to examine what settled and binding means in each of five different kinds of pronouncements that synod can make. Synodical pronouncements on confessional issues, as on ethical issues, are both settled and binding, but when the pronouncements are on ethical issues, these pronouncements are not “absolute and final,” “subscription to them is not required,” “negative votes are allowed to be registered against them,” and “a different measure of agreement is expected from them” while all of this is not possible on confessional issues. Clearly, a distinction is made in terms of the amount of agreement that is expected. Less agreement is allowed with ethical decisions that are nevertheless settled and binding.

2. On how we may disagree

The question then is: What kind of disagreement is allowed? Report 47 gives an example. To ethical decisions of synod, a negative vote may be registered. A negative vote is a delegate’s way of saying, “I disagree with this vote and I reserve to myself the right to disagree and to do so openly and to do so without having to follow the prescribed route of convincing church council, classis, and synod of this decision being contrary to the Word of God and to the Church Order.” If one would want to insist that one only has the right to register the vote, but no freedom to continue to disagree, then registering a negative vote does not accomplish much beyond saying I am against it. In fact, in all ethical matters pronounced upon by synod, open disagreement has continued to be voiced. We would suggest that what synod envisaged was that in ethical matters pronounced upon by synod, not only would synod not bind the conscience of those who objected, but it would also not bind the tongue of the objector, only requiring the objector to object within the parameter of settled and binding.

3. On settled and binding

The next question is: How then must we understand the settled and binding nature of such a decision? Does settled and binding mean that the discussion and disagreement is at an end for anyone who is a part of that denomination? That is how Article 20 could be interpreted, but we have tried to show that synod does not say that. We believe that settled and binding means that all discussion that takes place after a synodical decision needs to take that decision into account by reflecting upon its reasoning and its conclusions. Settled and binding means that in my disagreement I must remain accountable to the wisdom of the church as reflected in its pronouncements. It means that the church has taken a position and that in the ongoing discussion and disagreement, this decision along with Scripture, form the foundation on which such disagreement can take place. In this way of honoring the decisions made, the unity of the church is preserved. The unity of the church does not need to have uniformity of thinking or practice on issues. The unity of the church is broken, however, if the church orders its members how to think and speak and act on issues.

4. On being Reformed

In fact, we would maintain that the very nature of being Reformed means that we have to encourage those who hear differently from the majority to continue to speak. The Spirit will use all voices to give guidance and direction to the church. Even if we have some hesitation in allowing this freedom of differing with synodical pronouncements on confessional issues, surely difference of opinion needs to be allowed and encouraged when it comes to matters of pastoral advice. The very nature of being reformed is that we all are continually reshaping, reforming, and challenging the accepted formulations. "To be Reformed is to be constantly reforming" is not only a good motto but also a good practice. Luther and Calvin refused to acknowledge that the church had the last word on any issue, and they insisted that the Scripture alone had authority to bind. Any pronouncement of the church on what the Scriptures say needs to be constantly reformulated or reformed. This freedom to differ on matters of advice is also in line with Church Order Article 27, which maintains that original authority lies with the consistory while that of classis and synod is delegated authority. It is true that the congregations make a covenant with one another to consider decisions of classes and synod to be settled and binding; nevertheless part of what it means that the original authority resides with the consistory lies behind Synod 1975's reflection on what Article 20 implies. Articles 20 and 27 need to be kept in balance.

5. On advice

Advice is no longer advice if it is an order to be obeyed. We may be foolish in not following the advice that is given, but we all need to retain the right to accept or reject the advice that is given, albeit within the guidelines given by Synod 1975.

6. On Synod 2002

Synod 2002 ended its report on Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members with words that in effect are asking for the same thing we suggest is needed, namely recognition that there is diversity of opinion and that this needs to be allowed.

We have different views on the subject of homosexuality and we, New Life, would add, on homosexualism if a distinction is forced here. Emotionally charged issues tend to bring quick reactions, personal attacks, threats to secede, and so forth. But Scripture says, "You must understand this, my beloved; let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20). As Christians we must learn to exercise justice and grace when we disagree. Attitudes soften when people can present their views without being interrupted, when a person's reasons for adopting certain beliefs are truly heard. Often other people are driven by life experiences far different from our own. Can we calm down enough to hear the stories of others? Can we listen to each other without simply looking to win a debate? In the present atmosphere, it is possible for people to lose their livelihood when they espouse a view on homosexuality different from that of the majority. Sometimes a more accepting view has developed reluctantly when one's own child is gay. How should we deal with such differences in a way that is just and gracious? Are divergent views intolerable in this area? Is this the place where the line must be drawn for the sake of orthodoxy and job security? Many of us may never have a significant and personal emotional experience with homosexuality. We may never have a family member or close acquaintance challenge us to carefully review what we thought were simple issues, simple distinctions. However, we may sometime be part of the leadership of a church or classis where significant situations regarding homosexuality arise, situations that feel quite personal to us.

