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AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2007



CHRISTIAN
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2007



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

June 9-16, 2007
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2007 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 9, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Auditorium at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. First CRC, Grand Rapids; Graafschap CRC, Holland; and Noorderloos CRC, Holland, will serve as the convening churches for Synod 2007. The pastors of the convening churches, Reverends William C. De Vries (First CRC), Stanley Scripps (Graafschap CRC), and Mark Vande Zande, will serve in the convening of the opening session of Synod 2007 until it 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 8, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. The location of the orientation meeting will be announced at the registration desk.

A 150th Anniversary Celebration Service will be held Sunday, June 10, 2007, at 3:00 p.m. in the Van Andel Arena, 130 West Fulton Street, Grand Rapids. Rev. Roy Berkenbosch will deliver the message.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 3 and 10. 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.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2007. 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 dykstraj@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 2007 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 recorded. 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 2007:

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
5:00 - 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 2007

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Arthur L. Verboon Cecil Van Niejenhuis	Ministers Nicolaas Wolmarans Raymond A. Blacketer
Elders	Tamba George Foryoh David Haarsma	Elders _____ _____
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	James D. Zondervan John R. Huizinga	Ministers Geoffrey A. Vandermolen John Van Sloten
Elders	Fred Bosma Bob Klay	Elders Albert Kooy _____
Arizona		
Ministers	John J. Berends Lawrence A. Lobdell, Jr.	Ministers Randall C. Raak Kenneth J. Vanderploeg
Elders	Kenneth L. Rindels Jose Rayas	Elders _____ _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	James Vande Lune Jerald D. Lion	Ministers Kenneth Prol Stanley J. Sturing
Elders	Jos Euser Coenraad Bakker	Elders _____ _____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	John Heidinga Pieter G. Sinia	Ministers Joel Ringma Harvey J. Roosma
Elders	John H. Wisselink Ron Fuller	Elders John A. Buikema Steven Diertens
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Carel GeleyNSE Bert Slofstra	Ministers Colin Vander Ploeg Sidney Couperus
Elders	Bill Aalders Gordon Houweling	Elders Norman Brouwer Al Wisselink
California South		
Ministers	Cornelius Pool William Verhoef	Ministers Alan Breems Donald J. Klop
Elders	Rudy Gonzalez Will Libolt	Elders Jose F. Munoz Dirk Jasperse
Central California		
Ministers	Bruce A. Persenaire George G. Vink	Ministers Andrew C. S. Narm Derek M. Zeyl
Elders	Mike Sutton Charles Dillender	Elders Jay A. Sankey _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham	Ministers Peter C. Hogeterp James R. Poelman	Ministers William T. Koopmans Richard T. Vander Vaart
	Elders Martin P.J. Bosveld Hank Jagt	Elders Rick A. Faber Henry J. Mulder
Chicago South	Ministers Cornelius J. De Boer Timothy S. Bossenbroek	Ministers Roger Nelson Peter C. Kelder
	Elders Ben Dykstra David W. La Vizzo	Elders Richard A. De Vries George N. Pierson
Columbia	Ministers Joseph M. Kamphuis Howard B. Spaan	Ministers Louis M. Korf Dae Sun (David) Shin
	Elders John S. Dekker Paul E. Covey	Elders _____ _____
Eastern Canada	Ministers Pieter A. Heerema Daniel G. Brown	Ministers Nicolaas Cornelisse Paul R. Vanderkooij
	Elders Bernard H. Berghout Mike Van Dyke	Elders _____ _____
Georgetown	Ministers Joel R. Boot Gerald A. Koning	Ministers Jeff Stam Larry J. Doornbos
	Elders Ronald DeGood Bernard VanderKlok	Elders Melvin C. Vander Bie Ronald Koedam
Grand Rapids East	Ministers George F. Vander Weit David H. Kromminga	Ministers Michael F. Abma Jack Roeda
	Elders Henry J. Baron Jonathan D. Bradford	Elders Del Nykamp Alan J. DeVries
Grand Rapids North	Ministers William G. Vis Terry D. Slachter	Ministers Lucas Rodenhouse Paul C. Worster III
	Elders Wayne Hubers Harry J. Friend	Elders Rob Den Braber William Bode Sneller
Grand Rapids South	Ministers Curtis A. Walters John M. Ouwinga	Ministers Kenneth E. Van Wyk John J. Steigenga
	Elders Gordon J. Vander Ark Brent R. Cottingham	Elders Herman E. Scholten Minert Brock
Grandville	Ministers John P. Douma Thomas K. Groelsema	Ministers G. Duane Nieuwsma Steven C. Elzinga
	Elders George W. Talsma Sam De Groot	Elders Theodore J. Lyzenga Todd Kuperus
Greater Los Angeles	Ministers Melvin Jackson Matthew B. Ford	Ministers Matthew M. Le Sid Sybenga
	Elders Merwyn Tanis Bernard Vander Weide	Elders Ron Veltman _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Hackensack	MinistersJohn A. Algera Ramon Orostizaga	MinistersNorman B. Steen Andrew K. Chun
	EldersColin P. Watson, Sr. Galen J. Ledebouer	Elders _____
Hamilton	MinistersJeffrey P. Janssen Shawn R. Brix	MinistersPaul Vanden Brink Kenneth F. Benjamins
	EldersAl Martens George Bergshoeff	Elders _____
Heartland	MinistersM. Dale Fopma Gregory P. Timmer	MinistersDavid L. Heilman Paul A. Hansen
	EldersDave Plum Newton Trowbridge	Elders _____
Holland	MinistersKeith M. Doornbos Stanley Scripps	MinistersMark Vande Zande Jack B. Dik
	EldersPeter Sytsma Bruce A. Hekman	EldersKenneth W. Frieling Charles D. Strabbing
Hudson	MinistersPeter A. Hoytema Albert Sideco	MinistersCraig E. Broek Norman F. Brown
	EldersPaul C. H. Szto Roy G. Heerema	EldersVincent Bandille Robert D. Mulder
Huron	MinistersRay Vander Kooij Darrell J. Bierman	MinistersJacob (Jack) De Vries Stephen D. Tamming
	EldersRalph J. Van Dalen Fred Veenstra	EldersRay J. Heeres Hans C. Verra
Iakota	MinistersHerman Van Niejenhuis Carl H. Bruxvoort	MinistersClifford Hoekstra Stephen K. Rhoda
	EldersMelvin E. Logterman Lee Van Ruler	EldersBernard E. Weidenaar Arthur L. Attema
Illiana	MinistersJoel H. Nederhood Gerrit Veenstra	MinistersJohn Kostelyk Laryn G. Zoerhof
	EldersGlenn D. Smits James A. Van Zyl	EldersHarley D. Ver Beek Henry J. Reyenga
Kalamazoo	MinistersKenneth A. Baker Warren H. Lammers	MinistersJoseph A. Brinks Victor Y. Ko
	EldersLeonard D. Klok Donald G. DeGroot	Elders _____
Lake Erie	MinistersAdrian Eising Harvey A. Stob	MinistersKenneth M. Vander Horst Clayton Libolt
	EldersRobert W. De Roo _____	Elders _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior	Ministers Steven A. Zwart David L. Smit	Ministers William Versluys II Jeffrey A. Fisher
	Elders Hank Breems Richard Vanderhooff	Elders Phonh Sinbondit _____
Minnkota	Ministers Timothy J. Brown Roger W. Sparks	Ministers Bernard Dykstra William D. Vis
	Elders Rick A. Fey Lonald O. Lien	Elders Paul C. Ward Albert Haak
Muskegon	Ministers Mark D. Bennink Michael Borgert	Ministers Gerald D. Postema John Rop, Jr.
	Elders Donald E. Sikkema Ronald D. Bielema	Elders Jeffrey Hough _____
Niagara	Ministers Derek Bouma Harold A. Winter	Ministers Gerald P. Van Smeerdyk Andrew E. Beunk
	Elders George DeRoo Jacob Westerhof	Elders Ken Van Dyk Louis Den Bak
Northcentral Iowa	Ministers Frank E. Pott Thomas J. Niehof	Ministers Charles Walton George M. McGuire
	Elders Gary Nibbelink Ronald Klaasen	Elders Marlyn H. Allspach Herbert W. Schreur
Northern Illinois	Ministers Gerald W. Frens Jon E. Hoekema	Ministers Pedro Aviles David R. Armstrong
	Elders Craig Buma James Van Kampen	Elders _____ _____
Northern Michigan	Ministers Keith A. Mannes Bryan D. Berghoef	Ministers Jon O. De Bruyn Duane J. Timmermans
	Elders Craig Pollington Al De Boer	Elders Chris Kostelansky Richard A. Huibregste
Pacific Hanmi	Ministers Roger Y. Ryu Byung Duk Min	Ministers Hyung Ju Park Theodore Lim
	Elders Abraham D. Jae Paul Im	Elders Chol Lee _____
Pacific Northwest	Ministers Jonathan D. Westra Harry J. Weidenaar	Ministers Mark A. Davies Paul Soomyung Kim
	Elders Paul Van Zanten Jay A. De Boer	Elders Fred Y. Ypma Chris Ledebouer
Pella	Ministers Douglas M. MacLeod Ryan Faber	Ministers Arthur J. Van Wolde Gideon E. Wamala
	Elders Ronald D. Hiemstra Carroll W. Hoksbergen	Elders Lee Talma _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Jake Kuipers Karl J. House	MinistersJohn Visser Peter Slofstra
Elders	Larry Boyce Frank Westerhof	EldersGerald Zwart Gerry Wolters
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Michael J. Meekhof Bobby Boyd	MinistersPaul H. Redhouse Raymond Slim
Elders	Ted Charles Norman Chee	EldersJames Litson Willie J. Bennally
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	John Terpstra Richard J. Ebbers	MinistersGerald W. Vander Hoek David A. Hornor
Elders	Anthony Begay Walter Ackerman	EldersDavid R. Dawson Terry Gray
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Stanley J. Workman Vernon Vander Zee	MinistersScott Vander Ploeg Manny S. Bersach
Elders	Donald J. Bouwer James L. Kelley, Jr.	Elders_____
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Randal L. Meyers Benjamin M. Hulst	MinistersBrian L. Ochsner Roger Bultman
Elders	John Vander Wall Ralph H. Veenstra	EldersJohn R. Versluys Cornelius (Casey) C. Jen
Toronto		
Ministers	Gary Van Leeuwen Willem J. du Plessis	MinistersJacob (Jack) Kerkhof Douglas J. VandeKamp
Elders	Sid Vander Wilp Ray Scheepstra	EldersJames H. Verkaik _____
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Daniel J. Roeda Glenn O. Gerdes	MinistersPeter T. Verhulst Robert A. Sizemore
Elders	Jerrold G. Antoon Harvey S. DeYong	EldersCorwin Vander Ark Glenn E. Meeusen
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Jack Huttinga Wilfred Gesch, Jr.	MinistersRandall Van Osdol Thomas Vander Ziel
Elders	Marion (Mike) Menning Harry Faber	EldersMichael D. Cok _____
Zeeland		
Ministers	Ronald D. De Young Tyler J. Wagenmaker	MinistersJack C. Vander Plate Ronald J. Meyer
Elders	Harvey Koetje Preston Heyboer	EldersJonathan Vugteveen _____

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 2006 and Synod 2007.

I. Introduction

A. *General*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, entrusted the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses, teaching all nations to obey everything he had commanded.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church corporately and each of its members individually, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to share this gospel of the kingdom within the fellowship of the church and with people throughout the world by proclaiming God's Word and giving God the worship and honor that are his due, in the confidence that Christ is building up the church and is establishing the kingdom.

To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter synod) has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

(Preamble, Constitution of the Board of Trustees)

The Board, a synodically appointed body whose members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, has met two times since Synod 2006 (September 2006 and February 2007) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2007. The Board's agenda normally consists of agency matters (program review, personnel appointments, focus of the agency, and so forth), polity matters (study reports, board appointments, and interim committee of synod concerns), as well as normal organizational matters that come up in a complex organization such as the CRCNA. In addition, the Board oversees the work of the executive director.

In compliance with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities, the Canadian trustees also meet separately to consider Canadian issues as needed. 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 entire church.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. James Clousing (member-at-large), Mr. Dan Cooke (Region 12), Rev. Marvin J. Hofman (Region 10), Rev. Mary S. Hulst (member-at-large), Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga (Region 9), Ms. Sari Mills (member-at-large), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Rev. John Rop, Jr., (Region 10), Mrs. N. Theresa Rottschafer (Region 7), Rev. Robert J. Timmer (Region 8), Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen (Region 11), Rev. Rodney Vander Ley (Region 5), Mr. Marion D. Van Soelen (Region 8), Rev. Mark Vermaire (Region 6), 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. Kenneth D. Boonstra (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 (Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

1. Board officers: Mr. K. Oosthoek, president; Rev. M. Vermaire, vice president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. J. Vander Haagen, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers:
 Canadian Corporation: Mr. K. Oosthoek, president; Rev. J. Kuipers, vice president; Mrs. Pat Storteboom, secretary.
 Michigan Corporation: Rev. M. Vermaire, president; Mr. D. Cooke, vice-president, Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. J. Vander Haagen, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Mr. D. Cooke; Rev. J. Kuipers; Mr. K. Oosthoek, chair; Mrs. P. Storteboom; Mrs. J. Vander Haagen; and Rev. M. Vermaire. Rev. G.L. Dykstra serves ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

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

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
2006-2007 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$97,489	\$121,862	\$146,234			
19	\$88,698	\$110,873	\$133,047			
18	\$79,795	\$99,744	\$119,693	\$91,444	\$114,306	\$137,167
17	\$72,293	\$90,366	\$108,440	\$79,641	\$99,552	\$119,462
16	\$65,992	\$82,491	\$98,989	\$69,860	\$87,325	\$104,790
15	\$60,680	\$75,850	\$91,019	\$61,683	\$77,104	\$92,525
14	\$53,263	\$66,578	\$79,894	\$54,790	\$68,487	\$82,185
13	\$47,044	\$58,804	\$70,565	\$49,012	\$61,265	\$73,518

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	Arizona		Rev. John J. Berends	
	Eastern Canada		Rev. Daryl J. Meijer	
	Grand Rapids North	Rev. Henry Admiraal	Rev. Terry D. Slachter	2010(1)
	Greater Los Angeles	Rev. R.D. Goudzwaard	Rev. David R. Koll	2009(1)
	Hudson	Rev. Donald Wisse	Rev. Norman Brown	2010(1)
	lakota		Rev. Aldon Kuiper	
	Lake Superior	Rev. Jack Van Marion	Rev. David L. Smit	2010(1)
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. Suh Hyun Park	Rev. BuyngDuk Min	2009(1)
	Toronto	Rev. Jack Kerkhof	Rev. Nick Overduin	2009(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-six classes have adopted a decision to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Huron
Atlantic Northeast	Kalamazoo
B.C. North-West	Lake Erie
B.C. South-East	Lake Superior
Chatham	Muskegon
Chicago South	Niagara
Grand Rapids East	Northern Illinois
Grand Rapids North	Pacific Northwest
Greater Los Angeles	Quinte
Eastern Canada	Red Mesa
Hackensack	Rocky Mountain
Holland	Southeast U.S.
Hudson	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 2007 at this printing is sixteen. To be in line with synod guidelines, the BOT appointed the following persons as ethnic advisers:

Ms. Irene Bakker
Mrs. Natalie Bayale
Ms. Yatta Foryoh
Mr. Abel Gonzalez
Mr. Jonathan J. Kim
Ms. Elaine Yu

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 2007:

Ms. Mary R. Baas
Ms. Marilyn Baker
Dr. Karen De Mol
Ms. Lydia De Ruitter
Ms. Gloria Sanchez
Ms. Katherine Vandergrift
Ms. Carol Veldman Rudie

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:

Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Rev. John R. Huizinga is the pastor at Maranatha CRC, Lethbridge, Alberta. He has served on the board of World Missions, the Youth Unlimited board, and the classical Home Missions board. Rev. Huizinga has been a delegate to synod three times. Currently, he serves

as chair on the classical interim committee and the classical ministries committee.

Rev. Kevin J. Vryhof is the pastor at High River CRC, High River, Alberta. He has served on the classis renewal task force, the Crisis Pregnancy board, and Christian School Board. He has also served as chair of the Home Missions committee. Rev. Vryhof currently serves on the planning committee for the Christian school and as chair of the High River Ministerial.

Classis Toronto

Mr. Marten Mol, a member of Bethel CRC, Newmarket, Ontario, is the owner of management consulting and travel firms. He has consulted with and worked in all levels of management in industries such as computers, engineering, marketing, finance, human resources, television, travel, and real estate. Mr. Mol has served as president of three corporations and has served on several boards. He has also served his church as an elder and as a member of various church committees. Mr. Mol currently serves as chairman of the board and director for the largest producer of Christian television in Canada and as vice chair of a Christian mental health association.

Mr. Peter A. Noteboom, a member of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario, is currently serving as an associate secretary for the Canadian Council of Churches, as president and executive director for Global Learning Partners, and as a college adjunct lecturer. He has served on various church committees. In addition, Mr. Noteboom serves on various committees and boards that are concerned with race relations, health care, justice and peace initiatives, and human rights.

Region 6 – alternate only

Rev. Carl Kromminga, Jr., is the pastor at New City CRC, Long Beach, California. He has served as a church planter and has worked with multiethnic and inner-city ministries.

Rev. John Poortenga is the pastor at The River CRC, Redlands, California. He has served on various classical committees and the Christian Reformed Home Missions executive board.

Region 8

Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven, a member of First CRC, Oskaloosa, Iowa, is a sales consultant. He has served on the CRWRC board, an ad hoc committee for Classis Pella, the classical ministry committee, the Love Inc. board, and the Habitat board. Mr. Van Engelenhoven currently serves as an elder for his church and serves on the evangelism committee and classis deaconal committee.

Mr. Joe Van Tol, a member of Trinity CRC, Rock Valley, Iowa, is an officer and administrator of a local network of banking institutions. He has served on numerous boards and as a financial officer of Hope Haven. Mr. Van Tol has also served as an elder and teacher of adult electives in his church.

Region 10

Ms. Suzanne Van Engen, a member of South Bend CRC, South Bend, Indiana, is the principal at Covenant Christian School, Mishawaka, Indiana. She has served on a variety of committees at her church as well as on a Catholic school board. She currently serves on the Covenant Christian School board.

Mr. Edward Zylstra, a member of North Street CRC, Zeeland, Michigan, is a retired insurance agency business owner. He has served as a church treasurer and elder, as president of a Christian school board, as well as on a pastor search committee. He currently serves on a charter township planning commission and as an elder in his church.

Region 11

Mrs. JoAnn Liefers Swart, a member of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has worked as a national advertising media buyer for major accounts and as an office manager. She has served her church as an elder, pastoral advisor, pastoral caregiver, and educator, and has co-lead the institution of new models of governance structure and pastoral leadership. Mrs. Swart has developed and implemented new ministry programs and has taught classes in biblical studies, theology, and pastoral care issues. She currently plans and leads Sunday services for a multiracial, multicultural congregation.

Mrs. Cynthia M. VanderKodde, a member of Sunshine Community CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a therapist intern with a masters degree in social work. She has served on the CRC Race Relations advisory committee. Mrs. VanderKodde currently serves on the CRC's 150th Anniversary Committee, the Disability Concerns advisory board, and as an alternate to the Board of Trustees.

The following single nominee is coming to synod for election of a first term:

Classis Hamilton – alternate only

Rev. William C. Veenstra is the pastor of Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario. He has served as a stated clerk of classis, on the classis interim committee, the education committees of John Knox Christian School, Mississauga, and Fraser Valley Christian High School, Surrey, British Columbia. Rev. Veenstra has also served on the executive committee of the Board of Publications and on the Committee for Contact with the Government. He has served as the vice chair of the Canadian Ministries Board, on the executive committee of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, and as the Canadian ministries director.

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

Eastern Canada

Rev. Paul R. Vanderkooy (incumbent)
Alternate position is presently vacant.

Hamilton

Rev. Arie G. Van Eek (incumbent)
Alternate position is presently vacant.

Region 5

Rev. Rod Vander Ley (incumbent)
Alternate position is presently vacant.

Region 11

Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (incumbent)
Rev. Kenneth E. Van Wyk (alternate)

b. At-large member

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also chosen directly by synod. This year Mr. James Clousing and Mrs. Patricia Storteboom are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

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

Canada

Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (incumbent)
Mrs. Cindy Bruin (alternate)

U.S.

Mr. James Clousing (incumbent)
Alternate position is presently vacant.

6. Appointment of Faith Alive Editor in Chief

This past year, Mrs. Pat Nederhood retired after some thirty years of faithful service with CRC Publications. Her retirement, along with *The Banner* editor, Rev. Robert DeMoor's acceptance of a call to serve the Westend CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, as pastor of preaching and administration, resulted in some modification to the CRC Publications' editorial structure. The board of CRC Publications nominated, the BOT appointed, and, on behalf of synod, ratified Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee as Faith Alive Editor in Chief. Rev. Vander Zee took up his new responsibilities in December 2006. His curriculum vitae is found in Appendix A.

7. New hymnal

In response to a request from CRC Publications, the BOT endorsed the recommendation that the CRC and the RCA cooperatively publish a new comprehensive hymnal provided a budget is developed that shows it can cover the costs. Additional information can be found in the CRC Publications report.

8. Sexual Abuse Task Force

Synod 2006 instructed the BOT to "appoint a small task force to consider how best to respond to the underlying issues raised by Mr. Heersink's appeal: namely, how the denomination ought to be responding, whether in financial terms or otherwise, to the very real consequences of sexual abuse in the lives of current and former members, and that the Board of Trustees report its recommendations to Synod 2008" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 679). The following persons were appointed and agreed to serve: Rev. Bruce Adema, Dr. Ronald Nydam, Ms. Irene Oudyk-Suk, Ms. Laura Triezenberg (chair), and Rev. Jerry Van Groningen.

9. Bible Translation Committee
In response to the request by Synod 2006 to appoint a Translation Committee to review and make recommendations regarding new translations, the BOT requested that CRC Publications appoint such a committee to review the New Living Translation. Dr. Emily Brink has been appointed as chair of this committee.
10. Children at the Lord's Supper Task Force
Synod 2006 directed the BOT to appoint a task force to address the issues raised by the decision to allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper. The following persons were appointed and agreed to serve: Rev. Mike Abma (chair), Rev. Robert Arbogast, Dr. Lyle Bierma (Calvin Theological Seminary), Mrs. Janice McWhertor, Mrs. Pat Nederveld, Dr. John Witvliet, Jr., (advisor), and Rev. Gerard Dykstra (ex officio). The committee's report and recommendations can be found in Appendix B.
11. Director of Denominational Ministries Search Committee
With the appointment of Rev. Gerard Dykstra as executive director of the CRNCA, the position of director of denominational ministries became vacant. The BOT appointed Ms. Laura Carpenter, Rev. Vicki Cok, Mr. Earl James, Mr. Sid Jansma, Jr., Rev. David Koll, Mr. Keith Oosthoek (chair), Mrs. Beverly Weeks, and Rev. Gerard Dykstra (staff advisor) to the Director of Denominational Ministries Search Committee.
12. Contemporary Testimony Revision Committee
The Contemporary Testimony Revision Committee has been diligently working to provide Synod 2007 with an updated version of the Contemporary Testimony. Unfortunately, the death of committee member Dr. George Vandervelde delayed the final draft of the committee's work. Mr. Michael Goheen has been appointed to the committee to replace Dr. Vandervelde. In addition, the BOT granted the committee's request to extend their timeline, thus allowing them an additional year. Their recommendations will now be presented to Synod 2008, allowing adequate time for the churches to review and respond to the proposed changes. A draft of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* can be found in Appendix C for synod's comment.
13. Form of Subscription Revision Committee
The committee assigned with the task of revising the Form of Subscription continued its work this past year but, due to circumstances beyond the control of the committee, they were unable to complete a final draft for distribution to the churches by January 2007. In order that the churches will have adequate time to review and respond to the revision, the BOT granted the committee an extension to complete its mandate. The revised Form of Subscription will be presented to Synod 2008.
14. Sea to Sea Bicycle Tour 2008
The BOT endorsed the planning of a bicycle tour across North America as a celebration in the summer of 2008.

15. Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church

As a 150th anniversary gift to the church, the BOT approved the founding document (and the provisions therein) for the establishment of the Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church. The document itself can be found in Appendix D.

16. Adoption of change in Church Order Articles

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)

- a. Synod 2006 (see Acts of Synod 2006, p. 723) proposed to Synod 2007 that Church Order Article 3-a be revised to delete the word male. The new text for Church Order Article 3 follows:

- a. All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, *deacon*, and ministry associate.
- b. Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.

As requested by Synod 2006, additional editorial changes were made in other Articles to reflect this revision.

- b. Synod 2006 approved admission of all baptized members at the Lord's Supper and requested that a task force bring appropriate Church Order Articles into conformity. Recommendations re the proposed changes are included in the report of the Children at the Lord's Supper Task Force found in Appendix B.

17. Adoption of Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8

The work of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee and the decisions of Synod 2006 have resulted in changes in Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8 and corresponding Supplements (relating to candidacy procedures). Per the instruction by Synod 2006 (see *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 663), the Church Order changes to Articles 6, 7, and 8 have been adopted by the Board of Trustees and are being presented to Synod 2007 as information (changes noted in italics).

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 *synod* 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 *synod* to be candidates for the ministry of the Word.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 6

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. *Those preparing for the ordained ministry under the provisions of this article are required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).*

—Cf. Supplement, Article 7

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 desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be *required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).*
- 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

18. Revision of the *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

Over the past decade, a number of changes to the Church Order have been proposed and adopted by various synods. This year, additional significant changes are being proposed. The Board of Trustees proposes that synod initiate a process for a complete review and revision of the *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*.

19. Convening churches of synod

The Board anticipates receiving invitations by churches wishing to convene Synods 2008 and 2009 in time to be reported in its supplementary report. Synod has previously approved the following convening church:

2010 – First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, with synod meeting at The Kings University College

20. 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 procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee's nine members include people with legal expertise and include both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

Three members of the committee are completing their first terms and are eligible for reelection to a second term: Mr. Robert L. DeJong, Ms. Susan Keesen, and Mr. Gordon Vander Leek. 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.

21. Biographies of synod delegates

Synod instructed the BOT to modify the Rules for Synodical Procedure, section VI, A, 4, b (p. 97), to provide a brief bio of all delegates and a classis

recommendation regarding any who have qualifications and the willingness to serve as an officer of synod. After investigating the logistics of gathering, collating, and editing such information, it was determined that providing such information in a timely fashion was not feasible. The BOT instructed the office of the executive director to review the process and enhance it in such a way as will most effectively serve the delegates.

22. Director of Denominational Advancement

The BOT is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Peter M. Harkema as the Director of Denominational Advancement for the CRCNA. Mr. Harkema had most recently served as the vice president for advancement at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He plans to take up his work for the denomination beginning in July 2007. His curriculum vitae can be found in Appendix E.

23. Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Synod 2006 approved the BOT's implementation of Synod 2005's directive in support of the healthy church initiative to create a Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) project to promote healthy congregations. The final proposal has been approved and is being implemented. The SCE proposal can be found in Appendix F.

24. Resolution for Dr. George Vandervelde

In gratitude for his service to the Christian Reformed Church and the worldwide church, the Board of Trustees prepared the following Resolution of Thanksgiving for the life and service of Dr. George Vandervelde. Dr. Vandervelde will be sorely missed and his contributions to the church will be long remembered.

**Resolution of Thanksgiving
for the Person and Service of George Vandervelde**

The Board of Trustees and the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church desire to express gratitude to God for the life and ministry of George Vandervelde. His many years of service to the church worldwide and as an ecumenical ambassador for the Christian Reformed Church is gratefully noted and celebrated. George's keen intellect and winsome personality made him an effective participant in numerous church-wide discussions, complex ecumenical relationships, and an articulate spokesperson for all matters reformed. Christian condolences are extended to George's wife, Bea, and their children in this time of mourning their loss. The church in many places will miss his contributions to the oneness of God's people in Christ. Bea and other members of the family are commended to God's gracious care.

25. Director of Synodical Services

The BOT gratefully acknowledges the appointment of Ms. Diane (Dee) Recker as director of synodical services. Ms. Recker will assist the executive director with synod-related publications, communications, and planning.

26. Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee

Classis Pacific Hanmi was established to create a unique environment in which Korean-speaking congregations could flourish and grow as they assimilated into the North American culture and language. At the time, it was assumed that after fifteen years, the churches would no longer need a Korean-speaking classis. After careful evaluation, the Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee has recommended that Classis Pacific Hanmi be continued until it becomes evident that a Korean-speaking classis is no longer necessary and that responsibility for training and assimilation be turned over to the leadership of the classis itself. The report of the monitoring committee can be found in Appendix G.

27. 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.

The *Yearbook* is published each January and reflects 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 2007 *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 1,057 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was at the 82 percent level this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 870 ministries.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was published, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by Synod 2006. In addition, proposed Church Order changes are included in italics for consideration for adoption by Synod 2007. The Church Order is 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 director of synodical services under the direction 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*

With the greater use of electronic media and a significant decline in requests for printed material, the paper version of the handbook has been discontinued. All material previously available in the handbook can now be located on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org). The website is regularly updated, and the information and forms provided are the most current available.

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). We are in the process of creating a database of synodical decisions on the CRC website in which indexing of synod decisions will be done electronically.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual was revised in 2006 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. Additional information regarding financial matters are contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2007—Financial and Business Supplement* distributed at synod. All requests for offerings and ministry-share allocations will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

The BOT provides oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries is provided for through the office of the executive director (ED) of the CRCNA 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 and continues to improve. The use of the Ministries Plan Scorecard, has served to focus the different agencies on common objectives. This effort has served the church well and continues to raise the awareness of our responsibilities to serve the churches as well as serving for the churches. In addition, joint ministry initiatives, frequent interagency consultations, and the use of shared resources are common. In an effort to ensure that the church's resources are used well, the Board encourages the consolidation of support functions that are common to several or all of the denominational agencies. While challenging at times, the result of these efforts has been gratifying.

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. Specialized Ministries

a. Aboriginal Ministries

The Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee, recently formed, has begun its task of encouraging congregations and classes to consider ministering to the First Nations communities around them. Because the church is to promote justice and shalom, the committee is studying the complex issues related to land claims and discrimination. The committee also seeks to serve the three Urban Aboriginal Ministry Centres operated by the CRC. Located in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton, they bless many with pastoral and community services.

Winnipeg director, Ms. Jeannette Sybenga, reports that the renovation of the Indian Family Centre is ongoing, even as the ministry continues unabated. From Regina, Mr. Bert Adema is facilitating a comprehensive review of the vision and mission of the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship. In Alberta, Mr. Harold Roscher had the Edmonton Native Healing Centre extend its hours during the holiday season to meet the many needs of that population.

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 2006-2007 include:

- Communicating with the Canadian Government regarding the Synod 2006 report on war and peace.
- Working with Members of Parliament to support legislation that will make poverty reduction a priority in official development assistance. In the course of this work, CCG was able to share some of CRWRC's excellent work fighting poverty.
- Deepening partnerships with KAIROS, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Citizens for Public Justice in an effort to build a strong voice of faith in Canadian public debate.
- Growing opportunities to express a positive Christian vision of justice in discussions with Parliamentarians and other policymakers.

Further information on CCG activities is available at www.crcna.org/ccg.

c. ServiceLink

ServiceLink Canada, which serves constituents across the country with opportunities to be involved firsthand in CRC ministries, engaged 437 volunteers (330 new to ServiceLink) this past year. We give thanks and praise to God for the record high 73,627 hours contributed as they served in various capacities and in 25 different countries around the world. Some highlights for the year include six service and learning teams that traveled to Indonesia with CRWRC and who lived and worked with local people in rebuilding their homes; 14 Canadian young adults who served with World Missions in their Summer Missions Program and were challenged and inspired to live out God's calling in their lives; 1 young adult who served through Disability Concerns Canada in a Nigerian school for special needs children; and a local Christian high school, whose staff believes in empowering their students through service and missions, sent 120 students and chaperones to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in Gulfport, Mississippi. We praise God for all of our many dedicated volunteers and their service to the Christian Reformed Church.

d. The Office of Abuse Prevention

Churches should be safe places of grace and love, but, sadly, the brokenness of a fallen world also impacts the church. The Office of Abuse Prevention, directed by Ms. Beth Swagman, seeks to create safe churches by assisting churches and classes with educational materials, advice, and support. By raising awareness and providing the tools necessary to combat abuse in the church, this office provides an important service to local churches and the broader CRC. The full report from Abuse Prevention is contained in Appendix H.

e. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

Chaplaincy Ministries, lead 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 Chaplaincy Ministries is contained in Appendix I.

f. 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 past year has been a year of transition for Disability Concerns. Rev. Mark Stephenson has taken up his role as director and is bringing a new sense of direction and enthusiasm to the work. A more detailed report of the work of the Office of Disability Concerns can be found in Appendix J.

g. 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 building better and more effective relationships. It is evident that more needs to be done to promote prevention and education. Rev. Visser works with Rev. Norman Thomasma, who devotes much of his time to education with a particular focus on the unique dynamics of staff ministries. 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.

h. 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 past year's work resulted in a new curriculum for training in racial reconciliation. This new material, *The Dance of Racial Reconciliation*, has been widely field tested and is now being offered to churches, classes, schools, colleges, and other groups across North America. With the assistance of Mr. Steven Kabetu and Rev. Norberto Wolf, Rev. Lugo and a team of trained facilitators is providing avenues for bringing racial reconciliation to the church. The report of the Office of Race Relations is contained in Appendix L.

i. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, under the coordination of Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, has dedicated significant time and energy to the Micah Challenge. The Micah Challenge, endorsed by Synod 2004, strives 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.

j. The Office of Ministry Planning

Rev. 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.

In 2002, Synod reviewed and endorsed a previous version of the plan, whose comprehensive Reformed identity statement is part of the current DMP and is available in booklet form as well as being posted on the denominational website. The DMP was revised by the Board of Trustees in 2006. The revision included the new vision and mission statements adopted by Synod 2005. While retaining the 2002 plan's important attention to biblical and theological identity, it made changes in the summary of core values and strategic objectives.

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

The plan's ten strategic objectives are now 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.”

In order to effectively implement the plan throughout our ministries, the board has adopted a tool widely used in business, government, and non-profit 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 of our ministry agencies are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan’s ten objectives. This year, the MPS is operational at the interagency level, and agencies are working to align their own plans and targets with both its content and its format. Consequently, the Board is better able to use the plan as a dynamic instrument for oversight of our ministries.

k. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

The Christian Reformed Church is in the last year of its five-year 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 of almost \$2 million (\$400,000 per year) ends on December 31, 2007. However, if a proposal to the Endowment for renewal of the grant is accepted this year, the project will be extended at a reduced funding level for another four years. 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 2006, and plans for 2007:

Website: www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

Email: pastoralexcellence@crcna.org

1. Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE)

The board is pleased this year to announce the beginning of a new project called Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE), funded not by the Lilly Endowment, as the name may suggest, but by synod itself through a \$10 ministry share approved in 2005 and renewed again by Synod 2006. The project both supports the denominational priority of healthy local congregations mentioned above and responds to synod's own concern that funds "assist local churches, directed specifically toward smaller congregations."

The purpose of the project is to promote healthy congregations through grants for renewal and technical support, gatherings for mutual learning, and coaching. The intent is to use successful aspects of the Lilly-funded program for pastors, including: low overhead, encouragement of creativity in grant proposals, an interagency administrative approach, relatively simple application and approval processes, and use of a variety of communication methods to demonstrate appreciation for and understanding of congregations and their leaders. Information about the project will be sent to pastors and congregations prior to synod, and the first proposals will be reviewed for approval after July 1, 2007. (The SCE implementation plan can be found in Appendix F.)

2. 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 2007:

- Calvin College
- CRC Publications
- Specialized Ministries

3. 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. The CRC Foundation-Canada was formed in late 2003 and recently began meeting to develop plans and strategies for the future. Most of the activity of the foundation is for the current year in which funds are received and distributed. In addition to soliciting donations and providing grants, the foundation directors also function as the oversight board for 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.

During this past year, Dr. Peter Borgdorff has served the foundation well as the part-time director on an interim basis. Recently, the foundation, serving as a search committee for the BOT, nominated Mr. Peter Harkema

as the Director of Denominational Advancement. Following the board's appointment, Mr. Harkema accepted the position and intends to take up his new work in July 2007. In addition to assisting the Foundation in their work, he will provide coordination and leadership to the development staff of the various agencies.

C. *Financial matters*

In order to assure that synod has the most up to date and accurate information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2007—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 2008 (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008), and recommended ministry share amounts for the year 2008. 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 Mr. Keith Oosthoek, chairman of the Board; Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

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

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

D. 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).

E. That synod recognize the appointment of Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee as Faith Alive Editor in Chief (II, A, 6).

F. That synod adopt the recommendations found in the report of the Children at the Lord's Supper Task Force as follows (II, A, 9):

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Michael Abma and Mrs. Pat Nederveld when the report on Children at the Lord's Supper is discussed.
2. That synod commend to the churches the seven universal themes approved by the Reformed Ecumenical Council (see Appendix B, section II, D).

Grounds:

- a. These seven themes represent a consensus statement for many different Reformed denominations and can serve as a healthy basis for a sustained dialogue on this issue within our own denomination.

- b. These themes challenge each congregation, regardless of its position on this issue, to deepen commitment to vital participation in the sacraments and to nurture children and youth in faith.
3. That synod establish a Faith Formation Committee with the following mandate:

To deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) the participation of children in the Lord's Supper, and (2) public profession of faith, by means of:

- a. Formulating a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions.
- b. Discovering how Christian Reformed congregations in various multiethnic and missional contexts are experiencing intergenerational faith formation and sacramental practice and discerning which liturgical, educational, and organizational practices should be commended by synod to the entire denomination on the basis of their pastoral and theological integrity.
- c. Discussing with various agencies and organizations that work in the areas of faith formation, pastoral care, and worship (e.g., Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, Christian Schools International, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) what kinds of collaborative educational efforts best promise to support pastorally sensitive, theologically grounded work in these topics.
- d. Working with Faith Alive to provide guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics.
- e. Serving as a resource for discussions of these topics at a congregational and classical level.
- f. Reporting to synod annually for the next five years.

Grounds:

- a. Our approach to the question of children's participation at the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith must proceed on the basis of a clear statement of biblical and theological rationale.
- b. A study committee on biblical and theological issues alone is insufficient. An ongoing discussion needs to take place at all levels of the church to link our theology with our practice within a whole cluster of issues that relate to the sacraments, the preached Word, faith formation, church discipline, and practices that sustain lifelong discipleship.
- c. Our approach to children at the Lord's Supper and profession of faith needs to be part of a larger discussion of faithful and vital

intergenerational faith formation in various multiethnic and missional contexts. Mutual accountability and learning among very different types of congregations is only likely to happen when there are intentional structures in place to promote it.

- d. Several congregations are already asking for shared wisdom on this topic.
- e. Given strongly held opinions on this issue and growing diversity of practices, this topic is likely to be discussed throughout the denomination for at least the next five years. A pastorally and theologically oriented committee, attuned to the diversity of ministry settings within the denomination, would be well positioned to shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time.
- f. This approach would be a cost-effective means of shepherding this discussion, especially given the availability of the Internet to promote communication among committee members and to disseminate information to the denomination.
- g. The work of such a committee would be a fitting way to carry forward the themes, insights, and energy developed during the denominational Year of Faith Formation (2007-2008).

Note: The task force believes that this committee is needed whether synod adopts, fails to adopt, or delays adopting the Church Order revisions in the following recommendation. Synod's action on these Church Order revisions would certainly affect the context of the committee's work, but not its mandate, its value, or its potential positive impact.

4. That synod adopt the following Church Order revisions (see Appendix B, section II, A).

Ground: These revisions bring the Church Order into conformity with the reality that children are welcomed to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their membership in the covenant community of faith, as decided by Synod 2006.

Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed by holy baptism to children of *confessing members*. Upon baptism, children shall be designated as "*baptized members*." The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Article 59

- a. *All baptized members are welcome at the Lord's Supper.*
- b. *Baptized members who have reached an age of maturity and have been catechized in the Reformed tradition shall be encouraged to publicly profess their faith and their commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church with the use of a prescribed form. Before their profession of faith, they shall give an appropriate testimony of their faith, life, and doctrine to the consistory. Upon profession of faith, they shall be designated as "confessing members" and shall be granted the full rights and responsibilities of such membership.*
- c. *Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to confessing membership in the*

congregation upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to *confessing membership in the congregation* upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.

e. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to *confessing membership in the congregation* only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

Article 63

a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, *by deepening their participation in the Lord's Supper*, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.

Article 79

a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.

b. *The consistory shall encourage a spirit of mutual accountability, calling the congregation away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity within the body, especially in conjunction with participation in the Lord's Supper, as mandated in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.*

c. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.

Supplement, Articles 78-81

b. *A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of membership. [with no explanatory footnote]*

Note: The changes in the Church Order come before Synod 2007 for adoption because of the decision of Synod 2006 (and not merely on the basis of the task force's recommendations).

G. That synod receive the revised draft of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as information and refer it to the churches for their comment and request that the final draft be presented to Synod 2008 (II, A, 11).

H. That synod adopt the changes proposed by Synod 2006 to Church Order Article 3-a along with related revisions necessitated by the deletion of the

word *male* from Article 3-a and that Rev. Paul De Vries and Rev. Ronald J. Meyer represent the change in Church Order Article 3 to synod. The revised version follows (II, A, 15, a):

Article 3

- a. All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, *deacon*, and ministry associate.
- b. Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.

—Cf. Supplements, Articles 3-a, 45, and 48

- I. That synod initiate a process for a complete revision of the Church Order and its Supplements both for the purpose of an orderly updating as well as a rewrite of synodical regulations that govern the life of the denomination and the churches in the present situation and that synod appoint a committee or task force to propose such a revision for consideration by the churches and synod (II, A, 17).
- J. That synod reappoint the eligible members of the Judicial Code Committee for a second three-year term (II, A, 19).
- K. That synod adopt the following resolution of thanksgiving for the life of Dr. George Vandervelde (II, A, 23):

**Resolution of Thanksgiving
for the Person and Service of George Vandervelde**

The Board of Trustees and the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church desire to express gratitude to God for the life and ministry of George Vandervelde. His many years of service to the church worldwide and as an ecumenical ambassador for the Christian Reformed Church is gratefully noted and celebrated. George's keen intellect and winsome personality made him an effective participant in numerous church-wide discussions, complex ecumenical relationships, and an articulate spokesperson for all matters reformed. Christian condolences are extended to George's wife, Bea, and their children in this time of mourning their loss. The Church in many places will miss his contributions to the oneness of God's people in Christ. Bea and other members of the family are commended to God's gracious care.

- L. That synod approve the recommendations of the Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee as follows (II, A, 25):
 1. That synod extend the life of Classis Pacific Hanmi until it becomes evident that a Korean-speaking classis is no longer necessary.
 2. That the synod thank the synodical deputies from the classes neighboring Classis Pacific Hanmi for their work in establishing relationships with the Korean community and that they be asked to continue to actively advise, encourage, and support the work of Classis Pacific Hanmi as appropriate, according to the CRC Church Order.
 3. That synod encourage the leadership of Classis Pacific Hanmi to
 - a. Continue the work of training and assimilating first generation Korean leaders through the use of the Korean Institute of Ministry, the Home

Missions Korean Ministry Director, and whatever other resources in the CRC seem to be appropriate;

- b. Set up an advisory team of people beyond their classis who can provide resources to them in their continuing life and assimilation;
 - c. Report to synod on a bi-annual basis on their learning, success, and progress as a unique and valued part of the CRC.
4. That synod dismiss the Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee with thanks.
- M. That synod encourage churches and classes to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 30 to October 7, 2007, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday on October 7, 2007 (see Appendix L).
- N. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (see Appendix N).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Appendix A

Curriculum Vitae: Leonard J. Vander Zee

Education

AB, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, 1967

M.Div. Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, 1970

Present calling

1990 through present

Pastor, South Bend Christian Reformed Church; 1855 N. Hickory Rd.; South Bend, IN 46635 (www.sbcr.org). A congregation of 360 members from a wide variety of religious backgrounds and areas of work. The congregation also attracts a significant number of graduate students and professors from the University of Notre Dame.

Previous positions

1983-1990

Pastor, Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church; Grand Rapids, MI. Copastor to a 650-member inner-city congregation with a significant ministry to its struggling neighborhood. Staff of three besides copastor.

1978-1983

Pastor, Trinity Christian Reformed Church; Iowa City, IA. A 200-member congregation in a college town with a significant membership of university faculty, staff, and students.

1973-1978

Pastor, West Sayville Christian Reformed Church; Long Island, NY. A suburban congregation of 350 members.

1970-1973

Pastor, Des Moines Christian Reformed Church; Des Moines, IA. A small homogenous city congregation.

Publications

Books

- *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship*. Intervarsity Press, 2004. 265 pages.
- *In Life and In Death: A Pastoral Guide for Funerals*. CRC Publications, 1992. 220 pages.
- *Can I Call After Midnight? A Leaders Guide for Teaching Prayer*. CRC Publications, 1989. 52 pages. (rev. ed., 1995: *More than Words: Prayer as a Way of Life, a Leader's Guide*).

Articles

- "Praying by The Book." *The Banner*, August 2001.
- "Retreating Into Real Life." *The Banner*, June 1999.
- "Too Spiritual For Our Own Good." *Reformed Worship*, June 1998.
- "Hot Dogs and Holy Communion." *Perspectives*, September 1996.
- "Cultivating Faith: Godparents in the Reformed Tradition." *Reformed Worship*, June 1995.
- "The Good Funeral." *The Banner*, May 1995.
- "Prayer That Works." *The Banner*, March 1994.
- "Laughing With Sarah." *Christianity Today*, 9 March 1992. (Won recognition as the "Most Valued Article" of the issue.)
- "When Someone Dies." *Reformed Worship*, June 1992.
- "Marriage: Weaving the Fabric of Trust." *The Banner*, June 1991.
- "The Nuts and Bolts of Prayer." *The Banner*, February 1987.
- "When the Christmas Tree Comes Down." *The Banner*, December 1985.

Other positions

- Member of the Board of Trustees for the Christian Reformed Church
- Former Member of the Theological Commission of the Reformed Church In America
- Former member of the Worship Committee of the CRC and assisted in writing a major study on worship for the Synod of the CRC published in November 1996.

Honors

- Recipient of the Merrill Fellowship, Harvard Divinity School, Spring, 1985
- Recipient of the Louisville Foundation Religious Leaders Study Grant for 1997
- Recipient of the Lilly Foundation Indiana Pastor Renewal Grant, 2004

Appendix B

Children at the Lord's Supper Task Force

I. Background

In response to an overture from Classis Holland, Synod 2006 made some significant changes regarding the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper. First, synod allowed "for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their full membership in the covenant

community” (p. 730). Second, synod directed the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force to do the following:

- a. Bring any appropriate Church Order Articles into conformity with the reality that children are welcomed to the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their membership in the covenant community of faith.
- b. Evaluate the impact and implementation of the 1995 synodical decisions regarding synod’s position on children at the Lord’s Supper.
- c. Discover the challenges and joys that have resulted from the synodical decisions of 1995.
- d. Propose approaches to further the discipleship of professing and communicant children toward greater spiritual growth, a deeper relationship with Christ, a more meaningful involvement with the body of Christ, and a greater understanding of the Reformed faith.
- e. Evaluate the manner in which our churches are implementing Church Order Article 59-b and propose appropriate ways of celebrating the entrance of young confessing members into the full privileges and responsibilities of adult membership.

(Acts of Synod 2006, pp. 730-31)

This mandate was in fact the curious hybrid of both the advisory committee’s majority report and the advisory committee’s minority report. The majority report wanted to keep things the way they had been since 1995—that young children be encouraged to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ and so be admitted to the Lord’s Supper. The minority report went the other direction. It wanted to break the connection between public profession of faith and admittance to the Lord’s Supper. It asked synod to allow baptized members to the Lord’s Supper only on the basis of their baptism—namely their full membership in the covenant community. In this mandate, synod gave a nod of assent to both sides.

The confusion about what theological emphasis—personal faith or covenantal status—should be applied to admission to the Lord’s Table has characterized the discussion of this issue from its first appearance at Synod 1984. In that year, an overture from Classis Rocky Mountain asked synod to appoint a committee to study the issue of how covenant children partake of the Lord’s Supper. A study committee was appointed and reported to Synod 1986. The question posed was this: Should covenant children participate in the Lord’s Supper? The study committee answered with a clear yes, but, the yes had different qualifications: the majority said yes, but only after a public profession of faith; the minority said yes, but not by a formal public profession of faith; the minority of the minority said yes and noted that the child’s covenant status, not profession of faith, was the only requirement. Synod was confused. It enlarged the study committee and asked it to reconsider the whole matter.

This new, revised study committee gave a new, revised report in 1988. This report also did not have a unified voice. The same key question arose: What is the main prerequisite for admission to the Lord’s Table—personal faith or covenant status? The majority report said the emphasis should be on a person’s covenant status. They recommended dissolving the connection between profession of faith and admittance to the Lord’s Table. The minority report went the other way. They wanted the emphasis to remain on one’s personal faith. As such, they wanted to retain some form of public profession of faith as a prerequisite. Synod said yes to both emphases. On the one hand, synod adopted the recommendations of the minority report and retained

public profession of faith as a prerequisite to taking communion. On the other hand, it said that participation in the Lord's Supper is a result of status in the covenant. There simply needed to be an acceptance of these covenantal promises in a public profession of faith. Therefore, it encouraged churches to allow children to profess their faith at a younger age. As a result of this decision, the worship committee of the Christian Reformed Church presented a *Trial Form for the Public Profession of Faith for Children* in 1989.

An overture from Classis Alberta North in 1991 asked for clarification regarding what the age-appropriate requirements of public profession of faith actually were. Synod responded with another study committee to help clarify things. This committee reported in 1993. On the one hand, their report made room for a very simple public profession of faith at a young age. On the other hand, it recommended a subsequent occasion at an older age in order to agree with the church's confessions and to assume adult responsibilities. They recommended three categories of membership: baptized, communicant, and voting. The advisory committee to Synod 1993 presented a majority report that emphasized the flexibility of a local option approach and a minority report that worried about what a younger profession of faith would do to the traditional profession of faith, which involved the acceptance of adult responsibilities. After considerable confusion, synod finally recommended the whole business to another study committee.

This study committee reported to Synod 1995. Again, this report was not unified: there was a Report A and a Report B. Report A basically accepted the decision of 1988, and attempted to hold both covenantal status and personal faith together. Report A supported profession of faith as a prerequisite for communion and encouraged younger members to do so. This report also proposed three types of membership: baptized (via baptism); communicant (via profession of faith); and corporate (via an interview at age 18 to commit to the Reformed confessions of the church and to accept the responsibilities of the church). Report B, however, did not accept the decision of 1988. It pointed out the inherent tension in trying to hold both covenantal status and personal faith as the way to the Table. This report concluded that baptism should be the only prerequisite to communion. Report B proposed two types of membership: baptized and corporate (corporate meaning baptized members who have professed their faith, committed themselves to the Reformed confessions, and accepted church responsibilities).

The advisory committee to Synod 1995 tried to stay unified in bringing its recommendations and favored most of the recommendations in Report A. Synod 1995 agreed to implement the four-step process already suggested in 1988: (1) a child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper, (2) the parents discuss the meaning of the sacrament with their child and then contact an elder/pastor, (3) the elder/pastor meets with the child and parents to hear the child's desire to take part in the Lord's Supper and then recommends to the church council that the child be admitted to the Lord's Table, and (4) the child makes a public profession of faith using the form of 1989. In addition to this, synod asked that each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership from confessing members who attained the age of 18. Synod retained two forms of membership: baptized and confessing. However, there were two categories of confessing membership:

those admitted to the Lord’s Table and those who had also, on reaching age 18, made a commitment to the creeds of the CRC and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership. Membership transfers were to note whether the confessing members had assented to the creeds of the CRC and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership.