(*Agenda of Synod 2002*, p. 337-38)

B. *Re the life of the church*

A look around us to determine what the congregations and councils do with synodical pronouncements indicates that a number of "negative votes" are being registered. Not all share the same view on the nature and extent of the Bible's authority. The advice of the report on Neo-Pentecostalism that the gifts are for today and that the church needs to encourage ministry according to the gifts is only slowly gaining ground in the denomination. Marriage guidelines are applied unequally. Relations with other churches on local levels vary widely. The implications of the report on office and ordination, that *diakonia* and not office is the operative concept, and that every believer is ordained to *diakonia* according to one's gifts, are only slowly filtering into the practice of the church. We have both pacifists and just-war proponents in our churches and, in fact, the latest report to Synod 2006 seeks to move the church to focus on peacemaking rather than on which position, pacifism or just war, is biblical. Notice also the wide latitude that is given when it comes to the place of women in the offices of the church because the church wants to say yes to women in office without saying that it is unbiblical to keep them from office. To us, it is obvious that Synod 1975 was reflecting a reality that has always existed in the church and that always will and must continue to exist—there is and there must always be freedom to allow for disagreement with synodical pronouncements, particularly those of an ethical nature and given as pastoral advice. This synod was seeking to guide that disagreement in such a way that the unity of the church would not be impaired and to suggest clearly that settled and binding is not the same thing in all circumstances. In fact, we believe that in the 1972 report on the nature and extent of biblical authority, what synod said regarding the authority of the Word of God, both as general and special revelation, can and should be applied to synodical pronouncements as well: "While all Scripture speaks with divine authority, the reader of

the Scriptures must pay attention to what God says, how he speaks, to whom he speaks, etc. The progressively developing covenant history must be considered in rightly understanding God's revelation" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 507). All Scripture has authority over the believer, but not all Scripture has the same authority. Even so, all synodical pronouncements are settled and binding, but settled and binding means different things in different contexts.

We also ask us all to remember that whenever an ethical issue first comes on the table the reactions tend to be very black and white, very right or wrong, with each side of the question marshalling all of the proofs that they can for their position. This either-or, right-wrong kind of thinking tends after a while to be replaced with both-and thinking. The church would probably be better served if it addressed all issues using a different model (such as the six hat thinking) for how it arrives at decisions rather than the win or lose model it now employs.

If we follow what we believe are wise guidelines given in 1975, then we will allow room for passionate discussion on the ethical issues of the day, where we search the Scriptures, listen to one another, examine the tradition of the church, learn from our experiences, and in this all experience the guiding of the Holy Spirit. We will hopefully always keep ourselves from requiring everyone to see a matter from the one perspective or opinion that is clothed with the authority that this is the truth. We know the Truth, the Way, and the Life, who is Jesus Christ, but we differ on our explication of John 14:6. Our words about the Scripture ought not to be equated with the Scriptures themselves. When you read the report on homosexuality of 1973, then you see that when the Scriptural proof for the position taken by the synod is considered, there is usually an explanation of the various interpretations offered for this passage, followed by reasons why the position chosen is the correct one. We are not saying that it is not the correct position, but we are maintaining that if we differ with the *interpretation*, we are not yet differing with the Word of God

It is this wisdom that one finds in the 2002 synodical report. It is this wisdom that will allow us to speak what we believe to be proper and correct and truthful guidance but will also leave room for those who cannot see it that way. Synod will remember that there are all kinds of synodical decisions, which when delivered, seemed like the last word on these issues; yet all of them have had to be either modified or dropped, either officially by synod or by common consent of a changing practice in the denomination.

C. *Re the Scriptures*

Freedom to disagree on issues once settled is also part of the Scripture itself. Note these two examples of change.