This is where things stood for the decade between 1995 and Synod 2006. At Synod 2006, an overture from Classis Holland requested a new 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 (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 526-30). Synod 2006 had no appetite for a new study committee to delve into this matter. However, it did allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their full membership in the covenant community (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 730). It then directed the BOT to appoint a task force to bring any appropriate Church Order Articles into conformity with the reality that children are welcomed to the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their membership in the covenant community of faith (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 730). Our task force was appointed in October and was first convened in early December. We met five times and emailed multiple times before presenting our report to the Board of Trustees in early February.

II. Fulfilling our mandate

A. *Proposed Church Order revisions*

In fulfilling part (a) of our mandate, we held to several guiding principles. The first was that we strove to use language that was consistent with the original and other Church Order Articles. Second, in rewording Church Order Article 59-a, we used the exact wording given to us by Synod 2006. Third, we realized that in changing one Church Order Article, others would be affected. This is the way it should be. The way a church welcomes, nurtures, and admonishes its members will naturally be reflected in the Church Order Articles that deal with baptism, public profession of faith, and discipline. Thus, we are proposing changes in all three of these areas. With these guiding principles in mind, we present the following Church Order revisions:

Church Order 2006

Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Article 59

a. Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord’s Supper upon a public profession of their faith in

Proposed Revisions

Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed by holy baptism to children of *confessing members*. Upon baptism, children shall be designated as “baptized members.” The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Article 59

a. *All baptized members are welcome at the Lord’s Supper.*

Christ with the use of a prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall ensure that there be an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith, and life. Their membership shall be designated as “confessing member.” The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

b. Confessing members who have reached the age of eighteen and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

c. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The

b. Baptized members who have reached an age of maturity and have been catechized in the Reformed tradition shall be encouraged to publicly profess their faith and their commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church with the use of a prescribed form. Before their profession of faith, they shall give an appropriate testimony of their faith, life, and doctrine to the consistory. Upon profession of faith, they shall be designated as “confessing members” and shall be granted the full rights and responsibilities of such membership.

c. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to *confessing membership in the congregation* upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to *confessing membership in the congregation* upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.

consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

Article 63

a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.

Article 79

a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.

b. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.

e. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to *confessing membership in the congregation* only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

Article 63

a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, *by deepening their participation in the Lord's Supper*, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.

Article 79

a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.

b. *The consistory shall encourage a spirit of mutual accountability, calling the congregation away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity within the body, especially in conjunction with participation in the Lord's*

Supper, as mandated in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

c. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.

Supplement, Articles 78-81

b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership. [with an explanatory footnote]

Supplement, Articles 78-81

b. *A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of membership.* [with no explanatory footnote]

B. Living with the decisions of 1995

Fulfilling parts (b)-(e) of our mandate was more difficult in the time given to us. To discover and then evaluate the joys and challenges of living with the decisions of Synod 1995, our task force produced a web-based survey and invited all serving pastors with an active email account to participate. We were pleased with the strong response we received. A summary of the survey results is found in the addendum to this report. Here are a number of observations we gleaned from this survey.

1. The practice of public profession of faith in the CRC today

In 1988, it was decided that covenant children be encouraged to make profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith. This was affirmed in 1995 with a four-step process whereby a child could make a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner.

The question is: Does this younger expression of faith represent the majority of public professions of faith in the CRC today? The simple answer is no. The vast majority of people who make public profession of faith in the CRC are at least high school age. There seem to be many reasons for this. A significant one is that many congregations have not encouraged public professions of faith at a young age and have been reluctant to welcome young children to the Lord's Table. This reluctance is often based on a particular understanding of 1 Corinthians 11 and on the traditional understanding of the connection between a more adultlike public profession of faith and admittance to the Lord's Supper.

2. The changes that have occurred since 1995

Although the vast majority of public professions of faith are by high school age young people, the decision in 1995 to encourage younger children to profess their faith is making an impact. The majority of congregations are at least allowing public professions of faith at a younger age and beginning to welcome younger children to the Lord's Supper. Even in congregations where the vast majority of public professions of faith are by high school age young people, there is evidence of at least a few instances of

public profession of faith at a younger age. Also, some pastors surveyed admitted that they began welcoming professing children to the Lord's Supper rather reluctantly but now express enthusiasm for this practice.

Our survey also asked whether baptized children ever take communion prior to making public profession of faith. A surprising 25 percent responded with a yes. However, this seems to be more an exception than the normal practice. It appears that this is often allowed to accommodate a new family whose young children partook of communion at their previous church, or it was practiced only once or twice a year at special services.

3. The challenges of living with the decision and direction of 1995

Synod 1995 not only encouraged younger children to publicly profess their faith, it also encouraged each congregation to devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 720). A number of congregations that have had younger members profess their faith have found it difficult to consistently implement this second commitment at age 18. Our survey asked the question: "When younger children (before high school) make profession of faith, do you also at some later point publicly mark their coming of age, and taking adult responsibilities in your church?" Almost a full 68 percent answered no.

That figure needs to be qualified somewhat. The problem is that congregations seem to mark this second commitment in many different ways: some in a public worship service; most in a nonpublic setting. These nonpublic settings have many different expressions: an interview with a pastor and/or elder (mentor), a letter at age 16 or 18 inviting the confessing member to the adult responsibilities of the church, or the names of those turning 18 appearing in the bulletin as voting members. Many congregations also admit that "nothing special is done." A common scenario is that a congregation has a policy for their 18-year-olds to make a commitment to the Reformed confessions and to accept the responsibilities of adult membership, but little is actually being implemented. As one survey respondent noted: "I'm *not* convinced that our good intentions always carry through."

We see this uneven and inconsistent implementation of this second and more mature commitment as one of the most significant challenges in living with the decision and direction of Synod 1995.

C. Responses to the decision of 2006

Part of our mandate included proposing approaches to further the discipleship of professing and communicant children toward greater spiritual growth. Because Synod 2006 had made the decision to allow baptized children to the Lord's Supper, whatever approaches are proposed need to be within this new context. We again used our survey to solicit the wisdom of our brothers and sisters in Christ on how best to proceed. Many of the responses we received expressed enthusiasm for the decision of Synod 2006. However, there were also many voices that raised questions, concerns, and cautions.

1. Biblical and confessional questions surrounding the 2006 decision

By far, the most common concern expressed was that Synod 2006 made its decision “without significant biblical-theological reflection.” Indeed, the traditional practice of requiring profession of faith before participation in the Lord’s Supper is based largely on a particular interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. The ability to “discern the body” has been interpreted to mean discerning that the bread and wine in communion are the spiritual body and blood of Christ. Without this discernment, it was assumed that communicants would be “eating and drinking judgment against themselves.” It is for this reason that faith formation in the Reformed tradition has generally followed this rhythm: baptism, catechetical instruction, public profession of faith, and participation in the Lord’s Supper. This interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, and this rhythm of faith formation are deeply engrained into the contours of Christian Reformed congregations.

The decision to allow baptized children to partake of the Lord’s Supper is based, in part, on another possible interpretation of this passage. This interpretation contends that, taken within its context, the reference to recognizing the body is better understood to refer to recognizing the church and all its diverse members as the body of Christ. It is better understood as a call away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity. It should be noted that this interpretation, while new to many, is not idiosyncratic. It has been described in a number of denominational study reports, well-recognized commentaries, and theological position papers, some of which specifically appeal to traditional Reformed exegetical principles. (We also note that some commentators affirm aspects of both interpretations, noting that Paul may well be speaking of each of these meanings of the term *body*.)

The decision to allow baptized children at the Lord’s Supper is also based on a strong awareness of the significance of the faith of the entire community. In defending the practice of infant baptism, many Reformed theologians stress that the phrase *repent and be baptized* (Acts 2:38) is practiced by the entire faith community rather than by the infant—a communal action that is also possible for *discerning the body*. Some may even suggest that this is the *only* interpretative move needed to defend the practice of welcoming children to the Lord’s Supper in the context of a tradition that practices infant baptism, regardless of how one understands the phrase *discerning the body*.

There are also other texts that speak to the inclusion of children at the Lord’s Supper indirectly, including Jesus’ welcome to children and texts that help us understand the exact relationship between circumcision and baptism, as well as between Passover and the Lord’s Supper. In both precise exegetical work and in pastoral practice, it is the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 and the analogy with infant baptism that establishes the trajectory from which each approaches this issue.

A second area of concern expressed in the survey involves how this decision to allow baptized children at the Table fits with our Reformed confessions, particularly with Belgic Confession, Article 35 and Lord’s Day 28-30 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is a legitimate concern. Even Minority Report B of 1995, which favored baptized children at communion,

acknowledged that this practice did not align with the traditional understanding of the Reformed confessions (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 300).

We note that any study of the confessions on this matter will be complex. The Belgic Confession, for example, makes a strong case for the analogy between circumcision and baptism: Furthermore, baptism does for our children what circumcision did for the Jewish people. That is why Paul calls baptism the “circumcision of Christ” (Art. 34). This fits well with a typical argument for inclusion of children at the Table: Just as the circumcised participated in Passover, so, too, the baptized participate at the Table.

At the same time, the Belgic Confession (Art. 35), clearly emphasizes the significance of faith for the proper reception of the bread and cup: “But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life that belongs to believers he has sent a living bread that came down from heaven: namely Jesus Christ, who nourishes and maintains the spiritual life of believers when eaten—*that is, when appropriated and received spiritually by faith.*” This poses the question: Whose faith: the individual participant’s or the congregation’s faith? Those opposed to opening the Table to the baptized would stress that it refers to the individual’s faith, further citing Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 81, which frames its discussion of participation in individual terms. In contrast, those who would argue for opening the Table stress that in the Reformed tradition, it is always the faith of the entire church that is most significant, drawing on a typical argument for infant baptism. This approach would insist on calling each person who participates to age-and-ability-appropriate faith-filled participation, but would also question imposing a formal rite, such as public profession of faith, as a requirement for coming to the Table.

The opening of Belgic Confession, Article 35 is another complex example: “We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church.” This sentence offers two statements about those who would participate in the Lord’s Supper: (a) those who are already born again and (b) those who are ingrafted into his church. Given that baptism is, in fact, a rite of incorporation into the church, requirement *b* does not present an argument against baptized children coming to the Table. However, given that the Reformed tradition does not teach baptismal regeneration, requirement *a* argues against opening the Lord’s Supper to baptized members. Yet, those in favor of opening the Table insist on probing this a bit further: Does this imply that we really think that profession of faith is a sign of regeneration? Should we have confidence that those who have professed their faith are the regenerate? What about the regularly recurring examples of those who profess faith but then fall away from the church?

Although Synod 2006 did not feel it was necessary to form another study committee to resolve these biblical and theological concerns, we sense that consensus will not be achieved until they are adequately addressed.

2. Enthusiasm and gratitude for the decision of Synod 2006

Where some had serious questions regarding the biblical and confessional warrant for this change in practice, others expressed that “it’s about time” we aligned our covenantal theology with our sacramental practice. There were many responses that resonated with joy over this decision.

Some were enthusiastic that we were finally taking the sacrament of baptism seriously. Others expressed relief that we were opening the Table rather than guarding it. Still others expressed gratitude that a fuller recognition was being made of the parallels between the Old and New Testament practices of circumcision and baptism, and of Passover and the Lord's Supper. Among those who welcomed this decision, we heard many voices that asked for help, guidance, and materials in implementing this decision in their local congregation.

3. Common concerns regarding public profession of faith

Regardless of whether pastors greeted the decision of Synod 2006 with enthusiasm or with criticism, all pastors expressed a common concern for what would happen to the practice of public profession of faith. Pastors in all kinds of ministry contexts (established churches and church plants, urban and rural, small and large), and pastors from all kinds of theological persuasions (from the so-called traditional to the so-called progressive) expressed a deep concern for maintaining some kind of robust and meaningful public profession of faith within their fellowship. Many pastors wondered whether opening the Table to all baptized children would have the effect of eroding and weakening the place of a public profession of faith within the church fellowship.

4. Concerns for proper and prudent procedure

Finally, a number of the pastors surveyed expressed a concern with how quickly Synod 2006 made the decision to dissolve the connection between a public profession of faith and admission to the Lord's Supper. Some of the concern was procedural—"the churches were not given time to reflect on this matter before a decision was made." Some of the concern was practical—"this decision . . . will create wildly diverse practices throughout the denomination . . . further fracturing the unity of the CRC." Many voices also cautioned the denomination to move slowly and cautiously.

5. Summary

We received all these joys and concerns in the spirit of shared wisdom and felt blessed by the cooperative spirit of the survey respondents. We noted that everyone shared a deep concern for being faithful to Scripture and honest to the Reformed confessions. We also noted a shared commitment to the spiritual health of the denomination and its children—young and old.

D. Ecumenical learning

In the spirit of seeking wisdom, our task force also reviewed how a number of other denominations have handled or are handling this issue. This is the kind of topic in which broad consultation among Reformed church bodies offers significant help and reminds us again of the rich resources of reflection found within the body of Christ worldwide.

In general, our study of other Reformed denominations reveals that this topic has certainly been discussed in many contexts over the past twenty years, and that most denominations engaged in this issue have divided opinions about the best way to proceed.

We gratefully note that active participants in this discussion across denominational lines share a commitment to nurturing vital covenantal faith. As it

was for Passover in the Old Testament, so it is with the Lord's Supper in the new covenant: The ritual action is designed to point to, embody, and nurture the underlying covenantal relationship. This conversation, then, is not just about specific rules and regulations for church services; it is ultimately about how we most earnestly and faithfully form communities to accept God's invitation to participate in the grace-filled, promise-based relationship we have with God through Christ.

A review of the work of other denominations also dispels the notion that approaches to this issue can accurately be labeled as conservative or progressive. Contrary to perceptions, some traditionally conservative Reformed voices have argued for it, while some other progressive Reformed voices have cautioned against it. The descriptors *traditional* or *progressive*, *conservative* or *liberal* should not automatically be associated with one outcome to this discussion.

In terms of specific denominations, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) have discussed the issue, each reviewing majority and minority reports that represent the two sides of the issue. Both of these denominations have retained the requirement of profession of faith. The Reformed Church in America (RCA), Presbyterian Church (USA), and Presbyterian Church in Canada have also discussed the issue, opening the Table to baptized children at the discretion of local congregations. In these contexts, the challenge seems to be to create a healthy climate of dialogue within a denomination so that consensus can be reached and so that changes can be made in a clear and healthy way.

One of the most helpful studies to surface in our work is a 1994 study committee report of the Reformed Churches of Australia (now the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia), which noted that "there are no Scriptural grounds to continue the Reformational practice of requiring a profession of faith by baptized members of the covenant community before seeking to take part in the Lord's Supper." It also noted that "there is no Scriptural evidence which establishes an age of discernment, spiritual understanding, or a certain degree of understanding of the meaning of Passover or the Lord's Supper as an absolute prerequisite for partaking in either the Passover or the Lord's Supper ("Children and Church Membership" Study Committee Report 16 for the Reformed Churches of Australia, 1994, pp. 200-19).

In the context of worldwide discussions of this theme, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) devoted significant attention to the topic during the mid-1990s. Discussions among council members did not produce consensus about the issue, but the discussion led to the development of a significant document designed to name the specific consensus that did arise and suggest the most helpful starting point from which to approach this question. We note gratefully the work of CRC representatives Dr. John Hulst, Dr. Carl Zylstra, and Dr. Russell Maatman in developing this document. The document was approved by the REC in 1996. The themes are as follows.

1. There is only one category of membership in the church. All members of the church are full members of the church. While some members of the church may not have all the same privileges as all other members of the church, nevertheless, anyone who is a member of the church is fully a member of the church. When God made his covenant with his covenant people, he made a single covenant with Abraham and his descendants. After Pentecost, the

Apostle Peter confirmed that this covenant promise is to believers and to their children.

2. Baptism is the mark by which covenant youth are identified as members of the church. While baptism does not in itself bring youth to salvation, it is the divinely appointed mark by which the children of believers are identified as members of Christ's church.
3. The means of grace function together to build one community of faith. Some in the community of faith may not fully understand the preaching of the Word or actively participate in the Supper of the Lord. Nevertheless, both the sacraments together, and the preaching of the gospel, are given to build up the one body of Christ. Neither the preaching nor the sacraments should ever be used to bring divisions into the body.
4. The sacraments are given to nurture the entire community. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper serve to nurture faith in different ways at different stages in a person's growth and development. However, both sacraments nurture the faith of the entire church, not just certain members of it.
5. Participation in the sacraments calls for a response of faith as well as involvement in the community of faith. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are given by the Lord to call forth more and more faithful obedience to him. This obedience includes public confession of Jesus as Lord and a life that evidences a heart of faith.
6. Instruction of Christian youth is designed to structure the response and growth of faith. Within the covenant community, instruction is not designed to initiate faith but rather to cultivate and structure the ongoing response and growth of faith. Formal instruction assumes that faith is already present within covenant youth and continues even though public expressions of that faith may have been made.
7. Christian youth should be called to exercise the office of believer. Youth should be given the opportunity to exercise their office as believers appropriate to every stage of their growth in maturity and faith. The gifts of youth should be recognized, affirmed, and employed in service both to the Christian community and to others.

(Acts of the Council, Grand Rapids, 1996, pp 12-14; 44-47)

We find these universal themes particularly helpful as a starting point as we work for consensus on questions regarding children, membership, and the sacraments in both individual congregations and in the denomination.

III. Moving forward in a healthy and united way

A. The interrelationship of children at communion and public profession of faith

Synod 2006 made the historic decision to allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper. This decision, however, affects a whole cluster of related matters within the fabric of Christian welcome, nurture, and discipleship. It touches on how we practice hospitality, witness, and accountability. What we as a task force realized is this: Although the discussion of this issue has often revolved around an either/or question—either covenantal status or personal faith—the reality is that within this cluster of related matters, these two must always be closely connected. Covenantal theology implies a covenantal response of faith. Therefore, any opening of the Table to baptized children must also emphasize a nurture in and response of faith to the covenantal promises given. What we now face is a pastoral opportunity to once again emphasize the need for deep faith formation that leads to a robust and mature public profession of faith.

For over a decade, our denomination has been encouraging churches to allow younger and younger members to publicly profess their faith. This younger expression of profession of faith emphasized a personal faith in Jesus

Christ as Savior and an affirmation of one's baptism. The hope and desire was that when the child matured, he or she would express belief in the Bible and loyalty to the Reformed confessions and also accept the responsibilities, joys, and sorrows of adult membership.

In severing the connection between a public profession of faith and admittance to the Lord's Table, we have the opportunity to begin developing a new rhythm of faith formation—baptism at the font, nourishment at the Table and from the pulpit, nurture in catechetical instruction, and a willingness to be held accountable to a life of discipleship in a public profession of faith. Moving in this direction will mean deepening a conversation about how the sacramental Word intersects with the preached Word. It will mean deepening a conversation about how catechetical instruction leads to an affirmation of the covenantal promises. It will mean deepening a conversation about how discipline and accountability can only occur within a context of those who have clearly committed themselves to a life of following Christ as Savior and Lord.

What will this mean in practice? It will mean that baptism is acknowledged as the sacramental sign of membership in the covenant community. It will mean that children will be acknowledged as exhibiting faith, even at a very young age, and that this faith will be allowed to be nourished at the Lord's Table and from the pulpit. It will mean that although the faith of children will be nourished, nurtured, and expressed in many different ways in their younger years, a ceremony for a mature public profession of faith will once again carry the weight of all four of its traditional elements: a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior; an affirmation of one's baptism; an expression of belief in the Bible and loyalty to the Reformed confessions; and an acceptance of the responsibilities, joys, and sorrows of adult membership (*Agenda for Synod 1989*, pp. 63-64). If this is the understanding of public profession of faith, then the ceremony itself should have the significance it deserves. It follows that an acceptance of the rights and responsibilities of confessing membership should take effect immediately upon making a public profession of faith.

How all these things are put into practice will vary from congregation to congregation. A church plant may practice things one way; one of many multiethnic congregations may practice things somewhat differently. We will need to listen to one another, learn from one another, and share the lessons we have learned with one another. The main thing is that even though intergenerational faith formation may vary from one missional or multiethnic context to another, the basic rhythm of this faith formation should look substantially the same.

Last, but not least, we need to reflect on how these changes will affect those with developmental disabilities or cognitive impairments. There is great potential for joy in moving from an ethos of exclusion to inclusion around the Lord's Table. Baptized members of our denomination whose disabilities or impairments are such that even the simplest of profession of faith is difficult, may now be invited to the Table. In moving in the direction of giving public profession of faith the weight and significance it deserves, we do not want to imply that a certain cognitive level of discernment must be reached to make a public profession of faith. Each public profession of faith should be ability appropriate. It is for this reason that our recommended Church Order revisions speak about those who have reached an age of maturity. We feel this would include those with developmental disabilities or cognitive impairments

who have reached an age of maturity. We do not want to put limits or impediments before such as these who desire to profess their faith.

Have we untangled all the issues surrounding this change in practice? No. Have we answered all the questions? No. We have, however, tried to emphasize that any opening of the Lord's Supper to baptized children must be accompanied by a number of related emphases: a celebration of baptism as our entry into the covenant community; an intentional nourishment at the Table and from the pulpit in the covenantal promises; an ongoing nurture that leads to an opportunity to respond in faith to these covenantal promises; and, finally, a willingness to be held accountable to one's lifelong commitment to Christ.

B. Final reflections

For synod to simply approve Church Order revisions will not be enough to shepherd a healthy discussion of how our theology shapes and forms how we practice welcome, nourishment, nurture, and discipleship within the church. We need to embark on an ongoing theological conversation that is willing to discuss how our theology of the covenant intersects with our theology of the sacraments and how our theology of the covenant and the sacraments includes both the aspects of hospitality and of accountability. We need to be willing to listen to one another and to learn from one another, particularly when it comes to how to put into practice a new rhythm of faith formation. This is a large issue that is multifaceted. We need to give ourselves the time and the mutual respect to continue a Spirit-filled conversation that began twenty years ago and may very well continue for another twenty.

At the center of our recommendations is a proposal for a new committee. This requires some explanation, given that we have already had two prior study committees on this topic and the reluctance of Synod 2006 to appoint another committee. Part of the opposition to a committee is grounded in skepticism about the value of producing another lengthy technical theological study. Indeed, most synodical committees have focused on articulating a particular biblical or theological position. This is crucial and necessary work, but this approach leaves out the important step of mutual reflection, learning, and accountability on the practices that follow from a study. On this topic, for example, the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11 is crucial, as is careful attention to the teaching of the confessions on this issue, but so is a church council's response to an incoming family whose baptized children have participated in the Lord's Supper in their previous congregation and who ask for an exception to long-established practices. So is a council's response to a young person who has participated in the Lord's Supper for a long time but then lives in a way that does not reflect a vibrant faith. While these are important topics individually, the largest challenge (with the greatest potential for mutual learning and growth in Christ) is that of fully integrating the best work on the Bible and confessions with complex pastoral practices. What we propose, then, is not simply a committee to study concepts but a committee to both study and foster the complete integration of faithful biblical exegesis, Reformed confessions, and pastoral practices in local congregations.

Approaching this topic in this way also promises to meet other common objections to forming a committee: namely, the objection that a committee would simply represent a denominational effort to control things from the top down, and the objection that a committee would likely produce a set of

normative concepts or practices that do not take into account the complex diversity of the denomination. These are strong objections, and they grow out of perceptions that erode our covenantal work together as a denomination. The committee we envision, in stark contrast, is one that would attend, over a period of time, to the unique ministry challenges across the spectrum of the CRC, each year giving careful attention to the dynamics and challenges of perhaps two or three specific types of CRC congregations. While the committee would indeed serve synod by preparing useful documents on the biblical and confessional issues on this topic, it would also gather up wisdom to help churches in local practice. It is this gathered wisdom that is most likely to serve the needs of local congregations.

This new kind of committee would be, then, a kind of “shepherding” committee that advises synod and the denomination over a period of time. We suggest that the committee make annual reports to synod for five consecutive years in a way that offers synod a manageable agenda of work on this theme each year. This approach, too, is unusual, but it fits well with the organic nature of the committee’s work. Each year, committee work is likely to generate refinements in understanding and practice that come from careful attention to various ministry contexts. To be sure, the committee would begin by generating a working draft of a statement on biblical and confessional issues, a statement that synod could well be asked to adopt early on. However, that statement will only be improved after subsequent attention to various ministry issues. Subsequent synods might be asked to approve emendations to that document as well as to commend to the churches specific approaches to liturgical, educational, or cultural practices. Each synod would be presented with information and reports from specific types of ministries. (We note that this procedure could be a good way for synod to attend to denominational diversity not only in reports it hears from various agencies but also in the very business in conducts as processed through its advisory committees.)

Further, as it shapes recommendations to synod, the committee can be particularly alert to working in a way that is most likely to foster denominational unity, with biblical and confessional integrity. Given all that is at stake in the area of faith formation and sacramental practice, it is crucial that we work in such a way that minimizes the likelihood that we will have winners and losers. Indeed, our second recommendation below is an example of an approach that begins by staking out, in bold terms, what we sense is an area of large consensus with biblical and theological integrity on which to build. It is in that spirit that we present the following recommendations.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Michael Abma and Mrs. Pat Nederveld when the report on Children at the Lord’s Supper is discussed.
- B. That synod commend to the churches the seven universal themes approved by the Reformed Ecumenical Council (see Section II, D).

Grounds:

1. These seven themes represent a consensus statement for many different Reformed denominations and can serve as a healthy basis for a sustained dialogue on this issue within our own denomination.

2. These themes challenge each congregation, regardless of its position on this issue, to deepen commitment to vital participation in the sacraments and to nurture children and youth in faith.

C. That synod establish a Faith Formation Committee with the following mandate:

To deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) the participation of children in the Lord's Supper, and (2) public profession of faith, by means of:

1. Formulating a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions.
2. Discovering how Christian Reformed congregations in various multiethnic and missional contexts are experiencing intergenerational faith formation and sacramental practice and discerning which liturgical, educational, and organizational practices should be commended by synod to the entire denomination on the basis of their pastoral and theological integrity.
3. Discussing with various agencies and organizations that work in the areas of faith formation, pastoral care, and worship (e.g., Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, Christian Schools International, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) what kinds of collaborative educational efforts best promise to support pastorally sensitive, theologically grounded work in these topics.
4. Working with Faith Alive to provide guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics.
5. Serving as a resource for discussions of these topics at a congregational and classical level.
6. Reporting to synod annually for the next five years.

Grounds:

1. Our approach to the question of children's participation at the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith must proceed on the basis of a clear statement of biblical and theological rationale.
2. A study committee on biblical and theological issues alone is insufficient. An ongoing discussion needs to take place at all levels of the church to link our theology with our practice within a whole cluster of issues that relate to the sacraments, the preached Word, faith formation, church discipline, and practices that sustain lifelong discipleship.

3. Our approach to children at the Lord's Supper and profession of faith needs to be part of a larger discussion of faithful and vital intergenerational faith formation in various multiethnic and missional contexts. Mutual accountability and learning among very different types of congregations is only likely to happen when there are intentional structures in place to promote it.
4. Several congregations are already asking for shared wisdom on this topic.
5. Given strongly held opinions on this issue and growing diversity of practices, this topic is likely to be discussed throughout the denomination for at least the next five years. A pastorally and theologically oriented committee, attuned to the diversity of ministry settings within the denomination, would be well positioned to shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time.
6. This approach would be a cost-effective means of shepherding this discussion, especially given the availability of the Internet to promote communication among committee members and to disseminate information to the denomination.
7. The work of such a committee would be a fitting way to carry forward the themes, insights, and energy developed during the denominational Year of Faith Formation (2007-2008).

Note: The task force believes that this committee is needed whether synod adopts, fails to adopt, or delays adopting the Church Order revisions in the following recommendation. Synod's action on these Church Order revisions would certainly affect the context of the committee's work, but not its mandate, its value, or its potential positive impact.

D. That synod adopt the Church Order revisions presented above (see section II, A).

Ground: These revisions bring the Church Order into conformity with the reality that children are welcomed to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their membership in the covenant community of faith, as decided by Synod 2006.

Note: The changes in the Church Order come before Synod 2007 for adoption because of the decision of Synod 2006 (and not merely on the basis of the task force's recommendations).

Children at the Lord's Supper Task Force
 Rev. Michael Abma, chair
 Rev. Bob Arbogast
 Dr. Lyle Bierma
 Rev. Gerard Dykstra
 Mrs. Janice McWhertor
 Mrs. Pat Nederveld
 Dr. John D. Witvliet

Addendum

Survey Summary

I. Survey question/response detail as of 02/01/07:

816 email surveys sent to pastors

411 responses received

+150 returned as "undeliverable"

Response rate = +60%

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/DisplaySummary.asp?SID=3054617&U=305461730274>

II. Survey Questions/Results:

1. Do baptized children in your congregation take communion prior to making public profession of faith?

Yes: 25.1% (103 responses)

No: 74.9% (307 responses)

2. When do children in your congregation ordinarily make public profession of faith?

Lower elementary (grades K-2): .5%

Upper elementary (grades 3-5): 5.6%

Middle school (grades 6-8): 20.7%

High school (grades 9-12): 73.2%

3. If you responded "high school" to the previous question, have you ever had a child make profession of faith before high school?

Yes: 67.9%

No: 32.1%

4. When younger children (before high school) make profession of faith, do you also at some later point publicly mark their "coming of age" and taking adult responsibilities in your church?

Yes: 32.2%

No: 67.8%

Note: Respondents who answered yes were asked to specify how this happens.

Answers included:

- Announcements in the church newsletter or Sunday bulletin
- Simple ceremonies at which the young person (usually age 16-18) acknowledges agreement with the doctrines and beliefs of the church and acceptance of adult responsibilities
- Ceremonies of reaffirmation of (prior) profession of faith
- Two-tiered professions of faith, sometimes called by other names, such as:
 - First communion/profession of faith
 - Children's profession/official profession
 - Covenantal statement of faith/profession of faith
 - Profession of faith/profession of discipleship

- Stage 1/stage 2
- Participation in membership classes

5. How has your congregation responded to Synod 2006's decision to welcome covenant children to the Lord's Table?

Eager: 13.4%
 Somewhat eager: 14.6%
 No particular reaction: 49.6%
 Somewhat concerned: 10.3%
 Concerned: 12.1%

In addition to simply using the five-point scale to indicate their own and/or their congregation's attitude toward the decision, a large number (176) of respondents added lengthy and thoughtful comments to enlarge on and explain their responses. These comments ran the gamut from excited ("We have been praying and eager for this for a decade") to upset ("We are very much in disagreement with the decision to impose this change on the denomination. Furthermore, we are convinced it will further divide the CRCNA at a time when we desperately need unity") to disinterested ("It certainly isn't a hot topic in our church. Most, I'm sure aren't even aware of Synod's decision") to watchful ("We'll wait for the task force and synod to consider and act").

The following comment from a pastor provides a good summary of the apparent disparity of perspectives and emotions surrounding the issue demonstrated in the survey responses: "The Council was largely unaware of the decision until I handed out the summary of the major decisions of 2006 and pointed this issue out to them. While two of them were favorably inclined, the rest were shocked. It really involves a paradigm shift, demanding a break from a centuries old practice. I am personally in favor of this, but also feel the dramatic nature of the change."

6. What resources have you found helpful in preparing younger children and teens to profess their faith?

Here again, responses were varied, with most pastors reporting that they put together their own teaching resources or used a variety of denominational resources published by Faith Alive.

7. What else do you wish to tell (or ask) the task force as it deals with this significant issue for the church?

The following quotes, excerpted from the 217 written responses, suggest the perceived significance of this matter for the church—and the daunting challenge the task force faced in responding to the issue and providing guidance for the church.

Responses centered around these themes:

- a. Provide a theology of communion.
 - "I was a delegate at the last Synod and served on the committee of pre-advice that studied this issue. I am convinced that Synod acted hastily in making this decision. I would encourage the task force to present a Biblical and Confessional rationale that is thorough,

persuasive, and clear. It will need to be so in order to get a positive and supportive response from local congregations.”

- b. Provide material that will help congregations discuss and understand the issue.

“Recognize that congregations are all over the map on this one, and maybe guidance for churches in their uniqueness, to move us along in the same direction. Congregation-friendly material would be good. Stuff to pass along that makes the whole issue easy to understand in just a few pages—that would be great!”

- c. Define (and strengthen) public profession of faith—its purpose and place in the life of the church.

We need a clearer understanding of what profession of faith means. As we openly welcome children to join in Communion as part of their families (I am assuming without the hybrid children’s profession any more) we also need to be more clear about what the step to adult membership really means with respect to the local congregation, the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole, the person himself, etc. . . . this all needs work.”

- d. Give congregations practical help as they seek to implement this decision.

“Go for it. Be bold, give a strong endorsement of Synod 2006’s decision, and give solid practical steps for implementation. Though I know there are some congregations forging ahead already, if our congregation is like many others, we’re looking for leadership on this at a denominational level, not wanting to ‘just go for it independently’; I believe there will be good response in our congregation with some clear steps for implementation.”

- e. Proceed slowly and sensitively.

– “Just be aware of what a massive cultural shift this is. Despite the good intentions of the reformers the CRC has in fact acquired a sizeable works righteousness ethos in its on-the-ground practice in the churches. Comments we hear around here are, ‘Well, this makes it just too easy!’ The core fundamental struggle here is to comprehend the far-reaching implications of grace.”

– “Proceed cautiously!”

– “Please strive for empathy and clarity . . . it will be difficult to generate consensus around change.”

– “I would suggest this goal: to affirm diversity of expression, while allowing churches to continue to develop local practices in accord with their history and theological understanding. Unity and unanimity are not the same.”

– “For those of us fully in favour of moving ahead with this, please do not bind us with all kinds of rules and regulations that keep this from being a simple celebration of God’s grace to his people.”

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/DisplaySummary.asp?SID=3054617&U=305461730274>

Appendix C

Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony

February 2007 (Draft)

Preamble

1. As followers of Jesus Christ,
living in this world—
which some seek to control,
and others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust:
Our world belongs to God.
2. From the beginning,
through all the crises of our times,
until the kingdom fully comes,
God keeps covenant:
Our world belongs to God!
God reigns; Let the earth be glad!
Christ has won the victory; Hallelujah!
The Spirit renews creation; Praise the Lord!
3. But despair and pride still fill the earth:
some, crushed by failure
or broken by pain,
give up on life and hope and God;
others, shaken,
but still hoping for human triumph,
work feverishly to realize their dreams.
As believers in God,
we also struggle with the spirits of this age,
testing the times by the Spirit's sure Word.

Our world, fallen into sin,
has lost its first goodness,
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands:
our Maker preserves this world,
sending seasons, sun, and rain,
upholding all creatures,
renewing the earth,
promising a Savior,
guiding all things to their purpose.
5. With fierce love
God holds this world,
keeps his promise,
sends Jesus into the world,
 pours out the Holy Spirit,
and announces the good news
 that sinners who repent and believe in Jesus
 live again as members of the family of God—
the first fruit of a new creation.

We rejoice in the goodness of God,
renounce the works of darkness,
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.

As covenant partners,
set free for joyful obedience,
we offer our hearts and lives
to do God's work in the world.

With tempered impatience,
eager to see injustice ended,
we expect the Day of the Lord.

We are confident
that the light
that shines in the present darkness
will fill the earth
when Christ appears.

Come, Lord Jesus.
Our world belongs to you.

Creation

7. Our world belongs to God—
not to us or earthly powers,
not to demons, fate, or chance.
The earth is the Lord's.
8. In the beginning, God—
Father, Word, and Spirit—
called this world into being
out of nothing,
giving it shape and order.
9. God formed sky, land, and sea;
stars above, moon and sun,
making a world of color, beauty, and variety—
a home for plants and animals and us—
a place to work and play,
worship and wonder,
love and laugh.
God rested
and gave us rest.
In the beginning
everything was very good.
10. Made in God's image
to live in loving communion with our Maker.
God appointed us
to enjoy creation and care for it,
to bring forth its possibilities,
using all our skills
to tend God's garden
and help it flourish.

11-12. Together,
male and female,
single and married,
young and old—
every hue and variety of humanity—
we are called to represent God,
for the Lord God made us all.
Life is God's gift to us,
and we are called to foster
the well-being of all the living,
protecting from harm
the unborn, the weak,
and the vulnerable among us.

13. Even now,
as history unfolds
in ways we know only in part,
we are assured
that God is still present in our world,
holding all things in tender embrace
and guiding them to his purpose.
The confidence
that the Lord is faithful
gives meaning to our days
and hope to our years.
The future is secure,
for our world belongs to God.

Fall

14. In the beginning,
our first parents walked with God.
Then, they listened to the serpent's lie
rather than living by the Creator's word of life,
and fell into sin.
In their rebellion
they tried to be like God.
As sinners, Adam and Eve feared
the nearness of God
and hid.

15. Fallen with our first parents,
we prove each day
that apart from grace
we are guilty sinners:
we fail to thank God,
we break God's laws,
we ignore our tasks.
Looking for life without God,
we find death;
grasping for freedom outside the law,

- we trap ourselves in Satan's snares;
pursuing pleasure,
we lose the gift of joy.
16. When humans fail to image God,
the whole world suffers:
we abuse the creation or idolize it;
we are estranged from our Creator,
from our neighbor,
from our true selves,
and from all that God has made.
17. All spheres of life—
family and friendship,
work and worship,
school and state,
play and art—
bear the wounds of our rebellion.
Sin is present everywhere—
in pride of race,
in arrogance of nations,
in abuse of the weak and helpless,
in disregard for water, air, and soil,
in destruction of living creatures,
in slavery, deceit, terror, and war,
in worship of false gods,
in the mistreatment of our bodies,
and in our frantic efforts
to escape from reality.
We become victims of our own sin.
18. In all our striving
to excuse or save ourselves,
we stand condemned
before the God of Truth.
But our world,
broken and scarred,
still belongs to God,
who holds it together
and gives us hope.

Redemption

19. While justly angry,
God did not turn away
from a world bent on destruction
but turned to face it in love.
With patience and tender care the Lord set out
on the long road of redemption
to reclaim the lost as his people,
the world as his kingdom.

20. Although Adam and Eve were expelled
from the garden
and their days burdened
by sin's effects,
the Lord held on to them in love
and promised to crush
the evil forces
they had unleashed.
21. When evil filled the earth,
God judged it with a flood
but rescued Noah and his family
and animals of every kind.
God covenanted with all creatures
that seasons will continue
and that such judgment
will not come again
until the Lord returns
to make all things new.
22. The Lord promised to be God
to Abraham, Sarah, and their children,
calling them to walk faithfully before him,
a blessing to the nations.
Israel was chosen to show the glory of God's name,
the power of God's love,
and the wisdom of God's ways.
The Lord gave them the law
through Moses
and led them
by rulers and teachers,
shaping a people
in whom God is revealed—
a light to the world.
23. When Israel spurned God's love—
lusting after other gods,
trusting in power and wealth,
and hurting the weak—
God scattered them among the nations,
yet kept a remnant,
and promised them the Messiah:
a prophet to speak good news,
a king to crush evil and rule the earth with justice,
a priest to be sacrificed for sinners.
Forgiving their sins,
God promised them a new spirit and a new heart
to awaken a new obedience.

Christ

24. Remembering the promise
to reconcile the world to himself,
God joined our humanity in Jesus Christ—
the eternal Word made flesh.
He is the long-awaited Messiah,
one with us
and one with God,
fully human and fully divine,
conceived by the Spirit of God
and born of the virgin Mary.
- 25-26. As the second Adam
Jesus chose the path we had rejected.
In his baptism and temptations,
teaching and miracles,
battles with demons
and friendships with sinners,
Jesus lived a full and righteous human life before us.
As God's true Son,
he lovingly obeyed the Father
and made present
in deed and word
the coming rule of God.
27. Standing in our place
Jesus suffered during his years on earth,
especially in the tortures of the cross.
He carried God's judgment on our sin—
his sacrifice removes our guilt.
Therefore, God raised him from the dead:
he walked out of the grave,
conqueror of sin and death,
Lord of Life.
We are set right with God,
given new life,
and called to walk with him
in freedom from sin's dominion.
28. Being both divine and human
Jesus is the only mediator.
He alone paid the debt of our sin;
there is no other Savior.
We are chosen in Christ;
God's electing love sustains our hope.
God's grace is free
to save sinners who offer nothing
but their need for mercy.

29. Jesus ascended in triumph,
raising our humanity to the heavenly throne—
all authority is given to him.
There he hears our prayers
and pleads our cause before the Father.
Blessed are all
who take refuge in him.

The Spirit

30. At Pentecost, promises old and new are fulfilled.
The ascended Jesus becomes the baptizer,
drenching his followers with his Spirit,
creating a new community
where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home.
Revived and filled with the breath of God
women and men,
young and old,
dream dreams
and see visions.
All are prophets,
brought into God's presence in Christ,
transformed ever more into his likeness.
31. The Spirit renews our hearts,
moves us to faith,
leads us in the truth,
helps us to pray,
stands by us in our need,
and makes our obedience fresh and vibrant.
God the Spirit lavishes gifts on the church
in astonishing variety—
tongues, prophecy, encouragement,
healing, teaching, discernment, service—
equipping each member
to build up the body of Christ
and to serve our neighbors.
32. The Spirit gathers people
from every tongue, tribe, and nation
into the unity of the body of Christ.
Anointed and sent by the Spirit
the church is thrust into the world,
ambassadors of God's peace:
announcing forgiveness and reconciliation,
proclaiming the good news of grace.
Going before them
and with them
the Spirit convinces the world of sin
and pleads the cause of Christ.
Men and women,
impelled by the Spirit,

go next door and far away
into science and art,
media and marketplace—
every area of life—
with the vision of the reign of God.

Revelation

34. God has not left this world
without ways of knowing him.
The Spirit has been active
from the beginning.
God continues to show his power and majesty
in the creation,
has spoken through prophets, poets, and apostles,
and speaks most fully through his Son,
the image of the invisible God.
35. The Bible is the Word of God,
the record and tool of God's redeeming work.
It is the Word of Truth,
God-breathed,
fully reliable in leading us
to know God
and to walk with Jesus Christ
in new life.
36. The Bible tells God's mighty acts
in the unfolding
of covenant history.
It is one revelation in two testaments,
which reveals without fail God's will
and the sweep of God's redeeming work.
Illumined and equipped by the Spirit,
God's people hear and do the Word,
become disciples,
and witness to the good news:
Our world belongs to God
who loves it deeply.

God's New People

37. In our world,
where many journey alone,
nameless in the bustling crowd,
Satan and his evil forces
seek whom they may scatter and isolate;
but God, in and through Jesus Christ,
by his gracious choosing
gathers a new community—
those who by God's gift
put their trust in Christ.
In the new community,

all are welcome:
the homeless come home,
the broken find healing,
the sinner makes a new start;
the despised are esteemed,
the least are honored,
and the last are first.
Here the Spirit guides
and grace abounds.

38. The church is the fellowship of those
who confess Jesus as Lord.
She is the Bride of Christ,
his chosen partner,
loved by Jesus and loving him:
delighting in his presence,
seeking him in prayer—
silent before the mystery of his love.

39. Our new life in Christ
is nourished
in the fellowship of congregations,
where we praise God's name,
hear the Word proclaimed,
learn God's ways,
confess our sins,
offer our prayers and gifts,
and celebrate the sacraments.

40. God meets us in the sacraments,
communicating grace to us
by means of water, bread, and wine.

In the mystery of baptism,
whether of the newly born
or newly converted,
God reminds and assures us
of our union with Christ in covenant love,
the washing away of our sin
and gift of the Spirit—
inviting our love and trust in return.

In the mystery of the Lord's Supper,
the Lord offers
his own crucified body and shed blood
to believers,
assuring them a share
in his death and resurrection.
By the Holy Spirit,
he feeds us
with his resurrection life
and binds us to each other

as we share in bread and wine.
We receive this food gladly,
declaring, as we eat,
that Jesus is our life-giving food and drink
and that he will come again
to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

42. The church is a gathering
of forgiven sinners called to be holy.
Saved by the patient grace of God
we deal patiently with others
and together confess our need
for forgiveness and grace.
Restored in Christ's presence,
shaped by his life,
this new community lives
the story of God's reconciling love,
announces the new creation,
and works for a world of justice and peace.
43. We grieve that the church,
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,
and spans all time, place, race, and language,
has become a broken communion in a broken world.
When we struggle
for the truth of the gospel
and for the righteousness God demands,
we pray for wisdom and courage.
When our pride or blindness
blocks the unity of God's household,
we seek forgiveness.
We marvel that the Lord still gathers the broken pieces
to do his work
and that he blesses us with joy,
new members,
and surprising evidences of unity.
We pray for brothers and sisters
who suffer for the faith,
and we commit ourselves to seeking and expressing
the oneness of all who follow Jesus.

The Mission of God's People

44. Continuing the story of God's reconciling love
the church is sent
with the gospel of the kingdom
to call everyone to know and follow Christ
and to proclaim to all
the assurance that in the name of Jesus
there is forgiveness of sin
and new life for all who repent and believe—
the good news that our world belongs to God.

The Spirit calls all members
to embrace God's mission
in their neighborhoods
and in the world:
to feed the hungry,
bring water to the thirsty,
invite in the stranger,
clothe the naked,
care for the sick,
and free the prisoner.
This mission is central to our being.

- 44b. In a world estranged from God,
where happiness and peace are offered in many names
and millions face confusing choices,
we witness—
with respect for followers of other ways—
to the only one in whose name salvation is found:
God loves the world,
in Christ he reconciled the world to himself,
his compassion knows no bounds.
45. In Christ all things hold together;
the Spirit is active everywhere.
We follow the Lord into the world,
not fitting in,
but as light in darkness,
salt in a spoiling world.
46. We worship the Creator,
the source of all life,
thankfully receiving this gift from God's hand.
We protest and resist
all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of life,
whether by abortion, pollution, gluttony,
addiction or foolish risks.
Because it is a sacred trust,
we treat all life with reverence and respect,
especially when it is most vulnerable—
whether growing in the womb,
touched by disability or disease,
or drawing a last breath.
When forced to make decisions
at life's raw edges,
we seek wisdom in community,
guided by God's Word and Spirit.
47. Since God made us male and female in his image,
we treat each other with respect,
as equals,
not flaunting or exploiting our sexuality.
While our roles and capacities may differ,

we are careful not to confine God's gifts and calling to the shape of our cultural patterns or expectations. Sexuality is disordered in our fallen world— brokenness, abuse, grief, and loneliness are the result— but Christ's renewing work gives hope for order and healing and surrounds suffering persons with a compassionate community.

- 48-49. We are the family of God, serving Christ in different callings, some single, some married, together in Christian community. In our individual callings, we seek to be devoted to God's kingdom. In friendships and family life, singleness and marriage, as parents and children, we reflect the covenant love of God. We decry the prevalence of divorce and of selfish individualism in our societies. We belong to God.
50. Serving the Lord in whom all things hold together, we support sound education in our communities, and we foster schools and teaching in which the light of Truth shines in all learning and where all students, without regard to their abilities, race, or wealth, are treated as persons who bear God's image and have a place in his world.
51. In our work we hear the call to serve our Lord. We work for more than wages and manage for more than profit, so that mutual respect and the just use of goods and skills may shape the work place and that, while we earn or profit, we may provide useful products and services. In our global economy, we advocate meaningful work and fair wages for all. Out of the Lord's generosity to us, we give freely and gladly of our money and time for charity and church.

- 51b. Rest and leisure are gifts from God
that relax us and set us free
to discover and to explore.
But we confess
that often our addiction to busyness
allows our tools and toys to invade our rest
and a virtual world of the Internet and video games
to distort our leisure.
Reminding each other that
our Maker rested and gave us rest,
we seek to rest more trustingly
and to entertain ourselves more simply.
52. Grateful for advances
in science and technology,
we participate in their development,
fostering care for creation
and respect for the gift of life.
We welcome discoveries that prevent or cure diseases
and that help support healthy lives.
We counsel respect for embryonic life,
approaching each new discovery,
whether of science or of medical technique
with careful thought,
seeking the will of God.
- We regret that our abuse of creation
has brought lasting damage
to the world we have been given:
polluting streams and soil,
poisoning the air,
altering the climate,
and damaging the earth.
We commit ourselves
to honor all living things
and to protect them from abuse and extinction,
for our world belongs to God.
53. The authorities that rule are established by God:
we are to respect them.
We are to obey God first:
Christ is Lord.
Therefore, we pray for our rulers,
and influence governments
to do God's will for public life.
We are thankful for the freedoms
enjoyed by citizens of many lands;
we grieve with those who live under oppression;
and we seek their liberty to live without fear.

54. We call on governments to do justice
and to protect the rights and freedoms
of individuals, groups, and institutions,
so that each may flourish.
We urge governments and pledge ourselves
to safeguard children and the elderly
from abuse and exploitation;
bring justice to the poor and oppressed;
and promote the freedom
to speak, work, worship, and associate.
55. Following the Prince of Peace
we are called to be peacemakers,
promoting harmony and order
and restoring what is broken.
We call on our governments to work for peace
and to restore just relationships.
We deplore the spread of weapons
in our world and on our streets
with the risks they bring
and the horrors they threaten.
We call on all nations to reduce their arsenals
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.

New Creation

56. We long for the day
when the kingdom of God will fully come
and our bodies are raised,
when at last our tears will be wiped away,
and we will dwell forever
in the presence of God.
We will take our place
in the new creation,
where there will be no more death
or mourning or crying or pain.
The Lord will be our light.
"Come, Lord Jesus, come."
57. On that day
we will meet our Savior,
the sacrificed lamb and triumphant king.
He will be shown to be just and gracious,
judging evil, condemning the wicked,
and setting everything right.
We face that day without fear,
for the judge is our savior,
who will declare us righteous
in the power of his blood.

We live confidently,
in anticipation of his coming,
offering to him our daily lives—
our acts of kindness,
our loyalty, and our love—
knowing that he will weave
even our sins and sorrows
into his sovereign purpose.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

58. With the whole creation,
we join the song:
Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise.
He has made us a kingdom and priests
to serve our God,
and we will reign on earth.
We will see the Lord face to face,
and God will be all in all.
Righteousness and peace will flourish.
Everything will be made new,
and every eye will see at last
that our world belongs to God.
Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus.

Appendix D **The Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church:** **Founding Document**

On the occasion of its 150th anniversary in 2007, the Christian Reformed Church, in gratitude to God and with eager resolve to participate in God's mission in the world, announces the establishment of The Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church. The Institute is designed to serve as a catalyst for the formation of value-based leaders in all walks of life who will act out of a biblically based understanding of what it means to lead people and institutions to serve in God's world. The Institute will support, encourage, instruct, and enable leaders by offering financial grants to local communities, initiating networks and relationships that promote learning and growth, and developing training and educational programs, all for Christian leadership development. The Institute will work to build the leadership capacity of local congregations and organizations to function creatively and faithfully in their ministries across all generations in the CRC and across a variety socio-economic, cultural, racial, and global contexts.

I. Vision

Imagine . . .

A Christian Reformed Church in which discipleship forms the DNA of each organization, committee, congregation, and agency; in which apprenticeship and mentorship in Christ-centered virtues, skills, and practices challenges young and old, new, and veteran Christians—persons of every ethnicity and culture—to grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Imagine . . .

Churches in which new members from a multitude of backgrounds are welcomed with open arms and enfolded into the body of Christ, where congregational leaders support every member in times of difficulty and joy, and where the monumental and ordinary events of human life are experienced in the congregation's story.

Imagine . . .

An era in which Christian Reformed congregations have the capacity to offer targeted training and constructive evaluation for all volunteer leadership positions, increasing the morale and effectiveness of every ministry, from nursery duty to community development work, from group Bible studies to evangelistic outreach.

Imagine . . .

A time in which congregations testify to their experience of the work of God's Spirit through genuine community reconciliation and forgiveness, in which the differences discovered within community life become a source of growth and new vitality.

Imagine . . .

Local Christian communities that offer encouragement, resources, constructive criticism, and networks of support for believers involved in business, science and technology, agriculture, homemaking, education, social services, and politics; where believers are encouraged to participate in a healthy balance of Christ-centered activity both within their congregation and beyond it.

Imagine . . .

A culture in the Christian Reformed Church that encourages all its members—from youth to older adults—to identify local community needs, marshal necessary resources, and create innovative organizations and structures to meet them.

Imagine . . .

An era in which faithful, organic institutional change is viewed not with skepticism or cynicism but with prayerful expectancy and Spirit-led hopefulness.

Imagine . . .

A time in which so many young people are called to pastoral ministry that the CRC has a surplus of pastors and has new opportunities for expanding its mission in church planting, campus ministry, urban missions, and chaplaincy.

Imagine . . .

A day in which many early retirees take on new careers in church leadership, non-profit management, and community development; in which the majority of recently retired people volunteer substantial hours for ministry needs, thereby significantly increasing the capacity of CRC congregations and a variety of local and national organizations to be engaged in ministry.

This is a vision of grateful, Christ-centered Christian communities whose culture breathes with vitality, integrity, and service. This is a vision of a missional people, whose view of God's work in the world extends into all creation, whose commitment to ministries of education, healing, and witness are dedicated "to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives."

This is a vision that has deep roots in the CRC. Indeed, for 150 years, God has blessed the CRC with remarkable opportunities to practice this kingdom vision. Today, over 1,000 congregations are dedicated to practicing this vision. A network of denominational agencies, educational institutions, and related parachurch organizations are committed to supporting it. Spirit-led transformative ministry has happened throughout these 150 years in ways that no one could have imagined.

Still, there is much in this vision yet unrealized, for the CRC, like all institutions and organizations, has been a broken vessel for ministry. At times, our ministry has been driven by fear or arrogance rather than gratitude and hope. At times, we have developed organizational cultures and leadership styles marked by retrenchment or ungrounded innovation, rather than rooted organic responsiveness to new needs and opportunities. Even apart from these challenges, the Bible's vision for healthy and effective ministry is always out ahead of us. It calls us toward deeper dedication to kingdom service. It asks each generation to own and celebrate its call to join God's work in the world.

Thus, on the occasion of its 150th anniversary in 2007, the Christian Reformed Church affirms its commitment to a kingdom vision and pledges to nurture a culture of gratitude, trust, integrity, and faithfulness. As a tangible sign of this commitment, the Christian Reformed Church announces an initiative designed to make real what we might only have imagined, an initiative envisioned as a catalyst for renewal and ministry throughout the CRC: The Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church. The Institute is shaped and organized to complement, strengthen, and sharpen the work of current and future CRC congregations and organizations, as well as that of individual CRC members in their local contexts.

Formal action to establish this initiative was taken by Synod 2005. Upon the recommendation of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Sesqui-centennial Committee, synod voted to pursue the development of a leadership institute dedicated to developing leaders in order to solidify and expand the ministries of the CRCNA and enhance the effectiveness of Christians in business, non-profit organizations, education, and politics. The vision is that such an institute would strengthen the capacity for strong leadership across all generations in the CRC and across a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and global contexts. The goal is to develop leaders at every level of CRC life who are familiar with and can articulate Reformed faith and carry it out in intentional, focused ways.

This document forms a more concrete proposal for the structure and work of such an institute.

II. Background analysis

A. *Rationale*

The particular strategy of founding a Leadership Institute arises out of the following three convictions.

First, while no one single angle on institutional capacity promises to solve all problems and generate all virtues, in many of the scenarios described in the vision above, there is a common theme of a biblical, intentional, well-conceived culture of leadership. Building a healthy culture of leadership allows churches and their ministries to thrive.

Few things kill effective ministries more quickly than an impoverished culture of leadership where followers respond to any new idea with cynicism, where leaders fail to rely on prayer and the leading of God's Spirit, where leaders take on all the work of ministry and fail to equip and empower others to serve, where there is no system of accountability for both leaders and followers, where leaders lack the courage to address systemic problems such as racism, or where leaders heroically lead institutional change but fail to earn the necessary trust to nurture and encourage the gifts of those around them. In contrast, a healthy culture of leadership builds capacities for kingdom service. It offers a forum for dealing with differences honestly and openly. It practices prayer. It creates momentum for the fruits of the Spirit to permeate a community's life.

Importantly, the term *culture of leadership* involves more than just a leader; it speaks of a whole set of relationships in which leaders and followers work together toward common ends in trusting, committed, and mutually accountable relationships. The term *culture of leadership* pushes away from approaches that focus on (and wittingly promote) an isolated view of an individual leader. Rather, the focus is placed on a web of relationships that leaders and followers share.

Second, the CRC already has in place a strong and active network of existing agencies, organizations, and ministries that correspond with a wide range of kingdom-oriented service. What is needed is not a new agency with a large institutional infrastructure. More pressing is the need to develop the capacity of existing organizations and local ministry efforts. For example, if a new culture of volunteer leadership were to permeate the CRC, it could strengthen the ministry of each congregation, each CRC-related organization, and many organizations well beyond the CRC. If a new culture of interpersonal reconciliation and forgiveness were not only to be preached but also practiced more faithfully in CRC communities, the capacity for ministry and kingdom service of every organization would grow.

This vision for supporting and deepening existing and future congregations, organizations, and individual ministries is somewhat like strategies of the Barnabas Foundation and Christian Stewardship Services. Just as they aim to promote a culture of stewardship and giving that, in turn, increases the ministry effectiveness of all participating organizations, this new Leadership Institute aims to be a catalyst for developing new capacities in the area of leadership.

Third, an institute developed collaboratively with CRC-related educational institutions as a connecting link to on-the-ground ministries is a promising strategy for renewal. For one, educational institutions offer a place for deep reflection on cultural patterns and practices, with ready access to networks of experts in a variety of fields. For another, educational institutions ensure direct access to a rising generation of leaders. Indeed, over four thousand CRC young people currently attend CRC-related colleges, and many more are affiliated with CRC campus ministries in various universities. Founding a leadership formation initiative in close collaboration with CRC-related educational institutions not only promises to draw on their strengths but also to shape relationships among these institutions for common service.

This in no way implies that this venture will simply be an academic exercise in the pejorative sense of the term. In contrast, it intends to engage daily community practices in a variety of local contexts. The focus is on the practice of leadership. The goal is to deepen and enhance this practice, and to do so through a venture in close cooperation with the vital, imaginative, student-focused work that happens in CRC-related educational institutions.

In sum, this document describes an initiative that is designed:

- To build the capacity for ministry of existing and future congregations, organizations, and individual ministries, rather than to develop a large, permanent program alongside of existing ones,
- To be nimble enough to respond to particular needs and opportunities that emerge over time,
- To enhance a healthy culture of leadership throughout the CRC, and
- To be developed with close ties to the educational institutions associated with the CRC.

B. Context

This effort must be grounded with close attention to the context of ministry in the CRC and beyond. Indeed, the CRC currently finds itself in a context marked by significant change. While significant portions of the church are still tied to the Dutch heritage, the CRC is steadily becoming a more multiethnic denomination with members from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. While many CRC communities are flourishing within historical frameworks for church life, others feel the press of change as patterns of migration, urbanization, worship style, church size, congregational organization, and denominational loyalty change the contexts in which they come together as communities of faith. While some historical CRCs are closing with thanks and grace, other congregations are being planted with promise and hope.

Furthermore, not only are local churches changing, but the composition of those in CRC ministry leadership is also in transition. The number and character of those in ordained leadership is shifting within the CRC. Within the next few years, because of large Calvin Theological Seminary classes in the 1960s and 1970s, the number of ordained pastors retiring from ministry will exceed the supply of new graduates by a significant margin. Roughly one in eight Christian Reformed Churches already functions without an ordained pastor because of existing shortages. These shortages will be further exacerbated by the CRC's goal for new church plants in the decade ahead. There will be many challenges in the years ahead in the recruitment, formation, and retention of ordained pastors in relationship to CRC congregations. Many

institutions of the CRC, including its seminary and church-supported agencies, are at work on the challenges related to these trends.

The role of those in lay- or staff-ministry leadership, typically working without an ordained status, is also changing within the CRC. Many churches are now hiring youth pastors, church education coordinators, directors of worship, promoters of outreach, and executive administrators to be leaders in their ministry teams. Many people are being ordained as ministry associates. In addition, lay volunteer leadership—as elders and deacons, as leaders of church task forces and committees, as worship planners and public worship participants—continues to evolve.

CRC members also continue to play significant roles in non-profit organizations, parachurch groups, community development efforts, and for-profit businesses. These organizations create significant synergy with the institutional church, offering the church access to information, leadership strategies, and resources, while offering society the resources of a biblical and theological vision for societal engagement.

With changing contexts, new challenges for those in ordained leadership and the emergence of significant Christian leadership roles among the non-ordained, CRC congregations must find new structures, processes, and pathways through which to be healthy congregations that are effective witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Institute is positioned to support CRC leadership development so that congregations, together with their lay and ordained ministry leaders, become the church of God's intent. The Institute will intertwine knowledge, skills, and ministry practices in support of Christian ministry leadership by members of the CRC at all levels and in all its capacities.

C. *Current work on leadership development*

1. Within the CRC

The CRC has already been at work in understanding its leadership needs. In 2005, it published an important training tool, "Effective Leadership in the Church," to help congregations, pastors, and other church leaders effectively work together in accomplishing God's mission. Developed by a broad team of denominational leaders, this training tool provides biblical and theological themes regarding leadership for the church, discusses the nature of effective leadership, and identifies specific leadership challenges in the CRC through commentary and cases. Its use is spreading, but there is still significant CRC space into which these messages about the nature and practice of ministry leadership need to reach.

Those in Christian colleges related to the CRC and in CRC-based campus ministries are working diligently to think about Christian leadership models and practices. Each college has developed either informal or formal leadership-related programs, many of which are directly focused on church-related ministry opportunities. The training events, apprenticeships, conferences, and courses offered through these institutions provide a strong basis for the future work of the Institute.

Further, several CRC-related groups have developed innovative approaches to leadership development. Dynamic Youth Ministries and the

All-Ontario Christian youth conference regularly address the theme of calling. The Staff Ministry Committee of the CRC is developing new models of professional credentialing. The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary have been developing new models and routes to ordained ministry. Christian Reformed Home Missions has sponsored several leadership development networks across the denomination.

The new Institute is not primarily designed to develop a permanent leadership development program alongside each of these. Rather, it is designed to learn from each of these, identify key needs and issues common to each of them, and share resources to meet those needs.

2. Beyond the CRC

The CRC is not alone in its desire to develop Christian leadership capacity. The Willow Creek Association, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, the Wesleyan Church's Leadership Development Journey, the Hinton Rural Life Center, Leader's Edge, and The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center have all developed significant programs for cultivating ministry leadership. Furthermore, the DePree Leadership Center of Fuller Theological Seminary, the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities Leadership Development Institute (LDI), Haggai Institute, Peacemaker Ministries, the John Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development, and the Christian Management Association have each made a significant contribution to this conversation about the development of Christian leadership.

This new CRC Leadership Institute can connect with these other entities, access their best resources, and, in turn, bring them to the CRC. In this way, emerging thinking and best practices from a host of faith-based circles regarding Christian leadership perspectives and practice will be accessible to all members of the CRC. The Leadership Institute will position the Christian Reformed Church of North America to both benefit from and be beneficial to this larger conversation about Christian leadership.

III. Basic description

In the context of these needs and opportunities, the CRC is inaugurating the new Institute for leadership formation. The following name, mission, and core values provide the conceptual foundation for the work of the new venture and may be used in the initial marketing and promotion of the Institute.

A. Name

This new entity will be named The Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church.

The word *leadership* emphasizes that this is a denominational effort to build understanding of and connections among the knowledge, skill, and virtues that healthy leadership requires.

The term *institute* highlights this as an organized and continuing effort. Leadership formation is an ongoing process over time. An institute provides a framework that can identify what is needed and track the development of such leadership capacity over time.

The explicit reference to the Christian Reformed Church clearly identifies this as a venture of the denomination, but the title does not say that it is an

institute whose scope is limited to the Christian Reformed Church. Indeed, the work of the Institute may well connect with, benefit from, and contribute to efforts beyond the denomination. The Institute's programs will, however, serve as a Christian Reformed contribution to a growing ecology of efforts related to leadership development across North America and beyond.

B. *Mission*

The mission of the new Institute is

to promote healthy leadership formation that embodies and deepens Christian values and practices in church and society.

The term *promote* signals that the Institute is designed to be a catalyst for growth, rather than a comprehensive program.

The words *healthy* and *embody* draw on metaphors of the body that link with an incarnational view of ministry and the image of the church as the body of Christ. These images are visceral and organic, not mechanical.

As noted above, the phrase *leadership formation* calls attention to the organic connection among the skills, knowledge, and virtues that healthy leadership requires.

The term *deepens* encourages us to develop more fully our calling to Christian leadership. Embedding Christian values and practices in church and society is an ongoing journey in both personal sanctification and the development of leadership knowledge and skills.

The emphasis on *Christian* communicates that this is designed to be an explicitly Christ-centered venture, in which our sharing in Christ's anointing provides the context, the motivation, and the principles for every aspect of institute-related activity.

The phrase *values and practices* reflects a deep commitment both to honor abiding principles and to stress the importance of faithful Christian living.

The phrase *church and society* signals a desire to reflect the CRC's historic commitments both to the institutional church and to the witness of Christians in broader society.

In sum, this new Institute is designed to be a catalyst for

- Identifying, encouraging, and challenging both emerging and established local leaders in a variety of settings,
- Developing and nurturing vital communal practices in congregations, organizations, and other entities, and
- Offering deep theological reflection on current cultural opportunities, challenges, and approaches to leadership.

C. *Core values*

The work of the Institute will be guided by these core values:

1. Church-based – A focus on strengthening the Christian Reformed Church
The Institute will promote strong healthy congregations and a vital denomination. It will reflect and hone a Reformed theological vision for a biblical understanding of Christian ministry leadership. It will strengthen the connection between leadership practices and the polity of the CRCNA.

2. **Biblical** – A place for biblically shaped leadership formation
 The Institute will work to promote deep spiritual formation among present and future lay and ordained leaders. It will work not only to develop skills among future leaders but also to nurture virtues. It will encourage effective planning and management practices but also expectant prayer, a biblical and theological understanding of the church, and faithful living in the church community.
3. **Diverse** – A determination to cultivate diverse sources of CRC leadership
 The Institute will work to strengthen leadership simultaneously among
 - Low-profile leaders, often in unacknowledged roles in local communities, as well as high-profile positions in major institutions,
 - Both clergy and laity,
 - All generations of church leaders,
 - Both men and women,
 - Urban, suburban, and rural churches, and
 - A variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.
 The Institute will work to share learning among these various groups, create new networks among groups, and thereby strengthen the fabric of personal relationships and common mission among these diverse leaders.
4. **Applied** – A belief that thinking and practice must be intertwined
 The Institute will strategically intertwine the best thinking about leadership with the best practices—in ways that sharpen the links among thinking, teaching, and practice—in a range of Christian Reformed congregationally based initiatives. To meet this mission, best research, theories, theology, and practice must be translated for the widest range of church learners who are growing together as communities of faith and practice across many ages, varying degrees of education, and a rainbow of cultures. The Institute will also be a place to test popular approaches to leadership against biblical visions for Christian community life.
5. **Contextual** – A desire to shape ministry leadership in context
 The initiative will be sensitive to the varying contexts for leadership in a wide range of cultural, ethnic, and institutional settings. It will seek to learn about and then promote forms of leadership that are locally appropriate and effective. It will also focus specifically on the relationship of those who lead and those who follow in any given church community; thus, ultimately focusing less on leaders and more on “leadership,” namely the combined practices of how leaders and followers work together in local communities. As such, dimensions of the Institute’s programming will be available as on-site services.
6. **Reconciling** – A commitment to promote forgiveness, reconciliation, and community
 The Institute will promote leadership practices that nurture communities that learn to practice forgiveness and reconciliation intentionally and graciously. It will develop deeper understandings of how churches, organizations, and communities can work together through change and conflict resolution. It will encourage restoration by the unified and healing

power of the gospel for the persistent and inevitable experience of hurt and brokenness in community life.

7. World-aware – An awareness that ministry leadership will have both North American and global dimensions
The Institute will mirror the CRC’s simultaneous commitment to effective local ministry in North American communities as well as strong partnerships with Christians on every continent.
8. Hospitable – A source of Christian hospitality
The Institute will embody hospitality as a key virtue, creating welcoming, encouraging environments for collaborative learning, prayer, fellowship, and creativity. This ethos of hospitality may well be as important as any specific program developed by the Institute.
9. Responsive – A network that is nimble, responsive, and open to risks for the gospel
The Institute is not intended to become a large organization with extensive institutional overhead. Rather, it is designed to address quickly perceived needs and respond to new ministry opportunities.
10. Shared – An expectation of excellent and shareable results that allow others to benefit from what is learned from the exploration of ideas in relationship to practice

The Institute’s director will regularly report through the executive director of the CRC on the Institute’s accomplishments and challenges. These will be annually communicated to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and to synod. This provides an annual opportunity for mutual accountability—both for the Board and for senior leadership of the denomination as they assess their own work in light of the Institute’s work. It also provides a means to share what is being learned about Christian leadership in light of the key themes of this founding document.

D. Institute programming

The Institute will develop programming to build the capacity of congregations, organizations, and their leaders for creative and faithful service in a variety of local contexts. It is essential that the Institute’s staff listen discerningly to the many conversations about ministry in the church and society throughout the denomination, and spark new conversations and networks of learning. The Institute should generate ongoing reflection—disseminated through reports, websites, and occasional papers—about leadership needs, opportunities, and learning within the CRC. As staff listen and then shape healthy leadership and organizational practices, they should model the nonheroic, adaptive leadership that the Institute seeks to promote.

1. Initial strategies
Initially, the Institute will engage in the following tasks:
 - a. Grant-making for local and regional leadership formation initiatives
This high programmatic priority will ensure that the Institute’s resources are invested in local communities throughout the denomination. Modest grants will typically be awarded around key themes, goals,

and broad priorities identified by the staff and governing board of the Institute and integrated with the Institute's educational and training programs. They will provide important signals and some financial leverage regarding leadership formation across the CRC. To ensure that this part of the program works in an equitable and strategically significant way, the Institute will also work to develop grant-writing capacities of potential grant recipients.

Grant proposals will be evaluated on the basis of their potential for encouraging effective leadership practices, their focus and clarity, their promise for sustainable local benefit, their capacity to multiply beneficial results, and their fit with institute values and priorities. The staff and governing board will develop the formal themes, criteria, and policies that govern the selection of each year's grants. For example, the grant theme in a given year could emphasize strategies for bringing the young into the ministry leadership of the church, cultivating mediation and reconciliation skills among CRC leaders, or learning to manage change in the church context.

b. Training and educational programs on a healthy culture of leadership

The Institute will develop portable and flexible training programs that fit its mission, complement the work of other agencies and organizations, fill gaps in the repertoire of CRC-related leadership offerings, and attract interest in various locations. These might include intensive training retreats, seminars and/or courses for academic credit at appropriate CRC-related educational institutions, day-long conference sessions, or web-based learning modules. The Institute will work to develop content for these events that draws on the best of existing Christian leadership models and responds to significant needs or opportunities. In addition, it will promote collaborative work with these programs in ways that engage expertise from a variety of CRC-related institutions, create teams of teacher-mentor-coaches, and generate ongoing feedback from all program participants.

c. Identifying and disseminating leadership resources

The Institute will build connections to sound resources related to church leadership developed by the CRC and beyond. While not principally engaged in direct resource development or new scholarly research, the Institute will create a resource bank for CRC-specific data and CRC best practices generated from multiple denominational sources and develop a strong website to disseminate these resources. Thus, it would become a principal portal or connection through which to access CRC ideas about leadership frameworks and practice from multiple sources.

2. Longer-term strategies

As the Institute builds its understanding and network, there are additional possibilities. These might include:

a. Leadership formation through peer-learning, mentoring, coaching, and networking

The Institute will work to build key relationships, networks, and mentoring that promote its mission. These may include forming study

groups around key problems or opportunities, establishing mentor relationships, teaching groups to create and disseminate new curricula, or supporting peer learning groups. Whenever possible, the Institute will promote collaboration and communication among existing pockets of leadership development energy and expertise.

b. Cultivate new ideas about Christian leadership

The Institute will, on occasion, create new booklets, articles, DVDs, and other media to help guide the denomination's understanding of leadership. When necessary, it will also conduct applied research and data analysis relevant to the CRC's leadership future.

c. Grant-writing

While the basic budget for the Institute will be established by denominational gifts, staff members will engage in additional fundraising activities, primarily through grant-writing to appropriate foundations, endowments, and other grant-making entities.

IV. Organization and governance

A. Legal

The Institute will be a collaborative venture with the CRC's congregations, classes, agencies, and educational institutions and will function within the organizational structure of the CRCNA. The legal status of the Institute will be that of a CRCNA entity. An appropriate document will be drafted to articulate a relationship and detail commitments among the denomination, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and other relevant educational institutions who support this common venture in light of the general parameters described below.

B. Approval process

The approval process for the founding of the Institute will reflect its nature as a collaborative venture of the denomination with other institutions. Formal approval for establishing the Institute will be processed by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. However, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary will present this proposal for information and discussion through faculty governance channels and to their respective boards of trustees.

C. Physical location

To provide a supportive infrastructure, offices may be located on or near the campus of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary or a similar support system.

As the Institute begins, minimum requirements include an office for the director, an office for a second professional associate, meeting space for up to six people, and an appropriate area for reception of visitors and the completion of support or clerical tasks. Three to four computers will be required.

D. Governance

1. Governing board

The Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church shall be directed by a governing board, to consist of up to nine members, including:

- Up to four members from among members of the CRC who bring expertise in leadership in a given arena or represent organizations that could be strategic partners with the Institute.
- One member of Calvin College nominated by the college's administration.
- One member of Calvin Theological Seminary nominated by the seminary's administration.
- Three members to represent other CRC-related institutions of higher learning. These institutions include Dordt College, the Institute for Christian Studies, The King's University College, Kuyper College, Redeemer University College, and Trinity College.
- The Institute director (ex officio and nonvoting).

The governing board should be diverse in ethnicity, gender, age, and experience. Governing board members shall be nominated, in consultation with the participating institutions, by the executive director of the CRC, and appointed by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. All governing board members will serve three-year terms, with renewable terms allowed.

The governing board shall provide the needed oversight for the Leadership Institute, especially in the development of policies and priorities. The board will meet at least two times per year, with the following responsibilities:

- a. Nominate a director for appointment by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
- b. Engage in strategic planning for Institute initiatives in relationship to the CRC's Denominational Ministries Plan and sound conceptual bases for the Institute's work.
- c. Approve grant-making priorities, including the themes for annual grant initiatives and the relative scale of such grants, in consultation with the director. Review and evaluate grant proposals.
- d. Adopt and approve all policies for the operation of the Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church.
- e. Annually propose a budget for the activities of the Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church for consideration by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
- f. Advise the director concerning the priorities, activities, and management of the Institute.
- g. Participate in the CRC executive director's evaluation of the Institute's director.
- h. Be responsible for annual reports to the participating institutions and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
- i. Authorize its executive committee to give interim approval to exceptional needs or requests that are consistent with the purposes of the Leadership Institute of the Christian Reformed Church and with the annually adopted plan and budget.

2. Institute bylaws

Following the approval of this founding document, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA will appoint the initial governing board. The board will develop a formal bylaws document in accordance with this founding

document. Once adopted, the bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the governing board subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

E. Institute leadership

1. Staff

The primary staff of the Leadership Institute shall consist of a director and such other personnel as may be appropriate and necessary for its effective operation. The Institute's governing board will nominate to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA a qualified candidate to be the director of the Institute. Once appointed, the director will be accountable through the executive director of the CRC. Additional staff shall be secured according to normal CRC procedures in consultation with the governing board of the Institute.

a. Director's tasks

The director will:

- 1) Have administrative responsibility for all aspects of the functioning of the Leadership Institute and its staff.
- 2) Lead the coordinating team of specified contacts across the denominational network.
- 3) Recommend to the governing board an annual plan for activities, an annual budget, and such other policies as may be appropriate.
- 4) Implement all policies, plans, and budgets as adopted by the governing board.
- 5) Report on all the activities of the Leadership Institute at each meeting of the governing board.
- 6) Facilitate and promote the use of the Leadership Institute.
- 7) Personally undertake a program of professional responsibilities consistent with the purpose of the Institute.
- 8) Be present at meetings of the governing board and its executive committee except when the director's work or appointment is being discussed.

b. Director's qualifications

The director should:

- 1) Be a committed Christian believer, eager to promote God's work in church and society.
- 2) Have successful experience in a leadership role in a congregation or organization.
- 3) Be committed to the core values of the Institute (see above).
- 4) Have the ability to teach these themes for various audiences through college-level instruction or congregational workshops and write for popular and professional audiences.
- 5) Have the capacity to envision and implement new and creative programming.
- 6) Have the requisite qualifications for a college-level faculty appointment.

2. Coordinating team

In addition to the director, the Institute shall be supported by a coordinating team with the following characteristics:

- a. Each CRC-affiliated institution of higher learning shall identify a contact person in their institution whose role is to coordinate and assist local efforts as appropriate.
- b. Additional persons may be added to this coordinating team to represent other geographic regions or needed areas of expertise.
- c. This coordinating team collectively forms a network that advises the director regarding the Institute's activities and communicates with leaders in these networks of connection.
- d. The coordinating team shall meet, virtually or in person, once or twice a year; each institution shall assume the related travel costs.

Several among the CRC-related colleges and universities have already indicated an eagerness to be partners in this undertaking and to share in covering costs of coordinating team representatives. The Christian Reformed Church is grateful for this spirit of cooperation.

F. Time-line for implementation

The following is a tentative time-frame for implementation. Much will depend on the pace and timing of the fundraising campaign.

October 2006	Draft of founding document circulated for comment
February 2007	Founding document submitted for approval to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA
2007	Fundraising throughout the denomination's anniversary year
May 2007	Governing board appointed by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA
Summer 2007	(or date at which the fundraising achieves \$3 million in commitments) Governing board meets for its initial meeting, and a search for the first director is announced
December 2007	Goal of having at least \$3 million of the endowment fund invested, in addition to \$50,000 of start-up funds
July 1, 2008	(or six months after initial fundraising goal is reached) Formal institute start-up (with the possibility that the director could begin work sooner, depending on the results of fundraising and the search process)

G. Institute communication channels in the CRC

In many ways, the Institute's communication channels and access points to other CRC-related entities are as important as the formal governance structures for ensuring its success. As the Institute begins, the following channels are particularly important:

1. Ministry Council

To maximize communication and collaboration with denominational agencies, the Institute's director shall regularly engage the Ministry Council to discuss the needs and opportunities for leadership development.

2. Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and synod
To build institutional collaboration and communicate the work of the Institute, the director will prepare an annual report for the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA that would be incorporated in their unified report to synod.
3. College-based centers, institutes, and initiatives
To facilitate communication and collaboration with other college-based efforts throughout the CRC, the Institute will develop partnerships with other entities sponsored by our educational institutions, such as the Church Connection Initiative at Trinity Christian College, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, as well as the constellation of centers and institutes at Calvin College.
4. Seminary faculty
To further communication with the seminary and its faculty, the Institute's director will consult regularly with the seminary faculty.
5. Other CRC-related institutions
Members of the governing board and coordinating team from other educational institutions will be important links for communicating with their respective faculty, staff, and student bodies. The Institute's director will develop a plan for regular communication with these campuses.
6. Other initiatives, related to the CRC and beyond
The Institute staff will work to be deeply aware of the work of other CRC-related organizations, congregations, and individual leaders, looking for ways to learn from and contribute to these efforts. The range of possible links is breathtakingly large. The possibilities for collaboration in building Christian leadership capacity is only hinted at by the following brief list of meetings, events, and conversations with which the Institute could connect:
 - A creative discussion among pastors in Edmonton about a particular kind of ministry to the community,
 - A gathering of Christian and public school administrators for continuing education,
 - A gathering of First Nations and Native American leaders about the nature of community decision making,
 - A meeting of the Association of Reformed Institutions of Higher Education (ARIHE) college presidents,
 - A presentation at a theological conference on church polity or the biblical requirements for officebearers,
 - A speech by a CRC member to an urban community development conference or to an agricultural consortium,
 - An academic conference on theories and research related to organizational life for the Christian business community,
 - A meeting of Korean leaders in the CRC to discuss generational differences within the Korean community,
 - A Christian leadership conference hosted by a Christian circle beyond the CRC,
 - A peer learning group of youth program administrators, and
 - A conversation to build the capacities of CRC faith-based not-for-profit organizations.

The Institute's staff will need to work strategically with the governing board to develop networks of people who can contribute to institute-related conversations and relationships, and to discern which of these are especially needed at a given time. In this way, the Institute will not only be working in the field of leadership but will also have opportunities to model effective leadership, particularly in the areas of collaboration, strategic planning, and communal discernment.

H. Relationship to other leadership-related initiatives

Because the Institute enters a denominational context that already includes several leadership-related initiatives, it is important to emphasize that this new entity will complement, support, and enhance the other efforts. The Institute is designed to be a catalyst for creative, energetic, well-grounded, and venturesome ministry leadership by, in, and from CRC congregations, in partnerships with their ministry leaders, to each other and to CRC educational institutions and agencies. A major goal of this work is to encourage and support local, contextualized leadership development efforts throughout the denomination.

A primary difference between this and other agency-led leadership development initiatives (e.g., Home Missions Leadership Development Networks or the Staff Ministry Committee's credentialing program) is that the new institute is not designed to establish permanent programs to serve only one cross-section of the CRC. Rather, it is designed to be institutionally nimble. It may develop specific time-limited programs to address a given need or opportunity, but it also will remain poised to address new needs or opportunities and to encourage networking that crosses agencies and organizations.

The Institute will encourage partnerships with Calvin Theological Seminary and each CRC-related college. Given the CRC's commitment to Christian day schools, the Institute will look for strategic ways of supporting, complementing, and coordinating with leadership development initiatives related to Christian education at all levels. Reflecting the CRC's interest in mobilizing youth for ministry, it will also cooperate with Dynamic Youth Ministries. While the Institute is not designed to be a funding source for agency-sponsored programs, it may provide seed money to pilot congregational or agency collaborations. The Institute is not designed to offer direct support for non-CRC-related organizations, but it is committed to promoting efforts of CRC congregations to learn from best practices of other organizations, to look for strategic ministry partnerships, and to strengthen CRC ecumenical ties.

Overall, the Institute goal is to serve as an effective partner with local congregations, assisting their leaders, both clergy and lay, as they guide churches and their ministries to become the healthy and faithful fellowships of God's people that they are intended to be.

V. Financial plan

A. Endowment

The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and synod have adopted a \$5 million fundraising goal to permanently endow the Institute. The money will be invested by the CRC Foundation Board in its pooled investment funds with an expectation that 6 percent of principal will be spent each fiscal year. At a 6

percent pay-out rate, this would make possible an operating budget of \$300,000.

B. Fundraising

While the Leadership Institute will not have a separate development office, additional donations may be accepted for particular uses that fall within the Institute's mission. These may be either added to the Institute's endowment and dedicated to particular programming, or added to the Institute's annual budget. The governing board of the Institute will have the authority in consultation with the CRCNA to recommend the allocation of any incoming funds.

As noted above, the Institute will actively seek out additional grant funding from appropriate foundations and endowments. These grants will typically include line items for indirect costs and overhead, which income may be applied to any annual space rental, and/or staff support fees that the Institute pays.

C. Budget

The annual program and budget priorities will be recommended by the governing board, approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, and carried out by the director of the Institute. Initially, these budget models assume that the director of the Institute, if employed full-time, will have other responsibilities at Calvin College or Calvin Theological Seminary, and receive compensation for them from the college or seminary.

When *fully funded*, the annual budget—which would be approved by the governing board—might include:

\$100,000	Grant-making program, including expenses for publicity, grant-selecting, training sessions for grant recipients, and analysis of the results of grant-related programming
\$36,000	Training and educational programming (including funds for travel, teaching fees, hospitality expenses), typically developed around a key theme each year
\$120,000	Staff salary and benefits—to be distributed in several ways, including a .5 FTE director who might also have responsibilities at the college or seminary, a full-time support staff person, and contracted web-design support and/or student assistants
\$5,000	Basic office expenses, books, and resources
\$5,000	Staff travel, consultants, or training
\$10,000	Expenses related to the governing board
\$15,000 *	Overhead fee to hosting institution toward all expenses related to hosting the Institute, including support of human resources, financial services, and so forth (calculated at 5% of overall budget)
\$9,000 **	Office space rental, including phone, and technology support (calculated at \$15 per square foot x 600 square feet of office space) Additional expenses, as funded by any grants the Institute would secure

* See next page.

** See next page.

A larger annual budget is certainly desirable and would allow the funding level for grants to increase. This budget also assumes that half of the director's salary would be paid by the institution at which he or she had other responsibilities. A larger operating budget could reduce such expectations for the director.

A *basic minimum operating budget* is conceivable at the \$180,000 level. This might consist of:

\$25,000	Start-up programming, including web design, curriculum development, pilot learning groups, and so forth
\$25,000	Training and educational programming (including funds for travel, teaching fees, hospitality expenses), typically developed around a key theme each year

\$90,000	Staff salary and benefits—to be distributed in several ways, including a .5 FTE director who might also have responsibilities at the college or seminary, a .5 FTE support staff person and/or contracted web design support
\$6,000	Basic office expenses, books, and resources
\$10,000	Expenses related to the governing board
\$9,000*	Overhead fee to hosting institution toward all expenses related to hosting the Institute, including support of human resources, financial services (calculated at 5% of overall budget)
\$9,000 **	Office space rental, including phone, and technology support (calculated at \$15 per square foot x 600 square feet of office space)

*This includes expenses for which the Institute would reimburse the host college. The amounts listed represent one possible scenario of reimbursement and are calculated to cover a fair portion of the actual expense incurred by the college. The actual amounts will need to be refined in light of continuing college conversations about sustainability and internal charges within the college.

**\$25,000 of the initial gift should be reserved for office remodeling, the purchase of office furniture, and computer equipment. If office space, both renovation and rental, is secured at less expense, then the remaining funds from this budget item will be dedicated to Institute programming. Up to \$25,000 may be needed for the initial meetings of the governing board and expenses related to the search for the first director (publicity, travel, and so forth).

With a \$180,000 minimum budget, the Institute will be ready to open as soon as six months after receiving and investing at least \$3,050,000, to allow for some accrual of interest. This really makes it urgent to receive lead gifts as soon as possible.

D. Financial operations

The Institute will operate from accounts established within the CRCNA's financial accounting system. Financial Services of the CRCNA will process regular financial transactions and provide monthly financial reports.

VI. Conclusion

In a recent discussion about ministry in the CRC, a report to synod observed:

The CRC needs leaders. It needs leaders of all types: youth leaders, worship leaders, directors of children's ministries, pastors, evangelists, chaplains—the list goes on and on. We not only need many kinds of leaders, but we also need leaders who belong to many kinds of communities, 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 and, in its variety, beautiful.

(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 613)

This compelling vision provides the motivation and goal of this proposal. We pray that God's Spirit may use the work of the Leadership Institute to this end.

Appendix E

Curriculum Vitae: Peter M. Harkema

Professional objective

Senior executive leadership position in a foundation or non-profit organization.

Qualification summary

- Extensive experience in executive leadership and fund raising in higher education.
- Developed teams that carried out complex tasks with expansive goals.
- Hired and mentored outstanding managers.
- Led a five-year fund raising capital campaign that raised \$125 million dollars.
- Worked successfully with foundation and individual donors to raise major gifts.
- Able to motivate people to action; visionary and passionate.
- Have a Christian, people-centered worldview characterized by compassion, integrity, and justice.
- Knowledgeable and comfortable in multicultural contexts.
- Experienced in developing positive relationships with board members, and broad opportunities to work with board policies and procedures.

Education

Ph.D., Higher Education Administration, Michigan State University, 1990
M.A., Student Personnel in Higher Education, Western Michigan University, 1981
B.A., Political Science, Secondary Education, Calvin College, 1971

Experience

Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

The largest nondenominational Protestant seminary in the world, offering graduate degrees to over 4000 students from 70 countries, Fuller has schools of theology, psychology, and intercultural studies, and campuses in six metropolitan areas in the western United States.

Vice President for Advancement: 1999 to the present

- Designed and led the institution in implementing a five-year Leading Change Campaign from 2001 to the present. Current pledges and gifts total \$125 million.
- Served as an officer of the institution and participated in strategic planning and budget management as a member of the president's cabinet and the provost's council.
- Gave leadership to the development, alumni, and church relations and public affairs offices.
- Maintained a list of major donor prospects and, each of the past five years, personally raised more than \$1 million from these donors.
- Worked with trustees to formulate advancement strategies and to implement a new culture of fundraising within the board of trustees and at the seminary.
- Led the efforts to revitalize Fuller's fundraising program that focused on accountability and led to improved productivity in major gifts and systems management.

Vice President for Student Life and Enrollment Services: 1995-1999

- Designed an enrollment management program. This program included developing a distribution system for financial aid and scholarships,

admission's systems for a very diverse university-type organization, and student-life programs that supported students that range in age from 22 to 75.

- Redesigned campus housing systems to make them more hospitable for all students but especially for international student families.

Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Founded in 1876, Calvin College is a Christian liberal arts college with an enrollment of about 4000 students. It is consistently ranked in the top five among Midwest, bachelor degree granting colleges and was ranked number one for the past two years in *U.S. News and World Report's* Guide to Colleges.

Vice President for Enrollment Services: 1994-1995

- Managed a division with a budget of \$10 million.
- Led institutional efforts to develop adult degree-completion programs and encouraged educational initiatives in distance learning and accelerated liberal arts courses.
- Supervised over 50 employees in the offices of admissions, financial aid, registrar, enrollment research, degree completion, and graduate education.

Vice President for External Relations: 1991-1994

- Brought together the enrollment management and external relations functions into an integrated marketing effort.
- Initiated an institutional student retention program that improved first year to sophomore year retention by nearly twenty percent.
- Led institutional teams mandated to provide long-range enrollment projections and pricing policies.
- Developed a comprehensive, institutional public relations plan that took into account local community bridge-building, institutional fund raising and enrollment goals, as well as 50,000 alumni.
- Organized and recruited members to the first President's Multicultural Advisory Council, a group of nationally known ethnic minority leaders.

Additional Calvin College Roles

- Executive Director, Enrollment Management and College Relations: 1990-1991
- Admissions Development Director: 1977-1990
- Admissions Counselor: 1974-1977

Secondary Education Teacher: Byron Center, Michigan 1971-1974

Professional recognition

- Fuller Theological Seminary Student Service Award 1996-1997.
- First Recipient of the Admissions Officer of the Year 1988, The National Association of Christian College Admissions Officers.
- Coalition of Christian Colleges Fellow: 1987.

External service

- Board member, Maranatha High School 2001-2005
- Board member, Recuperation Center 1994-1995
- Member, Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Business and Ethics Council 1991-1995

- Board member, Heartside Ministry (organization for the homeless) 1993-1995, President 1994-1995
- Board member, Camp Tall Turf (camp for inner-city youth) 1991-1995
- Member, Leadership Grand Rapids 1993-1995
- Board member Grand Rapids Christian School Association 1985-1988
- Several terms as a church board member

Appendix F

Sustaining Congregational Excellence Implementation Plan

I. Overview

The plan that follows is intended to foster health and excellence of ministry in all CRC congregations while directing financial assistance specifically to smaller congregations. It delineates the scope and describes the history and context of this proposal and defines *smaller congregation*. It then provides an analysis of congregational health. At its heart is a recommended two-year program for communication and coordination of services to all congregations while providing grants, learning events, and coaching to smaller congregations.

The plan recommends that the project be administered by a part-time project administrator and part-time assistant reporting to a project director in the Denominational Office. A diverse implementation team and a smaller advisory council will also play key roles.

The plan identifies a desired impact and outcomes, potential obstacles, and a process for evaluating the project. Finally, it proposes a budget for distributing the approximately \$900,000 annually that will be generated for this purpose by the \$10 ministry share approved by synod in 2005 and again in 2006. If approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, implementation of Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) would begin in March 2007.

II. Introduction

This plan for a Sustaining Congregational Excellence project responds to a decision of Synod 2006. Acting on a recommendation from the Board of Trustees (BOT), synod requested that a plan be prepared to “promote healthy congregations using the \$10 ministry share approved by Synod 2005 to assist local churches, directed specifically toward smaller congregations” (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 720). Later in its session, synod renewed the ministry share for another year. This plan therefore covers a two-year period, from January 2007 through December 2008, but the project can be extended should the BOT and synod decide to do so.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence is one effort among several currently underway to implement the denomination’s priority to create and sustain healthy congregations. This priority was adopted by Synod 2004 out of a concern that too many local churches—especially smaller ones—struggled financially and lacked vitality. It also reflected a perception that not enough attention and resources were being directed to the local church and that existing resources were being provided in a fragmented way.

A team of five prepared this plan: Rev. Michael Bruinooge, Denominational Office (team leader); Rev. Allen Likkel, Christian Reformed Home Missions; Rev. Kathy Smith, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary; Rev.

Duane Visser, Office of Pastor-Church Relations; and Ms. Lis Van Harten, Denominational Office. The team intentionally sought the ideas of many people for how this project should be structured, particularly pastors and elders of smaller congregations. Their thoughts were extremely valuable and have significantly shaped this report. Appendix F-1 lists those who either participated in one of eleven focus groups convened throughout Canada and the United States or submitted written comments to the team.

III. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this plan for SCE is to foster health and excellence of ministry in all CRC congregations while directing financial assistance specifically to smaller congregations. It must be added, of course, that although congregational health is a worthy goal—and a worthy denominational priority—it is still not an end in itself. Our vision and our ultimate purpose is to see congregations giving glory to God and being used by him to transform lives and communities. Indeed, *health* implies this very result.

A. Definition

For this project, *smaller congregation* is defined as one having one hundred or fewer confessing adult members. However, the definition of this term is elastic—at least in Protestant circles. In some other denominations, a church of one hundred members is regarded as moderate in size. We prefer to think larger (one hundred) rather than smaller (fifty) when it comes to a definition so as to increase the number of congregations eligible for assistance. The number *one hundred* should be a guideline, not an absolute line of demarcation.

The definition above should not imply that all smaller congregations are alike. They are not. A rural church differs from an urban or suburban congregation. A monocultural church differs from a multicultural church. A Korean first generation fellowship differs from a second generation fellowship. Some smaller churches are vibrant, others are not. Some smaller churches have financial difficulties, others do not.

B. Self-esteem

One theme the planning team heard consistently was that pastors and members of smaller congregations feel stigmatized because they are small. The leaders of smaller congregations say that they sense disapproval within mainstream CRC culture and that this comes from an unspoken assumption that because a church is small, it must be unhealthy in some way. They challenge the view that if a pastor does not make a career move from small church to larger church, then he or she is not a quality leader—a success.

The planning team cannot say strongly enough that if these attitudes are present—and we think they are—they are wrong and must be opposed. Congregational health has nothing to do with size. A larger church can be unhealthy, a smaller one healthy—and vice-versa. One goal of SCE is to strengthen the self-esteem of smaller congregations and their pastors. SCE and other leaders should affirm regularly that “small is OK” and, in fact, often beautiful. The denomination’s leaders and Calvin Theological Seminary should equip and encourage pastors specifically for smaller church ministry. They should affirm in their calling those pastors who seek out ministry in smaller congregations.

At the same time, it is important to say that growth is good. Growth has many dimensions. Growth in size is one of them, and it is an indicator of health if it means a church is witnessing to and enfolding new believers. A healthy congregation should strive to grow in a variety of ways.

C. Limitations

Sustaining Congregational Excellence can advance the denominational priority. It can have a measurable impact on congregational health, but it is important to note that there are limits to the needs that SCE can address. First, it does not address the budget needs that smaller congregations feel—specifically in their capacity to pay pastors’ pension costs and health benefits. Many smaller churches are struggling financially, so pastors are feeling the pinch in reduced income and financial security. Several years ago, synod made a difficult decision to stop giving financial assistance to churches for pension costs. SCE is not intended to provide financial support for basic budget needs such as these. These must be addressed by other mechanisms, if at all, and denominational leaders are currently assessing possible courses of action. Second, this plan does not address questions such as the status and future of support for heritage churches as currently administered by Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM). Third, it does not address the needs of certain regions and clusters of congregations for interagency-based leadership strategies. Finally, it does not answer a host of detailed questions that must be decided during the implementation phase, such as the steps required to submit a grant proposal, or the content of an SCE website.

It is our hope, however, that as the SCE staff and teams proposed below begin their work they will be able to address not only questions of implementation detail but also questions of broader strategic direction and recommend action that leads to a better integration of the services provided by CRCNA ministries to local congregations.

IV. History and context

The need for support for smaller congregations was first mentioned in the CRC in 1936. Since then, through the Fund for Needy Churches (FNC—later renamed the Fund for Smaller Churches), a variety of assistance has been channeled to smaller churches. Various annual synods have debated strategies for meeting the needs of churches in financial difficulty, churches of particular historical value to the denomination, ethnic minority churches, and churches in transition, (churches that have lost their only pastor and not yet found a new one).

In all this, Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) has figured prominently. Although its mandate stresses evangelism and church planting in the home context of North America, it has also, over the years, provided a variety of consultation and training services to established churches. In 1999, synod asked CRHM to take on responsibility for smaller churches—a responsibility it had once had but then lost when the FNC was given independent status. Since then, CRHM has had an active smaller-church staff team that has given training, consultation, and support to this group of congregations. The story of smaller church funding and ministry in the CRCNA is told in Appendix F-2, Concise Overview of Smaller Church Funding and Ministry in the CRCNA: 1936-2006.

The concern of the BOT for the vitality of local congregations (not just smaller ones) dates from February 2004. At its regular meeting, the Board reviewed the recommendation of a special Board committee and accepted “as the denominational priority for the next five to ten years the creating and sustaining of healthy local congregations in North America.” The following June, Synod 2004 adopted this priority.

A year later, in February 2005, the Board received the report of a follow-up committee. This time the board accepted and endorsed the following:

- Ten common characteristics of healthy congregations,
- A motion to establish a resource group of three to five local congregational advocates to serve as a proactive link between local congregations and the denomination, and
- A request that the Denominational Office design and implement a plan to raise the level of awareness and ownership of the denominational priority throughout the agencies and institutions of the CRC.

Implementation of the Board’s second recommendation has been postponed in order to learn from the experience of SCE how such a resource group can best be deployed. In section VII, D below, there is a suggestion for how this concept can be introduced. Implementation of the Board’s third recommendation is occurring through the objectives, measures, targets, and communications of the CRCNA Ministries Plan Scorecard.

Excerpts from the February 2005 report to the BOT, including the full recommendations and grounds for them, can be found in Appendix F-3. A variety of other services are provided to congregations of all sizes by the agencies and institutions of the CRC. Many of these are listed in Appendix F-4.

The most recent denominational initiatives used to assist local congregations has been an indirect one. In 2002, the CRC received a \$2 million five-year grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., for a project to Sustain Pastoral Excellence (SPE). The SPE project was created to support pastors but with the assumption that healthy pastors would also contribute to healthy congregations. Through peer learning groups, continuing education events, and enhanced mentoring services, over half the denomination’s pastors (and their congregations) have benefited from SPE in one way or another.

Because of the positive impact of SPE in the life of the Christian Reformed Church, and its widely perceived success, this SCE plan uses SPE as a model, not just by adapting its name but also by using many of its elements. These include:

- An interagency approach to administration,
- Low overhead,
- Encouragement of creativity in grant proposals,
- Relatively simple application and approval processes,
- Referral of proposals to other funding sources when possible, and
- Use of a variety of communication methods to demonstrate appreciation for, and understanding of, congregations and their leaders.

A final aspect of the history and context of SCE is the trend in CRC ministries toward both greater administrative collaboration and greater responsiveness to congregations. Local churches have let it be known that they expect these behaviors. The Board of Trustees has demanded them. The

Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP) has encouraged them. The denomination's executive and agency leadership have been increasingly sensitive to the need for them. A prime example of this trend is the adoption of a DMP objective called Ministries of Choice. By adopting it, CRCNA agencies and institutions are saying to congregations: "We don't presume on your loyalty. We need to listen far better to you—in fact, to shape our programs and services around your perceptions of what is needed in the local church and in the world. We also need to administer our ministries so well on your behalf—with collaboration, efficiency, and quality—that you *choose* to support these ministries with your ministry shares, additional gifts, and prayers."

It was perhaps partly with the above in mind that Synod 2005 insisted that services provided to local congregations be unified in the future. Synod asked that the Board of Trustees work with CRHM to ensure such unity. The SCE project is an important step in that direction.

V. Analysis: The healthy congregation

What is a healthy congregation? What makes a congregation healthier? There is no better place to look for answers than the book of Acts, chapter 2, where the earliest Christian community is described. Verse 42 says, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (NIV). The story is descriptive, not prescriptive, but it demonstrates that God blesses the church that gives single-minded attention to teaching, fellowship, the sacraments, and prayer. Any list of characteristics of the healthy Christian church needs to start with these.

There is no shortage of such lists, especially in our North American context today where scholars, researchers, and consultants abound. The lists are similar, differing only at the margins. One of them, promulgated by Natural Church Development (NCD), is probably the best known and most applied in North American Protestant churches today. Many Christian Reformed Churches have profited from NCD analysis.

That there is a variety of lists should tell us that no analysis is definitive. Yet, some are more valuable than others—or more pertinent to our own denominational heritage and polity. The Board of Trustees' own descriptive list of ten characteristics of healthy congregations was cited above. The SCE planning committee finds it to be an excellent reflection of biblical and Reformed themes and an analysis that can be the foundation for SCE.

The Board said that healthy churches:

- Proclaim God's Word with power and integrity,
- Assemble for worship in joyful awe,
- Receive the gospel promises in the sacraments,
- Nurture and teach members for discipleship,
- Center congregational life in prayer,
- Commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally,
- Promote genuine loving fellowship,
- Advocate justice for the poor and the powerless,
- Encourage servant (or shepherding) leadership, and
- Practice mutual accountability.

We believe that these practices are essential; they are prerequisites for congregational health. In our focus groups of pastors and elders this past fall, they resonated well. Interestingly, that did not stop participants from mentioning other practices that in their view are essential to health. We might ask in response: Is fervent, disciplined attention to the ten practices above not enough to ensure vitality?

Perhaps the answer is that while the ten are essential and foundational, they are not always sufficient. What else is needed may depend on the local context. Or perhaps the answer is that we never know everything that contributes to life, vitality, and growth in the local church. As with effective leadership, there is a mystery to church health. You know it when you see it, but you do not always know exactly what is causing it. Sometimes, there is a confluence of factors that we do not completely understand. Sometimes, the Spirit showers blessings upon us, and we simply say, "Thank you, Lord." Sometimes God withholds such blessings and none of our analysis and willingness to change helps. We remember then that we are called to pray, stand firm in hope, be faithful to the gospel, and stay open to what God may be teaching us.

That said, it is true that much of the time pastors, ministry staff, and other congregational leaders can foster healthful change through a variety of actions, such as self-examination, training, and NCD analysis. Thus, while they give primary attention to the ten attributes of health above, they should also give serious consideration to:

- Practicing better stewardship,
- Learning conflict management skills,
- Studying the principles of Christian community development,
- Learning how to lead change,
- Taking good care of the pastor's spouse as well as the pastor,
- Helping the congregation know how to manage its anxieties,
- Learning that they cannot do everything—especially if they are small—so do a few things well,
- Becoming more flexible about some nonessential practices in order to attract newcomers,
- Learning what it means to be multicultural,
- Exploring new models of pastoring such as bi-vocational pastorates or sharing pastors between churches.
- Finding a good congregational coach ,
- Providing ongoing training for elders, deacons, and ministry staff—and using peer learning groups as much as possible, or
- Partnering for learning or programming with other congregations or with the classis, *or even*
- Being open to ending the life of their congregation if that leads to spiritual renewal in some other setting.