1. Acts 15 reports that the first "synod," meeting in Jerusalem, was called together to deal with the deteriorating relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish believers. The question that divided them was over how much of the Old Testament law ought to be observed by the Christians of Greek background. Ultimately, it was decided that only three things would be asked of Gentile Christians. They would be asked to refrain from eating meat that had been polluted by being sacrificed to idols, from eating meat of animals that had been strangled and so had the blood still in them, and from sexual immorality. By the time Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthian church, it is obvious that the Jerusalem decision did not end the

discussion because Paul now says that everyone is free to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:8). He adds the caution to use our freedom wisely. What was once settled and binding was unbound later.

2. In Acts 8, it is reported that Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch. This is a remarkable occurrence given the fact that the Old Testament was very specific in excluding eunuchs from the assembly of God's people (Deut. 23:1). These are direct words from God given to the people through Moses. However, Isaiah the prophet begins to question this practice when he says that to the eunuchs who keep God's Sabbath, God will give a memorial and a name that will not be cut off (56:3-5). For eunuchs to be excluded because they are eunuchs must come to an end, says Isaiah, and Philip's act in baptizing a eunuch puts the seal on that process. The church of God is urged to act always upon what "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28) without concluding that the last word has been spoken on anything at any particular time. The Word of the Lord is always spoken in a context, and as the context changes, so does the way that the Word is applied. That being the case, room for disagreement needs to be given, as well as guidelines for how to disagree in such a way that the unity of the church is maintained.

III. Our conclusion

When a council and congregation subscribe to the authority of the Scriptures and the confessions and consider decisions of synod to be settled and binding, they still have the right to hold that decisions of an ethical nature are not the absolute and final word on the matter; the right not to subscribe to it and the right to register a negative vote against any and all such ethical decisions of synod that are given as pastoral advice or guidelines. When a council finds itself in the position that it cannot follow the advice, synod can ask that council to explain itself, and can disagree with the case presented by that council but may not take away the right of disagreement, nor compel compliance on threat of punitive action. We see no biblical, confessional, or church orderly warrant for such action. Because synod, through its in loco committee in Toronto, seeks such compliance under threat of disaffiliation, we protest and ask that this decision be stricken and that synod allow First CRC Toronto and any other congregation to carry on its disagreement within the settled and binding context described above. We maintain that it is healthy and Reformed and biblical to be constantly busy reforming our thought and practice on any issue covered in synodical pronouncements. Squelching disagreement other than what can be brought through a *gravamen*, threatens the health of the church, limits the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit, and paves the way toward congregationalism while at the same time fostering denominationalism. The tyranny of the majority is what the church has been at pains to avoid in the decisions and guidelines of Synod 1975, and we do well to heed that advice. In and through the ferment of ongoing discussions, the Holy Spirit will always lead the church into the Truth, who is Jesus Christ. By practicing what the synod advocated, we also avoid the black and white, win or lose situation that we have now created. Synod maintains its decision, which is settled and binding, but every consistory and congregation has the

right to disagree with advice or guidelines within the parameter of settled and binding as outlined in 1975.

Council of New Life Christian Reformed
Church, Guelph, Ontario
Nicole Veldhuis, clerk of council

Communication 7: Council of Maranatha CRC, Woodbridge, Ontario

I. Background

On two occasions in the past several years, synod has expressed disappointment at the way Classis Toronto has handled concerns regarding ministry at First CRC of Toronto. When Synod 2004 instructed Classis Toronto to investigate the allegations regarding First CRC and to urge First CRC to act in accordance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002, one of the grounds was synod's perception that "Classis Toronto sees no further responsibility in this matter at this time." Again, when Synod 2005 appointed its own in loco committee to investigate the same things at First CRC of Toronto, one of the grounds given was "that Classis Toronto did not sufficiently carry out the synodical directives of 2004."

Synod's perception regarding Classis Toronto was well founded. In January of 2005, upon receiving the report of church visitors to First CRC, Classis Toronto could not garner enough votes to pass a recommendation "that Classis recognize its continued responsibility in this matter."

Upon investigation, the in loco committee discovered that synod's concerns with regard to the situation at First CRC were justified. Its report to Classis Toronto in September 2005 indicated that it found nothing that would contradict its three perceptions. These were:

- That the council of First CRC of Toronto holds that same-gender sexual intimacy is not sinful in committed relationships.
- That the council of First CRC of Toronto does not require the elders, in their pastoral care guidance, to view homosexual practice as sinful.
- That the council of First CRC of Toronto does not teach that homosexual orientation is a disorder, nor that homosexual practice is sinful.