Some say that an infallible mark of the healthy church is plenty of laughter—a sign of living relaxed in God's forgiving embrace—so learn to laugh more. That is surely worth consideration too.

Frequently, the planning team heard the observation that what contributes most to congregational health is a healthy pastor; therefore, we should tend to the pastor's needs. There is much truth in this, and it suggests an overlap between SCE and SPE. If we continue to foster the learning, spiritual

wholeness, and general well-being of pastors, we will contribute to the health of their congregations.

One of the most trenchant observations about congregational health that we heard came from Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Peter Bush, who described the key attitude of a healthy church as, “It’s not about us. It’s about God’s glory—worship. It’s about God’s will—prayer. It’s about being used by God—mission. It’s about following God—sacrifice. An unhealthy church is one that has started to think it is about itself and the people already in the pews. A healthy congregation is one that knows it is not about them. And this has nothing to do with size.”

What, then, should a congregation first do if it wants to become healthier? Distilling the advice of the many people it listened to, the planning team suggests three things:

- Pray—in every way and with as much participation as you can. Confess your sins. Thank God for his gifts. Pray for each other. Pray for enemies. Intercede for your community, your country, and the world, and especially, *listen*—listen for what God has to say to you. Then, look at the other nine characteristics of a healthy congregation for where you may need to change.
- Develop a sense of purpose—and sacrifice for it. As you go forward, do not try to do everything; do what God has gifted you to do and what suits your context.
- Look outward—discover how God can use you for his loving purposes in your community and in the world.

VI. Analysis: What SCE can do

A. For all congregations

1. Communication

For all congregations, SCE can and should communicate in a variety of ways the themes articulated in this report, including:

- The importance of the local congregation,
- Its role in God’s great transforming work,
- The value of the smaller congregation,
- The need to creatively explore “new wineskins”—new ways of being the church in a changing world,
- The possibilities in partnership—with other churches, big and small, with classes, with other denominations, and with community development organizations.

SCE should also continue to listen to what churches are saying about their needs and about their vision for the denomination. SCE’s communication strategy should use a variety of electronic and print media.

2. Coordination

One unhappy aspect of our current situation is that communication with congregations and the services offered to them are severely fragmented. Each denominational agency and institution relates to local churches in its own way and on its own schedule. There is not near enough coordination

among them. As a result, churches receive more mail than they want, sometimes get mixed messages, and are confused about resources available to them.

This is a bigger problem than SCE can solve, and it is being addressed by others. SCE, however, can and will coordinate its program well with CRHM and Pastor-Church Relations, whose services to local churches are most akin to its own.

B. For smaller congregations

We recommend that SCE assistance be offered in two phases: year one (fiscal 2008) and year two (fiscal 2009). This allows for strengthening the project as it proceeds by learning from experience. We anticipate that during the second year the key program elements identified below can be refined and, in the case of coaching, expanded.

SCE will offer assistance to smaller congregations in three categories: grants, learning events, and coaching.

1. Grants

We propose that there be grants offered to smaller congregations in two categories: (1) for health and renewal, and (2) for technology and equipment.

Grants for health and renewal will cover a broad range of possibilities. The following are merely suggestive: leadership training, transitioning, partnerships of various kinds, coaching, renewal/revisioning, new models of leadership, youth programming, service projects, community transformation, training in racial reconciliation, new ways of being church, and materials for visitors.

Grants for technology and equipment will adopt best practices of the similar program formerly administered by CRHM. Grants will be offered on the assumption that in most cases the resources needed by the congregations are already present there and in the surrounding community. Therefore, their chief purpose is to function as seed money and as a catalyst for creative thinking about ministry and about the health of the church. The principle is not that funding is essential to congregational health but that funds can leverage some actions that are helpful to the congregation.

In every case, churches will be asked to demonstrate the work they have already done that demonstrates a commitment to the goal of the grant. In most cases, churches will be asked to demonstrate what they will contribute to the implementation of the grant in budget dollars or in-kind resources.

In turn, SCE will seek to adopt a process for reviewing and approving grant proposals that balances ease and simplicity with necessary accountability. SCE will try to provide assistance for those churches that need it in applying for grants. In this regard, churches will be encouraged to use NCD or a yet-to-be-prepared CRC assessment tool for evaluating the congregation's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, churches will be encouraged to demonstrate how their proposal is linked to one or more practices identified by SCE as essential or important to congregational health.

SCE will view the grant review process as a dialogue with churches through which mutual learning can occur. In the grant review process, SCE will request the input of the CRHM regional team that is closest geographically to the congregation or classis that is applying for funds. The team will

be asked to provide their analysis rapidly by way of email so that a quick overall review time is possible. Decisions on grants will be made by the implementation team (see below). Classes will be notified concerning grants approved for congregations in their area.

2. Learning events

We propose that up to ten regional peer learning forums be organized annually in various parts of North America for leaders of smaller congregations. This responds to a need expressed often in the focus groups held this fall. These events will last one to two days. Travel and other expenses will be paid by SCE. Their chief purpose will be mutual learning and support in the context of Christian community, but they will also demonstrate interest in and respect for the smaller church setting.

Denominational leaders, seminary professors, or well-recognized resource people from outside of the denomination will lead one or more training sessions. There will be adequate time for discussion. There will be time to share ministry best practices—and time to share problems and loss. Prayer and worship will permeate each event.

3. Coaching

We propose that smaller congregations be offered the assistance of coaches to help them think through their needs and how to address them. During year (phase) one, SCE will simply encourage churches to explore coaching resources in their particular regions as part of the grant dialogue process mentioned above. As possible, SCE will identify available coaches. SCE will provide no financial assistance, however.

During year (phase) two, SCE will, through a simple application process, link churches with SCE recommended coaches. The coaches' expenses and stipend will be paid by SCE. SCE will also devise a process for screening, orienting and—as necessary—training a group of eligible coaches.

VII. Outline of program elements

SCE programming will be offered in two year-long phases, the second pending a satisfactory review of phase one and authorization by the Board of Trustees to continue and to add new elements. A phase three is possible should SCE be extended beyond 2008.

A. *Launch period March – June 2007*

- Convening of implementation team and advisory council (see below),
- Refining implementation details,
- Hiring staff (see below),
- Preparing materials,
- Setting up communication, and
- Mailing information to churches.

B. *Phase one – year one (2007-2008)*

1. New under SCE

- a. Grants – for health and renewal to encourage creativity, including partnerships with other churches and with classes and for equipment and technology.

- b. Events – ongoing regional forums for peer learning (eight to ten per year), using denominational and other staff coordinated by SCE.
 - c. Coaching/consultation – churches are encouraged to explore coaching and consultation resources in their particular regions.
2. Improved coordination of ongoing assistance to smaller congregations with PCR and CRHM

C. Phase two – year two (2008-2009)

Continue phase one elements and add grants for coaching and consultation as well as having certified coaches available.

D. Phase three – year three (2009-2010)

Continue phase one and two elements but add a denominational network of coaches and liaisons for congregations—persons who help them get access to networks and other resources.

Note: In addition to a satisfactory review of SCE to date, this depends on development of a unified approach to assisting local congregations and on allocation of adequate funds for such a network.

VIII. Administrative design

A. Staffing

We propose that SCE be administered by a project director, project administrator, and administrative assistant—all serving part-time.

The proposed project director is Rev. Michael Bruinooge, director of ministry planning. He is also the current project director of SPE, enabling him to coordinate the services of both projects should the SPE grant be renewed beyond 2007 by Lilly Endowment. The project director will be accountable to the executive director of the CRCNA. The proposed project administrator is Ms. Lis Van Harten. She currently serves as administrator of SPE and as such is well placed to coordinate both projects under the terms mentioned above. Ms. Van Harten would have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of SCE. A part-time assistant will likely be hired to assist Ms. Van Harten with administration of the project.

Job descriptions will be written for all three positions.

B. Implementation team

A team of nine to ten volunteers will be recruited by the project director to serve on an implementation team. Members will represent different constituencies of the CRCNA. They will be given a small annual stipend for their service.

The responsibilities of the implementation team will be to decide on grant proposals, advise SCE staff concerning the administration of the project, and assist in evaluating SCE's impact and outcomes. They will meet at least monthly via teleconference and face-to-face meetings.

C. Advisory council

A small council of CRCNA agency representatives and others will be consulted by the project director and administrator periodically in order to enhance coordination of denominational services to congregations and to

advise SCE staff concerning the project's long-term strategies. The council will also assist in evaluating SCE's impact and outcomes.

D. Christian Reformed Home Missions regional teams

Home Missions regional teams will be requested to provide rapid turn-around advice to the implementation team concerning grant proposals from congregations in their region.

E. Christian Reformed Home Missions resource staff

In support of the above program elements, CRHM will discontinue its smaller church team and loan that team's part-time staff person to SCE through fiscal 2008. He will serve as a staff consultant to SCE, coach to smaller congregations, and trainer.

IX. Desired impact and outcomes

SCE's desired impact is evidence that its assistance is contributing to changed and transformed communities. SCE's desired outcomes are:

- New and renewed partnerships between congregations and CRCNA ministries that enhance health and ministry,
- An increasing number of stories current in the denomination concerning congregational growth and health and a decreasing number of stories concerning decline and division,
- A predominance of appreciative over critical comments concerning SCE,
- Emergence of a unified approach among denominational ministries for serving congregations,
- Evidence of greater creativity in congregational structures, leadership, and ministry, and
- A growing number of congregations using tools for assessing congregational health—Natural Church Development or a CRCNA index currently under development.

X. Potential obstacles

The SCE staff and implementation team will need to identify potential obstacles to SCE's success and devise ways to prevent them or address them should they emerge. Some examples are:

- Disappointment in smaller congregations over lack of immediate help in paying ministerial pension and health costs,
- Lack of coordination with CRHM's other grant programs,
- Confusion in congregations about the relationship between SCE and CRHM's programs, and
- Confusion in congregations and among pastors about the differences between SPE and SCE and about the relationship between them.

XI. Evaluation

At the end of each year, SCE staff will prepare a written evaluation of the project. The evaluation at the end of year two will make use of a survey of regional and congregational leaders and conversations with denominational leaders, agency directors, and the SCE implementation team.

The advisory council will provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation of SPE's impact and outcomes.

XII. Budget

Preparation – start-up (March – June 2007)

Line 1	Administration – miscellaneous	\$30,000
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Phase one – year one (2007-2008)

Line 2	Administration – publicity, training, and resources	20,000
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Line 3	Administration – travel	7,000
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Line 4	Administration – supplies	3,000
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Line 5	Administration – staff	40,000
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Line 6	Program – grants for health and renewal	625,000
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Line 7	Program – grants for equipment and technology	75,000
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Line 8	Program – peer events	100,000
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Total		\$870,000
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Phase two – year two (2008-2009)

Line 9	Administration – publicity, training, and resources	25,000
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Line 10	Administration – travel	7,000
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Line 11	Administration – supplies	3,000
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Line 12	Administration – staff	40,000
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Line 13	Program – grants for health and renewal	575,000
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Line 14	Program – grant for equipment and technology	75,000
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Line 15	Program – peer events	100,000
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Line 16	Program – coaching network	75,000
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Total		\$900,000
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XIII. Budget narrative

A. 2006-2007

Line 1 – \$30,000 Administration—miscellaneous: For preparation, printing, and distribution of a brochure, translation costs, travel to classes, mailings to churches, and staff salaries.

B. 2007-2008

Line 2 – \$20,000 Administration—publicity and training: Ongoing publicity and training costs will include mailings, writing and editing of materials, and website design and maintenance.

Line 3 – \$7,000 Administration—travel: Funds will enable visits to classes for publicity and informational purposes, visits to congregations for consultation, and travel involved in preparation for and hosting of learning events for smaller congregations.

Line 4 – \$3,000 Administration—supplies: Needed supplies include paper, computer, desk, and maintenance and repair.

Line 5 – \$40,000 Administration—staff: Salaries and benefits for administrator and administrative assistant.

Line 6 – \$625,000 Program—grants for health and renewal: Grants to congregations, clusters of congregations, and classes for programmatic, visioning,

and partnering initiatives that foster health, vitality, and ministry; if grants average \$7,500, eighty-three congregations or clusters can be served.

Line 7 – \$75,000 Program—grants for equipment and technology: Grants to congregations for equipment—computers, printers, audio and video technology, software and more—that demonstrably assists ministry.

Line 8 – \$100,000 Program—peer events: Regional forums for pastors, elders, and other congregational leaders for the purpose of training, exploring best practices, and mutual support; funds to be used for trainer stipends and travel and related expenses.

C. 2008-2009

Line 9 – \$25,000 Administration—publicity: See narrative for line 2

Line 10 – \$7,000 Administration—travel: See narrative for line 3

Line 11 – \$3,000 Administration—supplies: See narrative for line 4

Line 12 – \$40,000 Administration—staff: See narrative for line 5

Line 13 – \$575,000 Program—grants for health and renewal: See narrative for line 6

Line 14 – \$75,000 Program—grants for equipment and technology: See narrative for line 7

Line 15 – \$100,000 Program—peer events: See narrative for line 8

Line 16 – \$75,000 Program—coaching network: Stipends and training for coaches who assist congregations.

Appendix F-1

List of Focus Groups and Individuals Submitting Comment

I. Focus Groups (11)

A. July 21, 2006 – Zeeland, MI (for western and northern Michigan classes)

1. Contributors – J. Aukema, J. Berghuis, H. De Vries, P. De Vries, K. Gebben, J. Karsten, K. Koning, C. Moore, D. Posie, J. Pruijm, P. Slager, V. Swierenga, C. Van Haitsma, J. Vugteveen, L. Weeks.
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, L. Van Harten, M. Bruinooge

B. August 30 – Albuquerque, NM (U.S. western and southwestern classes)

1. Contributors – R. Bouwman, A. Carlisle, D. Draayer, J. Dykhuis, T. Dykman, J. Greydanus, M. Harberts, D. Hornor, W. Lee, T. Pettinga, R. Raak, S. Ten Clay, T. Vander Ziel,
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, J. Holleman, M. Bruinooge

C. August 31 – Rochester, MN (U.S. midwestern classes)

1. Contributors – A. Blik, L. Cooper, T. Grotenhuis, G. Kasprzak, G. McGuire, H. Newhouse, T. Niehof, S. Schulz, D. Sweeney, J. Te Brake, A. Vermaak, B. Versluys, D. Vos, M. Vos, M. Winnowski, M. Vos.
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, M. Bruinooge, L. Meyer

D. September 6 – Ridgewood, NJ (U.S. east coast classes)

1. Contributors – B. Averill, M. Avila, C. Broek, S. Holmes, P. Ingeneri, R. Orostizaga, B. Pennings, D. Van Dalen, J. Vandelune,
2. Staff present – L. Van Harten, D. Angus, M. Bruinooge

E. October 4 – Los Angeles, CA (Korean pastors)

1. Contributors – S.C. Choi, J. Chun, J.S. Han, P. Im, Y.C. Jin, D.I. Kim, J. Kim, S. Kim, T.K. Ko, D. Kong, M.S. Lee, J.K. Lee, T. Lim, B.D. Min, S.M. Moon, J.S.H. Oh, C.H. Park, H.J. Park, J.H. Park, O.S. Seo, D. Suh, C.D. Yoon
2. Staff present – T. Park, M. Bruinooge

F. October 5 – Ottawa, ON (eastern Canada classes)

1. Contributors – J. Boer, B. Berghout, H. Huyer, G. Luimes, B. Ponsen, D. Tigchelaar, H. Vanderbeek, D. Vroeghe
2. Staff present – B. Adema, B. Vandezande, G. Postma

G. October 9 – Orlando, FL (classis Florida and Hispanic pastors)

1. Contributors – M. Bersach, F. Fernandez, R. Harris, J. Jung, K. Olsen, N. Piersma, D. Ridder, W. Schmeltz, P. Toledo, J. Torres
2. Staff present: J. Dykstra, S. Workman

H. October 26 – Red Deer, AB (western Canada classes)

1. Contributors – B. Adema, R. Bodini, M. Booy, W. Delleman, F. Friesen, S. Groothof, J. Hart, C. Koogers, D. Meinema, H. Steenbergen, P. Vander Beek, R. Visser, A. Westluyk
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, M. Contant, M. Bruinooge

I. November 2 – London, ON (southwest Ontario classes)

1. Contributors – H. Boot, D. Bouma, F. De Boer, D. Edgar, W. Gerrys, B. Kamerman, G. Kraayenbrink, M. Rodenburg, G. Rowaan, A. Rupke, S. Speelman, E. Tenyenhuis, D. VandeKamp, H. Vander Ende, R. Vander Vaart, B. Velthuisen, F. Witteveen
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, B. Adema, M. Bruinooge

J. November 29 – Western Michigan (northern Michigan and Lake Erie)

1. Contributors – J. Blom, T. De Vries, A. Eising, D.J. abaay, S. Na, B. Ridder, R. Stevenson, J. Vanderburgh, M. Van't Hof, A. Van Whye
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, L. Van Harten, M. Bruinooge

K. November 30 – Seattle, WA (western U.S. classes)

1. Contributors – P. Armstrong, J. Ellenbaas, R. Jansons, J. Kamphuis, B. Katte, D. Kuiper, B. Lappenga, C. Ledebouer, E. Likkel, A. Mullinix, T. Toeset, J. Westra
2. Staff present – J. Dykstra, M. Bruinooge

II. Individuals submitting written comments

- CRHM staff – D. Ackerman, D. Angus, B. Becksvort, P. De Vries, J. Holleman, L. Meyer, T. Park, W. Van Groningen
- CRWRC staff – J. Van Groningen
- Canadian pastors – P. Vander Beek, W. Veenstra, R. Visser, K. Wilk
- Canadian elders and deacons – B. Potma, Neil R.
- U.S. elders – S. Ten Clay

- U.S. pastors – R. Jansons, D. Koll, T. Leunk (and peer learning group), G. Maguire
- Pastors of other denominations – P. Bush, C. O’Reilly, J. Smith, D. Welscott

Note: Many others gave informal input to planning committee members, including BOT members, pastors, and agency and seminary staff. Summaries of comments made at each focus group are available upon request by writing Ms. Lis Van Harten at vanhartl@crcna.org or calling 616-224-0805.

Appendix F-2

Concise Overview of Smaller Church Funding and Ministry in the CRCNA: 1936 – 2006

Support for smaller churches is first mentioned in 1936. This became known as the Fund for Needy Churches (FNC) as part of the work of Home Missions. The system was tweaked periodically and in 1958 became an entity separate from Home Missions. Over the next thirty years the number of congregations in the CRC nearly doubled. During that period, the number of smaller congregations more than tripled. By the late 1980s, the system was showing signs of strain, and it was clear that change was needed.

Though salary support for the pastor remained the key feature, Synod 1988 made a number of changes, replacing *needy* with *smaller*, introducing a quota-reduction plan (dropped by Synod 1997), reducing the size of salary grants, and deciding on rules for funding termination.

At Synod 1994, a task force appointed by a previous synod set the stage for significant change when it reported a number of stresses on the system of supporting small churches, including most notably stagnation of growth and enthusiasm in funded churches.

Synods 1994 and 1995 strongly affirmed the conclusions of earlier synods: Incentives for change and creativity within congregations are lessened by the presence of long-term financial assistance from the denomination. For example, the presence of an ordained pastor may not be necessary for a church to minister effectively. Such presence may be helpful, comforting, and desirable, but it is not necessary. Long-term subsidies often stymie the consideration of creative alternatives.

As a result, Synod 1995 set a terminal point for the funding of all FSC-supported churches by mandating a reduction schedule that would end funding in ten years except in certain cases where the classis judges the ministry to be of such a crucial nature or of such historical significance that classis normally contributes at a rate of one dollar for every two dollars contributed by FSC. (This is the seed for the Heritage Church class, which was established by Synod 1999.)

The direction set by Synods 1994 and 1995 found resonance in Synod 1999 when it terminated the Fund for Smaller churches and transferred the responsibility for smaller churches back to Home Missions where it had begun years earlier. Synod agreed to honor the Fund for Smaller Churches’ declining funding track for churches already involved. This phase-out of FSC concluded in December 2005, a decade after it was initiated by synod.

What changed (or began to change) in 1999? The Report of the Task Force on the Support of Smaller Churches in the CRC (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 35-41) provides the background for understanding the changes that resulted. That report noted that much, if not all, of the impetus for these changes had crystallized in the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee report in January 1998. That report requested that the responsibilities of the FSC “be transferred to Christian Reformed Home Missions, which would emphasize ministry development in smaller churches rather than salary support.” The entire report, and especially that line, is seminal for how support for smaller churches has developed within CRHM. In short, the FSC “believes that the time has come for the CRCNA to get away from what is essentially a salary-subsidy program and begin investing in ministry instead. This distinction is more than a matter of semantics; it constitutes a fundamental shift in thinking that will, in the end, be helpful to smaller churches and stewardly in the use of denominational funds.” The report noted that “the FSC committee is not in a position to follow up with churches to check progress or to offer advice, training, and encouragement.” With exceptional foresight, the committee report detailed potential benefits as well as likely challenges and potential impact.

To develop new program and consultative support for smaller established churches (150 or fewer total members or fewer than 100 professing members) Home Missions responded by listening to and planning with smaller church leaders. Following synod’s direction, it emphasized ministry development in smaller churches rather than salary support. This was implemented in part by paid staff with passion and expertise in smaller church ministry. Smaller churches now had “some of their own” inside the system. This multifaceted—listening, learning, leading, resourcing—approach included:

- Smaller church networks, seminars, specialized consultations, and *Thrive* newsletter to and by smaller churches.
- Program grants in amounts up to \$5000 (\$2 received in grant funding for every \$1 spent).
- Technology update grants up to \$800.
- Continuing education grants up to \$600 for pastors and other leaders.

Home Missions also administered the Heritage Church program established by synod for a handful of churches that are of a crucial nature or of historical significance, at a maximum of \$25,000 per year.

In spite of the expanded ministry of Home Missions, it became apparent that the decision of Synod 1995 to phase out FSC salary support had consequences for some smaller churches and the pastors who serve them. In their attempts to deal with the reduction of support, many of these churches froze or reduced the compensation packages provided to their pastors. As these churches and their pastors began to feel the reality of these changes, they also began to direct their concerns and frustrations toward Home Missions and the denominational leadership.

In May 2001, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA appointed a Smaller Church Compensation and Subsidy Review Committee (SCC & SRC). In its two reports to the BOT (2002 and 2003), this diverse group noted two distinct perspectives in approaching assistance to smaller congregations: a concern for pastors and their financial well-being and a concern for the smaller churches

and their ability to do, provide, and support ministry within the local setting. Though these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and often work together for the mutual benefit of both pastors and churches, they do reflect the tensions that are often felt. That report concluded with a number of recommendations, based on the premise that the key to successful ministry support is a system that provides both for the well-being of the pastor and assures the long-term health and ministry of the local congregation.

In February 2003, Home Missions transferred funding for the churches of Classis Red Mesa from new church development to its smaller church program with the understanding that funding would continue under the guidelines for continuation funding for Classis Red Mesa churches (primarily pastoral compensation) until new funding approaches were developed.

Smaller congregations felt the financial squeeze even more after Synod 2003 mandated that each smaller church pay the complete pension cost of its pastor. Previously, the cost had been pro-rated with the smallest congregations paying only part of the cost. With skyrocketing medical costs, synod requested special offerings and funding assistance from the CRC Foundation Board, though that made little dent in the difficulties.

In September 2003, Classis Red Mesa adopted a formative document entitled: "Missioned to Mission: Framework for Classis Red Mesa Vision and Goals." In 2004, after nearly four years of work by Classis Red Mesa and CRHM leaders, the "Financial Partnering Task Force Report" was affirmed by all parties. This superb foundational and comprehensive document established unifying principles, guidelines, and a framework for expanded partnership. Though necessarily including key components of financial partnering, consultation, and process, it did so within the perspective of a vision of congregational health and indigenous leadership development.

In February 2004, a new three-part funding plan—additional assistance for smaller churches—was endorsed by the CRHM board as a response to the request of the BOT and its SCC & SRC for implementation in fiscal year 2006. These additional subsidies and helps include:

- Time-limited subsidies under the heritage church guidelines. (This grant is now called: Smaller Church Redevelopment Funding.)
- Contextualized assistance for other churches in unique situations, such as certain Classis Red Mesa churches. (This Smaller Church Transition Funding currently includes two pilot churches: Bethel CRC, Shiprock, NM; Lawndale CRC, Lawndale, IL.)
- Matching grants to qualifying churches for insurance and pension costs only. (This Assistance for Insurance and/or Pension has not been included in the Home Missions budget because broader denominational discussions were pending.)

A sample of recent Home Missions initiatives include a pilot project for an online course in smaller church ministry and leadership through Kuyper College and an electronic newsletter for smaller churches (*e-Thrive!*). On the horizon, are clusters for peer learning and support (various ethnic groups, bivocational pastors), a coaching network for leaders of smaller churches, upgraded ministry with ethnic or multiethnic smaller churches, and online discussion forums on topics of critical interest to smaller churches.

Synod 2005 instructed the BOT and Home Missions to formulate a unified plan regarding assistance to smaller congregations and to assist the development of healthy congregations in such a way that gives meaningful expression to the covenant underlying our denominational relationships. In response, Synod 2006 created a Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) project to promote healthy congregations. SCE is to use the \$10 ministry share approved by Synod 2005 to assist local churches and is directed specifically toward smaller congregations. It also requested that the executive director recommend to the BOT the most effective way to structure the denomination's ministries so as to implement the priority of healthy congregations.

Appendix F-3

Report of the Board of Trustees Ministries Priorities Committee, February 2005 (Excerpts)

I. Vision for healthy churches

All the churches of our denomination are active, thriving, healthy, mission-focused communities of God's grace, in which God's forgiveness through Christ Jesus is experienced and relationships are restored. Our wholistic ministries, shaped in obedience to God's expectations, are initiated and sustained through prayer. Our churches equip members who freely, joyfully, and prayerfully grow into the likeness of Christ as they live out their faith, building God's kingdom in all they do.

II. Common characteristics of healthy churches

In view of Synod 2004's endorsement of this committee's goals, and in harmony with our Denominational Ministries Plan, we offer the following reflections on the characteristics of healthy local congregations. Healthy congregations are not unreachable ideals. They are communities of Christ's people who are surrounded by the complexities of a sinful culture and know its invasive power in their hearts. Yet, the Holy Spirit brings order to the disorderly lives of individual members and communities. Their influence reaches outward to season their local communities and minister worldwide through denominational mission agencies.

As Jesus' disciples gathered around him in the moments prior to his ascension to heaven, they heard Jesus' final command to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Since that day, the church has been about making disciples, baptizing them into the body of Christ, and teaching them to follow his teaching. Not only is every Christian called to be a disciple maker, but every church, every local congregation, is called to obey this Great Commission. While what follows are common characteristics of healthy churches, it must be understood that at the heart of every healthy congregation is the desire to make disciples.

Briefly, a healthy congregation is a Holy Spirit filled gathering of people called by Jesus Christ to be salt and light in the world. Acts 2 describes the freshly born Pentecost church as a growing gathering of baptized believers committed to following Christ. Central to that commitment was a devotion to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship of believers. They spent their time in prayer and the breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), while freely sharing their money and possessions. The church's leaders and members lived as

responsible citizens of the Roman Empire but also challenged the authorities with the lordship of Christ. The apostles were also concerned with justice for suffering widows and fairness for the poor, calling deacons to this service. Their lives filled with awe and wonder as the Holy Spirit transformed them and those around them with great joy and praise, even in the face of opposition. God blessed the church and added many people to it, as the thrilling conclusion in Acts 2:47 to the newly born church emphasizes.

This church soon faced new challenges and opportunities. When difficulties and disobedience arose within the body, church discipline promoted moral accountability and engendered respect for God and others. As the church began to grow, it experienced persecution, yet God used such adversity to scatter its members, thereby spreading the gospel throughout the world. Later, God spoke directly to Peter and Paul, commanding them to reach out to the world. Even through the temptation of spiritual elitism witnessed in Acts 15, the church took seriously Christ's command to make disciples. Soon the gospel message permeated the Roman Empire. Within their struggles, these early churches exemplified healthy communities of Christ's disciples.

Twenty-first century churches and Christians can use reports and examples of God's people from all of Scripture as benchmarks to dream, plan, and live their own lives as God's imperfect—yet redeemed and striving—people. No matter what their current situation, thousands of years removed from earlier members of God's family, contemporary Christians know God has been there before, having worked before and working still in our confusing yet exhilarating circumstances.

Such vital and healthy Christian communities still live today. Authors such as Christian Swartz (*Natural Church Development*), Waldo Werning (*Twelve Pillars of a Healthy Church*), and Peter Steinke (*Healthy Congregations*) have provided language to identify such communities. The Christian Reformed Church recognizes the value of the work these and others have provided for us. We gratefully use it as we explore the picture of the early church painted by God in the Bible.

Ongoing study of the early church has led to the awareness that healthy congregations share certain common characteristics that are not utopian but visible and powerful testimonies to God's work among his people. To that end, we offer the following brief list of characteristics seen among healthy gatherings of God's people to which the Bible gives witness in different times and places of history. We recognize that this list is not exhaustive. Yet, it is representative, comprehensible, and thus useful for God's people today. Furthermore, it is also encouraging to recognize that agencies of the Christian Reformed Church with mandates to spread God's good news have often incorporated such characteristics in their own work and histories. Thus, it will come as no surprise that the work of The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has contributed to many of the themes, insights, and suggestions offered in the following pages for local CRCs to keep developing their own spiritual health.

We offer the following characteristics of healthy churches that are seen in the biblical history of God's people. Healthy churches:

- Proclaim God’s Word with power and integrity.
- Assemble for worship in joyful awe.
- Receive the gospel promises in the sacraments.
- Nurture and teach members for discipleship
- Center congregational life in prayer.
- Commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally
- Promote genuine loving fellowship.
- Advocate justice for the poor and powerless.
- Encourage servant leadership.
- Practice mutual accountability

A. Proclaim God’s Word with power and integrity

Biblically based teaching and preaching is clearly central to being a healthy congregation. Second Timothy 3:16-17 identifies Scripture as “God breathed and . . . useful for teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness so the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” While there are many ways to present these biblical truths to the world, preaching and teaching are still at the forefront. The salvation of the world depends on Holy Spirit-filled, life-changing preaching. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom. 10:14, NIV).

Preaching and teaching are primary modes of communication throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Matthew records Jesus in Matthew 5 as teaching what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ ability to preach and teach amazed his audiences. At one point in his ministry, the crowds responded to his teaching by noting, “he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt. 7:29). When Jesus preached, he did so in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah brought both a message of repentance and a message of hope to Israel, promising that despite their constant rebellion and disobedience God would send a redeemer. Jesus echoed Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:5-6) in his condemnation of religious leaders who do not lead and guide God’s flock in the truth of his word. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

The apostles continued proclaiming the gospel of the risen and ascended Lord. The book of Acts contains several examples of apostolic preaching, and the epistles further deepen its message. The first four centuries of the church’s history give us many examples of biblically and theologically sound preaching from Athanasius to Clement, from Chrysostom to Augustine. In the following centuries, however, preaching seemed to lose its prominent position, and ordinary people often never had an opportunity to hear it.

The Reformers of the sixteenth century led the church back to its earlier emphasis on preaching God’s word. The authors of the Belgic Confession remind us that the true church “engages in the pure preaching of the gospel” (Article 29). At the same time, the invention of the printing press made the Bible available to more people, making it possible for God’s Word to regain prominence in the life of local churches.

The church in twenty-first century North American culture must be careful to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Healthy churches stay focused on God’s word and teach the truth of God’s grace and judgment to an idolatrous, self-centered culture. The kingdom of God can only be understood in the light of the Bible. When churches fail to focus on the truths of Scripture, decline and decay eat away at their effectiveness to be salt and light. As citizens of the kingdom, God calls us to be countercultural. Jesus constantly reminds us that we are different from the world. When the church fails to teach and preach these differences, it fails to bring people to repentance and conversion. Hope for the future of the church profoundly depends on its depth of understanding and willingness to proclaim the Word of God.

B. Assemble before the Lord for worship in joyful awe

The New Testament word for church (ecclesia) is the word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for Israel’s great assemblies before the Lord, such as those described in Exodus 19 and Ezra 9 and 10. Worship describes the event of covenant renewal as God’s people meet before his face. It is dialogical in character in that the congregation engages in a holy conversation with God by listening to God’s Word and responding with praise and dedication. It often leads to an experience of joy or lament, depending on the circumstances of the encounter.

In an age when worship has sometimes become a commodity used to market the church, the true worship of God can get lost in the desire to meet the felt needs of the worshippers—to merely inspire rather than encounter the living God. The focus can easily slip away from God-centered worship to audience-pleasing activities. We are engaged in a conversation that begins with God rather than us. The issue is not whether a church worships in a more traditional mode or uses more contemporary instruments and media. Either can run the danger of being human-centered rather than God-centered.

Christian worship is also profoundly trinitarian in character. We can say that our worship is offered to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. It is through Christ that we have access to the Father by the one Spirit (Eph. 2:18). Paul speaks of Christ as the one who prays for us at the right hand of the Father (Rom. 8:34). Only the Holy Spirit enables us to know God as Father (Gal. 4:6), and confess Jesus Christ as Lord (1 Cor. 12:3).

Because it is the Holy Spirit in our midst who unites us to the Father and the Son, it is also the Holy Spirit who inspires and directs our worship. The active presence of the Holy Spirit determines the life and vitality of worship, not human choices of songs, instruments, or other media. When people only attend out of a sense of Christian duty, rather than out of a desire to stand in the presence of God, true worship cannot result. Healthy congregations are inspired and inspire others to worship God in Spirit and in truth.

Spirit-filled worship points the church toward the true destiny of all creation as envisioned in the Revelation of John to gather before the throne of God and of the Lamb and be “lost in wonder, love, and praise.”

C. Receive the gospel promises in the sacraments

In Acts, baptism and the breaking of bread were always powerfully present as the church proclaimed the gospel and worshipped. The worship of the church is sacramental. That is, certain elements from the stuff of creation make

God and his saving work present to us in worship in ways that go beyond the spoken or written word. Calvin emphasized that, in sacramental worship, God stoops to human weakness. When Christians eat and drink at the Lord's Table, and when they pour the baptismal water, God bends to human senses in order to make his salvation present and real and to confirm the promises of his Word.

Our confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 25-30 and Belgic Confession, Articles 33-35) clearly call us to an understanding of the sacraments as both sign and seal.

For they are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they are not empty and hollow signs to deceive us. For their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing.

(Belgic Confession, Article 33)

What is enacted and sealed in the sacraments is union with Christ in his dying and rising, as well as all the benefits of union with Christ. Christians receive these benefits by faith and through the Holy Spirit. In the Reformed tradition, sacraments are not mere ordinances—something Christ told his people to do—but the powerful means through which God works his grace in human hearts through faith. In other words, worshipers do not give meaning to the sacraments by their thoughtful faith; rather, God works directly through the sacraments, and faith receives what God has to give in them.

Reformed Christians must always view the sacraments as powerful material ways in which God affirms and deepens our faith. Joyfully celebrated and properly understood, they will ground and revitalize Christian worship in our churches.

D. Nurture and teach members for discipleship

Jesus commands the church to make disciples by “baptizing . . . and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19). In dependence on the Holy Spirit, healthy churches seek to form disciples of Jesus Christ by teaching and training them to serve him in every area of life in God's world and God's kingdom. In ways that address minds, hearts, and hands, they endeavor to tell the great drama of God and his salvation, from creation to new creation, from the Fall to redemption in Jesus Christ.

This teaching is anchored in the wonderful gift of divine revelation, the holy Scripture, and utilizes the riches of the whole Christian tradition, especially its creeds and confessions. The goal of the church's teaching is not mere knowledge but an obedient life in which members of Christ's body eagerly seek to live by the shape of God's kingdom and develop and exercise the manifold gifts of the Spirit in the church and in the world.

Teaching and learning begins as soon as the baptismal waters draw people into union with Christ and continue until we see Christ in his glory and beyond. Healthy churches, in concert with the home and Christian day schools, take great care to provide for the Christian education of their youth whom God has claimed in the covenant of baptism, and the church has promised to nurture in faith so that the light of Christ may shine from generation to generation. They must also enable and encourage all their members, from new converts to third-term elders, to grow in the likeness of Christ so that they may love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love their neighbors as themselves.

E. Center congregational life in prayer

It is clear from the early chapters of Acts that the early church was devoted to prayer and that Luke wants us to see that prayer was a key to its growth and vitality. Healthy churches are praying churches. The prayer life of these churches is not limited to corporate prayer, as important as that is for the church. In addition to organized group prayer, members of healthy churches are passionate about prayer, both within the church and in their personal lives. These people characterize prayer as central to their life in Christ. Such enthusiasm about prayer has been demonstrated to raise the level of passionate spirituality within a local congregation. Christian Swartz identifies this passionate spirituality as one of the eight essential qualities of healthy churches.

Healthy churches teach and practice prayer. A vital prayer life does not just happen; it is modeled and taught. When people gifted in prayer lead prayer in worship, congregations learn the shape of true prayer. When members tell the stories of prayers answered in direct and powerful ways, the congregation is encouraged to be faithful in prayer. When people gifted in prayer teach the wide scope of the practice of prayer, people are enabled to find their own distinctive style and method. When congregations bathe every ministry, meeting, and activity in prayer, its people learn that results of the Spirit's work in the church depend on prayerfulness.

What the Heidelberg Catechism says about prayer is true for individuals and congregations alike: "[P]rayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them" (HC Q. and A. 116).

E. Promote genuine loving fellowship

In the hours before his death, Jesus offered a prayer in which he expressed his desire for a unified body of believers. He spoke to his Father: "I am in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:23). Evidence of such unity is most clearly demonstrated in genuine loving fellowship within the body of Christ, his church. "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Phil. 2:1).

Healthy churches work hard to "maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). While they are places where discussion and even debates can sharpen and build up, they do so without bitterness or rancor. Members lead lives of service and concern for others. Their primary desire is for the well-being of the body, not for their own needs. These churches spend less time talking about love and more time loving. People desire to share in the life of a community of Christians who live in a world of grace and forgiveness where loving fellowship is not merely an emotion experienced for the moment but is a way of life, a fruit of the Spirit. It is exemplified in churches where the full fruit of the Spirit is clearly evident in the practices of the members. Laughter and excitement fill the air. Small groups study and pray together, sharing their joys and sorrows. People show care in genuine acts of kindness,

support, and sharing. In providing such care, the church must be sensitive to the social, psychological, and spiritual distress that impairments, limited health, and abuse often bring and be willing to walk with those so affected—relieving needs, recognizing gifts, and sharing pain.

Loving fellowship also demands a steady commitment to be inclusive of others across barriers of race, gender, social status, and level of knowledge of and commitment to the faith. Those seeking entrance into the fellowship quickly pick up on the subtle signals of exclusivity (cliques, dress codes, language, and in-jokes). Genuine openness to those different from ourselves involves constant watchfulness and a readiness to critique the barriers that may subtly form.

G. Commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally

No church can ignore Christ's final command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19). A healthy church gives the highest priority to proclaiming the good news to the unchurched, gathers them into its fellowship, and disciples them with the truth of God's Word.

By God's grace, a healthy church can expect to grow in numbers as well as spiritual vitality. The Christian church is a fruit-producing organism. The Bible is clear that Christ is the vine and we are the branches; our purpose and task are to produce fruit. In one parable, Jesus spoke of the crop returning thirty-, sixty-, and even a hundredfold (Matt. 13:23). When the master gave his servants talents, he expected that his money would grow, and he condemned the servant who failed to make that happen.

In recording the story of the apostle's first proclamation, Luke tells us, "and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). Later in Acts 2:47, he writes, "and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Numerical growth was not an occasional event; it was a daily occurrence in the early church. All of Acts is the story of how the gospel of Jesus Christ spread throughout the world. Even in times of great persecution, the church grew.

Yet, church growth is not a triumphal march. It requires slogging through tough human hearts, burrowing into stubborn anti-God cultures, applauding obedience to God, showing gratitude for goodness developed in the face of opposition, mourning sadness, and rejoicing in beauty, grace, and mercy.

When people come to know Christ in the context of local congregations, the whole community sees more clearly the transforming power of Christ in people's lives. New Christians, in turn, bring them into contact with others among their friends and relatives who need salvation, and often become the most passionate advocates for evangelism in the congregation.

Evangelistic growth often happens even more rapidly when congregations eagerly plant new churches in their communities or areas. Healthy congregations may choose to send some of their most valuable and vital members to participate in planting another church.

Healthy local congregations look beyond themselves by sharing in God's desire to gather his people from every tribe and nation. God's covenant has always had the whole world in its embrace. God promised Abraham, "in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). In Acts, Jesus sends

his disciples to be his witnesses “in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Paul and the other apostles responded to that promise by traveling from city to city throughout the Roman Empire, proclaiming the gospel and planting churches.

When congregations share in this global perspective, they realize that they participate in what God is doing in the whole world. By sending missionaries, whether through denominational agencies or as local churches through short-term mission projects, they regularly hear stories of God’s power to save and participate in the life of the kingdom of God that knows no boundaries of race or nation.

H. Advocate justice for the poor and powerless

From the laws given by God, to the trumpet call of the prophets, to the Jubilee announcement of Jesus at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), the Bible clearly sets forth God’s passion for justice and his concern for the poor. While it is often difficult in our politically polarized culture, one of the signs of congregational health is its commitment to proclaim the message of justice and live it out in its ministry to the poor, the disenfranchised, the homeless, refugees, and those living with disabilities.

In Acts, the newborn church enacted God’s call for justice by voluntarily sharing their goods to provide fairly for all (Acts 3:32). When needs became apparent, as in Acts 6, the apostles called on deacons to make sure that the poor in their midst were cared for. Throughout its history, the church has shone its true biblical grounding wherever it advocated for justice. In the battle against slavery here and in England, and in the struggle for civil rights, the church has been at the forefront.

Healthy congregations will regularly hear God’s call for justice from their pulpits. They will seek to care for the poor among them; in their communities; and, through denominational agencies such as CRWRC, in the world. They unite with other congregations to advocate their local and national governments to enact policies that promote social justice, the fair distribution of goods, and care for the environment. They will also seek to reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of God’s kingdom in the face of their congregations.

I. Encourage Christlike leadership

Healthy churches are led by leaders who exemplify in their own lives the characteristics of the Good Shepherd. The very language of the church reflects awareness that leaders are shepherds first. Other expectations are secondary to leading and caring for the flock. Speaking of himself, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15, NIV). Churches can be healthy only when men and women who follow this biblical pattern of leadership lead them. Servant leaders know their congregations intimately, and their congregations know and trust them. A true shepherd leader must love the people and be prepared to give his or her life for those people.

A good local church leader is one who walks among the people, providing for their spiritual health and well-being. Leaders also help to develop a congregational vision and keep it before the community. Shepherd leaders neither drive their flock from behind nor run so far ahead that the sheep can no longer follow. Rather, good servant leaders walk with and among their

congregations through both good and bad times. They know their congregations and love them. These leaders provide green pastures, assuring that their congregations are well fed and healthy. In times of struggle and pain, these leaders provide the comfort and care necessary for healing. In times of comfort and ease, they know how to prophetically inspire the congregation with a fuller vision.

At the heart of a servant leader is a desire to have the attitude of Christ as explained by Paul to the church of Philippi. Paul reminds leaders that they must have an attitude of humility, making themselves nothing and taking the very nature of a servant. True servant leaders do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but rather consider others better than themselves (Phil. 2:3-6). At the same time, the Bible calls congregation members to respect and honor those who serve them in leadership (1 Tim. 5:17), and to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

Healthy congregations intentionally identify, raise up, and train new leaders. They continue to disciple existing leaders and hold them accountable for their spiritual walk with their Lord. Only those who themselves are continually shepherded and served can sustain their important calling to shepherd and serve others.

J. Practice mutual accountability

The Reformers recognized church discipline as one of the defining marks of the true church. It is too often misunderstood as a top-down action rather than a normal characteristic of the life of a healthy church community. Rightly understood, church discipline is the mutual accountability of the members of the body of Christ (see Church Order Articles 78 and 79). The primary texts (Matt. 18:15-20 and Gal. 6:1-5) begin with one-to-one relationships in which members of the body honestly, humbly, and lovingly speak and listen to each other about perceived faults and sins. Healthy churches foster the kind of atmosphere in which “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) becomes the normal way in which Christians help one another when in danger of wandering from the path of true discipleship. Church discipline, therefore, must be woven into the very fabric of the life of a healthy church community.

There may come times when, as Jesus and Paul affirm, the matter needs to be taken to the next level of accountability, that is, to another trusted person, and finally to the church, which we take to mean its official leadership. Nevertheless, the goal is always to keep the matter covered as much as possible, for “love covers a multitude of sins . . .” (1 Peter 4:8), and to restore the one who errs with humility and patience on the part of all (Gal. 6:1-5).

It will take patience and practice for churches to attain and retain a healthy atmosphere of mutual accountability in a world that loves gossip on the one hand and says “it’s none of your business” on the other. Practices of honesty in prayer and open confession of sin and forbearance among leaders, as well as strong, well-led small groups will foster greater health in this vital area. When the whole church community sees itself as a hospital for sinners, there is less and less need to hide from each other. When we all admit our absolute dependence on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, then mutual accountability will permeate the life of the body; thus promoting healing and health.

III. Conclusion

It should be understood that while the foregoing exploration of health for congregations is not exhaustive, it follows biblical standards by which we can examine our churches and measure their health and well-being. Such biblical examples can serve as a benchmark for congregations who are eager to follow Jesus. Appropriate balance among these traits will assure that churches are focused on Christlikeness. While different churches possess different visions, all must share the common vision of Christ: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

IV. Recommendations

A. That the BOT endorse these characteristics as descriptive of healthy churches.

Grounds:

1. It is important for the denomination to hold a common understanding of *healthy churches*.
2. These characteristics give churches a benchmark for measuring health within their individual congregations.

B. That the BOT direct the Denominational Office, under the direction of the director of denominational ministries, to establish a resource group of three to five local congregational advocates to serve as a proactive link between local congregations and the denomination.

Grounds:

1. The creating and sustaining of local congregations requires clear and open channels of communication between local congregations and the Denominational Office.
2. The office of the DDM is the best place to house such congregational advocates, given the mandate to "enhance the unified ministry of the denomination" (DDM position description as approved by the BOT).
3. Such advocates provide local congregations with a single point of contact with questions regarding denominational resources and support.

C. That the BOT instruct the Denominational Office to design and implement a plan intended to raise the level of awareness and ownership of the denominational priority throughout the agencies and institutions of the CRC.

Grounds:

1. It appears that the present priority is seen as the "BOT priority" and not as the denominational priority.
2. The present denominational priority will only have a significant impact on the overall health of the denomination if it is enthusiastically owned and implemented by all the agencies and institutions at all levels.

Appendix F-4

Examples of Congregational Services Offered Through CRC Ministries (2005)

Home Missions

Training/coaching

- Small group training
- Healthy congregations training
- Natural Church Development coaching
- Rebirth/Scenario of choice coaching
- Church planting bootcamp/coaching /networking
- Regional networking/coaching
- Workshops on prayer, spiritual formation
- Consultations on land/building
- Consultations with multiethnic churches
- Incubators for church planters
- Retreats for vision casting
- Smaller church consultations

Grant Funding

- Leadership Development
 - Leadership Development Network
 - Internships
 - New Church development
- Mission-focused churches
- Church planting
- Smaller church grants
- Continuing education grants

Resources

- New church development videos/websites
- Prayer resources (including classis)
- Newsletters

Conferences

- Small group conferences for women
- Saddleback for church leaders
- Willow Creek for church leaders
- Assessment center for potential church planters
- Church planting conferences
- Korean council events
- Korean Small Group Conference

Calvin College

- Worship renewal grants

World Missions

- Relationships between missionaries and local congregations
- Opportunities for missionary service
- Opportunity for congregations to minister internationally

The Back to God Hour

- Media advertising to support new church plants
- TODAY devotional distribution
- Joint sponsorship of programming on local stations
- Opportunity for congregations to minister internationally

CRC Publications/Faith Alive

Resources for

- Children and youth education
- Adult education
- Small groups
- Coffee Break
- Prayer
- Evangelism/outreach
- Local church leadership (elders, deacons, etc)
- Worship
- Ministry for people with mental impairments

Program support for

- Children and worship
- Intergenerational worship
- Spiritual development and sharing
- congregations' ministry stories via *The Banner*
- Provide opportunity for congregations to minister internationally via World Literature Ministries

CRWRC

Overall focus: Transforming church and community through consultation, education, and networking

- Networking of diaconal training and resources
- Consulting with and responding to information requests from churches re diaconal ministry
- Children and youth activities to build awareness of global missions
- Tours, work groups, etc.
- Opportunities for financial stewardship via offering causes
- Relationships between missionaries and local congregations
- Opportunity for congregations to minister internationally

Calvin Theological Seminary

- Preparation of pastors and other church leaders
- Continuing education for pastors and other church leaders
- Preaching (faculty and students), adult education classes
- Consulting on wide variety of topics
- Support for specialized ministry staff
- Summer/fulltime interns

Education

- Seminars/retreats for pastors, councils, and congregations
- Facilitating grants for continuing education for pastors
- Center for Excellence in Preaching grants

Facing Your Future program for youth
Publishing *Forum* for church leaders

Disability Concerns

Printed resources

Breaking Barriers newsletter

Other resources, including resource guide, devotional guides, etc.

Disability awareness resources

Various resources for disability ministry at the congregational level

Workshops/consultations on disability ministry

Race Relations

Consultation on race issues

Training on antiracism

Scholarships/grants

Multiethnic Conference

All Nations Heritage

Denominational Office

Finance and Administration

Ministers Pension Fund and Employee Retirement Plan

Health care coverage for pastors and full time staff

Ministers' compensation survey

Information services assistance

Consultation on financial and tax matters

Loan Fund

Office products cooperative purchasing

Cash management (Canada)

Executive Director

Consultation with churches on church order matters

Yearbook

Agenda/Acts of Synod

Denominational services

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

Denominational Ministries Plan

Pastor-Church Relations

Consultation/Support

Regional pastors

Mentors

Ministerial Information Service

Consultation/mediation

Staff evaluations

Specialized Interim Pastors

Appendix G

Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee Report

I. Background

The Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee was established in 1996 as part of the action of synod that created Classis Pacific Hanmi. The experiment of having a Korean-speaking classis seemed appropriate to synod, yet there were concerns that the classis would function in isolation with insufficient functional assistance in learning CRC practices and establishing relationship with the broader CRC. Synod 1996 approved the formation of the classis for up to fifteen years, and created a monitoring committee composed of two persons from Classis Greater Los Angeles, two persons from Classis California South, two persons from the new Korean-speaking classis, and one person from the CRC denominational office. The monitoring committee was asked to report to synod every two years, with a more extensive report given every four years.

Presently, the monitoring committee is pleased to observe that the classis has been functioning well. We believe our committee work is no longer necessary and that the life of the classis should be extended indefinitely. The classis has grown significantly since its inception, and it continues to effectively welcome first generation Korean immigrant congregations into the CRC. It also serves as an effective model of CRC life for other Korean congregations across North America. The reasons for creating the classis eleven years ago are just as valid today because Korean immigration has continued. The leadership in the classis has had opportunity to build relationships with members of the neighboring classes, and the relationship can be described as cordial. Finally, training mechanisms now exist through the office of the Home Missions Korean Ministry Director (KMD) and through the Korean Institute of Ministry (KIM) program of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC). It is our conviction that relationships with the broader church are strong enough and the training mechanisms are developed enough that the monitoring committee is no longer needed.

II. Proposals

The committee offers the following recommendations for the action of Synod 2007:

- A. That synod extend the life of Classis Pacific Hanmi until it becomes evident that a Korean-speaking classis is no longer necessary.
- B. That the synod thank the synodical deputies from the classes neighboring Classis Pacific Hanmi for their work in establishing relationships with the Korean community and that they be asked to continue to actively advise, encourage, and support the work of Classis Pacific Hanmi as appropriate, according to the CRC Church Order.
- C. That synod encourage the leadership of Classis Pacific Hanmi to
 1. Continue the work of training and assimilating first generation Korean leaders through the use of the Korean Institute of Ministry, the Home Missions Korean Ministry Director, and whatever other resources in the CRC seem to be appropriate;

2. Set up an advisory team of people beyond their classis who can provide resources to them in their continuing life and assimilation;
 3. Report to synod on a bi-annual basis on their learning, success, and progress as a unique and valued part of the CRC.
- D. That synod dismiss the Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee with thanks.

Appendix H

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

I. Introduction

The mandate for Abuse Prevention is to provide educational resources, develop policies and procedures, and conduct training events. These three activities revolve around two core goals: reduce the risk of abuse in the church setting and respond with justice and compassion when abuse occurs.

The director's role is to educate the faith community about their responsibilities; to design policies and protocols for church leaders and victims to report and process the allegations; to provide resources to church leaders, to victims, and to offenders; and to create awareness of all forms of abuse. Of equal importance is to understand that which synod did not mandate Abuse Prevention to do. The office does not investigate allegations of abuse, does not report suspicions of abuse to civil authorities, is not an advocate for a specific victim or offender, and does not contact church leaders when allegations are made by an adult. These responsibilities belong to individuals in the church who have first-hand knowledge, to trained church members or the ecclesiastical body, or to adult victims to disclose their stories.

From time to time, with respect to either a victim or an offender, the role of Abuse Prevention and the responsibilities of the local church or classis either collide or fail to synchronize. More often than not, the victim is worse off—especially when a complaint falls through the cracks. When that happens, allegations of child abuse go unreported, adult victims are denied an opportunity to come forward with allegations, and forgiven offenders and allegations dismissed by church leaders are made without the victim's input.

II. Accomplishments

A. Abuse Prevention changed the name of the classical Abuse Response Team (ART) to Safe Church Team. Initially, some people resisted the change because they felt the new name no longer recognizes abuse as an issue that demands the church's attention. However, far from minimizing the issue, we believe the new name reflects the goal of Abuse Prevention to reduce the risk that abuse will ever occur. We encourage each church to adopt that goal by learning and practicing safe interactions at all levels of leadership and among all members.

Our *response* to victims and offenders will always be part of the church's ministry. Through interaction with victim and offender, we understand more clearly the depravity of sin, the broken relationships that result from sin, and the need for God's grace and restoration. We must also stem the harmful interactions that continue to occur. We hope that Safe Church Teams throughout the classes will motivate churches to quicken the educational process and maximize greater safety for all.

B. Abuse Prevention sponsored its first advocacy training for members of the classical Safe Church Team. Twenty-two team members from twelve classical teams across Canada and the United States participated. Because Synod 2005 approved the use of advocates in the Advisory Panel Process, three advocates assisted victims who brought allegations against a church leader.

C. Abuse Prevention continues to conduct training in many locations across Canada and the United States. Addressing child safety is the most popular topic, but there are other forms and facets to abuse, and congregations and church leaders need to be informed of those as well.

D. Abuse Prevention produced brochures and materials to promote awareness of and to educate congregations about the Safe Church Team. Three brochures and a poster describe the work of the team, describe the advisory panel process, and offer information about the panel process for victims and offenders who may participate in it.

III. Challenges

A. The following is a list of classes that formed a team that later disbanded or ceased activity: Arizona, Central California, Chicago South, Columbia, Eastern Canada, Greater Los Angeles, Heartland, Iakota, Northcentral Iowa, Northern Illinois, and Thornapple Valley. In addition, there are a few marginally active Safe Church Teams.

The following is a list of classes that have *never* formed a Safe Church Team: Atlantic Northeast, California South, Grand Rapids South, Hackensack, Holland, Hudson, Illiana, Pacific Hanmi, Pella, Red Mesa, Southeast U.S., and Wisconsin.

The challenges with Safe Church Teams are to keep existing team members active and involved in the ministry, encourage team members to grow in their understanding of abuse dynamics, expand the ministry of Safe Church Teams to include education and support services, and develop leadership on the respective teams.

Within the Safe Church Team, the Advisory Panel is a synodically approved process for handling allegations against a church leader. From experience with nearly twenty panels over the past ten years, there are two specific challenges to mention. First, Safe Church Team members should stay committed to training, be aware of the procedures before conducting the panel process, and be aware of changes to the procedures that synod approves. A classis Safe Church Team that includes the advisory panel process should not refuse additional training or ignore approved changes to the process. Teams that waiver from approved procedures invite liability, frustrate victims and offenders, and act contrary to synod's intent to offer a unified process. Second, church leaders continue to thwart the efforts of advisory panelists by aligning with the alleged offender, obstructing the use of the panel process, and failing to cooperate with the procedures. To resolve these problems, councils should ask for training on the advisory panel process so that they can respond justly when an allegation arises.

B. With every complaint of abuse, there are three challenges. The first challenge is to reduce the number of church leaders who avoid reporting a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Church leaders who are mandated

reporters in their state or province may incur risk for failing to comply with the law. The second challenge is to encourage church councils to learn more about abuse because their response to an incident is critical. Once a church council approves a child-safety policy, the council potentially assumes liability if it fails to enforce the policy or fails to respond as the policy describes. The third challenge is to encourage church leaders to avoid the temptation to quickly forgive and smooth things over following the disclosure of abuse within the congregation. A disclosure has the power to rip a family and a congregation apart. To avoid that result and the pain it brings, we often move to find a quick solution. Rarely, however, is abuse healed or individuals restored through a quickly negotiated event. Forgiveness and restoration are a process.

C. The number of churches with a child-safety policy grew in 2006. The actual gain was difficult to measure because of changes in the *Yearbook* survey format. Thus, approximately 475 churches report implementing a child-safety policy.

D. Historically, the church has been inconsistent in its efforts to help victims and offenders journey through forgiveness and restoration. Despite our deep theological roots in God's grace, practicing forgiveness and living restoration remains allusive for many. The church must have protocols on forgiveness and restoration to assist it to help others heal from abuse.

Appendix I

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

I. Introduction

Chaplaincy Ministries is the office that manages the chaplains' ministry for the denomination.

A. Major responsibilities

1. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries recruits from colleges and seminaries, from those seeking career changes in ministry, and from those in parish ministry who meet the requirements for prison and military chaplaincy. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries assists the prospective chaplain in obtaining funds for additional training in pastoral care and counseling, either by providing assistance or acquainting the prospect with scholarship and stipend training program information.
2. The office manages the processes that lead to endorsement, working with the calling church to ensure that the process is conducted according to the Church Order by reviewing the duty description, conducting personal interviews, endorsing for a chaplain's position, and covenanting with the chaplain prospect and the calling church supervisory and oversight entities.
3. The office offers personal and professional support to our chaplains through periodic site visits, monthly email newsletter updates, regional cluster meetings, and an annual professional development conference. These activities are part of the joint supervisory responsibility of the office.

4. The office develops public-relations programs to build support in the CRCNA, including regular mailings to constituents and producing *Banner* ads, as well as articles and bulletin announcements. The office acts as advocate for the chaplains within the denomination and in other professional certifying associations.
5. An important role for Chaplaincy Ministries is participation in governmental and professional organizations. These organizations set the standards for the practice of chaplaincy and pastoral care. Decisions made by these organizations impact the level of training required by chaplains as well as on the development of chaplain programs in health care organizations. Endorsers ensure that the ministry of chaplains is connected to the faith communities that endorse the chaplain. Most of our civilian chaplains have membership and leadership roles in the following organizations: The American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, the Association of Professional Chaplains, and the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education. These organizations provide additional, ongoing training. Many of our chaplains are board certified chaplains.

B. *Statistics*

1. Total chaplains: full-time – 89; part-time – 6; National Guard and Reserves – 6
2. Chaplains in U.S.: full-time – 74; part-time – 18
3. Chaplains in Canada: full-time – 15; part-time – 4
4. Active military chaplains: 15 in U. S.; 1 in Canada; 6 in the National Guard and Reserves
5. New chaplains – 6; Civilian: Al Vanden Boogaard, Bradley Center, James Molenbeek, Don Steenhoek; Military: David Jeltema (Navy); Peter Hofman (Army)
6. Retirees – 5; Civilian: Norm Brown, Richard Grevengood, Bob Koorneef; Military: Carl Kammeraad, Jim Vander Lune
7. Chaplains who served overseas this year – Iraq: In Soon Gho Hoagland, Doug Vrieland, Will Hensen, Gord Terpstra; Qatar: Scott Koeman; Spain: Tom Walcott; Korea: Charles Cornelisse
8. Students: 10
9. Prospective/interested: 75

C. *National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF)*

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., assumed the chair of this organization in January 2006 when the former chair resigned. This organization is a unique, diverse body of military-chaplain endorsers from 175 faith communities with a constituency of 154,933,528 members that endorse 5429 or over 70 percent of all military chaplains. The executive committee meets three times a year and an annual conference is held each December. This year was eventful because of the establishment of another endorsing group and the controversy of public, ceremonial prayer in mandatory formations or meetings. The U.S. House of Representatives introduced language in legislation that was objectionable to the Department of Defense, the Service Chief's of Chaplains, and the members of NCMAF. This resulted in NCMAF's advocating against the legislation by correspondence and meetings with the members of the House and Senate and

the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), as well as interviews in major newspapers. The legislation did not make the final bill, and a compromise was made in committee for hearings to be held in 2007.

D. Restorative justice

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action developed a plan and a budget to advance the decisions of Synod 2005 on restorative justice. The budget was disapproved, but oversight responsibility for restorative justice was written into the job description of the director of Chaplaincy Ministries. Several meetings were held by way of teleconference and in Grand Rapids to flesh out several initiatives. Many useful educational materials were placed in the Faith Alive Christian Resources catalog. We partnered with Home Missions and the Reformed Church in America to plant churches in prisons. We partnered with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching to produce materials for use in worship that address restorative justice. *The Banner* and the *Christian Century* published materials that called attention to the prison systems in our countries. We reviewed several prison reentry programs and are working on a pilot program with Hope Network. In Canada and in some churches in the United States, Restorative Justice Week was celebrated. Rev. John DeVries volunteered to take leadership for Canada and has formed a Restorative Justice Advisory Group. A smaller budget has been submitted for this year to advance these programs.

E. War and peace

To implement recommendations of Synod 2006, the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries has added to the Chaplaincy Ministries home page material for churches to assist in the pastoral care of those serving in and those leaving military service. A letter was sent to all the pastors and churches encouraging them to minister to the men and women in service, to their families, and to those leaving military service.

1. The advance in military battlefield medicine has greatly reduced the number of persons killed in action (KIA) but has increased the number of wounded. Many of the wounded have disabilities for life with loss of limbs and severe head trauma. The incidents of post traumatic stress disorder are very high for returning veterans. Caring for our veterans should be a very high priority, and all returning veterans provide the church with an opportunity for witnessing to the mercy and compassion of our Lord.
2. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is in dialogue with the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel police to change the Directive on Conscientious Objection and to encourage Congress to change the law to allow for selective conscientious objection. We are also working to connect with other religious communities that stand in the just-war tradition to solicit their support for changing the conscientious objection laws.
3. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is in discussion with the Department of Defense (DoD) on the definition of preventive war that the DoD now defines as "war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk," and preemptive attack that the DoD defines as "an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent."

4. Working with Calvin College, we have created possibilities for courses that deal with peace, and in keeping with the recommendations of the report, we are working to achieve an educational minor in peace work. Several of the Christian institutions of higher education associated with the CRCNA have already conducted classes or held special events on the issues of peace and war.
5. A small group has formed to develop curricula for the CRCNA on issues of peace and the biblical framework for being peacemakers in our world.
6. We are also working with several groups in the Grand Rapids area and in Canada to partner and network concerning issues of war and peace.
7. We rejoice and thank God that the CRCNA chaplains who were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan have returned safely. Churches are urged to continue to remember these chaplains and their families in their prayers.

F. Challenges to Chaplaincy Ministries

1. Chaplaincy Ministries and restorative justice in Canada needs people in Canada to take the lead on these issues. Neither position is full-time, but contract personnel could, under the supervision of the director of Chaplaincy Ministries and in cooperation with the director of Canadian ministries, improve the implementation of these programs.
2. The progress on studying the issues on war and peace in the CRCNA would be enhanced if synod should ask the leaders from our institutions of higher education to appoint faculty members to work closely with the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries and the Office for Social Justice and Hunger Action to produce material for use in the churches.
3. Recruitment of chaplains is not keeping pace with the losses due to retirements. We have known for several years that the demographics of the CRCNA chaplains showed an aging chaplaincy. The denomination needs to stress the value and importance of this ministry in the classroom and from the pulpit.
4. A need that is becoming more and more critical is military and federal prison chaplaincy. The war in Iraq has made recruiting for the National Guard and Reserves a major challenge. Recruiting for these ministries is made more difficult by the age requirements for these positions. We have only a small number of ministers under the age of forty. The overcrowding of our prisons place high demands on prison staffs and inmates. Our military and criminal justice organizations provide the church with fertile fields for ministry at little or no financial cost.
5. The aging of our population challenges the churches to explore ways and opportunities for ministry. Hospice care has been a tremendous blessing to those who are dying, as well as to their families. The obituaries in the local papers are a testimony to this ministry. Senior citizen and retirement communities are a growing industry. Pastors and elders should encourage these centers to employ trained chaplains to minister to those living in these places. Pastoral ministry is often more than the local congregations can provide. Chaplains can assist in this ministry.

6. Ministry opportunities in factories, businesses, and industrial settings are in increasing demand. Employers are increasingly aware of the financial benefits of providing their employees with social and religious services in the workplace. Pray that the Lord will raise up people to work for this challenging ministry.

G. Conclusion

The Christian Reformed Church in North America celebrates its contribution to the ministry of chaplains from local ministry settings to the national organizations in both the United States and Canada. Chaplaincy Ministries allows the church to send men and women of faith into places where the church often is unable to go. Our chaplains help people come to grips with the many vexing questions about suffering, death, loss, war, and crime, and assist people in finding meaning for their lives. In this year when we celebrate our 150th anniversary, the Christian Reformed Church continues to send chaplains into many diverse settings where they can witness to the love of God in Christ and be constant reminders of the hope we have in Christ, our Lord.

Appendix J

Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

As our denomination celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, Grace through Every Generation, we give thanks to God for the many ways in which he has invited us to participate with him in the work of his kingdom, including ministry to people with disabilities. God has so blessed us in this area that a 2006 book, *Disability Advocacy among Religious Organizations*, highlighted the CRC in a chapter entitled, "The Christian Reformed Church as a Model for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities." As a result of this work, churches have become healthier, and lives have been transformed.

II. Grace through our generation—remembering twenty-five years of ministry

The work of God among us and through us began in earnest in 1978 when synod appointed a committee to study the needs of people with disabilities in Christian Reformed churches. This action initiated a flood of ministry in the succeeding twenty-nine years. In 1981, the study committee's report prompted synod to take two significant actions: (1) synod appointed the Service Committee for Ministry with Retarded Persons to facilitate the meeting of those needs, and (2) synod approved funding for the committee to hire a part-time administrative coordinator.

By taking these actions, our denomination was participating in a world-wide awakening to the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities in all of life. That same year, 1981, was declared The International Year of Disabled Persons by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which "called for a plan of action at the national, regional and international levels, with an emphasis on equalization of opportunities, rehabilitation and prevention of disabilities."

In 1982, the CRCNA's Service Committee hired a part-time administrative coordinator, Mr. Lee Vander Baan and published the first issue of *Christian Companions*, a newsletter about ministry with people with disabilities. Therefore, Disability Concerns considers 1982 to be the beginning of our ministry. Around this same time, the Board of Publications invested \$250,000 in the development of a Bible curriculum for people with intellectual impairments, the Friendship Series, which has flourished since its birth.

The Service Committee continued to make significant ministry commitments in the following years. In 1985, synod adopted a document, A Resolution on Disabilities, committing the denomination to work for inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of church life and ministry; calling on congregations to eliminate barriers of attitude, communication, and architecture; and urging congregations "to actively advocate for brothers and sisters with disabilities and to greet wounded and devalued people with Christian dignity and compassion, welcoming them and their contributions to the body of believers." In 1986, synod changed the status of the committee to a standing committee and also provided for the appointment of a full-time administrative coordinator, Rev. Ted Verseput. In 1987, synod expanded the mandate of the committee "to reflect the Church's concern for persons with all types of disabilities with the assurance that the needs of persons with mental disabilities and their families will continue to be a major concern of the committee." Synod also approved that the committee's name be changed to Committee on Disability Concerns.

Ministry continued to broaden and flourish in the years following with the establishment of support groups; the publication of the newsletter; the hiring of a program director; and, most importantly, greater disability awareness among churches that has led to breaking down barriers and to including people with disabilities more and more in their lives and ministries.

The 1990s began with a watershed event in the history of civil rights for people with disabilities when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in the United States at the beginning of the decade. The ADA provided a "clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities." Federal and provincial legislation in Canada was clearly moving in the same direction as the ADA and included many of the principles and concepts that govern the ADA. The Christian Reformed Church distinguished itself in 1993 when it became the first Christian denomination to endorse the ADA and to take its provisions upon itself. That work came about under the leadership of Dr. James Vanderlaan, who became the director of Disability Concerns in 1992.

Work has continued across the denomination with more and more churches breaking down barriers and opening up ministry to all of their members and guests. To better reflect this growing ministry, the name of the newsletter changed from *Christian Companions* to *Breaking Barriers* in 1993. A large network of regional disability consultants and church contact people was established by Disability Concerns beginning in 1997 with the goal of at least one consultant for each classis and at least one church contact for each congregation. Several regional disability committees formed (beginning in eastern Canada) with the purpose of sponsoring conferences and working together on areas of mutual concern. In early 2006, another body of people was added to this network of hundreds—agency advocates who advocate for people with

disabilities and the hiring of people with disabilities and who encourage ministry to people with disabilities in the agencies and educational institutions of the CRC. Regional consultants, agency advocates, and the Disability Concerns Advisory Committee members gather yearly in the autumn for training, inspiration, and mutual encouragement.

With the approaching retirement of Dr. Vanderlaan in 2006, the Board of Trustees decided to continue the position of director of Disability Concerns with a three-year term appointment. Rev. Mark Stephenson was hired to serve in this position. Rev. Stephenson and his wife, Beverly, have four children, including their oldest, Nicole, who is severely multiply impaired and has a number of medical issues. The Stepsons took care of Nicole at home for her first eighteen years, after which she moved into a Christian adult foster care home called Harbor House Ministries.

III. Grace in our generation—rejoicing

Although the historical survey above mentions only the administrators by name, these men were only four of hundreds of men and women across North America who have served God, our denomination, our churches, and many other institutions and have continued to advance God's kingdom in ministry with people with disabilities. God continues the work of transforming lives and fostering healthy churches among us today. Here are a few examples of this work:

Disability Concerns introduced a phrase this past year to provide a concise picture of an inclusive congregation: Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.

Five years ago, about half of Christian Reformed Churches had an accessible worship area. Now nearly 85 percent do. In that same time frame, 342 more churches made their main entrances accessible, from 421 to 763 churches. Similarly, 356 more churches have an accessible fellowship area, and 380 more have accessible restrooms. Churches reported that 300 people with special needs made public profession of faith this past year.

Two-thirds of the classes have regional disability consultants and 395 of the churches have contact people. Classes in need of a regional consultant are: Arizona, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Central California, Chicago South, Columbia, Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids South, Kalamazoo, Northern Illinois, Northern Michigan, Pacific Hanmi, Pella, Wisconsin, Yellowstone, and Zeeland. (Please contact Disability Concerns with suggestions for regional consultants for these classes.) Regional disability concerns committees are active in Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario.

This coming fall, the national organization Joni and Friends will be doing a Through the Roof training conference in Chicago that was initiated by the Chicago area disability concerns committee. People involved with Disability Concerns have been hosting training conferences and teaching at days of encouragement to help churches better learn how to include people with disabilities in their lives and ministries.

More Christian Reformed churches are mainstreaming children and youth with disabilities in their educational programming. Several churches have worship services specifically tailored to be inclusive, and several others have paid staff positions to enhance ministry to people with disabilities.

Over 65,000 copies of Disability Concerns' newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, are distributed quarterly to inform and inspire individuals, churches, and

agencies across North America in their ministry to people with disabilities. *Breaking Barriers* is available for all members and/or families in churches that ask to receive it.

Faith Alive Christian Resources produces many materials for children, youth, and adults in Braille. They also have a number of resources to help churches minister to people with disabilities, including a book released last year: *Learning Disabilities and the Church*. In addition, last year Friendship Ministries, a separate non-profit that works closely with Disability Concerns and the CRC, produced a new resource entitled *Autism and Your Church*. Last winter, a mental-illness awareness packet from Pathways to Promise was distributed to all Christian Reformed churches (at no cost to the CRC).

Disability Concerns' Web pages have been given a more memorable website address, www.crcdisabilityconcerns.org, and have been expanded to provide a variety of resources to church leaders and teachers. Churches can now call Disability Concerns toll-free at 888-463-0272.

One hundred fifty-three Christian Reformed churches have committed themselves formally to minister to people with disabilities by adopting the Church Policy on Disabilities written by the Office of Disability Concerns that is available on the website. Ninety U.S. congregations have become part of the Accessible Congregations campaign, which is sponsored by the National Organization on Disability—Religion and Disability Program (a U.S. organization). According to Ms. Ginny Thornburgh, director of this program, these ninety congregations make the CRC a “superstar proportionally” among denominations.

Numerous Christian Reformed people are involved in Friendship groups for people with developmental disabilities. Friendship Ministries is now in almost 20 countries and 50 denominations with about 850 groups worldwide.

Youth Unlimited has sponsored a special needs Serve project for the last several years. Likewise, Cadets and GEMS are seeking new ways to better include children with disabilities in their ministries.

IV. Grace for future generations—rededicating

Twenty-two years ago, as a denomination, we pledged “to be the caring community according to 1 Corinthians 12, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of people with physical, sensory, mental, and emotional impairments.” We pledged to overcome attitudinal, communication, and architectural barriers. We pledged “to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family.” Fourteen years ago, we “heartily recommend[ed] 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.” The historical survey and report above show that we have made great strides in fulfilling these vows for which we can praise God. Overall, our buildings and our communication are more accessible than they were two decades ago. Our attitudes are opening more and more toward using the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family.

There is still much work to do.

Some of our church buildings remain inaccessible or partially accessible not because those congregations lack the willingness but because they lack the financial resources to make needed changes.

Only 40 percent of our congregations have a church contact person, a person who will advocate specifically for the needs and concerns of people with disabilities within that church. One-third of our classes lack the help and expertise of a regional disability consultant.

Tragedies such as these continue to happen in Christian Reformed churches:

- A young family with a special-needs son leaves a church because the congregation will make no special accommodation for him to be involved in the church's educational program.
- A young man with disabilities who is a professing member of a church is asked by a fellow member before worship to go sit somewhere else.
- Many so-called shut-ins stay home from church not because they cannot attend but because barriers of one kind or another exclude them from worship.
- A man is asked to keep his walker out of the sanctuary because the walker annoys the deacons when they are taking the offering.
- People who must sit through the worship service are excluded from singing because they cannot see the lyrics on the screen when everyone else stands.
- A married couple does not attend worship together because they feel that their disabled daughter is not welcome.
- People do not partake of communion due to gluten allergy, or they do not come to worship at all due to sensitivity to perfume and cologne.
- The percentage of people with disabilities employed in our churches, agencies, and educational institutions is well below the percentage of people with disabilities in society.
- People with disabilities are more likely to feel cut off from the church than nondisabled people and accordingly stay away from the church in far greater numbers.

Most people think of a disability as a problem that resides in a person who *has* the disability. However, overhead screens, steps into a building, lack of pew cutouts, pity, paternalism, lack of understanding, and many other factors contribute to making a person with a disability disabled. As the United Nations has written recently, "disability is an evolving concept and . . . disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Preamble, *Draft final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities*, United Nations, December 5, 2006).

As a denomination, we have made an excellent start in the past twenty-five years to remove the disabling elements of our buildings, attitudes, and communication. As a result, our churches are healthier, our appreciation of diversity is greater, our outreach is more substantial, and our caring is more inclusive. We must maintain and even increase our dedication and commitment into the next twenty-five years if our church communities are to become more accessible and open to the lives and gifts of people with disabilities. Our Lord calls on his people to be leaders in hospitality and the inclusion of people with disabilities (Luke 14:1-24).

Many people in churches feel inadequate for this work; they lack the skills and knowledge to make inclusion happen. Through our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*; our website; consultations and conferences; and our network of dedicated volunteers and staff people, the Office of Disability Concerns seeks to serve all Christian Reformed churches so that the day will come when everybody belongs and everybody serves fully in the life and ministry of the church.

Appendix K

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

I. Introduction

This year, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) marks twenty-five years of service to pastors, staff, and congregations. It is gratifying to note the various ways in which this ministry has continued with its original mandate and has adapted to changing situations and opportunities. Our primary task has been to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. These dimensions of the work continue and indicate that congregational life continues to be a dynamic arena of opportunity and challenge.

The past year has provided occasion for an increase in strategic thinking at Pastor-Church Relations. The ministry involves both *direct* involvement with pastors, staff, councils, and congregations and *extension* activities whereby the staff of Pastor-Church Relations are training and supporting others who, in turn, provide direct support to pastors, staff, councils, and congregations.

II. Activities

A. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations is *directly* involved in cultivating a healthier relationship within the life of the church. Often this involves meeting with lay leaders, pastors, staff, and congregational members to consider ways to facilitate a measure of growth or healing. This report outlines many of the specific ways this is happening.

B. In cooperation with classical interim committees, PCR *extends* its work through sixty-five regional pastors who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses who are 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. As of this writing, a task force is studying the regional pastor effort and will be making recommendations for change to better serve pastors, staff, and their families through the regional pastor model.

C. In another *extension* initiative, PCR has begun a process of developing both best practices and training events for church visitors. Pastor-Church Relations is hoping to increase contact with church visitors and strengthen this vital link to congregations. Classes desiring to partner with PCR in this venture are encouraged to contact the PCR office and indicate this interest.

D. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations continues to provide support to the mentoring of new pastors. Evidence is increasing in churches, at the seminary, and in other arenas that a mentoring culture is developing. This year, we hope to rewrite the mentoring manual to reflect some of what people are learning in this area.

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

F. A corps of transitional ministry specialists are trained to help congregations deal with challenging times of transition. Currently, the denomination employs four transitional ministers:

Rev. Larry Slings – Rogers Heights CRC, Wyoming, MI

Rev. Leonard Troast – Lamont CRC, Lamont, MI

Rev. Robert Walter – Palm Lane CRC, Scottsdale, AZ

Rev. Melle Pool – Part-time consultant, Classes Alberta North and Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Additionally, there are other transitional ministers serving congregations. PCR is often involved in brokering relationships between these pastors and congregations who are seeking their services. PCR also gathers these specialized ministers once a year for consultation and training.

Pastor-Church Relations 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 CRCNA. This will be particularly relevant to congregations who are seeking a transitional minister and to pastors who sense 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.*)

G. In 2007, we hope to launch regional preretirement conferences for pastors and spouses. These conferences are being informed by the work of a preretirement task force working with Pastor-Church Relations.

H. Significant developments can be reported in response to the growing number of staff who are serving congregations. A survey of CRC congregations has revealed nearly one thousand professional staff who serve in leadership capacities but are not ordained. 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.

I. In November 2006, a pastors' spouse conference was held in Toronto, Ontario. Over one hundred spouses attended, and feedback from the conference was compellingly positive. Additional conferences and other support resources are being planned for the coming years.

J. Pastor-Church Relations 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 and/or opportunity they are pursuing. For the first time this year, the funds being applied for have exceeded our budgeted amount. It is gratifying to see this increased interest in continuing education. It is also challenging as the committee makes decisions as to how the funds will be distributed.

K. The Ministerial Information Service continues to maintain profiles of over seven hundred pastors and congregations. Through the Office of Pastor Church Relations and a monthly meeting of a volunteer group, congregations who are seeking pastors are assisted in finding pastors who might be suited for a potential call.

III. Challenges

A. Pastor-Church Relations 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. Identifying pastors and lay people most gifted for church visitor work and enabling them to dedicate more time to church visiting is one of the challenges currently being faced.

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

C. Increasingly, PCR is being asked for advice and assistance relative to adding ministry staff in addition to pastors. How the church ought to be structured in the context of this change is also important. We are exploring ways in which we can provide greater expertise and consultation as churches move from familiar patterns of ministry into the less-standardized forms of church staffing strategy. Developing a certification process for congregational staff has been a key part of this work.

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

E. One challenge this ministry is currently facing is the desire to find appropriate measurements for our work. There is a recognized need for ways to determine the relative effectiveness of the various aspects of PCR. In consultation with like agencies and information-services staff, new possibilities are emerging regarding helpful metrics to better gauge what is being accomplished.

IV. Conclusion

The staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is grateful for opportunities to meaningfully engage with many pastors, staff, lay leaders, and congregations. We are grateful for signs of God's grace in this challenging work.

Appendix L

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The year 2006 has been quite active for the ministry of Race Relations.

The Ministry Council charged the Office of Race Relations with developing a new antiracism/racial reconciliation training for the denomination's agencies, institutions, and congregations. The curriculum, Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR), was completed and a pilot training was held in September with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Since then, twelve trainings have taken place with a growing number of requests coming in for scheduling.

A ministry called Women of the Nations was kicked off with the first Women of the Nations Breakfast in 2005. This ministry's purpose is to encourage women to unite, organize, and participate in activities that embrace and promote unity in the midst of diversity. Plans are presently underway for a Women of the Nations Annual Summit to be held in April 2007.

The work of the Office of Race Relations is coordinated in Canada by Mr. Steve Kabetu. Mr. Kabetu ably and competently continues to develop partnerships with the CRC agencies in Canada. In addition, he promotes Widening the Circle, the antiracism training for Canada, as well as serves as a facilitator for DORR in the United States.

Plans are underway for the 2007 Multiethnic Conference (MEC). The MEC committee is excited about the program being developed for this three-day event. The event promises to be quite interesting and informative with workshops, plenary speakers, a ministry fair, networking opportunities, and joint activities surrounding synod and the 2007 150th anniversary celebration.

For the academic year 2006-2007, the Office of Race Relations awarded \$12,000 in scholarships to students in our various institutions. While this amount is less than the previous year, we are encouraged by the response of churches to All Nations Heritage offerings, which provide the funding for the scholarships.

The denomination places a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in our life together as a church. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. However, many changes and challenges still lie ahead for the ministry. The Office of Race Relations and the CRCNA are committed to its statement of vision and its mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God, and we covet prayer to this end.

The Office of Race Relations continues to promote and support All Nations Heritage celebrations by providing bulletins, worship resources, and advice to help congregations celebrate our God-given diversity. In 2006, 56 Canadian churches ordered 7,980 bulletin covers and 2,425 bulletin inserts, and 156 U.S. churches ordered 20,305 covers and 11,650 inserts. The Office would like to see even more churches take advantage of this celebration.

The Office of Race Relations requests that synod encourage churches, classes, and our institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 30 through October 7, 2007, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 7.

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 must 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 (MDGs). 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 an innovative website (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 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 nearly two 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 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 both 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, Ontario, (in partnership with the Committee for Contact with the Government) when appropriate, for our areas of focus. This year, such ad hoc advocacy included the farm bill, increasing levels of U.S. and Canadian assistance for the Millennium Development Goals, more and better U.S. humanitarian aid, pressuring the U.S. and Canadian governments to do more to end the suffering in Darfur (Sudan), and strengthening the Kimberley Accords.

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 Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Hour Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,789	-	-	-	1,789
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	2,695	2,081	-	100	4,876
Receivables & Advances	83	-	-	-	83
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	625	-	-	-	624
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,192	2,081	-	100	7,372
Accounts Payable	519	-	-	-	519
Notes/Loans Payable	815	-	-	-	815
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,266	-	-	-	1,266
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,600	-	-	-	2,600
Net Assets	\$ 2,592	2,081	-	100	4,772
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.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Hour
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,286	\$	4,489
% of Total Income		43.4%		45.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	4,209	\$	3,686
Estate Gifts	\$	1,012	\$	1,375
Total Gift Income		5,221		5,061
% of Total Income		52.9%		51.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	360	\$	322
Total Other Income		360		322
% of Total Income		3.6%		3.3%
TOTAL INCOME		9,867		9,872
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	3,391	\$	2,771
FTEs		10		10
International	\$	3,772	\$	4,011
FTEs		13		13
Television - Animation				
FTEs				
Program Initiatives	\$	371	\$	-
		-		-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	7,534	\$	6,782
Total Program Service FTEs		23		23
% of Total \$		78.9%		75.2%
% of Total FTEs		71.9%		69.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	657	\$	755
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,358	\$	1,483
FTEs		5		6
Total Support Service \$		2,015		2,238
Total Support Service FTEs		9		10
% of Total \$		21.1%		24.8%
% of Total FTEs		28.1%		30.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,549	\$	9,020
TOTAL FTEs		32		33
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	318	\$	852

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

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 553	-	-	-	553
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	22,721	-	2,140	6,646	31,507
Inventory	415	-	-	-	415
Prepays & Advances	1,697	-	21	-	1,718
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,328	-	-	734	4,062
Equities	58,278	-	8,070	68,909	135,257
Partnerships	687	-	-	7,043	7,730
Property (nonoperating)	12	-	-	5,757	5,769
PP & E	123,768	-	-	-	123,768
Other	-	-	-	2,149	2,149
Total Assets	211,459	-	10,231	91,238	312,928
Accounts Payable	3,219	-	-	-	3,219
Notes/Loans Payable	43,520	-	-	266	43,786
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	7,058	-	-	-	7,058
Deferred Income	1,193	-	13	-	1,206
Other	28,832	-	158	44	29,034
Total Liabilities	83,822	-	171	310	84,303
Net Assets	\$ 127,637	-	10,060	90,928	228,625
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Over 1,727 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowed gifts.				

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

	Fiscal 04-05 Actual	Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,756	\$ 2,896
% of Total Income	2.9%	2.8%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 2,913	\$ 2,730
Estate Gifts	\$ 26	\$ 7
Total Gift Income	<u>2,939</u>	<u>2,737</u>
% of Total Income	3.1%	2.7%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 88,646	\$ 94,912
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,622	\$ 2,729
Total Other Income	<u>90,268</u>	<u>97,641</u>
% of Total Income	94.1%	94.5%
TOTAL INCOME	<u><u>95,963</u></u>	<u><u>103,274</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 82,859	\$ 87,923
FTEs	582	597
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	<u>\$ 82,859</u>	<u>\$ 87,923</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	582	597
% of Total \$	87.0%	86.9%
% of Total FTEs	80.9%	80.7%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 4,792	\$ 4,992
FTEs	58	61
Plant Operations	\$ 5,190	\$ 5,651
FTEs	55	57
Fund-raising	\$ 2,375	\$ 2,597
FTEs	24	25
Total Support Service \$	<u>12,357</u>	<u>13,240</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	137	143
% of Total \$	13.0%	13.1%
% of Total FTEs	19.1%	19.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<u><u>\$ 95,216</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 101,163</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs	<u><u>719</u></u>	<u><u>740</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	<u><u>\$ 747</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 2,111</u></u>

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

	-----June 30, 2006-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,111	-	-	-	1,111
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	344	-	2,212	-	2,556
Receivables & Advances	58	802	469	-	1,329
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	184	118	-	-	302
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,921	-	42	-	10,963
Other	-	91	-	-	91
Total Assets	12,618	1,011	2,723	-	16,352
Accounts Payable	363	1,211	-	-	1,574
Notes/Loans Payable	361	299	-	-	660
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	129	-	-	-	129
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	853	1,510	-	-	2,363
Net Assets	\$ 11,765	(499)	2,723	-	13,989
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$23,563M , Annuity payable \$299M 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 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,488	\$	2,695
% of Total Income		45.0%		44.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	865	\$	767
Estate Gifts	\$	50	\$	-
Total Gift Income		915		767
% of Total Income		16.6%		12.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	1,751	\$	1,984
Grants	\$	329	\$	542
Miscellaneous	\$	44	\$	107
Total Other Income		2,124		2,633
% of Total Income		38.4%		43.2%
TOTAL INCOME		5,527		6,095
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,384	\$	2,585
FTEs		27		27
Public Service	\$	49	\$	52
FTEs		-		1
Academic Support	\$	782	\$	867
FTEs		3		4
Student Services	\$	513	\$	488
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	219	\$	242
FTEs		1		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,947	\$	4,234
Total Program Service FTEs		35		38
% of Total \$		72.9%		73.5%
% of Total FTEs		76.1%		77.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	739	\$	790
FTEs		6		6
Plant Operations	\$	345	\$	382
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising	\$	386	\$	351
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		1,470		1,523
Total Support Service FTEs		11		11
% of Total \$		27.1%		26.5%
% of Total FTEs		23.9%		22.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,417	\$	5,757
TOTAL FTEs		46		49
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	110	\$	338

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

	-----December 31, 2006-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,618	-	-	-	1,618
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	681	-	-	-	681
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	254	-	-	-	254
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,018	-	-	-	3,018
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,571	-	-	-	5,571
Accounts Payable	152	-	-	-	152
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	868	-	-	-	868
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,020	-	-	-	1,020
Net Assets	\$ 4,551	-	-	-	4,551
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)**

	2005 Actual	2006 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	\$ 8,424	\$ 8,766
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 88	\$ 214
Total Other Income	8,512	8,980
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	8,512	8,980
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 6,684	\$ 7,846
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 395	\$ 412
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 562	\$ 602
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 7,641	\$ 8,860
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	97.6%	97.9%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 189	\$ 194
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	189	194
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 7,830	\$ 9,054
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 682	\$ (74)

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

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 477	-	7	-	484
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	371	-	-	-	371
Inventory	2,114	-	-	-	2,114
Prepays & Advances	50	-	-	-	50
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	1,242	800	-	-	2,042
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	15	-	-	-	15
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,269	800	7	-	5,076
Accounts Payable	477	-	-	-	477
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	108	-	-	-	108
Other	188	-	-	-	188
Total Liabilities	773	-	-	-	773
Net Assets	\$ 3,496	800	7	-	4,303
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 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	767	\$	918
% of Total Income		12.4%		14.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	237	\$	325
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		237		325
% of Total Income		3.8%		5.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	5,009	\$	4,778
Grants	\$	62	\$	264
Miscellaneous	\$	99	\$	154
Total Other Income		5,170		5,196
% of Total Income		83.7%		80.7%
TOTAL INCOME		6,174		6,439
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	893	\$	1,251
FTEs		3		4
Education	\$	3,857	\$	3,717
FTEs		18		18
World Literature	\$	420	\$	417
FTEs		3		3
Teacher Training	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,170	\$	5,385
Total Program Service FTEs		24		25
% of Total \$		88.3%		88.5%
% of Total FTEs		92.3%		92.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	684	\$	699
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		684		699
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		11.7%		11.5%
% of Total FTEs		7.7%		7.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,854	\$	6,084
TOTAL FTEs		26		27
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	320	\$	355

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

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,895	-	608	-	3,503
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,742	-	32	-	1,774
Inventory	579	-	-	-	579
Prepays & Advances	16	-	-	-	16
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	11,843	-	-	-	11,843
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,514	-	-	-	5,514
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	22,589	-	640	-	23,229
Accounts Payable	2,348	-	-	-	2,348
Notes/Loans Payable	11,687	-	-	-	11,687
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	80	-	-	-	80
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	14,115	-	-	-	14,115
Net Assets	\$ 8,474	-	640	-	9,114
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 \$608,000 of Lilly Foundation grant balance.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions					

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

	Fiscal 04-05 Actual	Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 1,943	\$ 2,260
% of Total Income	64.9%	80.5%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 436	\$ 422
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ 1
Total Gift Income	436	423
% of Total Income	14.6%	15.1%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ 209	\$ 92
Services & Misc	\$ 408	\$ 31
Total Other Income	617	123
% of Total Income	20.6%	4.4%
TOTAL INCOME	2,996	2,806
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Synodical Services & Grants	\$ 979	\$ 1,159
FTEs	5	5
Communications	\$ 349	\$ 222
FTEs	3	3
CRCPlan	\$ 154	\$ 141
FTEs	1	1
Sea to Sea grants	\$ -	\$ 820
FTEs	-	-
		Sea to Sea payout
Total Program Service \$	\$ 1,482	\$ 2,342
Total Program Service FTEs	9	9
% of Total \$	69.7%	70.5%
% of Total FTEs	64.3%	64.3%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 585	\$ 923
FTEs	4	4
D.D.M.		
FTEs		
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$ 58	\$ 55
FTEs	1	1
Total Support Service \$	643	978
Total Support Service FTEs	5	5
% of Total \$	30.3%	29.5%
% of Total FTEs	35.7%	35.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 2,125	\$ 3,320
TOTAL FTEs	14	14
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 871	\$ (514)

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

		Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
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:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	5,140	\$	5,093
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	3,662	\$	4,176
Total Other Income		8,802		9,269
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		8,802		9,269
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$	5,031	\$	5,265
FTEs		29		29
Finance/Payroll/Development	\$	2,103	\$	2,085
FTEs		21		21
Information Services	\$	720	\$	908
FTEs		7		7
Personnel	\$	196	\$	186
FTEs		2		2
<hr/>				
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,050	\$	8,444
Total Program Service FTEs		59		59
% of Total \$		91.5%		91.1%
% of Total FTEs		95.2%		95.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General				
FTEs				
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	752	\$	825
FTEs		3		3
Fund-raising (Foundation)				
FTEs				
Total Support Service \$		752		825
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total \$		8.5%		8.9%
% of Total FTEs		4.8%		4.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	8,802	\$	9,269
TOTAL FTEs		62		62
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	-	\$	-

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

	December 31, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 271	-	-	-	271
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	203	-	-	-	203
Equities	2,446	-	-	-	2,446
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	118	-	-	-	118
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,038	-	-	-	3,038
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 3,038	-	-	-	3,038
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)

		2005 Actual		2006 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	\$	277
Participant Contributions	\$	21	\$	10
Miscellaneous	\$	188	\$	281
Total Other Income		439		568
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		439		568
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	76	\$	99
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
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FTEs	\$	-	\$	

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

	December 31, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	9	-	-	-	9
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,449	-	-	-	2,449
Equities	11,516	-	-	-	11,516
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	6,083	-	-	-	6,083
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	20,057	-	-	-	20,057
Accounts Payable	9	-	-	-	9
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	9	-	-	-	9
Net Assets	\$ 20,048	-	-	-	20,048
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.					

Home Missions (including Funds for Smaller Churches)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 828	-	-	-	828
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	782	-	-	490	1,272
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	14	-	-	-	14
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	1,275	-	-	47	1,322
Equities	1,401	7,779	15	-	9,195
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	43	-	-	-	43
PP & E	27	-	-	-	27
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,370	7,779	15	537	12,701
Accounts Payable	302	-	-	-	302
Notes/Loans Payable	79	-	-	-	79
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	327	-	-	-	327
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	708	-	-	-	708
Net Assets	\$ 3,662	7,779	15	537	11,993
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Other: \$6,476	Hawaii: \$1,303			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: \$15				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term Loan: \$489	NA Trn: \$33	Trust: \$15		

**Home Missions (including Funds for Smaller Churches)
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	5,174	\$	5,472
% of Total Income		40.3%		67.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,392	\$	1,582
Estate Gifts	\$	373	\$	245
Total Gift Income		1,765		1,827
% of Total Income		13.8%		22.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	5,884	\$	791
Total Other Income		5,884		791
% of Total Income		45.9%		9.8%
TOTAL INCOME		12,823		8,090
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
New-Church Development	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Established & Small Churches	\$	401	\$	377
FTEs		2		2
Campus/schools	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		2		-
Ministry Teams	\$	5,084	\$	5,194
FTEs		35		35
Ministry Devel & Planning	\$	908	\$	1,264
FTEs		11		11
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,393	\$	6,835
Total Program Service FTEs		50		48
% of Total \$		78.3%		80.4%
% of Total FTEs		84.7%		84.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,035	\$	866
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	732	\$	802
FTEs		6		6
Total Support Service \$		1,767		1,668
Total Support Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		21.7%		19.6%
% of Total FTEs		15.3%		15.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	8,160	\$	8,503
TOTAL FTEs		59		57
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	4,663	\$	(413)

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

	June 30, 2006				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 5,996	-	-	-	5,996
CDs, Time Deposits	2,000	-	-	-	2,000
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	17,394	-	-	-	17,394
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	25,390	-	-	-	25,390
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	20,435	-	-	-	20,435
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	20,435	-	-	-	20,435
Net Assets	\$ 4,955	-	-	-	4,955
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					

**Loan Fund
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
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:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	1,137	\$	1,220
Total Other Income		1,137		1,220
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,137		1,220
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Loan Interest	\$	564	\$	694
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	564	\$	694
Total Program Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		75.6%		78.5%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	182	\$	190
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		182		190
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		24.4%		21.5%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	746	\$	884
TOTAL FTEs		2		2
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	391	\$	336

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

	-----December 31, 2006-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 1,458	176	-	-	1,634
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	149	1	-	-	150
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	6,781	-	-	-	6,781
Equities	23,708	-	-	-	23,708
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	32,096	177	-	-	32,273
Accounts Payable	217	-	-	-	217
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	217	-	-	-	217
Net Assets	\$ 31,879	177	-	-	32,056
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 2005 Actual	MPF 2006 Actual	SAF 2005 Actual	SAF 2006 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 31	\$ 37
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	91.2%	86.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 1,666	\$ 1,811	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 4,155	\$ 3,746	\$ 3	\$ 6
Total Other Income	5,821	5,557	3	6
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	8.8%	14.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	5,821	5,557	34	43
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 1,933	\$ 1,961	\$ 15	\$ 3
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 1,933	\$ 1,961	\$ 15	\$ 3
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	85.5%	85.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%	-	-
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 327	\$ 345	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	327	345	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	14.5%	15.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%	-	-
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 2,260	\$ 2,306	\$ 15	\$ 3
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 3,561	\$ 3,251	\$ 19	\$ 40

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

	-----December 31, 2006-----			
	Pension	S.A.F		Total
Cash	\$ 1,922	183	-	2,105
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	495	-	-	495
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	24,395	-	-	24,395
Equities	80,580	-	-	80,580
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	107,392	183	-	107,575
Accounts Payable	169	1	-	170
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	169	1	-	170
Net Assets	\$ 107,223	182	-	107,405
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 2005 Actual	MPF 2006 Actual	SAF 2005 Actual	SAF 2006 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 91	\$ 94
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	95.8%	92.2%
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	\$ 4,168	\$ 4,289	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 6,788	\$ 11,738	\$ 4	\$ 8
Total Other Income	10,956	16,027	4	8
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	4.2%	7.8%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	10,956	16,027	95	102
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 6,462	\$ 6,650	\$ 58	\$ 47
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 6,462	\$ 6,650	\$ 58	\$ 47
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.8%	87.6%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 737	\$ 937	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	737	937	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	10.2%	12.4%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 7,199	\$ 7,587	\$ 58	\$ 47
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 3,757	\$ 8,440	\$ 37	\$ 55

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

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

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

	Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 2,060	\$	2,229
% of Total Income	88.6%		87.4%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$ 257	\$	282
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$	-
Total Gift Income	<u>257</u>		<u>282</u>
% of Total Income	11.1%		11.1%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$	-
Grants	\$ -	\$	38
Miscellaneous	\$ 7	\$	-
Total Other Income	<u>7</u>		<u>38</u>
% of Total Income	0.3%		1.5%
TOTAL INCOME	<u><u>2,324</u></u>		<u><u>2,549</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Chaplaincy Services	\$ 182	\$	198
FTEs	2		2
Race Relations	\$ 276	\$	274
FTEs	4		4
Pastor-Church Relations	\$ 465	\$	515
FTEs	3		3
Abuse Prevention	\$ 143	\$	159
FTEs	1		1
Disability Concerns	\$ 205	\$	230
FTEs	1		1
Social & Restorative Justice	224		289
FTEs	2		3
Sust. Pastoral & Church Execl.	350		449
FTEs	1		1
Ministries in Canada	\$ 542	\$	613
FTEs	4		4
Total Program Service \$	<u>\$ 2,387</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>2,727</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	18		19
% of Total \$	96.8%		97.1%
% of Total FTEs	94.7%		95.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 47	\$	47
FTEs	-		-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$	-
FTEs	-		-
Fund-raising	\$ 32	\$	35
FTEs	1		1
Total Support Service \$	<u>79</u>		<u>82</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	1		1
% of Total \$	3.2%		2.9%
% of Total FTEs	5.3%		5.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<u><u>\$ 2,466</u></u>	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>2,809</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs	<u><u>19</u></u>		<u><u>20</u></u>
NET REVENUE (EXPENSE)	<u><u>\$ (142)</u></u>	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>(260)</u></u>

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

	-----June 30, 2006-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,468	1,050	257	-	3,775
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	591	9	1	2	603
Inventory	56	-	-	-	56
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	111	1,028	70	629	1,838
Equities	81	748	51	311	1,191
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	575	-	-	-	575
Other	32	-	-	-	32
Total Assets	3,914	2,835	379	942	8,070
Accounts Payable	627	134	-	-	761
Notes/Loans Payable	480	-	-	-	480
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	256	-	-	-	256
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,325	-	-	-	1,325
Total Liabilities	2,688	134	-	-	2,822
Net Assets	\$ 1,226	2,701	379	942	5,248
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 \$66 - Endowment/Annuities \$160 - 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 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,853	\$	5,135
% of Total Income		37.4%		40.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	6,399	\$	6,449
Estate Gifts	\$	490	\$	400
Total Gift Income		6,889		6,849
% of Total Income		53.1%		54.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	1,233	\$	678
Total Other Income		1,233		678
% of Total Income		9.5%		5.4%
TOTAL INCOME		12,975		12,662
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,460	\$	3,519
FTEs		31		33
Eurasia	\$	2,789	\$	2,407
FTEs		19		21
Latin America	\$	3,538	\$	3,630
FTEs		26		28
Europe	\$	666	\$	774
FTEs		7		8
Education	\$	569	\$	562
FTEs		5		7
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,022	\$	10,892
Total Program Service FTEs		89		96
% of Total \$		86.7%		86.2%
% of Total FTEs		88.8%		87.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	786	\$	857
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	911	\$	892
FTEs		6		8
Total Support Service \$		1,697		1,749
Total Support Service FTEs		11		14
% of Total \$		13.3%		13.8%
% of Total FTEs		11.2%		12.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	12,719	\$	12,641
TOTAL FTEs		100		110
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	256	\$	21

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

	-----June 30, 2006-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,026	\$ 6,386	\$ 5,211	\$ -	12,623
CDs, Time Deposits	36	-	-	-	36
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,571	603	-	-	3,174
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	79	-	-	-	79
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	19	-	19
Equities	-	2,221	661	23	2,905
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	377	-	122	-	499
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,089	9,210	6,013	23	19,335
Accounts Payable	1,177	-	-	-	1,177
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	353	-	-	-	353
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,530	-	-	-	1,530
Net Assets	\$ 2,559	9,210	6,013	23	17,805
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 = \$2,670 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$6,330 9/11 funds = \$207				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$122 Gifts rec'd for subs years = \$5,621 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$279				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

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

		Fiscal 04-05 Actual		Fiscal 05-06 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	19,904	\$	19,910
Estate Gifts	\$	725	\$	1,039
Total Gift Income		20,629		20,949
% of Total Income		75.0%		67.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	5,833	\$	9,572
Miscellaneous	\$	1,033	\$	730
Total Other Income		6,866		10,302
% of Total Income		25.0%		33.0%
TOTAL INCOME		27,495		31,251
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	9,303	\$	10,290
FTEs		56		56
No America programs	\$	1,159	\$	1,382
FTEs		6		6
Disaster relief programs (core)	\$	4,991	\$	11,997
Above-budget relief costs				
FTEs		9		9
Education	\$	448	\$	637
FTEs		3		3
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	15,901	\$	24,306
Total Program Service FTEs		74		74
% of Total \$		85.6%		89.9%
% of Total FTEs		79.6%		79.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,259	\$	1,385
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,406	\$	1,341
FTEs		12		12
Total Support Service \$		2,665		2,726
Total Support Service FTEs		19		19
% of Total \$		14.4%		10.1%
% of Total FTEs		20.4%		20.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	18,566	\$	27,032
TOTAL FTEs		93		93
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$	8,929	\$	4,219

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
Executive Director
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; Rev. Mark Van Haitisma, vice president; Ms. Rose Olthuis, secretary; and Mr. Doug Kallemeyn, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

The following slate of nominees from Region 4 are coming to synod for election to a first term:

Ms. Alice Klamer is a member of Providence CRC in Beamsville, Ontario. She has a degree in education and is the owner and president of Blue Sky Nursery, Ltd. Ms. Klamer has served on Christian school boards and is presently on the boards of several Christian organizations, including IDEA Ministries and Myrrh Ministries. She also is a member of the Advancement (Racom) board of The Back to God Hour.