Therefore, in September 2005, the in loco committee recommended:

That Classis Toronto note the conclusion of the *Synod in loco* committee that the current position and practice of the Council of First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality in significant areas falls outside the position of the denomination as summarized in the reports of 1973 and 2002.

At its September meeting in 2005, Classis Toronto complied and took note of this conclusion.

In its initial formal response to the report of the in loco committee, First CRC of Toronto also concurred with the findings of the committee. It stated, "we do agree that our pastoral care history has brought us to the point where we are unable to meet all of the requirements implied in some of the guidelines of the 1973 and 2002 reports of Synod dealing with the issue of Homosexuality." Further, it stated, "it has become increasingly difficult, if not

pastorally impossible, to bring to bear on our brothers and sisters in Christ the full impact of some of the other guidelines of report "73." Further still, it stated, "We are pastorally therefore unable to meet some of the more strident condemnation of 'homosexual practice' even if we were able to distinguish between 'constitutional homosexuality and the practice of homosexuality' a distinction which we believe to be pastorally and theologically fraught with difficulty."

Following this, at its November 10 meeting, classis complied with another recommendation of the *in loco* committee and instructed the council of First CRC:

to provide a clear and unambiguous answer in writing to Classis . . . , stating that it will bring its pastoral care and teaching ministry within the guidelines of Synod 1973, (especially guideline 3) and the guidelines of 2002.

Homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture.
(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 632)

In response, First CRC of Toronto submitted the following statement to the January 2006 meeting of Classis Toronto.

The Council of First Christian Reformed Church, Toronto, having taken into consideration the discussions at meetings with the Synodical *in loco* committee, the classical pre-advice committee, and Classis Toronto, and not wishing to contribute to further unrest in the denomination, and wanting to maintain affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church (C.R.C.), herewith declares our resolve to acknowledge the C.R.C. guidelines with respect to homosexuality as the current position of our denomination and agrees to tailor its ministry accordingly.

In the discussion that followed, some delegates to classis perceived the commitment to "tailor" the ministry at First CRC to be somewhat vague and asked the delegates of First CRC to clarify. The response of the delegates from First CRC affirmed that it would be especially challenging to know how to tailor ministry for those who are already members at First CRC and wondered if "exceptions" would have to be made in those cases. In spite of this, Classis Toronto responded by formally declaring that it would accept the above statement from First CRC as an acceptable response to the previous instructions.

II. Observations

From the background given above, it is clear that successive synods have indicated that the question of whether or not the pastoral advice and the guidelines adopted by Synods 1973 and 2002 are being followed in the churches is a serious matter. Given the fact that First CRC previously stated, "it has become increasingly difficult, if not pastorally impossible, to bring to bear on our brothers and sisters in Christ the full impact of some of the other guidelines of report '73,'" it is reasonable to assume that this congregation will face significant challenges in acting on its resolve. Therefore, the members of First CRC would be well served if both the classis and the denomination continue to monitor progress in these things at First CRC. This congregation needs to be encouraged with its commitments and held accountable to them.

III. Request

Maranatha CRC respectfully asks that synod consider extending the mandate of the in loco committee to monitor First CRC of Toronto's progress at tailoring their ministry according to the ministry guidelines of 1973 and 2002 and report to the following synods.

Grounds:

1. Compliance with the pastoral guidelines of 1973 and 2002 is a weighty matter for our whole denomination. Whether our ministry encourages believers to flee sin or to accommodate it (in this case through committed homosexual relationships) is critical to their very salvation.
 - a. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 teach that those who deliberately continue in sin without repentance will not inherit the kingdom of God. All councils must be held accountable to oversee ministry in ways that call people out of bondage to sin.
 - b. Article 29 of the Belgic Confession affirms that those who belong to the true church can be recognized by the distinguishing marks of Christians. One of these marks is that "they flee sin and pursue righteousness, once they have received the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ . . . they crucify the flesh and its works."

Though great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their lives, appealing constantly to blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in him.
 - c. Q. and A. 87 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?

A. By no means.

Scripture tells us that no unchaste person, no idolater, adulterer, thief, no covetous person, no drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like is going to inherit the kingdom of God!
2. In the past, Classis Toronto on its own has not demonstrated a strong interest in holding First CRC accountable to its obligations in these matters.

Council of Maranatha CRC,
Woodbridge, Ontario
Albert Kramer, clerk