Ms. Jean Vander Kooy is a member of Palmerston CRC, Palmerston, Ontario. She has a degree in education and is employed as a secretary. Ms. Vander Kooy has served on the board of the local Christian high school. Her local church experience includes pastoral care work, coordinator of Coffee Break, and membership on a pastor search committee.

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

During the past year, The Back to God Hour has continued to fulfill its mission as the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. In ministry around the world, The Back to God Hour has brought the good news of Christ to the largest cities on this globe as well as to isolated and rural areas where the gospel is heard only through media witness.

The historic Christian faith has continued to be proclaimed by way of radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. People have responded to the message

of the gospel by phone; mail; email; 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, and refer people to Christian counselors, as well as 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 (media ministry of the 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. In addition to traditional radio broadcasting, MERF supports an Arabic-language ministry website. The partnership with MERF allows our media efforts to be involved with a holistic ministry to the Middle East. In addition to media work, in which The Back to God Hour partners, MERF is involved in training church leaders, supporting Reformed churches, and providing relief support. The broadcast minister in Arabic is Rev. Victor Atallah.

B. English-language ministry

1. The Back to God Hour, a weekly half-hour radio program proclaiming the historic Christian faith is heard on every continent in the world. During this past year, Rev. David Feddes completed his work as radio pastor. A revised format now features several speakers, including the director of The Back to God Hour, Dr. Robert Heerspink. The program is introduced and concluded by dialogue led by the English-language ministry leader, Rev. Steven Koster. This new format continues to offer solid Reformed biblical teaching but in a format that is more accessible to listeners. The Back to God Hour English-language program 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. The program is podcast on The Back to God Hour website. A follow-up center in Nigeria operates in concert with World Missions personnel and indigenous church leaders.
2. The news-magazine format television program, *Primary Focus*, concluded distribution this year but continues to air on stations that have maintained inventories of the program. 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). The Back to God Hour is exploring ways of strengthening the Web delivery of both devotional and sermon material. Both sermons and the *Today* devotionals are available on The Back to God Hour website and by email subscription.

4. The Back to God Hour's two animated programs for children, *The First Easter* and *The Prince of Peace*, continue to be aired during appropriate seasons of the year and have been produced in Arabic, Spanish, and Portuguese. The animation programs are available in DVD and VHS formats.
 5. *Kids Corner* radio program is now heard on over 270 stations in North America, including the Moody Radio Network. The production of a new series of *Kids Corner* programs with new characters and a new format began airing in spring 2004. So far, approximately 100 programs have been completed. The corresponding website, www.kids-corner.org, allows children to listen to the programs and to request music CDs, bookmarks, and other fun activities. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children. This past year, *Kid's Corner* became part of HisKids.net, an alliance of Christian children's radio programs. HisKids.net is webcasting *Kid's Corner* and has significantly raised awareness of the program among our potential audience.
 6. The Back to God Hour continues to partner with FEBA (a Christian media ministry headquartered in the United Kingdom) and Words of Hope in the production of *Spotlight*, a simplified English program that uses a limited vocabulary, basic grammar, and a slower delivery rate to target an international audience of those who speak English as a second language. The program is broadcast on stations around the world, and a church-based follow-up to the program is being piloted in Quito, Ecuador. In addition, The Back to God Hour is investigating distribution of *Spotlight* through CDs to those involved in teaching English as a second language.
 7. The Back to God Hour is exploring ways of assisting churches with media needs. This includes helping churches conduct their own outreach campaigns through media and improved use of media in worship, as well as linking churches that are interested in exploring new possibilities of ministry that have media implications.
 8. The Back to God Hour is continuing to investigate ways of diversifying its programs in order to reach a broader audience with the English-language ministry. This exploration includes connecting with those who speak English both as a first language and as a second language.
- C. *Chinese-language ministry*
1. Twenty-six provinces in China are home to over 1.3 billion people. Seven superpower stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China in Cantonese or Mandarin dialects. The Back to God Hour staff in Hong Kong provides follow-up and listener contact for the sixteen programs produced each week.
 2. 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 between Chinese and English.

3. The Internet is proving to be an increasingly valuable tool in ministry to Chinese people because it can transcend geographical as well as political boundaries. A new children's website has been launched with programming specifically targeted to Chinese children and their parents. Additional avenues of media distribution for the Chinese ministry include print, CDs, and DVDs.
4. 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 multi-year 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. New follow-up centers have been opened in Benin and in Brussels, Belgium, where a significant population of French-speaking African immigrants is served.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

The Indonesian-language ministry is enjoying its new ministry center in Jakarta. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and Christians experience significant pressure because of their faith in Christ. In spite of these obstacles, the ministry has expanded significantly over the last five years. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya, leads a team that produces a variety of radio programs, publishes four devotional booklets monthly (targeting different age groups), and maintains an Internet ministry. Television is a growing part of the Indonesian ministry. A children's program has proved to be highly successful, and the ministry is presently testing an adult program, *Wheels of Life*. The ministry works in close cooperation with the Indonesian Christian Church, a denomination of approximately three hundred thousand members who share a commitment to the Reformed faith.

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 to 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 of Brazil is a significant partner in this ministry.

H. Russian-language ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, a Calvin Theological Seminary graduate and a native of Moscow, gives leadership to this ministry. Rev. Sosedkin, while stationed in

North America, spends significant time in Russia engaged in personal contact with those who contact our ministry. While in Russia, he also is a regular speaker on call-in programs.

The follow-up center for The Back to God Hour is located in St. Petersburg. Working in conjunction with Christian Reformed World Missions, The Back to God Hour provides published materials and Bibles to those seeking nurture in the Christian faith. The website has been significantly updated and has become an important avenue of ministry, not only to those living in Russia but also to Russian speakers around the world.

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 in order to speak to a variety of audiences.

Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership in this ministry. Rev. Serrano provided workshops in homiletics and in media technology in Chile during the past year. Major workshops are planned for the coming year in Mexico, in conjunction with the Presbyterian Church of Mexico. These workshops help build strong bridges to local pastors and to those involved in media, providing new avenues for follow-up and program placement. Rev. Serrano is also publishing a book on homiletics, which will be distributed at preaching workshops in the coming year.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour cooperates with Christian Reformed World Missions in areas of joint ministry, including Japan, Russia, Mexico, Haiti, and Nigeria.
2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
3. The Back to God Hour works with certain 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 partners with Words of Hope (media ministry of the Reformed Church of America) and MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship) in media outreach to the Arab-speaking world.
6. The Back to God Hour partners with Words of Hope and FEBA (a Christian radio ministry headquartered in the United Kingdom) to produce *Spotlight*, a simplified-English ministry targeting an international audience.

7. The Back to God Hour is in partnership with HisKids.net, an alliance of Christian children's radio programs.
8. The Back to God Hour sustains major partnerships with Reformed denominations in Japan (Reformed Church of Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church).

IV. Recommendations

A. That Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; and Dr. Robert Heerspink, the director of The Back to God Hour, be given the privilege of the floor when The Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect a board member from the nominations presented for a three-year term.

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, director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2006 and the February 2007 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

For the October 2006 meeting, the 31-member Calvin Board of Trustees met in a retreat at the Double E Ranch in Cody, Wyoming. The President's Cabinet spent Wednesday evening and Thursday morning in strategic planning sessions before the arrival of the full board. The February meeting was held February 8-9, 2007, at Calvin College.

Board officers elected for 2006-2007 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 2006 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. The February 2007 meeting was spent conducting faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure. Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA attended the meeting as an observer, and Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director of the CRCNA made a presentation to the board.

III. Faculty*A. Faculty interviews*

Eighteen faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2007 meeting. Eight were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations) and ten for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. Lee Hardy, professor of philosophy, who also chaired the revision committee for the new core curriculum, 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 teaching and scholarship.

C. Administrative appointments

The college made the following administrative appointments and reappointments:

1. Richard Baez, Psy.D., Broene Counseling Center (two and one-half years, effective January 29, 2007)
2. Linda S. Bosch, M.A.T., international student advisor/ESL instructor, Student Academic Services (continuing administrative appointment)
3. Susan S. Hasseler, Ph.D., associate dean for teacher education (three-years)

4. Douglas L. Koopman, Ph.D., William Spoelhof Teacher-Scholar in Residence (one and one-half years, effective January 15, 2007)
5. Michelle R. Loyd-Paige, Ph.D., interim dean for multicultural affairs (one year)
6. Shirley J. Roels, Ph.D., director, Van Lunen Center for Executive Management in Christian Schools (three and one-half years, effective January 1, 2007, 0.50 FTE)
7. Dean A. Ward, Ph.D., academic dean for the social sciences and language, literature, and arts divisions (three years)

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

Region 4

The first three-year term for Mr. Peter Schuurman, delegate, expires in 2007. Ms. Nancy Booy, alternate, resigned due to a new job commitment. The board recommends that Mr. Schuurman be reappointed to a second three-year term.

Region 5

Rev. Paul Hansen, alternate, moved from the region.

The Board of Trustees recommends the following slates of nominees for reappointment to a second three-year term:

Region 6

Mrs. Karen Wynbeek, delegate

Ms. Mavis Moon, alternate

Region 8

Mr. David Zylstra, delegate

Ms. Kimberly Brinks-Starkenbug, alternate

Region 10

Mr. William Ryckbost, delegate

Ms. Nancy Mulder, alternate

Region 11

Mr. Craig Klamer, delegate

Mr. Max Van Wyk, alternate

Ms. Evonne Plantinga, alternate to Mr. James Haagsma from Region 11, resigned due to a church move.

B. Alumni trustee

The second term for Ms. Marjorie J. Youngsma expires in 2007. The board will present a nominee for election by synod by way of the supplementary report.

C. At-large trustees

The third term of Dr. Jack Harkema and Ms. Jacquelyn Vander Brug expires in 2007. The board will recommend nominees for election by synod by way of the supplementary report.

Mrs. Elsa Prince-Broehuizen's second term expires in 2007. The board will present a nominee for election by synod by way of the supplementary report.

V. Finance

The board approved the 2006-2007 budget of approximately \$90.2 million. Tuition and fees were set at \$21,685 and room and board at \$7,460. This represents a 6 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 2005-2006. In keeping with college practice, financial aid will also increase at a somewhat greater rate than the costs.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers; and the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, when matters pertaining to education are presented.

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

1. Eric J. Arnoys, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry*
2. Brian R. Bolt, Ph.D., *Professor of Physical Education*
3. Arlene J. Hoogewerf, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Biology*
4. Stacy Jackson, Ph.D., *Professor of Economics and Business*
5. Joel M.P. Navarro, D.M.A., *Associate Professor of Music*
6. Michael J. Page, Ph.D., *Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences*
7. Dwight E. TenHuisen, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Spanish*
8. Amber L. Warners, Ph. D., *Associate Professor of Physical Education*

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot, reelect members for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

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 2007 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God’s faithfulness and looks toward the future with great hope and anticipation.

I. Board of trustees

The board met in plenary session in May 2006, October 2006, and February 2007.

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:

Trustee	Alternate	Region
Mr. Curt Gesch		1
Rev. Joan De Vries		3
Rev. Kevin Adams	Rev. George Vink	6
Rev. Jul Medenblik	Rev. Joel Sheeres	9

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 2007.

Region 3 (alternate position only)

Rev. Peter Slofstra has served as pastor of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice, Ontario, since 2003. He was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 1977 after receiving a bachelor of arts degree from Calvin College and a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary, and he represents Classis Quinte. *Rev. Slofstra* has served the board of Home Missions, as a delegate to synod, on the Sea to Sea task force, and as a church visitor in Classis Quinte.

Rev. David Vroege is the pastor of All Nations CRC in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and represents Classis Eastern Canada. He received undergraduate education at The King’s University College (1990-1994), the University of Alberta (1995-1997), and earned a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2001. He was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 2001. *Rev. Vroege* has served as a member of the Reformed Worship Editorial Council.

Region 10

Rev. Tim De Jonge serves as pastor of youth and education at Faith CRC in Holland, Michigan. He received a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 2004. *Rev. De Jonge* serves as the president of council and chair of the administrative committee at Faith CRC. His wife, Heidi, is employed as Pastor of Discernment at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. William Renkema is the pastor of Borculo CRC in Borculo, Michigan, and represents Classis Zeeland. He received his master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and was ordained into the ministry of the Word in 1978. He has served as president of CRWM, as president of a seminary in

Honduras, and as both pastor and theological educator in the United States and abroad.

In addition, the board submits to synod the following slate of four nominees for election of two at-large trustees:

Ms. Jinny Bult De Jong has served Calvin College as dean of women and as vice president for student life. From 1998-2001, she held the position of chief operating officer of International Aid (1998-2001) and since 2001 as director of KIDS HOPE USA. She has served on various synodical committees as well as search committees for denominational leaders. Her past board experiences include Hope Network and Trinity Christian College; currently, Ms. De Jong serves on the board of the AuSable Institute for Environmental Studies.

Ms. Susan Keesen resides in Denver, Colorado, where she is vice president and general counsel for CIBER, Inc. She earned her juris doctor degree at the University of Colorado and has served as elder, clerk, and president of the council of Third Christian Reformed Church of Denver. Currently, she serves as a member of the Judicial Code Committee of the CRCNA and as a member of 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 many and various civic organizations.

Ms. Jeri Schelhaas is chair of the Theatre Arts Department and instructor of theatre arts and English at Dordt College. She serves on the Service Learning Program committee and the Teacher Education committee at Dordt. She has served in various capacities within her local congregation, including two terms as deacon at Covenant Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa. Ms. Schelhaas is a member of the Sioux Center Recreation and Arts Council.

Ms. Kim Vande Vusse earned her bachelors degree in business administration from Calvin College in 1985 and has worked in the banking field since that time. She serves on the finance committees of Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church and Safe Haven Ministries. Ms. Vande Vusse is employed by Fifth Third Bank and manages the Treasury Management Department for the West Michigan affiliate bank.

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 ministry formation; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; and Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor.

This year, the board reappointed Dr. Henry De Moor to the position of vice president for academic affairs for three years subject to ratification by Synod 2007. 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 people who contribute so much to the health and welfare of our denomination.

The board dealt with the reappointment of several faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2007:

Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament with tenure
Dean B. Deppe, Professor of New Testament with tenure
John M. Rottman, Associate Professor of Preaching for two years
John D. Witvliet, Associate Professor of Worship for two years (half-time)

The board also approved the reappointment of Mr. Roy Hopp as adjunct professor of choral music for three years. It appointed Rev. Andrew Beunk as instructor for computer-assisted exegesis for one year (2007-2008).

The board approved a number of part-time teaching arrangements for the 2007-2008 academic year and reports for information that the following leaves have been granted:

Mariano Avila, spring quarter, 2007-2008; and summer 2008
John W. Cooper, fall quarter, 2007; summer 2008; and fall quarter 2008
Arie C. Leder, spring quarter, 2007-2008; and summer 2008

IV. Curriculum and programs

A. Center for Excellence in Preaching

The year 2006 was far and away the best yet for the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP). Conferences sponsored or cosponsored by CEP drew close to four thousand people to the campus of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College. Nearly one thousand of those guests were preaching pastors who came to take in a vast variety of workshops, worship services, seminars, and lectures, all aimed at helping preachers achieve their very best when proclaiming the Word of God to God's people—people who come to church every week hungry to feast on the gospel's good news.

In addition to events held in Grand Rapids, CEP sponsored a number of peer-learning groups in which pastors get together at least monthly for six months or more to study a key book on the craft of preaching, to prepare sermons for upcoming seasons in the church year (Advent, Lent), to critique one another's sermons, and generally to encourage one another in their shared task in the church. In addition to these standing groups, regional workshops led by CEP and seminary faculty were held in places such as Edmonton, Alberta; Midland Park, New Jersey; Lethbridge, Alberta; Lynden, Washington; Kerrville, Texas; and Toronto, Ontario.

The CEP website (www.cep.calvinseminary.edu) also continues to be a key resource for thousands of pastors who visit the site regularly to help them plan sermon series, find preaching ideas for specific texts and topics, become updated on upcoming conferences throughout North America, view recommended reading suggestions, listen to audio/podcast sermons, and read the shared wisdom from fellow pastors who contribute to the website. Between

five and six thousand visitors come to the CEP website each month, viewing an average total of nearly twenty thousand pages of material.

At Calvin Theological Seminary, CEP directly underwrites key components of the master of divinity (M.Div.) curriculum in preaching. Under the leadership of Dr. John Rottman, a new day has arrived at the seminary as students are being given the vital tools and skills they need to become excellent preachers. Comments from congregations where students serve as guest preachers indicate that people are detecting a noticeable improvement in the preaching abilities of our students. In the fall of 2006, the master of divinity curriculum offered (for the first time) the core course Intermediate Preaching. Students who have studied under Dr. Rottman and who have learned the four-pages method pioneered by Dr. Paul Scott Wilson, have consistently proven themselves to be fine preachers in classroom lab settings this year. CEP has also sponsored a number of guest lecturers in this course, including Mr. James Vanden Bosch of the Calvin College English Department; Dr. Todd Farley of the Calvin College Communications, Arts, and Sciences Department; and Rev. Howard Vanderwell from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. CEP has also brought in guest teachers who are themselves skilled preachers. These teachers have included Rev. Stanley Mast, Rev. Mary Hulst, and Rev. Peter Jonker.

CEP also collaborates with numerous groups, including Calvin College; Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan; Trinity Christian College in Chicago, Illinois; the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship; the Calvin Seminars in Christian Scholarship office; the Festival of Faith & Writing planning committee of the Calvin English Department; the Calvin Workshops in Communication office; the Kuyers Institute; and the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. These collaborations have been bearing much fruit and will continue in the future.

This past year, CEP has advertised its programming in numerous publications and at national clergy conferences. Our signature slogan begins with the words, "The Preacher Speaks . . ." as we realize that every week millions of Christians gather in churches around the world, eager and hungry to hear what the preacher will say. The Center for Excellence in Preaching is dedicated to providing pastors everywhere with the tools, ideas, resources, and encouragement they need to feed God's hungry flock.

B. Making Connections Initiative

The seminary has completed the second 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 on 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 (1) the new Discerning Your Calling program, and (2) the development of Formation for Ministry as the integrating principle for theological education at Calvin Theological Seminary.

C. *Discerning Your Calling*

One of the ways the seminary is seeking to renew a culture of calling in the CRCNA is by hosting Discerning Your Calling (DYC) events at CTS and 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 am 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. Seminary faculty and the new director of admission, Rev. Greg Janke, also participate in these retreats. An online version of DYC will be developed soon for access by many more people so they will be able to discern their calling.

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 Calvin Theological Seminary. Formation for ministry at the seminary includes the following emphases:

- Formation goes beyond merely dispensing information.
- Formation focuses upon the whole person: head, heart, hands, to 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 also for 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 our classrooms 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.

E. How Formation for Ministry happens

Formation for Ministry happens at Calvin Theological Seminary as students actively engage in their own spiritual formation, seek to discern more clearly their call to ministry, deepen their capacity for theological reflection upon life and ministry, and develop practical ministry skills. This happens through the full complement of courses in the seminary curriculum, regular meetings with a mentor (usually a local pastor) throughout their seminary studies, involvement in the full life of a particular local church, and specific ministry practice experience in those churches and in summer internships in a variety of ministry settings. These summer internships offer opportunities for cross-cultural engagement as well as for congregational experience.

Tying all of these things together are the 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 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: 177

Non-Christian Reformed students: 123

International (does not include Canadian students): 68

Programs:

M.Div.: 126 and 9 interns

E.P.M.C.: 9 and 3 interns

M.A.: 40

M.T.S.: 23

Th.M.: 51

Ph.D.: 33

Unclassified: 6

Male students: 249

Female students: 51

VI. General matters

A. Continuing Education

The Continuing Education program has enjoyed hosting a number of wonderful events in the past year. We are grateful for growing support and interest in our events, as well as more and more repeat customers. Attendees are drawn from an increasingly wide area—for events in Grand Rapids, they

typically come from a region bounded by Chicago, Detroit, and Toronto. We also sponsor events around North America, and occasionally beyond these shores to places such as Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In 2006, we hosted events in Jersey City, New Jersey; Anaheim and Sacramento, California; Ames, Orange City, and Sioux Center, Iowa; Palos Heights, Illinois; Toronto, Ontario; and Edmonton and Lethbridge, Alberta, as well as other locations in Michigan—Grand Haven, Holland, Hudsonville, Schoolcraft, and Zeeland.

We continue to offer a mix of seminars, courses, and workshops in smaller sustained learning groups and larger topic- or speaker-focused events. In 2006, the total attendance at our events was close to seven thousand people. The number of cosponsors continues to grow as well, as the seminary is seen as a good partner in lifelong learning opportunities. We work jointly with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching. We also are pleased to collaborate with other CRCNA agencies and related colleges and organizations. Local churches are our best cosponsors, because they help us provide continuing education in settings where we also have opportunities to learn from a variety of practitioners in ministry. Finally, we are thankful for technology that provides ongoing learning opportunities. All of our on-campus lectures and conference sessions are audio- or video-taped and posted on our website in the lecture archive. A grand total of over sixty-two thousand individuals listened to those presentations in 2006, and the learning continues. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve pastors, church leaders, and laypersons with lifelong learning opportunities through the Continuing Education program at CTS.

B. Facing Your Future

The Facing Your Future program for high school juniors and seniors again generated wide interest in the spring of 2007. Forty-two 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.

VII. Recommendations

- A. That Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., chair; and Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, secretary, be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.
- B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of trustees from the slate of nominees presented.
- C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect trustees from the slate of nominees presented.
- D. That synod ratify the following reappointment of an administrator with faculty status:

Dr. Henry De Moor, Vice President for Academic Affairs for three years

E. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments:

Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament with tenure

Dean B. Deppe, Professor of New Testament with tenure

John M. Rottman, Associate Professor of Preaching for two years

John D. Witvliet, Jr., Associate Professor of Worship for two years (half-time)

F. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the International Student Subsidy Fund and the 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

I. Introduction

The mission of CRC Publications, as revised by the CRC Publications Board at its January 2007 meeting, 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' kingdom *that transforms lives and communities worldwide.*

The italicized phrase was added by the board this year to more explicitly align our ministry with the vision statement of the Denominational Ministries Plan (DMP).

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

- Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture that are articulated in the Reformed confessions.
- 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:

- 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 administrative duties of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to CRC churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

II. 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 (three from the RCA) elected by synod, governs CRC Publications. The board ordinarily meets three times annually: September, January, and April. 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 2007 are as follows: Rev. Sid Couperus, president; Rev. Ken Baker, vice president; Ms. Irene Bakker, secretary; and Mr. Tom Prince, treasurer.

C. *Nominations of board members*

1. At-large delegate

The following nominees are presented to synod to fill an at-large position that is designated for someone with business expertise:

Mr. Cal Jen is a graduate of Calvin College and has a masters degree in architecture (with distinction) from the University of Michigan. He has taught at both Calvin College and the University of Michigan. He is currently the president of A.M.D.G Architects, Inc., in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has also served as senior vice president of Dominos Farm's Corporation and Domino's Pizza (during which he developed and managed over \$200 million of real estate and more than 200 staff) and Thomas Monaghan, Inc., in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Mr. Jen has served as board member for Habitat for Humanity, Hope Clinic, and Partners Worldwide. Mr. Jen is a member of Madison Square CRC where he is currently serving on the visioning committee and the future facilities team. He and his wife, Karen, have four children.

Mr. Senez Rodriguez received a degree in business from Cornerstone University and a degree in paramedics from Davenport University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is currently the executive director of Kent County Emergency Medical Services, Inc. Mr. Rodriguez has served on a number of emergency medical committees in Grand Rapids, Kent County, and the State of Michigan. He has also served on several community committees, including the Alliance for Health Planning board and the Health Intervention Services board. Mr. Rodriguez is a member of Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served on the worship committee and has participated in a number of skits and plays. He and his wife, Sheri, have two children and are in the process of adopting a third.

2. Regional delegates

The following nominees are being presented to the classes in Region 1 for vote at the spring classis meetings:

Rev. Joel Ringma is pastor at Terrace CRC in Terrace, British Columbia. He has a bachelor of arts in philosophy degree from The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, and a masters in Christian studies degree from Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition, he has a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Ringma has served as student representative on the board and senate at TKUC, secretary/treasurer of the Terrace Ministerial Association, and the Classis B.C. North-West church visitation committee.

Ms. Kathy Roosma is a member of Christ Community Church in Victoria, British Columbia, where her husband Harvey is pastor. In her role as the pastor's wife, she has used her gifts to serve in a variety of volunteer activities in churches in Zeeland, Michigan; Elmhurst, Illinois; Port Alberni, British Columbia; and Victoria, British Columbia. These include Sunday school teacher and coordinator, VBS coordinator, GEMS counselor, Coffee Break leader, and small group facilitator. Ms. Roosma has also served on various committees in both the church and the Christian school in addition to being chair of the Christian school board.

D. Relationship with the denominational structure and denominational plan

As CRC Publications staff does its planning for new resources, it does so with careful attention to the strategic priorities and goals incorporated in the Denominational Ministries Plan.

CRC Publications staff has also been heavily involved in the development of the Balanced Scorecard, which is designed to help implement the DMP. CRC Publications is committed to work with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this new initiative.

In addition to its work that is 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 Faith Alive Department, which provides all the CRC-developed English publishing resources needed by Home Missions to carry out its ministry. We also work with a number of other agencies in this way.
- The World Literature Ministries area of CRC Publications, which 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 Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, with whom we partner in a number of ways, including copublishing resources. A significant recent example is the *Worship Sourcebook*.
- *The Banner*, which regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions. In fact, each issue of *The Banner* includes eight pages of information about denominational agencies and ministries, as well as regular coverage of these in the news section.
- Several of the CRC agencies for whom we provide order fulfillment services.

E. Relationships with other organizations

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

- Reformed Church in America (RCA)—One of the most significant developments in recent years was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA whereby Faith Alive Christian Resources became the marketing and distribution arm for the RCA. This agreement was implemented on December 1, 2004, and has been working well.
- Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA)—Several years ago, we formed a partnership with the Presbyterians for Renewal organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving over three thousand evangelical congregations, is a copublisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum.
- Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE)—We work closely on their annual conference. We also partner with the nascent Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE).
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)—Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the executive director of the denomination,

and numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination.

- Christian Schools International (CSI)—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues. Recently, we copublished a resource for youth on origins.
- Baker Book House—We often copublish books with this Grand Rapids-based publisher.

E. The Year of Faith Formation

Synod 2005 approved a number of recommendations from the synodical Committee to Study Church Education including the following:

That synod call the churches and classes to make faith nurture a special focus beginning in the fall of 2007 through the summer of 2008 by:

- a. Praying for the Holy Spirit’s work of spiritual transformation, growth, and discipleship.
- b. Placing special emphasis on building strong faith nurturing ministries for all ages, leading people to spiritual maturity and raising up spiritual leaders; and that synod ask the BOT to instruct CRC Publications to support and equip churches as they seek to carry out these tasks.

(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 719)

CRC Publications appointed a task force to help it identify how best to respond to this request to support and equip the churches. In early February of this year, a packet containing a resource book, a DVD, and a poster was sent to every CRC church, providing them with a variety of helps, tips, and suggestions for how they might respond to synod’s call. The theme for The Year of Faith Formation is Walk On.

G. New name for CRC Publications

At its January 2007 meeting, the CRC Publications board decided to change the name of CRC Publications to Faith Alive Christian Resources. The grounds for this decision are as follows:

1. This change will help improve the brand awareness and recognition of Faith Alive Christian Resources in the CRC, the RCA, and other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations.
2. The brand identity of the other units within CRC Publications (*The Banner* and *Libros Desafío*) will not be affected by this change because they have well-established brands within their audiences.

As of this writing, staff is in the process of developing a plan for implementing this change.

H. Use of CRC Publications resources by CRC churches

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by CRC Publications. In fact, about 85 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. About 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our core curricula. While that is high compared to many denominations, it is disappointing that many CRC churches do not place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written from a Reformed perspective—especially because new Walk With Me curriculum has been developed and is being 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.

Hopefully, many smaller CRC churches will use our new *Kid Connection* curriculum due out later this year.

I. New Living Translation of the Bible

At our board's suggestion, Synod 2006 agreed to "designate the TNIV version of the Bible as acceptable for use in CRC worship services" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 644). The same synod did not accede to an overture from Classis Toronto that the New Living Translation (NLT) be acceptable for CRC worship services because "it has not been reviewed by a study committee" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 652). Synod also approved a recommendation from its advisory committee that the Board of Trustees "establish a Translation Committee to review, study, and make recommendations regarding the use of new Bible translations in the churches" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 652).

The Board of Trustees has decided that it would not establish this committee as an ongoing entity but that committees should be appointed as the need arises for specific translations. The Board of Trustees then decided to ask CRC Publications to appoint such a committee to review the New Living Translation of the Bible to develop a response to the overture from Classis Toronto. The CRC Publications board will be appointing a committee to do this work. Dr. Emily Brink will chair the committee.

J. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting, the CRC Publications board adopted the report from the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. Until recently, 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.

K. Antiracism

CRC Publications continues to be an active participant in the effort of the Ministry Council (MC) to respond to synod's directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC by way of a staff antiracism team.

The CRC Publications board also 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.

L. Salary disclosure

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

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

III. 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."

April 2007 marked the second-year anniversary of the every household *Banner* sent to every CRC home (or distributed within the churches) without cost to recipients. Staff has received very positive anecdotal responses from diverse segments of the CRC in response to the every household *Banner*, including many who did not read it prior to its becoming an every household magazine.

However, to determine whether the positive reactions were representative of CRC members, staff engaged an outside firm to do a scientific survey of CRC members. The results of the survey confirmed what staff has been hearing. For example, 86 percent of respondents to the survey indicated that they read substantial portions of *The Banner*, compared to 58 percent in a 2002 survey of CRC members. Nineteen percent indicated that they read all of it, compared to 5 percent in the 2002 survey.

The most significant staff changes in the past year were changes in the position and location of the editor in chief of *The Banner*. Rev. Robert De Moor gave up his responsibilities as theological editor for the Faith Alive Department of CRC Publications and assumed the role of pastor of preaching and administration at West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. Given the technology currently at our disposal, this transition has gone very well. The loss of significant personal contact with the rest of the staff, while less than desirable, has not affected the work of *The Banner*.

Even though *The Banner* gets very positive reviews, the staff continues to look for ways to improve. Examples of changes in the past year include the following:

- Getting more reader involvement in the humor page
- Including edgier feature articles
- Adding different areas of expertise to the FAQ panel
- Overhauling the Tuned In section

The network of news correspondents continues to be a valuable resource for *The Banner*. The recent survey showed that the news section is the most widely read section of the magazine.

A representative sample of articles that received the most response during the past year include the following:

- "Going to the Extreme" on Christians and dangerous sports by Marian Van Til
- News article on First Toronto and the homosexuality issue; also Judy Cook's FAQ about a homosexual relationship
- "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" by Bonnie Mulder-Behnia
- "Hollywood Meets Easter" and "Texas Hold 'em" by John Van Sloten
- Sea to Sea news

- "Raising the My Space Generation" by Ron DeBoer
- Editorial against synod's decision to call for a seven-year Sabbath on the women in office debate.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For a number of years, synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC council 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 magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

A new editor, Rev. Joseph Chun, has made some significant improvements in this magazine during the past year. About three thousand copies are distributed bimonthly.

B. *Faith Alive*

After serving this department for many years in a variety of roles, most recently as department director, Ms. Pat Nederveld retired at the end of 2006. Now headed by new editor in chief Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, the department publishes and distributes resources for all areas of a local church's ministry. The goal of this department is to be the first-stop resource for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions.

One of the significant changes within Faith Alive during the past year has been the decision to dramatically reduce the number of products that we carry from other publishers (endorsed products). The board made this decision because, after doing a cost analysis, staff found that we were not covering our fully loaded costs; the availability of most of these products from Amazon also contributed to this decision.

A significant addition to the Faith Alive work this past year was the approval for ministry shares to be used to establish a position of teacher training and consultant on the Faith Alive staff. Ms. Jolanda Malburg was hired in late 2006 and has begun work implementing a plan to provide support for teacher training and other assistance for church-education efforts.

1. Curriculum

a. For children

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

The most important activity of this ministry is publishing curriculum for children. The *Walk With Me* curriculum is the flagship curriculum that we currently publish for children. A total of about 1,900 churches, 650 of them CRC, use at least one of our core children's curricula.

The number of churches who drop our children's curricula each year (over 500) makes it difficult to keep a significant customer base in this ministry, which is the most significant source of income for this department. Other denominational publishers are experiencing a similar trend.

In recent years, many of our customers have expressed a concern that our children's curricula materials, because they assume a number of students at each grade level, do not work for smaller Sunday schools;

accordingly, starting this fall, we are publishing a curriculum for smaller churches called *Kid Connection*. This is the first small-church curriculum published in the past ten years—and the very first written from a Reformed perspective. One important feature of this curriculum is a magazine that provides the basis for stronger ties to the home.

Other significant resources for children's ministry published during the past year or coming soon include a revision of *Sunday School That Really Works* and *Sing With Me*—the songbook that accompanies the *Walk With Me* curriculum.

b. For youth

The most important curriculum that we offer for youth, in our view, is curriculum that teaches the doctrines of our church to youth. The core resource in recent years for this has been *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course on the Heidelberg Catechism. Beginning last September, we also offer an alternative to the more cutting-edge pedagogy used in *Questions Worth Asking* called *HC and Me*. This new product is selling very well.

Another new product on the drawing board is a DVD-based treatment of the Contemporary Testimony, which will include online, downloadable resources on current topics to help ensure that the discussions are truly contemporary.

c. For adults

By far, the most significant new series of products for adults that Faith Alive is developing is the *Disciples* program. This multi-year program offers an integrated approach that will help adults and young adults at all stages of spiritual maturity to grow in their faith walk. Churches can use these resources, for example, at the beginning of the church year in connection with The Year of Faith Formation. They include the following resources:

- A month of worship resources, including complete services
- Five group Bible discussion guides of five sessions each
- A book of daily readings for individuals

Faith Alive's three more traditional Bible study series for adults are *Discover Your Gifts*, which is designed to support the Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions; *Discover Life*, which is designed to support men's Bible study; and a more intensive Bible study series called *Word Alive*.

Other recent or planned resources for adults include the following:

- *Christian: What It Means, Why It Matters* by Alfred Mulder
- A revised edition of a popular book, *90 Percent of Helping Is Just Showing Up*
- *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and Evolution*
- A book on politics in the Reformed, *Look at . . .* series

d. For people with mental impairments

The board of Friendship Ministries, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds to support the development and marketing of resources and program support for people with mental impairments.

The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*. The book *Autism and Your Church* was published during the past year and is selling well. Work is continuing on a revision of the year-long course called *Living God's Way*.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minneapolis, staff continues to expand the list of resources available in Braille. A small ministry share is designated for this work.

2. Resources for church leaders

In response to synod's request, we have published an online summary with discussion questions of the 2005 synodical report on Christian education.

Other significant resources for church leaders include *Learning Disabilities and Your Church* and a revision of a popular book called *Compassionate Congregation*.

We are currently planning a revision of our basic guidebooks for elders and deacons, and we are considering developing two additional resources: video-based training modules and a book on local church structures.

3. Worship resources

a. General update

The quarterly magazine *Reformed Worship* continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are about thirty-seven hundred subscribers; many from denominations other than the CRC. Because of a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, we were able to place all prior issues of the magazine on the Web this past year.

Staff in this ministry continues to work closely with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship on a variety of other projects; an active one is a book of New Testament songs.

We also work with the RCA staff to coordinate support for the children and worship program used by many of our churches.

b. New hymnal

In regard to a new hymnal, in April 2005, the board approved a motion that staff (1) explore the possibility of cooperating with the RCA in publishing a bi-denominational songbook; (2) explore various formats for publishing, including electronic; and (3) survey CRC and RCA churches.

In April 2006, CRC Publications established an advisory committee to develop a specific proposal for the CRC Publications board. Among the items in the mandate of this committee was "to recommend whether or not to publish a songbook." The members of this committee are Dr. Clay Libolt, pastor at River Terrace CRC in East Lansing, Michigan; Dr. John Witvliet, Jr., director of the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship; Mr. Ken Bradsell, director of Synodical Services for the RCA; Rev. Tim Ten Clay, member of the RCA Commission on Worship and and RCA pastor; and Mr. Gary Mulder, director of CRC Publications. Rev. Joyce Borger and Mr. Kent Hendricks served as staff for the committee.

The committee reviewed the results of the online survey that had been sent to all CRC and RCA pastors (510 respondents). Some highlights from this survey include:

- Sixty percent of the respondents describe their services as “blended,” very similar to the percent from a survey of CRC congregations in 1999.
- Seventy percent of CRC churches have the 1987 gray *Psalter Hymnal* in their pews.
- Twelve percent of CRC churches have the blue *Psalter Hymnal* in their pews; the same percent have *Sing! A New Creation* in their pews.
- Sixty percent of the churches always or usually sing from a hymnal in their worship services.

When asked whether they would purchase a comprehensive songbook if Faith Alive published one five years from now, 2 percent said definitely, 11 percent said probably, and 32 percent said maybe.

The committee reviewed the results of this survey at length. It also discussed a number of related matters such as the trends in worship in the RCA and CRC today, the better-than-expected sales of *Sing! A New Creation*, the decision of a number of denominational publishers to publish another hymnal, and the surprised reactions of people when told that Faith Alive is considering publishing another hymnal.

The committee decided to recommend the following:

That the CRC and the RCA cooperatively publish a new comprehensive hymnal provided a budget is developed that shows it can cover costs.

Grounds:

1. A new hymnal that is based in the Reformed tradition would serve to enhance the denominational identity of both the CRC and the RCA as well as other Reformed bodies.
2. Results of a recent survey of the two denominations show that 20 percent or more of the churches would possibly purchase a hymnal if one were published by Faith Alive. This degree of acceptance would mostly likely mean that costs could be recovered.
3. As to whether or not they would purchase a new hymnal for their pews, the fact remains that many churches from both denominations would benefit from a denominational process whereby a recommended list of songs from various genres would be developed.
4. A cooperative project such as this would be another significant step in developing closer ties between the RCA and the CRC.
5. Because the same process of compiling and editing would need to be followed for producing an electronic product, the development cost of producing a printed hymnal is not significantly more than producing an electronic product, or a list of “approved” songs for use by the churches.

Note: We will continue to explore the possibility of producing a digital version of the final product. There are many copyright issues to be resolved before we could do that.

At its January meeting, the board approved this motion as a recommendation to synod; it also approved the selection criteria and possible outline of contents for this hymnal that can be found in the Appendix to this report.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Introduction/overview

World Literature Ministries publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish line of products is published under the *Libros Desafio* imprint. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life. Most of the books are translated works from English books in doctrine or biblical studies and are intended for church leaders.

This department collaborates with other agencies, especially the mission agencies, through our World Literature Council, which includes representatives from all the CRC mission agencies.

2. The publishing work

a. Spanish literature

Some of the significant books translated and published this past year or currently in the works include the following:

- *Chaos of the Cults* – revised and expanded edition
- *Corinthians* (Kistemaker)
- *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Dillard & Longman)
- *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship* (Wes Howard-Brook, ed.)
- *Contextual Pastoral Care* (Alberto Roldan), originally written in Spanish

A significant amount of staff time this past year was devoted to translating and editing a year of the Friendship curriculum into Spanish. This curriculum, called *Amistad*, will be published in the summer of 2007.

b. Russian literature

Key books published in Russian this past year, under the leadership of Mr. Gary Timmerman, World Missions missionary in Russia, are:

- *Engaging God's World and Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Plantinga)
- *The Day of Christ's Return* (Kuyvenhoven)

c. Korean literature

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 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 China.

The Korean Council has published other important CRC materials into Korean, such as the Church Order, the Heidelberg Catechism, and so forth.

D. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting.

Although our print catalog remains a key vehicle for communicating with churches about our products, the Web and email have become very important in recent years. Orders through our website account for over 20 percent of total sales and nearly ten thousand people have signed up for our monthly e-newsletter. Other communication channels include direct mail, conferences, print and web-based advertising, publicity, and order enclosures.

We promote our curricula to churches from a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Our spring mailings normally go to about forty-thousand churches.

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' accounts and sales for English-language products are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active customers	Percent	Sales	Percent
CRC	831	18	\$1,507,000	44
RCA	653	14	\$543,000	16
Other	2554	56	\$1,077,000	32
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	540	12	\$279,000	8
Total	4578	100	\$3,406,000	100

E. Personnel

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 director, Mr. Gary Mulder, and representatives from these five departments: Ms. Joyce Kane, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Rev. Leonard Vander Zee and Ms. Ruth Vander Hart, Faith Alive; Rev. Alejandro Pimentel, World Literature Ministries; Mr. Tim Postuma, Marketing; Mrs. Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

E. 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 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 dollars from ministry shares for the development of the *Walk With Me* curriculum and for the every household *Banner*.

CRC Publications submits for synod information reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2006, and budgets for fiscal years 2008 and 2009. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2007—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 2008.

IV. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Rev. Sidney Couperus, president

Mr. Gary Mulder, director

For *The Banner*

Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For Faith Alive

Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, director

B. That synod recommend the Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 2008.

C. That synod approve the recommendation of the CRC Publications Board that the CRC and the RCA cooperatively publish a new comprehensive hymnal (see section IV, 3, b).

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

Selection Criteria for a New Hymnal

Below you will find the general selection criteria that we would like to follow, but exceptions may be made for musical, textual, or pastoral reasons.

I. Criteria for selection

A. Collection criteria

1. Balance of theological and biblical themes
2. Wide diversity of biblical names, metaphors, images for God
3. Songs for each season of the church year
4. Songs for each liturgical element

5. Address a diversity of issues and life experiences
 - social justice
 - families/broken homes/lives
 - environment/creation (care of)
 - birth/death
 - marriage
 - illness
6. Include simple texts for children (but not childish texts)
7. Include texts that resonate with youth
8. Include key sung liturgical texts
 - 10 commandments
 - Kyrrie, Sanctus, Agnus Dei
 - Canticles: Magnificat, Nunc Dimitis, Benedictus
 - Te Deum
 - Lord’s Prayer
 - Beatitudes
 - Shema/Deut. 6
 - Ps. 23
 - Great Commission
 - creeds/confessions
9. Reflect various streams of piety
 - a. Classic seasonal and historical music/texts (*Silent Night, A Mighty Fortress*)
 - Dutch Reformed piety
 - Early church
 - Reformation
 - b. Early North American evangelical revival (*His Name Is Wonderful*)
 - c. Contemporary worship music (*In Christ Alone*)
 - d. Global (including Taizé and Iona)
 - e. New hymns/songs
 - f. Liturgical renewal (Marty Haugen)
 - g. African American
 - Spirituals
 - Early gospel
 - Late gospel
 - h. North American cultural spectrum
 - Latino
 - Native American
 - Asian
10. Reflect a broad and balanced range of theological themes
11. Musical variety (keys, rhythmic, major/minor)
12. Include parts where possible for authentic instrumentation and percussion
13. Reflect the diversity of musical styles within our denominations
14. Include original languages and translations as appropriate
15. Preference given to material that is familiar, well-tested, and accessible to congregations

B. Textual criteria

1. Biblical and theologically Reformed
2. Poetical texts ought to reflect good poetic techniques
3. Grammatically correct (with some poetic license)
4. Follow criteria typically applied to all Faith Alive publications
5. Artfully written
6. Cohesive in thought
7. Understandable message (not puzzling to the singer or needing too much unpacking)
8. Captures the imagination or results in further reflection
9. Communal
10. Avoid language offensive to various people groups
11. Words fit naturally with selected tune
12. Avoidance of forced rhymes
13. Compared to ecumenical texts currently in use for consideration
14. Any language changes would be made on a song-by-song basis—decision based on what is best musically and pastorally

C. Musical criteria

1. Range: c-d¹ (can be stretched either way depending on musical context)
2. Tessitura (where does it lie for various voice parts)
3. Rhythmically accessible to congregants
4. Congregational rather than solo music
5. Ought to fit the text and support its message
6. Well-crafted memorable melodies
7. Interesting with some predictability but not trite
8. Open to multiple tunes for texts (i.e., *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*)

II. What might this hymnbook look like?

The aim of this collection is to provide a resource for congregational song in the CRC and RCA that can give a common voice to our worship in the twenty-first century. This collection seeks to be broad enough to include music from the traditional hymn repertoire to contemporary worship music and from Western music to the music of the global church. Our desire is also that this collection be deep enough to give voice to our praises and laments, be sung prayer and proclamation, and play a significant role in the faith formation of Reformed Christians old and young alike.

There will be some inherent limitations in this book that are best acknowledged up front. Individuals will probably look at this collection and wish that one or two of their favorites were also included, but, due to size restraints, some hard decisions need to be made. In addition, because of the publication process and the fact that once in print the book cannot be added to, it will not contain the most recently written contemporary worship music; we also know that we cannot compete with the systems already set up for disseminating such music. Finally, given that this will be a fairly large collection of approximately 600 songs and most churches have a repertoire of around 250 songs, not every song will be equally received by every congregation. The goal, however, is that congregations can find 200 songs within the collection that do support their worship.

Despite these limitations, it is our hope that this collection will ultimately follow in the tradition of previously published hymnals by providing a breadth and depth to our congregational singing that allows us to use old words that express our tried and true faith as well as challenge us with new words that may deepen and broaden our prayers and walk with God.

III. Suggested index topics

A. The Church at Worship section – Opening of Worship, Preparing for Worship, Call to Worship, God’s Greeting, Opening Responses, Confession and Forgiveness, Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, Lament, Assurance of Pardon, The Peace, Thanksgiving, The Law, Dedication, Proclaiming the Word, Prayers for Illumination, Introductions to the Reading of Scripture, Responses to the Reading of Scripture, Responses to the Sermon, Profession of Our Church’s Faith (sung Creeds and Confessions), Prayer, Lord’s Prayer, Offertory Prayer, Prayers of Dedication, Sacraments, Baptism, Lord’s Supper, Close of Worship, Sending/Charge, Blessing

B. The Christian Year section – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Baptism of Our Lord, Transfiguration, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Passion/Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost, The Trinity, Christ the King, Communion of the Saints

C. Themes of the Christian Faith (including the OT narrative) section – Creation (Genesis 1 and 2, Care of Creation, and Art and Science), Providence (New Year, Guidance, and Care), Redemption (History of Redemption—Genesis 3 through Malachi, Faith and Hope, Trust and Assurance, and Healing and Wholeness), Thanksgiving, Walk with God (Discipleship; Purity and Holiness; Comfort and Encouragement; Christian Community and Unity; Ministry and Service; Social Justice and Peace; Home and Family, including marriage, children, and confession/prayers; Society; Stewardship and Giving; New Creation; Death and Resurrection)

D. Indices section – Copyright Holders; Scripture References; Topical Index; Author, Composers, and Sources; Metrical Index of Tunes; Tune Names; First Lines and Titles

IV. Other

- Bible Translation: TNIV (translation Faith Alive has chosen to work with).
- When various wordings are used within the RCA/CRC for key liturgical texts, we may choose to include multiple texts (i.e., Lord’s Prayer, Creeds).
- Preference for including aspects of the classic liturgy.
- Liturgical aids would be included, such as those found in *Sing! A New Creation*, not full forms like the back of the *Psalter Hymnal*. A portion of these liturgical aids would be from approved RCA liturgies.
- Would include service music (i.e., Kyrie, Sanctus).
- Instead of a separate Psalter, the Psalms will be placed throughout the collection based on theme or liturgical use. (i.e., Psalm 51 would appear in confessions).

I. Introduction

A. *Our mission*

Is it not ironic that in a denomination and culture that does not particularly like change, *change* is the most defining aspect of our work at Christian Reformed Home Missions? As a church, we have become more inclusive, and we have struggled with what it means to serve a culturally diverse membership. As a denomination, we have extended our reach—from campuses to prisons, urban streets to suburban coffee breaks—and have sought the wisdom to address each unique population.

More and more of our churches are passionately transforming their ministries from an inward focus to an outward focus. The challenge Home Missions faces is how best to acknowledge change without compromising mission. In making our case for embracing that challenge, we are exploring what is new in the CRC and how that affects the work we do.

Christians would answer the question, “What is the church’s mission?” without hesitation: to follow Jesus’ commission, “As you go out into the world, make disciples” so 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” (Matt. 28:19; Phil. 2:10, 11).

There is no reason to rethink that mission. The mandate is clear and uncontestable, but today, the CRC is charged with rethinking how we can best minister to our neighbors when our reaching “every knee” and “every tongue” may be through ministries decidedly different from the ministries we have known.

B. *Our mandate*

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)

C. *Following Christ. In Mission Together. Home Missions’ goal and ministries*

Home Missions pursues its mandate under the leading CRC ministry objective: “transforming lives and communities worldwide” by “creating and sustaining healthy churches.”

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.

D. Home Missions organization

The Home Missions binational office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is organized to unify resources and mission support.

The Grand Rapids based ministry team, led by Rev. Allen Likkel, supports 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 also part of the ministry team.

Home Missions' five-person ministry advancement team, led by Mr. Tom Bratt, leads Home Missions' fundraising and communications efforts.

Rev. John Rozeboom, director of Home Missions, leads the agency and reports to the CRC executive director, Rev. Gerard Dykstra, as well as to the Home Missions board.

1. Looking to the future – personnel changes and plans

Rev. John Rozeboom presented recommendations for organizational change to increase Home Missions' connection with local ministries and regional teams. The CRHM board approved the new direction at the September 2006 meeting. The changes involved were to locate goal specialists (the former ministry development team located at the CRHM binational office) in CRHM regional ministry teams.

Subsequently, the two educational mission leaders, Rev. Peter Schuurman and Ms. Joyce Suh, accepted offers to locate respectively to the Eastern Canada and Korean/California South regional ministry teams. The other goal specialists, Mr. Dan Ackerman, Mr. Jim Osterhouse, Ms. Diana Klungel, and Ms. Denise Stevenson, chose to take severance.

Dr. Bill Van Groningen, leader of the former ministry development team, accepted a short-term study/writing assignment in missional ecclesiology for the spring Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association Conference, and then took severance.

Task forces were appointed in small-groups ministry development, church planting and development, and mission-focused church resources to evaluate what is needed in relationship to these areas.

The work of CRHM continues through all of our binational office people, including the director's office, the ministry advancement team, the ministry team, and the twelve regional ministry teams. We have made and are completing interim steps to provide the needed support for CRHM goals largely through the capable and dedicated support staff at the CRHM binational office. The staff in our binational office have the skills and dedication to carry out support events and to continue to offer resource materials.

2. Home Missions regional ministry teams

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. Regional ministry teams also have the responsibility to advance Asian, black, Hispanic, and Native American ethnic ministries.

The regional teams and team leaders are:

Black and Urban, Rev. Bob Price	Korean and California South, Rev. Tong Park
Chicagoland, Rev. Peter Kelder	Native American and Red Mesa, Rev. Stanley Jim
Eastern Canada, Mr. Ben Vandezande	North Central USA, Rev. Larry Meyer
Eastern USA, Mr. Drew Angus	West Central USA, Rev. Jerry Holleman
Great Lakes, Rev. Ben Becksvoort	West Coast, Rev. Peter Holwerda
Hispanic and Southeast USA, Mr. Javier Torres and Rev. Stan Workman	Western Canada, Rev. Martin Contant

E. CRC evangelizing growth in 2006

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,287 persons through evangelism in 2006, compared to 3,373 persons in 2005, 3,374 persons in 2004, and 2,939 persons in 2003.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 269,856 (*Yearbook 2007*, p. 147), compared to 272,127 last year, despite the fact that member additions (11,417 persons) were 4,387 more persons than reported member decline (7,030 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 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. Five board members-at-large will balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy/nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees.

The following slate of names from Region 12 is coming to synod for election of a three-year term:

Ms. Beth Fylstra has worked for Classes Hudson and Hackensack in a number of capacities since 1997. She has been the administrative assistant for the Eastern home mission board; a member of the Eastern ministry leadership team; and most recently as the director of development for Eastern regional ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, which encompasses Classes Hudson, Hackensack, and Atlantic Northeast. Ms. Fylstra previously served on the Christian Reformed Home Missions Board for one year as an alternate prior to regionalization and downsizing. The Fylstras attend Bridgeway

Community Church in Haledon, New Jersey, where she is the small group director. They have six children and one grandchild.

Rev. Al Gelder has pastored five congregations, all of which began as a “mission”—either planted directly by Home Missions or by a classis or region. He is chair of the leadership development team for Classis Atlantic Northeast and a member of the classical ministries team. He has served twice on the Home Missions Board, including three years as board president. Before the east region had a full-time team leader, he was employed part-time as a Home Missions contact person for it. Rev. Gelder is an ordained minister, currently serving Valley Christian Reformed Church in Binghamton, New York.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Dr. Mary Buteyn, president; Rev. Phil Reinders, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (director); Rev. Sheila Holmes, recording secretary; Mr. Rodney Huguen, treasurer; and Rev. Sam Cooper, vice all.

The officers of the Canada board for 2007 are Rev. Phil Reinders, president; Rev. Samuel Cooper, vice president; Mr. Victor Chen, secretary; Mr. Michael Talsma, treasurer; and Mrs. Elna Siebring, assistant secretary-treasurer.

C. 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 was disbanded in late 2006. The team was originally formed to explore the social and intellectual trends of the North American environment to identify the emerging mission opportunities and challenges. The team was also to provide resources to Home Missions’ regional teams, which included insights, conferences, and pilot projects that would help Home Missions with the new realities and opportunities of the twenty-first century in North America.

In 2006, the ministry development team completed its series of white papers, in which each strategic area of Home Missions’ work was carefully analyzed in light of current social, intellectual, ecclesial, and organizational trends. Educational mission leader Mr. Peter Schuurman submitted a paper that envisioned a campus ministry to be characterized as a “faith laboratory” with an “ambassadorial” element. Rev. Dan Ackerman, leader of mission-focused churches, submitted a paper entitled, “Unveiling God’s Purposeful Love: An Outline for Corporate Spiritual Formation.” Church planting and development leader Ms. Denise Stevenson submitted a white paper entitled, “Church Planting in a Diverse World: Envisioning a Future for the Christian Reformed Church.” The Home Missions white papers are available now.

Elsewhere, Home Missions' work in support of small-group evangelism and prayer mobilization moved forward in the Small Group Evangelism Conference held in Long Beach, California, this past July.

The former leader of the Home Missions spiritual formation team, Ms. Diana Klungel, began work to develop an integrated design for small groups, evangelism, spiritual formation, and prayer mobilization. A spiritual-formation retreat pilot program for pastors and their spouses began.

Throughout 2006, Dr. Van Groningen, the former ministry development team leader, offered a series of presentations and memos that further analyze and interpret the larger social, intellectual, ecclesial, and mission trends that gave rise to the white papers. Church leaders also received a bimonthly memo "Interesting Stuff." These memos reflected on a variety of recently published material that focused on the challenges and trends that bear on mission in North America today.

Rev. Ackerman, along with the Home Missions' smaller church team and Dr. Gary Teja of Kuyper College, launched an online continuing education course designed especially for smaller church leaders.

Ms. Denise Stevenson successfully challenged the church multiplication training center to explore revising its so-called bootcamp training curriculum to better prepare church planters for urban, multicultural realities. In cooperation with the CRCNA Office of Race Relations, Ms. Stevenson also hosted a peer forum to explore barriers to cross-cultural ministry. The Home Missions church planting and development team also partnered with the Denominational Office to sponsor the Soul Changes Conference.

In June, Ms. Klungel was invited to China. While there, she offered daily counsel and gave numerous public presentations to the leaders of the burgeoning Chinese Coffee Break movement. In November, former leadership development leader Rev. Jim Osterhouse traveled to Japan. In response to an invitation from the Reformed Churches of Japan, he spoke to several classical gatherings of church leaders on the topic of leadership-development strategies.

In addition, several CRHM regional teams provided rich opportunities for face-to-face interaction and resource development with a ministry development team liaison. Each ministry development team member also hosted an annual gathering of CRHM regional team specialists. The first round of these gatherings occurred last spring.

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 that flows through his people. Home Missions is moving into a new chapter of ministry with congregations, and it is our goal to encourage congregations 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-nine smaller churches for programs, to sixteen smaller churches for continuing education, and to thirty-one smaller churches for technology upgrades
- grants to two Heritage churches
- partnership staffing grants to thirty 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.”

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’ synodical 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 2006-2007 as of January 7, 2007:

Church Planting/Development

Churches reporting	62
Main worship attendance	4,045
Total confessing members	3,519
Growth by evangelism	387

Cultural diversity of church planting ministry is shown below:

Home Missions grant-funded ministry leaders – 1988 through 2007

	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%
2007 (1 year)	13	5	18	28%
Total	145	173	318	54%

New churches – 1988 through 2007

	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%
2007 (1 year)	10	11	21	53%
Total	151	190	341	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 CRC 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 2006 through 2007

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 2005-2006

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Allegan, MI/The River	A	Jon Vugteveen	2006	2008
Boumanville, ON/Discovery	A	Martin Spoelstra	2006	2008
Bradenton, FL/Epicenter	A	Don Ridder	2006	2008
Burlington North, ON/Living Mosaic	A	Leo Gatotos	2000	2006
Evergreen Park, IL/Evergreen Church	A	Recruiting	2006	2008
Fontana, CA/New Joy	K	Sung Chang Choi	2006	2008
Fountain Valley, CA/Fountain of Life	A	Matt Ford	2006	2008
Los Angeles, CA/Kings Chapel Harvest	B	Joseph Wright	2006	2008
New Brunswick, NJ/Grace Comm.	K	Jae Park	2006	2008
Newaygo, MI/New Community	A	Case VanWyk	2006	2008
Paoli, PA/African Christian Ministry	B	Robert Wafula	2006	2008
Plano, TX/Great Light Presbyterian	K	Myung Han Kang	2006	2008
Rowland Heights, CA/Crosspoint	K	Sang Guen Lee	2006	2008
S. Wocheater County, MA/The River	H	Bruce Dykstra	2006	2008
Santa Clarita, CA/SCV Community	K	David Kong	2006	2008
Simi Valley, CA/Remanente	H	Hector Chavez	2006	2008
Worthing, SD/Cornerstone Prison Church	A	Steve Moerman	2006	2008
Yucaipa, CA/High Power Ministry	M	John Gonzales	2006	2008

New work: Ministry year 2007

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Albuquerque, NM/Wings of Eagles	N	Paul Phillips	2006	2008
Bellingham, WA/Mosaic CPD/Resid		Atkins & Hall	NFP	NFP
Canton, MI/Canton R&D	K	Lee Chul Jeong	2006	2008
Chino/Rowland Heights/Crosspoint	K	Sang Guen Lee	2006	2008
Columbia, SC/Crossroads	A	Cary Holbert	2007	2009
Edison, NJ/Global Vision	K	Eun Beom Kim	2006	2008
El Paso, TX/Sunshine Comm Resid	K	Tony Lara	2006	2008
Evergreen Park, IL/New Evergreen	A	John Wilczewski	2006	2008
Grand Rapids, MI/Gold Ave/Peace Hope	H	Gilbert Varela	NFP	NFP
Hamilton, ON/First Hamilton CPD	A	Tim Sheridan	2006	2008
Hooksett, NH/New Life Ministries	M	Ryan Bradley	2006	2008
Kelowna, BC/The Well	A	Ron VandenBrink	2006	2008
London, ON/N. London CPD	A	George Saylor	2006	2008
Muskegon, MI/On the House Church	A	Jeff Boersma	2006	2008
New York/New York R&D/CPD	A	John Algera	2006	2008
New York/New York Residency	A	Steve Wolma	2006	2008
Olathe, KS/Pathwa 2nd Staff	A	Kurt Rietema	2006	2008
Orlando, FL/New Heart Fellowship	H	Felix Fernandez	2006	2008
Rowland Heights, CA/Rowland Hts.	H	Esther Kiyose	2006	2008
Thousand Oaks, CA/Thousand Oaks Comm.	K	Jeong Jin Yoo	2006	2008
Vancouver, BC/Yaletown CPD	A	Mary-Lee Bouma	2006	2008

Residencies

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Started	End
Rochester, MN/Living Stone Church	A	Kyle & Wendy Haack	2006	2008
Seattle, WA/The House	A	Brian & Betsy Turnbull	2006	2008
South Hamilton, MA/North Shore Resid.	A	Ryan Bradley	2006	2008
Traverse City, MI/Traverse City CPD	M	Bryan Berghoef	Non funded	NA

*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 2005-2006

Anaheim, CA/SaeSoon	Suil Kim	6/30/06
Anchorage, AK/Crosspoint	Dave Kuiper	6/30/06
Arcadia, CA/Salt and Light	Jonathan Kim	6/30/06
Atlanta, GA/Good News	George Boyd	6/30/06
Bayonne, NJ/ El Regalo de Dios	Denis Calix	6/30/06
Bellflower, CA/Rosewood Hispanic	Samuel Flores	3/31/06
Delta, BC/West Coast Comm.	James Berry	6/30/06
Ewa Beach, HI/Anuenue	Jerry Kraesig	6/30/06
Fruita, CO/ Abundant Life	Allen Kleine Deters	3/31/06
Grand Rapids, MI/Abundant Life Ministries	Arthur Bailey	2/20/06
Grand Rapids, MI/African Christian Fellowship	Mwaya Kitavi	6/30/06
Grand Rapids, MI/The Gathering	Paul Worster	6/30/06
Jersey City, NJ/Filipino CRC	Albert Sideco	6/30/06
Las Vegas, NV/Desert Streams	Bob Pollema	6/30/06
Long Beach, CA/ Nueva Comunidad	Orlando Alfaro	10/25/05
Los Angeles, CA/ Gardena City Harvest	Lawrence Bennett	6/30/06
Miami, FL/ Iglesia Renacer	Hector Garcia	12/31/05
Mill Creek, WA/Garden of Grace	Gilbert Kim	7/01/05
Northbrook, IL/Family of Faith	Michael Benson	12/31/05
Pasadena, CA/Gateway	Daniel Mendez	8/04/05
Rockford, MI/Standing Stone	Burt Bolt	5/31/06
Sacramento, CA/Gathering	Ron Vanderwell	6/30/06
Westminster, CA/Little Saigon	Matthew (Minh) Le	6/30/06
West Valley City, UT/Cambodian	Charlie Phim	6/30/06
Whitby, ON/Real Life	John Wildeboer	10/30/05
Williams Lake, BC/Cariboo Comm	Paul Lomavatu	6/30/06

D. Educational mission

Denominational 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 to 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 campuses in Canada and the United States. As of January 2007, twenty-three campus ministries are supported by Home Missions' partnership-assistance grants. They are:

Chicago State University (Black)	Passaic County Community College
Dalhousie University	Queen's University
Fanshawe College	University of Alberta
Ferris State University	University of Calgary
Iowa State University (Anglo)	University of Guelph
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Iowa
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Northern British Columbia
McMaster University	University of Toronto
Michigan State University	University of Waterloo

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

Rev. Peter Schuurman works .75 FTE as a binational educational mission goal specialist on the CRHM Eastern Canada regional ministry team in Guelph, Ontario. Ms. Joyce Suh now works .25 FTE as the educational mission goal specialist for the Korean/California South regional ministry team. Rev. Schuurman and Ms. Suh help coordinate partnerships with the U.S. ministries. They also 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 (CRCMA), Home Missions supports annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The agency also supports the CRC's ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America. Together, Home Missions tracks campus ministry trends, explores campus ministry issues and concerns, and helps set the course for ongoing mission in higher education.

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

1. Leadership development networks (LDN)

In classis-based partnerships, Home Missions supplies staff to thirteen LDNs. An LDN is a three- to four-year, in-ministry training program available in Spanish or English. The current locations are:

Location	Leader
Alberta	Curtis Korver
British Columbia	Wilma VanderLeek
California	Al Breems
California	Andy Choh
California	Albino Melendez
Colorado	Peter VanElderen
Maine	Bill Johnson
Manitoba	Robert Visser
New Jersey	Harold Sweetman
Sacramento	Kevin Adams
South Dakota	Jim Hoogeveen
Texas	Mike Johnson
Washington	Doug Fakkema

Three new LDNs are being developed: Eastern Canada LDN, Toronto; Antioch LDN, Grand Rapids and North Central Iowa LDN.

2. Calvin Theological Seminary masters degree in missions

Home Missions partners with Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College to offer an online education program to bring accredited education to mission students. Home Missions supports Dr. Gary Teja in directing this program. Eight 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 Dr. Gary Teja.

3. 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.

F. *Spiritual formation, small group discipleship, and prayer mobilization*

Home Missions' prayer and small group development people connect and supply resources to churches and ministries through consultation with and training of church leaders and members. Home Missions' website (www.crhm.org) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism. More than 2,500 people participated in over 115 events in 2006.

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.

IV. Regional ministry teams and partnership grants overview

More than one hundred committed and gifted Christian Reformed Home Missions' staff are now serving the churches and classes on twelve CRHM regional teams, inclusive of CRHM regional leaders. These committed servants are serving the churches and classes in their respective regions. Fifty-six are paid staff and forty-five serve as volunteers. In addition to the regional ministry team staff, several of the teams have partner teams aligned with the classes of their region. These partner teams multiply regional efforts with a larger number of partners who are working with CRHM to accomplish goals and strategic initiatives. The impact is greater awareness and momentum for engaging in Christ's mission through mission-focused churches, educational mission, and church planting. Specialists on the teams are also giving leadership to small group development, spiritual formation and prayer, and leadership development. Home Missions knows that capacity to serve the churches and classes of the regions has increased significantly as regional leaders and teams experience the synergy of the team. There is clear evidence that the goals of reorganization through regionalization (set in 2003) are being achieved.

Capacity for Christ's mission is being achieved through many new leaders who have signed on to serve as staff (paid and volunteer). These are leaders who have assignments that relate to CRHM's main goals and purposes. Our knowledge of the teams is an opportunity for us to be blessed by their strong commitment and ownership for Christ's mission as it is engaged by the CRCNA in North America and expressed by these added workers for the harvest.

Classes, congregations, and members of the CRCNA are being served in increased ways through these teams. Nearly all of the teams have engaged in conversation with, or are planning to visit, church councils and classical committees to listen to the needs and challenges they face in reaching their communities for Christ. They are serving classes, leaders, and congregations with vision casting, consultation, and encouragement. There is increased influence and impact.

The teams are serving one another with what we call best practices as well as the overall efforts of CRHM as a unified and distributed organization. Home Missions is beginning to experience the benefit of receiving "leadership from the edge."

With the recent employment of Mr. Javier Torres as the new Hispanic/Southeast U.S. regional team leader, all twelve of the Home Missions regional leaders positions are now fully staffed. Mr. Torres began by meeting with CRHM Hispanic pastors and leaders in the various clusters around North America in order to assess challenges and opportunities. With the burgeoning growth of the many diverse Hispanic groups in the United States and Canada, there is an urgent need for CRHM Hispanic regional teams to mobilize effective mission strategies for Hispanics.

One goal of each CRHM regional team is a more robust communication system within their region. It is the desire of CRHM, through its regional teams, to partner with and assist the churches and classis for their engagement in Christ's mission. Keeping everyone well informed of what God is doing and how the mission is progressing is a high value. It is also vital for the agency's respective teams to exchange information with each other.

As an expression of a commitment to diversity and the desire to learn more, the CRHM regional team leaders met prior to the Ethnic Workers Summit in Seattle, Washington, in April 2007 and then attended the conference, which celebrates ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity and provides training to further greater diversity in the work of Christ's mission in North America.

There are also significant challenges for the teams. Several teams (Korean and Hispanic regional teams along with the East United States, North Central, and Western Canada regional teams) have extensive geographical regions. This represents a logistical challenge for pulling together a representative team in a way that provides for good stewardship of time and financial resources. Another challenge is that teams are currently made up of volunteer and paid staff. The amount of commitment and investment of time and energy requested of volunteers is significant. Regional leaders must seek to be good stewards of financial resources as well as of the gifts, skills, and time of volunteer staff.

Church planting and the funding of other mission initiatives through the CRCNA churches in Canada is receiving a wonderful boost from the approximately \$1 million Sea to Sea Legacy funds. The process for investing these funds into mission strategies in Canada is now underway. The funds will serve as a "multiplier" for the ongoing CRHM partnership grants allocated to ministries in Canada. For each proposal submitted to CRHM, a parallel request will be made to the Canadian Ministry Foundation (where the funds are held). The funds will be invested according to the following percentages:

- Cultivating healthy churches – 10%
- Leadership development – 10%
- Funding new church plants – 80%

The chart below shows how grants are allocated in FY 2006-2007:

Church planting	
Residency	120,000
New churches	1,950,000
Parent churches	10,000
Computer	4,600
Moving	11,000
MTF	2,450
Subtotal	<u>2,098,050</u>
Mission-focused churches	
Staff & programs	<u>334,500</u>
Subtotal	<u>334,500</u>

Smaller churches	
Technology, program, continuing education	58,000
Transition	33,300
Redevelopment	0
Insurance/pension	0
Heritage	22,827
FSC	0
Red Mesa churches	<u>94,000</u>
Subtotal	<u>208,127</u>
Leadership	
Formal internship	58,900
Non-formal internship	108,500
Academic internship	12,250
Leadership development Networks	110,000
Summer interns	<u>0</u>
Subtotal	<u>289,650</u>
Campus	
New Mexico schools	325,000
Campus ministry grants	<u>419,800</u>
Subtotal	<u>744,800</u>
Total grant budget amount	3,706,127

V. Ministry advancement

A. *Financial gifts*

Home Missions' ministry share dropped 0.7 percent (\$36,244) totaling \$5,071,945. Above-ministry-share gifts (non-estate) increased 0.9 percent to \$1,505,477 and estate gifts experienced an increase of \$8,248 (4.1%). Although conference and registration fees dropped 3.1 percent to \$150,201, a significant increase in unrealized gain/loss on assets boosted the bottom line. Overall, total revenue was up \$452,730 (5.9%). 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.

B. *Personnel*

Mr. Tom Bratt continues to provide leadership for the five-person ministry advancement team that underwent staff changes during the year. Mr. Corey Watt, development officer, and Ms. Cindy Johnston, communications manager, both left Home Missions to pursue other opportunities. In the fall of 2006, Mr. Ben Van Houten was hired to be the new senior writer of Home Missions, and Ms. Kristie Schrottenboer joined the advancement team as administrative assistant. Mr. Jim Steenbergen continues to be the team's main development officer. Rev. Jack Stulp, in his forty-ninth year of ministry in the CRC, serves as manager of church relations. A number of volunteers also continue to support God's mission both in the binational office and with funded ministries. In addition, Home Missions is currently recruiting development officers to work in both Canada and the United States.

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 email. The Home Missions' website, used to convey information such as news, prayer needs, and other information, was redesigned to align itself with the newly designed denominational site.

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 *on a Mission* newsletters and several other promotional materials were published. 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 for 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 email newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Church planters receive the monthly *Pastor's Memo* e-newsletter. Home Missions also provides speakers for Missionary Union tours.

VI. Classis Renewal Ministry Team

Home Missions is a founding partner agency with CRWRC of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team (CRMT) 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 knowledge 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 has provided renewal resources to a growing number of classes. It maintains a partnership arrangement with six classes and has been in active conversation with several more, specifically around the questions of renewing a sense of community within the churches of the region and how to structure classis for ministry effectiveness. The Classis Renewal Ministry Team hosted a conference in the spring, to which thirty-nine of the forty-seven classes sent representation. This was the largest gathering of classes leaders for classis renewal since the Glen Erie conference of 2000. The team used a peer learning format where the partner classes shared their knowledge from past years in a workshop format. This was combined with a meeting of classis prayer leaders. At that conference, the CRMT distributed the first denominational resource binder, which has all of the CRC agency and ministry contacts in one place. The team is continuing to connect classes with the CRHM regional teams, strengthening their leadership development efforts and providing resources to meet the needs of classis leaders throughout the denomination. Mr. Frank Engelage currently serves as classis coach on a .75 FTE basis.

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 by way of the printed ballot elect a board member from the nominations presented for a three-year term.

C. 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 Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, director

I. Introduction

This has been a year of great blessing and transformation for the work and life of Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM). God has allowed us to resume ministry in places where it had been interrupted, has called us to new areas, and has allowed us to work with and through others in ways and places well beyond our reach. The work of CRWM has been greatly blessed both internationally and in Canada and the United States. We have welcomed new co-workers into our family and have been privileged to follow the lead of co-workers retiring from a combined three centuries of service.

As indicated in last year's report, we have, through an intense process of prayer and reflection, redefined our statements of mission, vision, and values. These statements rest on the Bible, the ecumenical creeds, our Reformed confessions, the CRCNA governance documents, and the Denominational Ministries Plan for agencies and institutions of the CRCNA. They make explicit what we have been doing well in missions, as well as what we hope to do in the future.

To advance the CRC's international mission through Christian Reformed World Missions, we have identified the following key strategies:

A. Mobilize CRCNA churches and their members for greater missions involvement through programs that:

1. Proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (the gospel of salvation and new life in Christ, justice, restoration, and peace), particularly to those who have not heard it.
2. Foster prayer for the work of the gospel around the world.
3. Enhance their vision and their connections for missions (with other CRCNA churches and agencies).
4. Inform and encourage them to follow sound mission practices.
5. Invigorate them by reciprocal interaction with parts of the body of Christ around the world.
6. Place CRCNA members in cross-cultural mission ministries with CRWM or other mission organizations.

B. Strengthen the CRCNA and international partners in our mutual capacity for Christian life and missions through programs that:

1. Plant and develop churches.
2. Make disciples.
3. Develop leaders, for all walks of life, with a Reformed world and life view.
4. Partner for impact through reciprocal relationships that multiply ministry.
5. Develop Christian schools, including institutions of higher education.

C. Participate in global networks and movements to advance the reign of Christ that:

1. Engage with others in an exploration of a Reformed world and life view.
2. Apply the world and life view for transforming individuals and communities.
3. Work with or develop collaborative networks and/or movements.

II. Ministry in Canada and in the United States of America

In light of our strategic priorities, the plans of World Missions-USA and World Missions-Canada are focused on challenging God's Christian Reformed people to support a vision for worldwide missions. Listening to churches and serving with them in proclaiming the gospel worldwide will be our ongoing privilege and challenge.

Churches are also increasingly supporting mission beyond what is being done or offered through the agencies that they have established. In light of these new avenues of partnering with other mission agencies, new ideas are being sought so that the overall opportunity for maximizing the ministry is being advanced.

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.

Having received the blessing of the CRWM Board, we have started to restructure our organization so it can respond effectively to churches and thus move toward our mission. A new position that will enable us to do this is a single North America director. Other staff have also been appointed, and they will proactively listen to churches and challenge them to a greater passion for mission as indicated above.

Internationally, we have begun to restructure as well. In Latin America, we have done so to fit a regional perspective rather than a national one. Two people now share the role of directing multinational teams that combine gifts in theological education, leadership training, and evangelism.

It is a great blessing that in Africa we have seen opportunities that push us to action without our needing to go find them. We have received invitations to join African partners in fields where we have no current work. In Asia, we have been invited to join as consultants and contributing partners in amazing missions work that is already bearing fruit. We have this blessing due to the credibility of our agency's history of good testimony.

Christian Reformed World Missions is working with Christians in many countries to find better ways to further God's kingdom together. Some of the partners and organizations with whom we work are listed below:

- 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'Education Chrétienne en Haiti (CRECH)
- Haitian Christian Reformed Church (HCRC)
- RCJ Eastern Presbytery
- Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ)
- National Presbyterian Church of Mexico
- Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)
- Synod Mission Board of the Mizoram Synod of the Presbyterian Church of India
- Asian Theological Seminary—Bacolod
- Asian Theological Seminary—Manila
- Faith Academy (Philippines)
- Philippine CRC—Classis Metro Manila
- 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 of announcing the reign of Christ. We seek to do so by joining our gifts with those of other churches, organizations, and peoples. Please note the following areas of ministry:

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. The challenge is to spread the Word without destroying people's lives and communities because open conversion oftentimes results in the individual's exclusion from the community.

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 influence of this country in francophone Africa is strong, and, through it, CRWM has seen projects grow and bear fruit. Furthermore, 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.

E. China

With a government that is printing Bibles in Chinese but with regions where churches are still persecuted, navigating through the maze of change in China is a real challenge for missionaries who are trying to boldly develop a ministry while maintaining a wise degree of caution.

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 for leaders, encouragement, and vision is needed.

H. El Salvador

El Salvador has had its share of hard times. Today, in many ways, it has been living up to its name, *the Savior*. In 1960, evangelical Christians were a mere 2.3 percent of the population. In 2000, they were 22 percent. Missionaries are not directing ministry in El Salvador. Rather, they are partnering—offering help and encouragement in critical ways as the country seeks to extricate itself from a difficult past.

III. Review of 2006

We draw encouragement from the grace and blessing that God is showing us around the world. Here are some examples of what he did this year.

A. All over Latin America, we are finding willing and able partners with whom we can work. Notably, in the Dominican Republic, both our Christian Reformed schools (COCREF) and church partners have developed a greater sense of ownership for the work in their country and have taken more responsibility for it.

B. We praise God for allowing us to establish a partnership with the Reformed Church of Zambia through which we can send one of their pastors, Rev. John Phiri, to head up the church-development work in Sierra Leone.

C. In North America, God has blessed us with talented new colleagues in the areas of recruitment, development, and church relations. We have also added two resource consultant positions to work with our CRC congregations in developing their mission passions, as well as adding a regional structure for Latin America, a special projects coordinator, and a donor relations position.

D. After a year of prayer, preparation, and promotion, Mr. Bernhard van der Vlis and the Daniel Center helped lead the Abuja Vision Conference 2006 in Nigeria. This conference brought together 42 Christian organizations and 515 participants. Conference speakers challenged participants to be leaders and reformers in every part of Nigerian society.

IV. Looking ahead

We have been strengthened with renewed mission, vision, and values statements, as well as with the start of some structural change. In the coming year, we anticipate entering areas where we have never worked. In this effort, we are continuing to explore ways to serve with the Synod Mission Board of

the Mizoram Synod of the Presbyterian Church in India. This agency currently sends over one thousand missionaries to many parts of India and to other countries.

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.

V. Report on mission fields and projects

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
2006	300,000

b. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)

The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria has grown in size and strength and has become a missionary sending church and partner in ministry.

Year	Worship attendance
1920	0
1957	5,600
1970	19,000
1980	60,000
2006	180,000

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. The situation stabilized in 2006.

Year	Worship attendance
1979	40,000
2004	55,000
2005	50,000
2006	50,000

d. Eastern Kambari area

In 2005, the emerging churches among the two hundred thousand Avadi in the Eastern Kambari area decided to become a classis of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN). The CRCN requires more members before recognizing a church plant as an organized church. Thus, growth continued in 2006 even though the number of organized churches remained the same. Leadership development also progressed with twenty-six local students completing their second year of a four-year Bible school program.

Year	Organized churches
1984	0
1995	3
1997	5
1999	8
2001	12
2002	13
2004	14
2005	20
2006	20

2. Guinea and Mali

Ministry in Guinea resulted in transformed lives and stirring conversion stories, especially for Mariama, whose story was told in *The Banner*. In Mali, 2006 brought further growth in the number of known Christians related to CRWM's ministry among the Fulbe people—as indicated in the chart below:

Year	Worship attendance
1984	0
2000	9
2001	14
2002	19
2003	27
2004	35
2005	50
2006	65

3. 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 in 2005, Liberians dedicated the Bassa Bible. Bassa is the first indigenous language in Liberia to have the complete Bible. Since the Bible was dedicated, enrollment in theological education by extension (TEE) has doubled to more than two hundred students.

4. Sierra Leone

Church attendance decreased during the years of conflict and war. Nevertheless, World Missions is responding to requests to help organize churches, develop leaders, and establish a Christian school. Working in partnership with the Reformed Church of Zambia, a Zambian pastor now provides leadership to the ministry.

Year	Worship attendance
1979	0
1985	400
1990	1,000
2005	500
2006	500

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 Calvin College, CRWRC, and World Vision on Spirituality and Leadership is being explored 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, and we participate in Calvin's worship symposium.
- 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

Through our partnership with CRWRC, scholarships are given to local pastors for training in Christian community development.

4. Japan

Our work focuses primarily on church development in partnership with the Reformed Church of 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 are being held.
- We provide teachers to the Christian Academy of Japan, a large international Christian school in Tokyo.
- We help connect the RCJ to Korean Presbyterian denominations.
- BTGH Japan ministries are closely integrated with CRWM ministries.

5. Philippines

Our primary partners in the Philippines are the CRC of the Philippines (CRCP) and Asia Theological Seminary in Manila.

- Asia 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 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 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 of 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

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.

Year	Seminary graduates
1952 - 1996	0
1997	20
1998	40
1999	60
2000	80
2001	100
2002	120
2003	136
2004	152
2005	168
2006	186

3. Russia

World Missions' ministry in Russia fits into three major areas:

- maintaining and strengthening evangelical libraries
- sustaining 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. 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 per year. This program has attracted sixty-one evangelical leaders from several Latin American countries. In the past year, UNELA also began a masters program in education that now has over twenty students. The School of Distance Learning, through partnership agreements, is providing training to hundreds of students in Latin America. 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 is training missionaries from Latin America to go to the 10/40 window.
- UNELA is offering online courses as part of its distance program.

2. Cuba

The past year has been a very difficult one for the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba. First, the long-time president of the church, Rev. Erelío Martínez, passed away on February 15, 2006. Second, internal leadership problems forced them to switch pastors in the different parishes, resulting in the loss of members.

The summer programs that include summer camps for children, teenagers, young adults, and couples went very well. Seventeen key leaders are enrolled in the UNELA bachelor and masters levels. This program is a key component in providing biblical and theological education to church leaders. Some ministry results in the CRC of Cuba are:

- twenty established congregations
- six ordained pastors
- seventeen in-training leaders
- five thousand worshipers
- strong emphasis on holistic ministries

3. Dominican Republic

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

The Christian Reformed Schools (COCREF) are reaching out to thousands of Haitian and Dominican children with Christ-centered education. Eighty percent of the students come from non-Christian homes; the

transforming power of the gospel is changing both the lives of students and those of their families; thus, providing more than just good education for Dominican and Haitian children. The growth and development of this school ministry include:

- twenty-one schools
- one hundred twenty-five teachers and supervisors
- five thousand students

4. El Salvador

Seeds of New Creation, a collaborative ministry between CRWM, The Back to God Hour, and various national ministries, continues to work for a renovation of the evangelical church in El Salvador based on an integral, Reformed world and life view:

- About sixty pastors and leaders of parachurch ministries participated in the growing Network for Integral Missions. This network provides a forum for training, for sharing experiences, and for collaboration. Subnetworks have formed for pastors, for leaders of ministries for youth and children, and for coordinating disaster relief.
- A theological education program, presenting an integral, Reformed view of the gospel, is providing training to more than 130 pastors and church leaders from a variety of denominations.
- The Christian university student movement (MUC) in El Salvador, one of the national ministries that is part of Seeds of New Creation, is increasingly recognized for its contribution to the university.
- The literature ministry of Seeds of New Creation offers quality Reformed literature to pastors and lay leaders at subsidized prices.
- The CRC of Santa Tecla has made substantial progress in completing its new church building to replace the one destroyed by an earthquake.

5. Guatemala

In 2006, CRWM appointed Rev. Joel Van Dyke to serve as director of the Strategy of Transformation Initiative. This initiative is a collaboration between CRWM, Liderazgo Juvenil, and the Center for Transforming Mission. The purpose of the initiative is to equip the church to reach high-risk youth and their families. This initiative is very important in Central America where highly organized youth gangs are increasingly active. Although Rev. Van Dyke is based in Guatemala, the training also was conducted in Nicaragua in 2006 and in 2007 and will expand to the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Honduras.

6. Haiti

Haiti has recently undergone a state of transition. Presidential elections took place in February 2006 and René Preval was elected president on February 7, taking office in May. During the second half of the year, a wave of about eight to ten kidnappings per day shook the country. The missionary community was not spared, and some North Americans were targeted. The motive for these kidnappings was financial, not political.

CRWM partners with the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti, a denomination to which the CRCNA gave birth over twenty-five years ago. Currently, this denomination has:

- twenty-two organized congregations
- twenty-two ordained pastors
- one hundred seventeen church workers
- over three thousand members

The country team has worked intentionally from the start at establishing structures and strategies to make the best use of the CRCNA gifts and strengths, while at the same time minimizing unhealthy dependency.

The construction of the first phase of the ministry center for the CRC of Haiti was possible with the help and participation of many North American work teams. This facility is already providing space for trainings, worship, and fellowship among the CRC churches. The plan is to continue the construction of the second phase of this building project with the addition of a second story to the existing building.

7. Honduras

The CRC of Honduras provides a Reformed witness in Honduran society troubled by poverty, corruption, and violence. The growing CRC of Honduras includes:

- eighty-seven established and emerging churches
- six classes
- over four thousand members
- five seminaries for the training of church leaders, evangelists, and pastors

8. Mexico

CRWM partners with the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. This denomination, which began in 1872, has 3,200 churches with about 1 million members. CRWM also partners with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico; which has 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.

The total population in Mexico is about 100 million people, of which only 7 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. Presbyterian churches grew rapidly in the southern states, especially during the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, but, during the last 15 years, the growth is taking place in the northern states.

9. Nicaragua

The Nehemiah Center continues to work for the transformation of lives and communities in Nicaragua based on an integral, Reformed world and life view. The Nehemiah Center trains pastors and lay leaders to be agents of transformation in the various sectors of society: church, community development, Christian schools, business, youth ministries, and the arts and media. 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.

- Over 150 pastors and lay leaders are participating in the thirty-month cycle of training to become agents of biblical transformation.
- The Ezra Team, which is responsible for all trainings, is made up of a capable group of Nicaraguan evangelical leaders. This past year, the work of the Ezra Team expanded from the Pacific to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.
- The Nicaraguan Association of Christian Schools, birthed by the work of the Nehemiah Center, has initiated a process of school improvement in over forty Christian schools.

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 career 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 2007 *Yearbook*, 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 December 2006, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

Years of service	Place	Name
5 years	Nicaragua	Steven and Kimberly Holtrop
10 years	Burlington office Grand Rapids office	Trish DeJong Patti Fisher
15 years	Mexico Nigeria	Scott and Marcia Geurink Michael Kiekover
25 years	Mexico, pastorate, teaching Guinea, Grand Rapids office	Dan and Jeananne Kuiper Rhonda Whyte-Koster
35 years	Mexico Nigeria	John and Jerre DeYoung Dick and Margaret Seinen
40 years	Nigeria, administration in Grand Rapids, Mexico	Bill and Laura Van Tol

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. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	2	2nd and 3rd
16	3	2nd

IX. Board nominations

A. The following nominees are being presented to synod for ratification for a second three-year term:

Region 9

Rev. Gary Schipper (incumbent) has a passion for missions and is a former missionary with World Missions in El Salvador and Honduras. He has been a church planter for Home Missions in California and was instrumental in the initial organization and management of the Leadership Development Network. He has also pastored in Texas and in California. Currently, he is serving Hope Community in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Member-at-Large

Mrs. Evelyn Huttinga (incumbent) is a former missionary with World Missions in Argentina. She has enjoyed serving on the World Missions board. Her husband is currently pastoring in Manhattan, Montana. They have also served churches in California.

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 2

Rev. Harold De Jong has a deep love and respect for the CRCNA as a true expression of the worldwide church, a desire to help it fulfill its divine calling in the world, and a willingness to serve as a board member (CRWM). He has served with CRWM for twenty years in theological education and mission administration (sixteen years in Nigeria and four years in Zambia). He served with CRHM for over four years at Charles Cook Theological College in Tempe, Arizona, as theological education by extension (TEE) program coordinator, and in curriculum development. *Rev. De Jong* was a pastor for ten years in Dispatch CRC, Dispatch, Kansas.

Rev. Edward Jager has served as chair of the Lacombe ministerial committee, on the classical interim committee, on the board of Camp Chestermere, and on the board of Dordt College. Currently, he is involved in a variety of ministries, including mission work, and has initiated several programs in and around Alberta.

Region 6

Mr. Jay Sankey is a member of Alameda CRC where he has served as both deacon and elder. He has served on the Alameda Christian School board and the CRC Mount Hermon Bible Conference board. *Mr. Sankey* is currently manager of debt compliance of the Port of Oakland, Oakland, California, where he ensures compliance with federal rules and regulations, trust indentures, accounting rules for grants, \$1.4 billion of tax exempt and other debts, budget and recording of interest income and expense, and depreciation. In addition, he prepares cash-flow and funding-source projections for the five-year capital program. He expects to retire at the end of this calendar year and is looking forward to volunteer work in some kind of Christian ministry.

Mrs. Lorraine (Lori) Schoolland is a member of Almond Valley CRC in Ripon, California, where she is serving as a leadership trainer for GEMS and on the education committee. She is currently leading a ladies' and couples' Bible study and plans to return to teaching for the Good News Club next year. Besides teaching, *Mrs. Schoolland* was a stay-at-home mom while the children were growing up and now manages the bookkeeping for their construction company. She has a love for the Lord and his work and has been a faithful prayer warrior for missions and missionaries.

Region 7

Mrs. DeAnn (DeeDee) Hunt was born in Mkar, Nigeria, where her parents were missionaries; she lived there until age eleven. The following years took her to California, Grand Rapids, and finally to Colorado State University in Fort Collins where she earned a bachelors degree in occupational therapy. After her marriage, she and her husband spent two years in Malawi, Africa, with the Peace Corps. The Hunts have three children and are waiting to travel to China for the adoption of their fourth child. *Mrs.*

Hunt facilitated a fifteen-week Perspectives on the World Christian Movement class, organized a mission committee at Immanuel CRC, and, along with her husband, has taught English as a second language to international students at the university. The Hunts have also been youth leaders of junior and senior high kids. She is convinced that the only way to truly fight terrorism is by turning hearts toward Christ who is the only hope for all the poverty, political strife, and disasters in our world. Her passion is to help spread this word of hope in any way she can.

Mr. Chuck Powell is a member of Third CRC in Denver. He is the chair of the missions committee and serves as the local representative for CRWM at his church. It has been said that Mr. Powell has actively engaged his church in missions. He is semiretired after a career in the hotel industry and currently serves on the Denver Christian School board.

2. Member-at-large (U.S.)

Mr. John D. Loeks, 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. 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., a producer of consumer shows in Michigan and Wisconsin, such as boat shows and home and garden shows. He has served on the boards of the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Grand Rapids Economic Club, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Hospice of Michigan Foundation, and Covenant College. Currently, he is serving on the boards of the Au Sable Institute and Junior Achievement. His wife, Mary, whose parents served as missionaries in Japan, retired in 2006 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. Craig Pollington is a member of Calvin CRC, Mc Bain, Michigan. He has worked in tool and die, is currently a beef seed-stock farmer, and works in sales for Beef and Dairy Semen. Mr. Pollington also works with delinquent youth near Reed City. He has served as director of the Seed Time and Harvest Mission organization in Siberia/Russia, as well as 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.

X. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the president of World Mission-Canada, Rev. John Tenyenhuis; the president of World Missions-USA, Ms. Joy Engelsman; and the World Missions director, Dr. Gary J. 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

Peace. It is a difficult concept for us to understand and even harder for us to attain. In our world where our friends and neighbors are serving in Afghanistan and Iraq; where rebel groups force millions to live in refugee camps in Sudan; and where disasters and hunger take lives every day, what is peace?

God has promised that those who trust in him will be kept in perfect peace—a peace that can transcend wars, hunger, injustice, and poverty. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has seen him fulfill this promise every day in communities all over the world.

We catch a glimpse of peace when a survivor of Hurricane Katrina sees the last nail pounded in on her newly rebuilt home, or a Sudanese refugee receives food despite great danger. Peace is there when a man in Laos harvests rice on his newly irrigated field. There is peace when a mother holds her sleeping infant and knows that he has been fully vaccinated against childhood diseases. It is a picture of peace when a church becomes a source of pride and support to the community of which it is a part.

CRWRC is blessed to play a role in sharing this peace. Yet, we know that we are only able to do this because other people join us with their prayers, volunteer hours, and financial gifts. Last year, this support—both financial and volunteer—came to CRWRC in record numbers following Hurricane Katrina.

CRWRC's peace-building ministry is also made possible through our partnership with 137 churches and community organizations in 30 countries. They are the ones who reach out in their communities and create programs that will make lasting changes in Christ's name. This includes tackling the crisis of HIV/AIDS, trying out new crop varieties that can resist drought, and even educating youth to take a more active role in society. As a result, more than 283,000 people were able to make improvements in their lives and communities last year. In addition, more than 497,000 people were able to rebuild their lives after a disaster. This represents transformation that is tracked in over 2,500 communities.

CRWRC staff feels privileged to be used by God in this ministry, and we are grateful for the support we receive from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

II. Board matters

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to set the vision and mission for CRWRC and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

The CRWRC governance structure is made up of delegates from the classes, in addition to up to twenty-seven members at large, which constitute the Board of Delegates of CRWRC. The delegates are a vital communication link with classes and churches. They 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.

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

CRWRC is known throughout the church and the development community for our quality programs and competent staff. We are grateful for the support and trust given to us by the members of the Christian Reformed Church. Confidence that our work is truly changing communities is also held by the Canadian government, the U.S. government, and multiple other foundations and other nongovernmental organizations. These groups provide funds to extend the reach of Christian Reformed members' contributions. While CRWRC maintains its own robust system of monitoring and evaluating the impact of our programs, we were pleased this year to receive positive evaluations from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (AID) that confirmed the quality of our programs.

Proof of grace through every generation is found in the work of CRWRC through the vision of those who have been here before. We are thankful for the passion within the Christian Reformed Church for casting the vision for a world relief and development agency; for inspiring members to serve as ministry workers; for the prayer support of the churches for these ministry workers; for the partners they work with; and, of course, for the communities where hope is coming alive. We are thankful for the CRC, which has a vision to seek justice for all and to demonstrate an ongoing concern for the poor and oppressed as an important expression of our Reformed tradition. CRWRC is truly unique among Christian relief and development agencies because of the close relationship between the ministry and the church.

A. *Development regions—highlights of 2006*

1. Asia

One of the biggest celebrations for the year in Asia has been the very successful Child Survival Program. Working in three large areas in Bangladesh, this program has provided CRWRC and our partners with several new approaches to health improvement and has generated a number of very good and best practices to the wider development community. As a result of this program, more mothers are surviving childbirth; more children are surviving their first year and growing normally. There is more hope in the communities as they celebrate life. This successful program will continue to expand into other countries as CRWRC gathers the lessons learned and works with partners around the globe to apply new practices to improved health in communities in every region where we work.

2. Eastern Europe

Healthy societies and strong churches do not appear overnight. The emergence of the church from the effects of the communist leadership in Romania continues to move forward. CRWRC ministry personnel in Romania continue to work closely with various evangelical churches in Bucharest and the Hungarian Reformed Church in Cluj to explore the meaning of being church in society. CRWRC staff continue a robust schedule of training in core principles of development, as well as exploring with the various churches CRWRC's theology of development. In time, we pray

that the churches there will embrace the calling to reach out to the poor and hurting in their surrounding communities for Christ.

3. North America

The Christian Reformed Church through CRWRC's growing network of regional partners is responding to more and more requests for coaching and consulting in diaconal ministries and Christian community development in the United States. More communities around the United States are experiencing some level of transformation because Christians and churches are providing the energy and vision for positive changes. While more Christian Reformed churches are engaging in this work of community transformation with CRWRC, there is an irony that most of the requests are coming to the North America team from Pentecostals and independent churches who want to establish signs of God's reign in their communities right now. CRWRC has successfully begun its second year of a federally funded AmeriCorps program where CRWRC trains volunteers (many of them are young adults) in asset-based community development and invites them to engage churches in their community in this transformation work. We are excited about the progress and the future leaders emerging from this program.

4. Latin America

In 2001, CRWRC partner Alfalit started working in the community of Las Almendras. This is a community with a population of forty-five families, one school, a catholic church, and a weak community organization. The living conditions, especially basic services, were depressing. Seventy percent of the population was living in indigent conditions and 30 percent in extreme poverty. The community is located in a hillside at about 850 meters above sea level. Because the only road to the community is made of dust, the only access is by 4-wheel-drive trucks.

Alfalit began initially by strengthening all the different base organizations through an informal educational process of the leaders so they could become workers for their own development. Then, Alfalit provided technical assistance to small, basic-grain producers to adhere to the implementation of low-cost technologies that would not affect the environment. This project was financed by the government, and, as a result, 40 percent of the burning of basic grain crops was reduced.

However, the community's needs were not only limited to production but also to the lack of infrastructure that would let people live with dignity. By building fifty latrines, the hygiene conditions were improved, and a water committee was formed to find and manage resources for the construction of a water system.

Currently, the community is working on the construction of a potable water-supply system. This has been a permanent struggle for four years, and members of the community have been trying to find associates to finance the project that would benefit another neighbor community. Praise to the Lord! As a result of a partnership with the national water company (SANAA) and a King's University College team through CRWRC, this project is becoming a reality. It is expected to be finished by July 2006 and will benefit at least one hundred families. Soon, they will be drinking safe

water, and women and children will stop carrying buckets of contaminated water to their homes.

Another goal was to rebuild the school, this was achieved by the end of 2003. In addition, a new church was built to allow for more than one hundred people to worship. With the help of CRWRC, a rural credit union has been started to facilitate credit to its shareholders and support the productive process of the farmers; they are encouraged to save every month.

The high level of illiteracy of the population older than twelve years of age was addressed through a basic literacy program. An educational center was started with eleven students and offered education for grades one to six. An important aspect with the implementation of this program is to promote solidarity among community members by using a facilitator from within who helps his or her neighbors in the learning center.

This is the story of transformation of a community. Instead of offering projects from the outside, the community itself identifies their needs, partners with others, develops their plan, and evaluates their own development, which includes aspects such as the biblical worldview, natural resources, production, and justice. Las Almendres is an example of a transformational process that CRWRC introduces in communities in Latin America and around the world.

5. East and Southern Africa

This is a real-life story of a family who had no income and no hope for any resources in order to meet even their basic needs such as daily food. This is a family of eight—six children and their two parents in Uganda. This is a story that begins when the family is very poor, the children are unhealthy, and they constantly struggle to find enough to eat.

Okidi and Akiny and their children live on five acres of family land that was given to Okidi by his late father. Okidi grew up in a family of nine brothers, and thus the family land was divided among the nine brothers, leaving each with between four and seven acres. Okidi managed to get five acres. Two years ago, when CRWRC started working in Apur, a village in northern Uganda where this family lives, Okidi's wife, Akiny, was among the twenty-five women who accepted training in functional adult literacy.

Functional adult literacy is practical adult education that not only teaches adults how to read and write but develops the student's skills in different areas of life, such as hygiene, farming, health, and relationships. Akiny committed herself to learning and implementing what she had learned at her home in Apur.

Okidi, her husband, was very much opposed to Akiny's learning because he felt that Akiny was wasting her time in school for adults, and, like many men, he thought that it was not going to help her in any way and might even have a negative result for him. However, Akiny never gave up, and she was supported through the commitment of the functional adult literacy teacher, Rev. Levi Acam. Rev. Levi was sponsored by CRWRC to pursue a diploma course in adult literacy, and he has reciprocated by training functional adult literacy teachers in his community at no charge. His student Akiny managed to convince her husband to start planning how to better utilize their farm for the good of the family.

The farm that was overgrown by useless bush for so many years is now producing enough food throughout the year for the whole family. After Okidi saw the benefit of the adult literacy classes, he has encouraged other men in the village to send their wives to the adult literacy classes. Apart from the family's being organized and getting enough food throughout the year, the children are healthy now, and they attend a nearby school where they are well dressed and more respected at school than before. Akiny testifies that her husband no longer wastes time at the market with the other men like he used to, but, instead, he has taken farming seriously and values his family. This has also improved their relationship within the family.

Okidi and Akiny have become the talk of the village. People say: "God can bless those who learn to do things correctly." CRWRC is seen as a God-sent organization that brings life to families. This is the joy and blessing that we, as staff of CRWRC, get from serving with the people to whom God has given resources but who do not see them. It is all about restoring their sight. It is all about removing the scales from eyes that blind us to our gifts and abilities, and it is all about discovering the potential God has given us. As Okidi and Akiny and their community have discovered, it is all about God. Surely he is the one who makes transformational development possible.

6. West Africa

Within the context of working in societies where Christians are a small minority, we strive for a Christ-centered approach to strengthen the local church and its ministries.

The West Africa ministry team has a heart to minister to the poorest of the poor. The cost of working with the poorest is high because they have been effectively evicted from the configuration of services and networks by which any population accesses the tools to improve their health, literacy, productivity, and human rights. Therefore, our work must entail not only working with the poor but dismantling the power structures that keep them poor, subservient, powerless, and voiceless.

All programming in the West Africa region reflects an emphasis on mutual knowledge to analyze the current situation, envision a future, and plan and implement incremental steps to achieve the short- and long-term goals that the community sets. We strive for genuine local participation.

Through these examples of CRWRC's work in the various regions, we offer Synod 2007 an opportunity to celebrate the real change for the poor that is happening globally through the efforts of our small denomination.

In total, CRWRC is working in 30 countries, with 137 partners, involving 283,993 people and their 2,499 communities in learning, organizing, and mobilizing for permanent, positive change for themselves and future generations.

B. Justice education and advocacy

A majority of time this past year was spent doing advocacy around the HIV/AIDS spring campaign—over thirty thousand postcards were sent (for each mailbox in each church) to the Prime Minister of Canada regarding Canadian contributions and their effort in the fight against AIDS. These postcards have since gone through a reprinting. Churches and network members were encouraged to write letters regarding AIDS around the time of

the International AIDS Conference and the Ecumenical Pre-Conference (which took place in Toronto in August 2006). Around this time, the CRWRC board also sent letters to the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States regarding the respective country commitments to fighting AIDS. In the United States, churches were also given opportunities for involvement and advocacy.

CRWRC did a substantial push for advocacy around World AIDS Day. There was a sample letter available, and churches were urged to advocate on AIDS issues. This focus on HIV/AIDS education and advocacy will continue to move forward, along with some focus on trade-justice issues. West Africa ministry team justice education coordinator, Mr. Zakka Chomock, made over thirty successful visits on a tour across Canada and the United States—providing education and raising important issues regarding HIV/AIDS and food security, while highlighting the ongoing justice work CRWRC is doing in West Africa.

Refugee Sunday postcards were sent by churches to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in Canada to address refugee issues. Members of Hope Fellowship's social justice small group (Courtice, Ontario), along with two deacons from Rehoboth CRC (Bowmanville, Ontario), met with members of Parliament to discuss and bring forward a petition calling on the government to act on refugee issues. As part of the visit, they described their experience in trying to sponsor a refugee family and then having that family be denied refugee status. The situation brought a real face to the challenge and bureaucracy faced by potential refugees.

CRWRC Justice Coalition Partners continues involvement with the Micah Challenge. The focus this year is on hunger and food security. There were a number of specific events organized and hosted by CRC congregations around Micah Challenge Sunday (and the Stand Up Against Poverty events). We are currently moving forward on education and advocacy around one Millennium Development Goal a month, leading up to the halfway point on the Millennium Development Goals in July 2007.

C. *Disaster relief and rehabilitation*

At the beginning of the program year, the members of CRWRC's disaster relief and rehabilitation team met to go over the tasks ahead. They realized once again how small we are compared to the challenges represented by words such as *tsunami*, *Katrina*, and the *Pakistan earthquake*. Again, we dedicated our lives and our work to God in whom we trust and from whom we receive the ability to be steadfast. We experience his peace and share his shalom with the survivors of disasters around the world.

New challenges lie ahead. Although the 2006 hurricane season spared North America from further devastating hurricanes, the island of Java in Indonesia was hit by a very severe earthquake. More than 6,000 people were killed, while more than 310,000 houses in and around the historic city of Yogyakarta were destroyed. To understand the enormity of this disaster and the suffering it brought to the affected families, we have to realize that tsunamis destroyed an estimated 240,000 houses in the four most affected countries. Three months later, the same island, Java, was hit by another earthquake-induced tidal wave, killing an additional 153 people and causing severe damage.

In Kenya, a severe drought caused famine conditions for more than one million people. Darfur continued to be a place of conflict and immense suffering. In all of that, our relief staff and thousands of volunteers labored with the unshakeable knowledge that, as we do the Lord's work, our hearts may hurt but can still be at peace.

The Lord has gifted CRWRC with a compassionate and generous constituency—Christians who, whenever they see injustice or disaster, do not chose to despair. Instead, they react with a strong balance of faith and action. Time and time again, we have seen that our constituency does not get tired of praying and offering generous assistance if we in CRWRC lay the facts before them and appeal to them on behalf of those who have no voice.

Many constituents are looking beyond prayer and financial support and wish to be involved hands on. Responding offers great possibilities for CRWRC. In domestic disaster response, the number of registered disaster response service (DRS) volunteers has passed the two thousand mark, while a seamless management structure of staff and trained volunteers manages a growing number of cleanup, need assessment, and repair and rebuilding sites. The number of church and school groups actively involved in clean-up or roofing projects have dramatically increased. Internationally trained and experienced volunteer relief managers play an increasing role in the start-up and management of food distribution and disaster-response projects.

These volunteers are able to bring what is happening in disaster sites within the lives of our congregation. One could say that they are bringing the suffering and the triumphs of disaster survivors "home" to our congregations, where God's Word and his grace offers the potential of a collective spiritual-growth experience. CRWRC believes that reaching out and witnessing to God's love to a broken world is not only a private but also a communal issue that is to be actively celebrated in our congregational life. It is an opportunity to make our faith and congregational life relevant.

The growing complexity of disaster-situation training for staff and volunteers is paramount. The efforts that we have expended in this area are bearing fruit. Domestically and internationally, CRWRC is more and more recognized for its disaster response expertise by both fellow Christian organizations and governments.

In North America during the year 2006, CRWRC-Disaster Response Services (CRWRC-DRS) was heavily involved in the Hurricane Katrina recovery and will be for several years to come. Thankfully, contrary to all forecasts, the 2006 season was mild. This allowed the long-term recovery programs to solidify in the Gulf states and gave the people who have been so traumatized by the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes time to recover, not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually. CRWRC was able to continue its efforts in carrying out need assessments throughout the state of Mississippi and to make real headway in the parishes around New Orleans. It is clear from our findings that, while the media may turn its attention to other things, the work of Katrina recovery will go on for many years, and CRWRC-DRS will remain involved, thanks to our donors and volunteers.

CRWRC-DRS accomplishments related to the Katrina recovery include:

- Clean-up repairs – 500 homes involving 1800 volunteers
- Organizational help to community organizations – 40 communities

- Need assessments – 18 counties, 15,500 volunteer hours on 14,500 homes
- Grants – \$1.2 million to 37 communities
- Evacuee resettlement with Bethany Christian Services – \$250,000 and 32 churches
- Long-term reconstruction – Laurel, MS; Gulfport, MS; Columbia, MS; Slidell, LA; Port Arthur, TX
- Economic development – \$250,000 for projects with Partners Worldwide
- Total homes repaired/rebuilt – 1,000

In addition to assisting communities to recover from Hurricane Katrina, CRWRC-DRS has been heavily involved with communities that are recovering from Hurricane Rita (Port Arthur, Texas, and Lake Charles, Louisiana), and various major flooding disasters (Texas, New Mexico, Ohio, New York, and Washington State). We have also continued our involvement with several communities in Florida that are still recovering from the hurricanes of 2004, providing need assessment volunteers, construction teams, and long-term recovery grants. CRWRC-DRS completed its work in San Diego, California, where we rebuilt homes that were destroyed by the wildfires of 2003.

CRWRC-DRS was blessed with a total of 2,088 long-term volunteers who worked 209,653 hours in the United States and Canada to help disaster survivors. This represents a 77 percent increase over the prior year.

In addition to our long-term volunteers, CRWRC-DRS partnered with over one hundred Christian Reformed Churches who sent volunteer teams to over thirty partner sites in the Gulf states to help with the Katrina response. We now have the capacity to direct our church teams to many areas across North America to help with disaster response.

As we seek to follow Christ's call to be Christ's hands and feet in the world today, we are blessed by our supporting constituency and the groups with whom we work in order to help individuals, families, and communities work toward their own restoration. As we work together, we are instruments of Christ's light that shines around the world through his people.

International highlights from CRWRC's international relief programming in 2006 include:

1. Tsunami—In India we saw the finalization of our tsunami response together with the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR). We were gratified by the knowledge that thousands of neglected families of the Dalit caste, the untouchables, were able to step out of the shadow of existence through our involvement.

In Aceh, Indonesia, we were able to finalize many of the programs we initiated right after the tsunami took the lives of more than 160,000 men, women, and children. During the two years we worked with the local population, we jointly cleared hundreds of acres of land of debris and sea sand, planted vegetable and coconut palms, supplied fishing boats, started sewing and embroidery groups for women, repaired schools, and helped students with uniforms and school supplies.

As peace between the government and local rebel groups solidified, CRWRC was able to assist the International Red Cross in building more than 600 temporary houses while at the same time building 525 permanent houses in four villages. Hope replaced despair as the new houses rose from the ground and were occupied by proud and thankful owners. Sixty-eight

volunteers from North America experienced the warmth and affection of the local population as they were welcomed to live in their homes, communicating with the help of phrase guides. Saying goodbye was difficult, hugs were many, and often tears flowed freely from both sides. God's kingdom was being built, overcoming cultural barriers.

In the meantime, CRWRC's staff have started building 365 additional houses in three villages funded by the Mennonite Central Committee, while in Tearfund, United Kingdom, the relief and development committee of the Evangelical Churches in Great Britain, is making a two-year livelihood program possible among the same people. We are thankful for the trust these Christian brothers and sisters are placing in CRWRC.

In Sri Lanka, our work is progressing despite the ongoing conflict between the central government and the Tamil Tiger rebels. However, the conflict is having an effect on the speed with which we can deliver our programs. There are days when we are unable to travel across the island to meet with our staff in Baticaloa. Yet, much has been accomplished. Through the building of two temporary villages, more than 300 families could leave their leaky tents, warehouses, and school classrooms and occupy individual dwellings. The number of families that were helped with their livelihood was 921. Ropemaking, carpentry, snack-food preparation, and an array of other income activities helped the tsunami survivors to focus anew on their future, while sessions in trauma counseling helped them to deal with their past losses. In seven villages, a total of 273 houses have already been completed with the total of 791 houses to be completed by November 2007. We are particularly thankful for the dedication of CRWRC's Christian Sri Lankan staff, who are willing to assist their fellow citizens in conflict areas. The Christian witness they express through their continued presence is well recognized by the tsunami survivors.

2. Indonesia—The historic city of Yogyakarta and its surrounding villages, a center of thousands of years of Javanese culture, was hit by an earthquake in May 2006. More than 6,000 people lost their lives and an estimated 300,000 houses were destroyed. With some of the CRWRC staff living in the city, we were able to mount a relief effort within hours. Working with medical volunteers of the Reformed Church of Indonesia (GKI), we opened two clinics for the wounded and started distributing relief goods such as food, blankets, baby equipment, kitchen sets, and tarps for 2,000 people. During three months of operation, the clinics treated nearly 3,000 patients, after which the local health system took over. Since then, CRWRC and the GKI have begun the task of rebuilding homes. During the first weeks, 82 families received temporary shelter. To be able to help as many families as possible, we decided to build one- or two-room houses that could be incorporated into a complete house at a later date. To date, 437 families have received a place they can call home.
3. Darfur, Sudan—The suffering in Darfur, where now more than four million people are depending on handouts from the United Nations and other aid organizations, is continuing unabated. Violence by government and rebel troops and general lawlessness is growing, and peace negotiations have gone without permanent results. In the middle of this, CRWRC and its five consortium partners continue their work with ninety thousand

beneficiaries in three districts. We are thankful that a recent health survey indicates that despite the deprivation and suffering, progress is taking place. The health status of children under five has been restored to preconflict levels, which speaks well for the determination as well as the skills of our local staff. There are many days when we cannot use our vehicles for risk of losing them in an armed hold-up. Thus, staff travels to the camps on camels and donkey carts. Twice our team has been held at gunpoint with the staff losing all their possessions, one driver was kidnapped (he returned after much prayer around the world), and two vehicles have been lost. CRWRC, together with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), has been funding this \$2.5 million (Canadian) program over the last two years. It has now been joined by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is providing 40 percent of the necessary funding.

4. Pakistan/India—Last year, we reported on the devastating earthquake that struck the Kashmir border area between India and Pakistan in September 2005. Since then, 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 Canadian project providing shelter materials and other essential nonfood items. Additional funds were received from the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation. This funding is channeled through the Swiss-based ecumenical group Action by Churches Together (ACT). 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.
5. East and Southern Africa—Uncertain rain patterns have led to food shortages and faminelike conditions in Zambia, Kenya, and Tanzania. In Kenya, we were able to work with 15,000 families and supply them with a six-month ration of maize, oil, and beans at a cost of \$1.8 million (Canadian). In Zambia, we worked with the Mennonite Central Committee, benefiting more than 20,000 families of which many are members of the Reformed Church of Zambia. The ongoing solid support from our constituency for the Canadian Food Grains Bank and the generous matching funds received from (CIDA) continues to enable CRWRC to mount food distribution programs that literally touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

While working on relief, CRWRC improves the food-security and agriculture-production capacity of vulnerable farmers. A new grain called Amaranth, which offers significant health benefits to people with depressed immune systems, such as HIV/AIDS patients, is being promoted through a CRWRC/CFGB project in Uganda, Kenya, and Mali. It is very gratifying to us when people who suffer from AIDS become well enough to return to their fields and provide for their families because of better nutrition.

6. Internally Displaced People (IDP)—We are thankful for the role CRWRC is able to play in the return of IDP after conflicts. Together with our partner

ZOA (Zuid Oost Azie or ZOA Refugee Aid) of the Netherlands, we are able to do just that in Liberia. Here, families who sometimes have lived for more than ten years in camps have an opportunity to return with our help to the area where they once lived to restart their productive lives. We are presently working with ZOA to address the possibilities for returning IDPs to northern Uganda—many of whom have suffered for many years from the violent actions of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and their abducting children and forcing them to become child soldiers.

7. The Foods Resource Bank (FRB) is a unique partner of CRWRC that connects the farming communities of the United States with the problem of world hunger. As an implementing member of FRB, CRWRC was able to invest \$592,906 in food security programs last year in twenty-four communities around the world, from Africa to Central America to Cambodia. The funding is made possible by communities, and usually initiated by a local church, that are willing to commit agricultural resources in the form of acreage; equipment; and advice for growing corn, raising livestock, or producing other agricultural products that will be sold. The proceeds are then contributed to CRWRC’s programming account, or directly to the account for the specific food security program sponsored by CRWRC. Additional matching funds are available from USAID; thus, providing a unique opportunity for our church communities in the farming areas to have a significant impact on the problem of world hunger. The opportunity for growth is only limited by our willingness to get involved and our creativity in coming up with new extensions of this wonderful agricultural-oriented model. City churches often get involved, partnering with rural churches, and helping to provide funds for seed and fertilizer. Sometimes they simply partner so that that they can lend prayer support. Either way, all of our Christian Reformed churches are able to be involved and to have a part in this important work. One of the great tasks of the future is solving world hunger, and the FRB model will play a key part in bringing about a solution. God will be honored.

Many more smaller projects have been part of the activities of CRWRC’s disaster response and rehabilitation team. Houses in Cuba and El Salvador, food and nonfood items for people affected by landslides and cyclones in the Philippines, wells in Niger, and food for widows and the elderly in Lebanon during the recent crises are some examples of how the Lord has been using CRWRC during the past year.

Looking back, we are humbled and marvel at his grace. We feel his presence and blessings. He grants us his shalom.

D. Community services

1. ServiceLink-US

When it comes to peacemaking, ServiceLink-US is privileged to work alongside North Americans who have a heart for service. In today’s fast-paced and chaotic world, more and more people are feeling called to become personally involved in ministry. By connecting them to the right opportunity, ServiceLink has seen these individuals take a break from their busy lifestyles and experience the peace that comes from serving others and being served by them in return. This peace, as well as an appreciation for all

that God is doing around the world, continues even after their service opportunity is complete.

a. Discovery Tours

Each year, people from the United States and Canada participate in CRWRC Discovery Tours. These tours visit ministry sites of CRWRC, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Partners Worldwide for ten to fourteen days. They are a great way for people to learn about how community transformation takes place and to gain an appreciation for the challenges that many communities face. CRWRC has found that Discovery Tours are also often a first step to greater involvement in CRWRC's ministry. In 2007, Discovery Tours will take place in Haiti, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, and Ecuador. In early 2008, tours will go to Cambodia, Laos, and Malawi. For more information, visit www.crwrc.org.

b. Program HOPE! internships

Between the time that this report was written and synod, two to four young adults will be selected to serve as Program HOPE! interns. Their placement will begin on July 1, 2007, in Kenya and Sierra Leone. Program HOPE! is a CRWRC internship program that provides young people with an entry-level position as well as purposeful mentoring and support as they consider a career in Christian community transformation. Each internship is intended to last thirty months, and interns receive a small stipend for their service. In addition to the young people hired this year, CRWRC currently has Program HOPE! interns serving in Romania and Laos. Recruitment for new Program HOPE! intern placements will begin in August 2007.

c. Volunteer placements

In addition to the opportunities highlighted above, Service Link-US placed 380 individuals in opportunities for service this past year. These volunteers served in 15 countries, including the United States and Canada and were made up of high school and university students, church groups, young adults, senior citizens, and all those in between. In total, they spent 32,617 hours in volunteer service. CRWRC has found that not only did these volunteers have a positive impact on the people they served, but, they, too, were changed in a positive and meaningful way by the experience.

2. ServiceLink Canada

ServiceLink Canada has completed eleven years of serving the Christian Reformed Church in coordinating volunteers with its many ministries. Although the number of volunteers who served on behalf of the denomination was not as high as had been anticipated for this year, the number of hours they contributed was a record high of 73,627. Around the world, people's lives were touched as 437 volunteers, 330 of whom were serving for the first time, traveled to 25 different countries, including Canada and the United States. In so doing, they had wonderful opportunities to learn how the Christian Reformed Church works and how they can participate as agents of transformation and love.

Of the total number of volunteers who contributed to the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, 62 percent were involved in CRWRC's efforts to "engage God's people in redeeming resources and developing gifts in collaborative activities of love, mercy, justice, and compassion." Compared to last year, ServiceLink Canada had an 8 percent increase in placing volunteers into CRWRC opportunities but with a 24 percent increase in the hours they contributed. A total of 275 volunteers served for 58,768 hours in volunteer efforts.

One of the new CRWRC opportunities available for constituents this past year was through service and learning teams that had the privilege of participating in Tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia. Unique to this project was that team members were hosted by local people in whose village CRWRC was building homes—one participant (or a couple) per home. As scary as this idea was initially to our volunteers, it became a highlight for most. Walls between North Americans and Indonesians began to crumble and stereotypes of Muslims and Christians melted away as some wonderful relationships developed. Team members discovered incredible hospitality and graciousness from their Indonesian hosts, and many tears were shed as people said farewell. Certainly, North Americans, as well as Indonesians were transformed through building new homes but even more so through building relationships of love and compassion.

We are thankful to God for blessing us with so many willing and gifted volunteers and the privilege our staff have in serving them on behalf of CRWRC.

E. Classis Renewal Ministry Team

CRWRC is a founding partner agency of the Classis Renewal Ministry Team (CRMT) 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 knowledge about ministry at the classis level. Prayer support as well as other means of mutual encouragement—including a quarterly newsletter and a website—are key emphases of this work. This year, the team continued to partner with twelve classes in a mutual learning covenant, held 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. Work is ongoing in the areas of program self-assessment, promoting classical diaconal ministry, gathering new sources for classical funding of ministries, and providing mentors to classes whose leadership needs to be encouraged. Mr. Frank Englage is the staff person to the CRMT.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history

This table displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1999-2007 (projected).

CRWRC - CONSOLIDATED
REVENUE AND EXPENSE HISTORY/BUDGETS
(Including Disasters)

(B = Budget)

	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07B
Revenue	13,344	13,661	12,471	13,759	14,114	27,495	31,250	13,363
Overseas	6,320	6,672	6,925	8,401	8,425	9,751	10,927	8,097
North America	1,313	1,511	1,446	929	872	1,159	1,382	925
Relief / Disasters	3,214	3,528	2,234	3,220	2,403	4,991	11,997	1,079
Resource devel.	1,363	1,448	1,141	1,198	1,354	1,406	1,341	2,119
Administration	1,231	1,092	1,033	1,165	1,152	1,259	1,385	1,461
Total expenses	13,441	14,251	12,779	14,913	14,206	18,566	27,032	13,681
Net rev./(exp.)	(97)	(590)	(308)	(1,154)	(92)	8,929	4,218	(318)

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 2007—Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Human resources management

CRWRC's human resources management and development function is currently focused on staff professional development, recruitment, and supervisory development with the aim of increasing CRWRC's future staffing and leadership potential. While all staff are supported to achieve annual learning objectives, this year, we have introduced a tool for competency assessment and development focused on organizational strategic priorities. This method has also promoted more thorough orientation of new staff. In the 2006 fiscal year, we have filled twenty-two staff positions and reached our gender equity and internal promotion goals. More than half of CRWRC's staff are female and almost half of our leadership positions are filled by women. CRWRC is implementing a plan for bolstering supervisory skills through ongoing human resource management advice, 360-degree feedback, coaching, and training. An increased focus on supervision is meant to promote both professional and leadership development of CRWRC staff.

VI. Resource development

CRWRC's ministry is made possible through the support it receives from churches and individuals.

Much of this support comes from Christian Reformed Church offerings. Churches are asked by synod to take at least four offerings each year for CRWRC, including one taken on World Hunger Sunday in early November. Promotional materials for the World Hunger campaign are made available

every August. Combined with other church gifts, the World Hunger offerings form the backbone of CRWRC's financial support.

CRWRC has also seen a growing interest within churches to support specific missionaries, programs, projects, or countries. To meet this need, CRWRC's Ministry Partner program has been working with churches to match them with the right support opportunity. These support relationships include prayer support, communication, and visitation or work group volunteering in addition to financial gifts.

CRWRC also receives a large portion of its support from individuals—both members and nonmembers of the CRC. Many of these people donated record amounts to CRWRC following the 2004 tsunami and 2005's Hurricane Katrina. CRWRC has also seen interest from individuals for supporting CRWRC's HIV/AIDS work around the world. As a result, CRWRC is preparing to launch a multi-year campaign with the intent of drastically increasing its anti-AIDS programs around the world.

One exciting way that individuals are supporting CRWRC is through the *Free A Family*® program. This alternative to child sponsorship allows people to make monthly or annual gifts that will enable an entire family to participate in CRWRC programs. In exchange for their support, people receive quarterly updates about an actual family that CRWRC and its partners are working with. Nearly three thousand people in the United States and Canada are part of this *Free A Family*® program—and the number is growing.

Other people have shown their support through online donations, gifts to CRWRC's gift catalog, memorial donations, support of specific missionaries, participation in a twenty-four-hour fast for World Hunger, and other donations.

In total, CRWRC received \$20,949,406 in support from churches and individuals last year. They also received \$9,571,425 in grants from Partners Worldwide, foundations, and the United States and Canadian governments. Interest from CRWRC's Joseph Fund and other investments provided an additional \$729,661 to CRWRC for a total revenue base of \$31,250,492.

For additional financial information, please see CRWRC's Annual Report (available at www.crwrc.org).

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Chris Van Spronsen, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Jim Romahn, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Ms. Ida Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada when CRWRC matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

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, CRWRC-U.S.A.
Ida Mutoigo, director, CRWRC-Canada

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States; Canada having its own, similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA.

II. Board of directors

The terms of Ms. Diane Apol and Rev. Julius Medenblik expire on June 30, 2007. Ms. Apol and Rev. Medenblik have each served two three-year terms. The board is presenting the following slate of nominees for election to a three-year term. A second slate of nominees will come to synod for a vote by way of the Board of Trustees supplementary report.

Rev. Randall C. Raak is pastor of Hope Community Church, Flagstaff, Arizona. He currently serves on the Classis Arizona home missions committee and on the board of directors of Pioneer Surgical Technology. Rev. Raak is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He worked as a CPA prior to entering the pastorate.

Rev. Chad M. Steenwyk is co-pastor of Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan. He serves as a church visitor for Classis Holland. Rev. Steenwyk is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He worked in banking as a commercial loan officer prior to entering the pastorate.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Mr. Ronald Haan (2008), Mr. Scott Lee (2008), Mr. Ronald Baylor (2009), and Mr. Donald Koopman (2009).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in the following thirty states and in the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2006) a total of \$20,436,606 of 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 3.83 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 140 loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2006, a total of

\$17,274,647 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2006, one loan was seriously delinquent. 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:

	2004	2005	2006
Cash and equivalent	\$ 8,301,638	\$ 5,310,302	\$7,995,722
Loans and accounts receivable	\$11,772,678	\$16,439,365	\$17,361,345
Equipment & software, less depreciation		\$10,780	\$33,650
Total	\$20,074,316	\$21,760,447	\$25,390,717
Notes and accounts payable	\$15,846,572	\$17,142,047	\$20,436,606
Net assets	\$4,227,744	\$4,618,400	\$4,954,111
Total liabilities and net assets	\$20,074,316	\$21,760,447	\$25,390,717

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2006, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2007—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 them has been obtained.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowing up to \$2 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Alice Damsteegt (60% of full-time) and Mr. Carl Gronsman, who also provides support to CRC Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's executive director, or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod elect by way of the ballot two board members 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, health, life, and disability benefits 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, which means that the plan complies with the requirements of the applicable sections of the Internal Revenue Code. However, because it is a church sponsored plan, it is not subject to the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). The payment of benefits is made solely from the assets of the plan.

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. The payment of benefits must be made from the assets of the plan.

Oversight of the denomination's Consolidated Group Insurance, which includes health, dental, and life insurance benefits 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. 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 product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2006, 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	841	252	1,093
Retired ministers	419	119	538
Spouses and dependents	129	23	152
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	92	14	106
Total	1,481	408	1,889

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 January 1, 2006, and furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2006, 2007, and 2008. Because the Canadian Plan was less than 80 percent funded at December 31, 2006, it will be required to submit an annual valuation to the provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2008 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be included in the supplemental report to Synod 2007 and released to the churches and others following Synod 2007.

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. "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.

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.

The plans’ actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 2005, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$108,400,000 for the U.S. plan and \$33,100,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect 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, 2006	December 31, 2005
United States (U.S. \$)	\$106,855,000	\$97,495,000
Canada (Can. \$)	31,584,000	28,185,000

Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	2006	2005	2004	2003	5yrs	10yrs
Canada	11.6%	17.4%	11.2%	12.7%	9.4%	8.0%
United States	11.4%	7.2%	10.4%	20.0%	6.8%	7.6%

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

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 defined benefit form of the plan was not altered; 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 0.3 percent from 0.6 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

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 2007 is \$29.52 per member in Canada and \$25.56 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$7,384 and \$5,776, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) 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 is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

As discussed previously in this report, costs for 2008 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 supplemental report to Synod 2007.

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 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 periodic 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 several investment alternatives, 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, 2006, 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 365 participants in the U.S. plan and 107 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	253	60
Inactive	112	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 1,350 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 659 pastors and employees of local churches, 365 employees of denominational agencies, and 326 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.

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 2007, premiums in the United States for the nonretiree group were increased a modest 5.7 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 2008 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 reelect by way of the printed ballot Mr. William Terpstra to the U.S. Board of Pensions for a second three-year term.

D. That synod reelect by way of the printed ballot Mr. Ary de Jong to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a second three-year term.

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 the publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Mrs. Janet Sheeres, chair (2007, second term); Dr. Robert Swierenga (2007, second term); Rev. Lugene Schemper (2008, first term); Dr. James De Jong (2009, first term); and Dr. Richard Harms, secretary (ex officio).

II. Archives staff

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; Ms. Renee LaCoss and Ms. Dana Verhulst, student assistants; and Dr. Henry Ippel, Rev. Henry DeMots, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit W. Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, and Rev. Leonard Sweetman, volunteers.

III. Committee membership

A. The committee gratefully acknowledges the six years of faithful service to the committee provided by Mrs. Janet Sheeres and Dr. Robert Swierenga.

B. *Nominees*

1. The committee recommends the following slate of nominees for a three-year term to replace Mrs. Janet Sheeres:

Mrs. Angie Ploegstra (nee Pluger) is from McBain, Michigan, and is currently living in Zeeland, Michigan, where she is a member of Bethel CRC. History and genealogy have always been her interests. She has traced all her family back to the late 1600s or early 1700s. Her research with Ms. Paula Vander Hoven led to the Perch Lake CRC, of Leroy, Michigan, a church that existed for about three years (1896-99) and published the story of the congregation in the 2005 fall issue of *Origins*. Their research partnership is continuing with work on Martin CRC, Martin, South Dakota. For the last twenty-five years, she has managed Field's Fabrics of Holland, Michigan. Mrs. Ploegstra and her husband, Joel, volunteer as construction supervisors for Disaster Response Services for CRWRC. It is important to her to preserve the stories of our ancestors as well as the history of our churches.

Mrs. Ellen Schroder (nee Kolk) grew up in Fremont, Michigan, where her Dutch immigrant grandparents had settled in the late 1800s. With a degree from Calvin College and a masters in social work from the University of Michigan, she practiced in child welfare in Milwaukee, where she became a member of the Milwaukee CRC, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Upon her marriage to Roland Schroder in 1962, they moved to Minneapolis, where they lived

for twenty-five years. She served as Sunday school superintendent for several years in First CRC, Edina, Minnesota, and directed the Coffee Break ministry for six years. She also served the community in the Parent to Parent program, tutoring at-risk children and mentoring their parents. She currently mentors a Calvin student. When the Schroders retired, they joined Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mrs. Schroder was widowed in 2004. Mrs. Schroder has a solid knowledge of and deep interest in the CRC and its institutions.

2. The committee recommends the following slate of nominees for a three-year term to replace Dr. Robert Swierenga:

Mr. Gordon De Young is a retired manager of book production at Baker Book House; earlier he served as an editor and book designer. He is a graduate of Calvin College, with majors in history and English. Mr. De Young has served as a teacher in the Lynden, Washington Christian schools and as an administrator in the Lansing, Illinois, Christian school. For three years, he was the publications coordinator at the National Union of Christian Schools. He is a longtime member of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies and has a keen interest in genealogy and the history of Dutch immigration and settlement. His ancestral roots can be found in CRC communities in the Englewood and Roseland areas of Chicago. Mr. De Young has been a longtime member of the Ada CRC, Ada, Michigan, serving as an elder and clerk numerous times. He is now serving on its 100th anniversary committee.

Mr. William Sytsma is semiretired but still active in the church and in real estate development. He worked in research and development at Chrysler Corporation for seven years; then as the business manager of Holland, Michigan, Christian schools for fifteen years; and finally was a founder and executive director of Worldwide Christian Schools for fifteen years. Born in the Netherlands, his family immigrated to Canada after WWII. He graduated from Calvin College and Wayne State University with majors in education and history. Since moving to West Michigan in 1971, he has been a member of Graafschap CRC, Graafschap, Michigan, on whose council he has served a number of times. Mr. Sytsma established and chaired the committee for designing and building the Graafschap Heritage Center (an archives and museum) and wrote *Our Blessed Heritage*, the congregation's 150th anniversary history in 1997.

IV. Archival work during 2006

A. The Historical Committee urges each classis to appoint a regional representative to act as a liaison between the Historical Committee and churches in a particular classis. During this past year, several new regional representatives have been appointed. In some classes, the stated clerks have agreed to act as our representatives. We are pleased to report that Classis Pacific Hanmi now has its first representative in Rev. Tong Kun Park.

The following representatives left office during 2006: Rev. Neil De Koning in Classis Alberta North, Mr. Frederick Pel in Classis B.C. North-West, Rev. Douglas Bratt in Classis Hackensack, Rev. Anthony Schweitzer in Classis Lake Superior, Mr. Peter De Kam in Classis Minnkota, Rev. Thomas De Does in

Classis Northern Michigan, Mr. Fred Witteveen in Classis Red Mesa, Mr. Cornelius Korhorn in Classis Thornapple Valley, Mr. John and Mrs. Tienke Lutgendorff in Classis Toronto, and very recently Mr. Arthur Steensma in Classis Hudson. Notes expressing appreciation for services rendered were sent to representatives who have resigned or retired.

B. Official minutes of eighty-seven Christian Reformed churches and three Christian school organizations were received, microfilmed, and the copies stored in our vault. They are accessible only with the written permission from the specific council or board. The originals were returned, usually by way of UPS. Official classical minutes were received from forty-six classes. If minutes are not sent in a timely fashion, the stated clerks are contacted. Anniversary materials were received from thirteen Christian Reformed churches.

As was the case last year, 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. Due to the frequency of reports of missing or destroyed records, we commend these congregations and classes for their total participation in this important work and ask that synod also recognize this participation.

C. We are pleased to report that the records of Exeter CRC in Ontario, organized in 1951, were filmed for the first time. All of the congregations organized before 1980 that have not had their records microfilmed continue to be contacted regularly by telephone, email, surface mail, and personal contacts. The following, organized prior to 1970, have not had their records microfilmed, and Archives staff will continue to particularly encourage the officers of these congregation to make use of this service:

Farmington, New Mexico – Maranatha (1962)
Fountain Valley, California – Fellowship Community (1967)
Grangeville, Idaho (1927)
Beaverton, Oregon – Oak Hills (1965)
Portland, Oregon – Parklane (1959)

D. The Archives published the twenty-fifth 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.

E. As part of our ongoing effort to digitize heavily used holdings, we added two PDF files to our website. The first is the Index to Anniversary, Birthday, Wedding, and Obituary Announcements from *The Banner*, 1996-2005 divided into eleven alphabetical sections available at www.calvin.edu/hh/Banner/Banner.htm. The second is Emigrants from Drenthe, the Netherlands to Michigan, 1845-1872 from data gathered by Ger de Leeuw, a historian in the Netherlands. It can be found at www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/drenthe_emig.htm. The Heritage Hall website received an average of forty-four visits per day, with each visitor going to an average of three different pages. We have had visitors from sixty-seven nations, predominantly in the global north. The five leading countries of origin for visitors are: the United States, the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany.

F. We processed 111.5 cubic feet of archival and historical manuscript material collections. Among these were the papers of philosopher and educator Peter Steen, which includes 36 cubic feet of manuscript archival material on the Christian philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, and the establishment of the Institute for Christian Studies, while 22 cubic feet of books from Steen's library were transferred to the Hekman Library. During the summer, we organized and opened for research 18.25 cubic feet of Calvin College records—10 cubic feet from the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, and 8.25 cubic feet from the 1984 and 1994 college accreditation self-studies. We also processed the records from the Cincinnati CRC in Ohio, which discontinued in 2005; four cubic feet of Calvin Theological Seminary records; and 28 cubic feet of denominational records, the larger sets of material came from CR World Missions and the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries.

G. We continued the translation project for early denominational and congregational minutes. Currently, we are working on the minutes of Manhattan, Montana; Dispatch, Kansas; Classis Grand Rapids West (1892-1921; now Classis Grand Rapids North), and *In Memory of Rev. Cornelius van der Meulen* (Grand Rapids: De Standard Press, 1876).

H. We contributed to various projects inaugurated by the denomination's 150th anniversary committee; served as members of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American, and the Dutch-American Historical Commission, Calvin College's Faculty Senate and Information Services Committee, and the State Historic Preservation Review Board of Michigan.

V. Publications

Son of Secession: Douwe J. Vander Werp (ISBN 0-8028-4040-X) by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres was published by the William B. Eerdmans Company in cooperation with the Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America. It has been well reviewed as a readable and meticulously researched biography of the early CRCNA pastor and his roots as well as the theological roots of the CRCNA in the Netherlands. Two books published in the Netherlands made extensive use of images from the archives: Agnes Amelink's *Gerformeerden oversee: Protestants-Christelijke Landverhuizers in Noord-Amerika* and Hans Krabben-dam's *Vrijheid in het verschie: Nederlandse emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1940*.

VI. Recognition

A. We acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2007:

72 years	Elco H. Oostendorp
69 years	Henry DeMots
68 years	John Blankespoor
67 years	Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma

66 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom Garrett H. Vande Riet
65 years	John A. Botting
64 years	Clarence Boomsma Edward Bossenbroek Bastiaan Nederlof
63 years	John H. Olthof
62 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen Jacob D. Eppinga George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
61 Years	Henry Bajema Bernard Top Haan David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
60 years	Jacob H. Binnema, Sr. John A. De Kruyter Jacob Hasper Herman Minnema Bernard E. Pekelder Gerald J. Postma Robert R. Recker
55 years	Ralph D. Baker Leonard C. Bossenbroek William D. Buursma Harold De Groot Anthony De Jager John H. Elenbaas Raymond R. Graves John M. Hofman Herman Leetsma Raymond Opperwall Arthur E. Pontier John C. Ribbens Chester M. Schemper Richard D. Sytsma Rits Tadema Samuel Vander Jagt Hilbert Vander Plaat John Van Ens Bernard A. Van Someren Benjamin Ypma Martin G. Zylstra Paul C. Zylstra

50 years Wilbur L. De Jong
 Jay De Vries
 Gerrit J. Heersink
 Earl S. Holkeboer
 Louis E. Kok
 Pieter Kranenburg
 Eugene W. Los
 Harvey A. Ouwinga
 Eugene F. Rubingh
 Arnold Rumph
 Gordon T. Stuit
 Jack Stulp
 Paul C.H. Szto
 Louis M. Tamminga
 Hans Uittenbosch
 Peter Van Egmond
 Roger E. Van Harn
 Gerald F. Van Oyen
 Henry C. Van Wyk, Jr.
 James E. Versluys
 Donald P. Wisse
 Lloyd J. Wolters

B. During the denomination's 150th year, the committee reports the following anniversaries of these ministries, noting particularly those three that established the denomination in 1857:

- 150 years, 1857-2007 Grand Rapids, Michigan – First
 Holland, Michigan – Graafschap (org. 1847 in RCA)
 Noordeloos, Michigan
- 125 years, 1882-2007 Beaverdam, Michigan
 Drenthe, Michigan (org. 1847 in RCA)
 Fremont, Michigan – First
 Grand Haven, Michigan – Second
 Holland, Michigan – Harderwyk Ministries
 North Haledon, New Jersey – Covenant
 (North Haledon-Trinity)
 Spring Lake, Michigan
 Zeeland, Michigan – North Street
- 100 years, 1907-2007 Denver, Colorado – First
 East Palmyra, New York
 Grand Rapids, Michigan – Sherman Street
 Holland, Michigan – Providence
 Kalamazoo, Michigan – Third
- 75 years, 1932-2007 De Motte, Indiana – First
 Sun Valley, California – Bethel
 Sunnyside, Washington

50 years, 1957-2007
Britt, Iowa
Broomall, Pennsylvania – Trinity
Burnaby, British Columbia – Nelson Avenue
Community
Columbus, Ohio – Olentangy
Comstock Park, Michigan
Georgetown, Ontario
Holland, Michigan – Maranatha
Kemptville, Ontario – First
Richmond, British Columbia – First
Salt Lake City, Utah – First
Salt Lake City, Utah – Indian Christian Center
Simcoe, Ontario – Immanuel
Wayland, Michigan
York, Ontario – Maranatha

25 years, 1982-2007
Allegan, Michigan – Unity
Crystal Lake, Illinois – Fox Valley
Denver, Colorado – Khmer
Fenwick, Ontario – Bethany
Fort Wingate, New Mexico
Jenison, Michigan – Friendship Chapel
Nanaimo, British Columbia – Christ Community
Naschitti, New Mexico
Tee Nos Pos, Arizona – Four Corners
Tohlakai, New Mexico – Bethlehem
Waterloo, Ontario – Huron Campus Ministry

VII. Reminders

A. We urge congregations that have or soon will observe anniversaries to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video tapes, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives. This is a convenient means for keeping a duplicate set of such materials in a secure location.

B. Of the 839 organized congregations, 659 (79%) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. This percentage of participation remains the same from last year. 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 that will be stored in an environmentally secure place. Due to the personal nature of the contents in some minutes that are duplicated, 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 Harms when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot elect two members to the Historical Committee for a three-year term to replace both Mrs. Janet Sheeres and Dr. Robert Swierenga.
- C. That synod approve the use of facsimile transmitted letters of authorization for granting access to congregational records. Such authorization would still come only from the specific congregation's council. Currently, such access is only possible upon receipt of an original letter by the Archives. During the past several years, congregations increasingly have asked to use facsimile transmitted letters to speed the process of access because surface mail delivery can take from days to weeks to arrive.
- D. That synod emphasize to the local congregations that they diligently produce and keep minutes; 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 again reports the frequency of individual congregations who are unable to locate significant portions of council, elders', and deacons' minutes (all absolutely necessary for both congregational and legal purposes).
- E. 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 congregations regularly contact the Archives to determine whether it is time to microfilm minutes, typically done once every ten years.
- F. That synod remind the stated clerks of each classis that all the records of discontinued ministries be sent to the Archives for safekeeping.
- G. That synod encourage all classes to continue to keep the Archives on their mailing lists (surface or electronic) because this has proven to be the most expedient means to prevent gaps from occurring in these records.

Historical Committee
James De Jong
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 to other ecumenical communities throughout the world. Relationships among churches are, in most respects, first interpersonal before a meaningful relationship can develop that is also institutional. Interchurch relationships are developed in various ways, but the most common venues are joint meetings and consultations, attending the same ecumenical gatherings, sharing information and resources, and exchanging visits and fraternal representatives. In most instances, these relationships are meaningful, but some are challenging and even difficult.

The IRC is pleased to submit this report to Synod 2007. The report this year is relatively routine when compared to the substantial issues brought to Synod 2006. Last year, there were recommendations that dealt with a new ecumenical charter, our relationship with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN), the final consideration of the Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80, and a proposal to initiate a consideration of the Belhar Confession. The agenda of IRC tends to ebb and flow significantly from time to time, and, while our report will contain significant information, there are few interchurch matters to decide this year.

II. Membership

The members of the IRC, along with the executive director – emeritus, Dr. Peter Borgdorff (member ex officio in place of Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra), and the director of Canadian ministries, Rev. Bruce G. Adema (member ex officio), with the years in which their terms expire are:

- From Canada: Ms. Louisa Bruinsma (2007); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2008); Dr. William Koopmans (2009); Dr. Bertha Mook (2008); Dr. James Payton (2007); and Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus, vice president (2008).
- From the United States: Dr. Philip V. De Jonge, president (2007), Rev. Marvin J. Hofman (2008); Ms. Teresa Renkema (2007); Dr. David Rylaarsdam (2006); Dr. Carol Rottman (2009); and Mr. Abraham Vreeke (2008).

The IRC follows 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 Reformed Church in America (RCA) annual synod in Pella, Iowa, June 8-14, 2006, Rev. Jason Chen.
2. To the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) anniversary and synod meeting in May and October 2006, Rev. Larry Spaling.
3. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) annual assembly in Rome, Georgia, June 21-23, 2006, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

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 and Rev. Bruce Adema serve as the CRCNA's representatives on the board of directors of the Canadian Council of Churches.
3. Dr. George Vandervelde served, until his unexpected passing in early 2007, as the IRC 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 was entrusted with important levels of leadership.
4. 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 last REC assembly was held in 2005 with the consequence that most of the present work of REC is conducted by its executive committee. Dr. Borgdorff, at the REC officers' request, is serving as an adviser to the executive committee.

Last year, the IRC reported that a joint communication had been received from the president of REC and the president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) announcing the proposed formation of the World Reformed Communion (WRC), an organization that will absorb both the REC and WARC. Synod 2006 noted with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the World Reformed Communion as advanced by the WARC and the REC cooperation committee. The grounds synod adopted as the rationale for its support were:

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.

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 666)

It is the conviction of the IRC members that it is best for the WRC to be constituted as soon as possible. That conclusion has been communicated to both the REC and WARC but, to date, the response has been that final approval of the proposal to form the WRC is subject to the vote of the REC and WARC assembly meetings scheduled for sometime around 2012. This delay seems untenable to the IRC, and we will continue to advocate for an earlier approval and implementation date.

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.

Rev. Bruce Adema serves as the representative of the CRC on the EFC board.

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) gathers its members twice each year instead of its previous single annual meeting format. In addition to these membership meetings, the CRC cooperates with the 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 the NAE.

The NAE president, Rev. Ted Haggard, resigned in late October due to a publicly exposed inappropriate relationship. Rev. Leath Anderson from Minneapolis is serving as president on an interim basis.

E. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

The CRC’s membership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) is now several years old, and there has been regular contact with the general secretary of WARC throughout the year. Part of that contact was occasioned by the CRC’s support for the Mission in Unity project. That project

has now been transitioned, and participation with WARC in the programmatic sense has now been assumed by World Missions. 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 U.S.A. (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 U.S.A. (CCT-USA). The present participants in CCT-USA represent five families of churches as follows: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, historic Protestant, evangelicals/Pentecostals, and racial/ethnic. The most recent meeting of CCT-USA was held February 6-9, 2007, in Pasadena, California. This meeting was classified as the first annual meeting of CCT-USA because all the meetings held previous to the Pasadena meeting were preparatory for the formation of CCT-USA. This official beginning was celebrated in a worship service February 7, 2007, at the Lake Avenue Presbyterian Church in Pasadena. Dr. Peter Borgdorff attended the meeting as the representative of the CRC. This first annual meeting was an exciting and informative event. It is clear that Christian churches of the various faith-families mostly struggle with the same issues and have much in common regarding challenges and opportunity.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC to participate in this new ecumenical organization. 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 Synod 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 Synods 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 viewpoints? 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 continues to discuss these questions and, as the recent revision of the Ecumenical Charter indicates, the IRC believes that it is time to infuse a different perspective into the discussion. The IRC recommended to Synod 2006 that the PCN be restored as a church in full ecclesiastical fellowship for the following reasons:

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 not restoring or 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.

(Agenda for Synod 2006, pp. 268-69)

Synod 2006, while adopting the new Ecumenical Charter, was not ready to adopt the IRC recommendation to restore the PCN to full ecclesiastical fellowship. Neither was synod ready to move toward termination. While the IRC has no alternative but to accept synod's judgment, the members of the IRC received synod's decision with a keen sense of disappointment. It seems clear that the adoption of the new Ecumenical Charter hails a new perspective on ecumenicity for the CRC. Yet, it seemed to the IRC that the decision relative to the PCN was driven by former thinking and, therefore, was in conflict with the Ecumenical Charter adopted by the same synod. Thus, matters stand as they were before Synod 2006. A discussion with PCN representatives is scheduled for early March 2007. If anything further needs to be addressed by synod this year, it will come by way of the supplementary report. It is the IRC's intent to report more fully on this matter no later than Synod 2008.

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.

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.

At the February meeting of the IRC, the Reverend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson met with the IRC to further discuss our mutual interest in the Belhar Confession. Consideration continues to be given to sponsoring joint-discussion activities in the classes of both denominations as the process for discussing the Belhar Confession unfolds.

At previous meetings with the RCA representatives, three items were given priority for consideration: (1) the so-called orderly exchange of ministers from

one denomination to the other (now completed); (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 (ongoing).

C. *Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)*

The Canadian subcommittee of the 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)

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.

Several meetings of the dialogue partners have been held since September 2003. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and the Most Reverend Patrick Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan, were selected as co-chairs of the multi-year discussion. The CRC participants are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Ms. Susan Rozeboom, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

VII. 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 to this report) 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 is available also to CRC congregations. Last year, the IRC recommended to Synod 2006 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.

(Agenda for Synod 2006, p. 273)

The IRC has decided that the best format for such a discussion is to sponsor regional one-day focus groups for congregational leaders throughout the denomination. The planning for and scheduling of such gatherings is presently in process.

VIII. Nominations for membership

Dr. James Payton is completing his first three-year term and is eligible for a second three-year term. Ms. Louisa Bruinsma and Rev. Philip De Jonge have

completed two terms (six years) of service and faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. Rev. Ralph Wigboldus has requested release from service on the committee with one year remaining in his second three-year term. In order to maintain a balanced membership rotation schedule, the IRC recommends that synod permit Ms. Louisa Bruinsma to complete Rev. Wigboldus' term for one year. The IRC also recommends that Dr. James Payton be appointed to a second three-year term. Nominees for the two vacancies will be presented to synod by way of the supplementary report.

IX. The IRC Hospitality Committee

The IRC has appointed a hospitality committee for fraternal delegates and observers to Synod 2007. IRC members Rev. Marvin Hofman, Rev. Carel Geleynse, Dr. Carol Rottman, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff have agreed to serve. This committee assists synod in helping visitors from other denominations feel welcome among us.

X. Recommendations

- A. That Dr. Philip De Jonge (president) and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the IRC are being discussed.
- B. That synod express its gratitude to Rev. Ralph Wigboldus and Rev. Philip De Jonge for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.
- C. That synod approve Ms. Louisa Bruinsma to complete Rev. Wigboldus' term for one year.

Interchurch Relations Committee
Peter Borgdorff, ecumenical officer

Appendix

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; I Cor 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; I Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6; Eph 3:14-20; I Cor 10:16-17; I Cor 11:17-34; Gal 6:2; II 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; I 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 absolutises either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutisation 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 [II Cor 5:17-21; Mt 5:13-16; Mt 5:9; II 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 colour 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 men; 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 and 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; I Pet 2:18-25; I Pet 3:15-18].

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honour and the glory for ever and To the one and only God, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honour and the glory for ever and ever.

I. Brief overview

In 2006, the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-seven sermons that are available on the denominational website (www.crcna.org/pages/reading_sermons.cfm). We have no way of knowing how widely used this service is, but we trust it is still needed and appreciated in our denomination. Moreover, making the sermons and liturgies available on the Internet also gives the larger body of Christ access to these resources as well.

We give thanks to God for the many years of faithful service that Mr. Ray VanderPloeg has given our committee as secretary/treasurer. Mr. VanderPloeg has retired from service on the committee, and we thank the Lord for his diligent work. The committee no longer requires a treasurer because we no longer publish and sell sermon booklets, and the work of secretary will be taken over by the remaining members. Our chairman, Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma, also needed to resign at the end of the 2006. We give thanks to God for Rev. Bruinsma's faithful service to this committee and to our denomination as well. The committee will meet in the spring to discuss the need for committee member replacements and to forward any new nominations to synod.

The committee is currently exploring means to measure the use and usefulness of the website. We are also researching the idea of continuing this website without the existence of the committee or with a scaled down version of it. Most pastors today are connected to the Internet, have their sermons available in electronic format, and could, therefore, post them to the Internet rather easily if we create a mechanism for our pastors to do so. The oversight and control of the website and postings remains a concern. We will continue to explore options in this regard.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Rich deLange (2009), acting chairman and secretary; Rev. John Kerssies (2008); Rev. Gordon Pols (2008); and Rev. Paul Stadt (2008).

II. Recommendation

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.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Richard deLange, chairman/secretary
John Kerssies
Gordon Pols
Paul Stadt

I. Background

The Sesquicentennial Committee was appointed by Synod 2001 with the following mandate:

That synod appoint a representative committee whose duty it will be to present to [synod] . . . a set of plans for a churchwide celebration of our sesquicentennial in 2007. The plans shall include a theme, programs, celebrations, publications, contests, and conferences that are suitable and significant for the occasion. An expanded budget along with possible funding sources will also be included in the proposal.

(*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 453)

The committee is composed of the following members:

Dr. Peter Borgdorff	Rev. Esteban Lugo
Rev. Moses Chung	Ms. Darlene Meyering
Rev. Michael De Vries	Ms. Cindy Vander Kodde
Dr. Richard Harms	Mr. Nate Vander Stelt
Ms. Miriam Ippel	Mr. Ed Vanderveer
Rev. Stanley Jim	Rev. Jack Vos

Rev. Arthur Schoonveld served the committee with staff support for most of 2005 and 2006. His services in organizing the regional celebrations is much appreciated by the committee.

Synod 2003 approved the theme for the sesquicentennial (Grace Through Every Generation) and gave general endorsement to the various ideas found in the committee's report (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 254-57 and *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 625). It also endorsed the idea that the theme be approached through three key thoughts: remembering, rejoicing, and rededicating. Synod 2004 approved three dates for 150th anniversary worship (April 27, 2007; June 10, 2007; and October 14, 2007), with emphasis on remembering in the April worship, on rejoicing in the June worship associated with the meeting of Synod, and on rededicating in the October worship (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 315-17 and *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 549). Based on feedback from various regional planning efforts since then, the committee felt compelled to expand the three specific dates into three seasons for worship: remembering during January to April; rejoicing during May to August; and rededicating during September to December.

The full committee met four times during 2006: January 25, April 26, August 29, and December 1. Numerous other meetings were conducted in subcommittees. Representatives of the committee made presentations at nearly all classical meetings to encourage regional participation in the anniversary-year events. At the time of this writing, more than forty regional events are in the planning stages.

II. Plans

A. Designated worship services

Rev. John M. Rottman, professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, produced sermon notes, and Dr. John Witvliet, Jr., and staff of the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship developed the worship resources for the

three designated worship themes. These materials were published in hard copy and by way of the website and made available to all congregations.

The June 10, 2007, synodical worship service of prayer and praise will be held at Van Andel Arena in Grand Rapids and will be broadcast in a digital format so that those not able to attend may participate through viewing over the Internet. The service will be preceded by a new digital video of the CRCNA at worship and will include both a mass choir and orchestra. After the worship service, a reception will be held at Rosa Parks Circle, adjacent to Monroe Mall, a short walk from the arena.

B. Popular history of the CRC

Rev. Scott Hoezee, director of the Center for Preaching Excellence at Calvin Theological Seminary, has written *Grace Through Every Generation*, a history focused on the last fifty years of the CRCNA for general readers. Faith Alive Christian Resources has published this book and a free copy was offered to every congregation with other copies now available for \$6.95.

C. Conference

A three-day conference with a plenary session titled *Assessing the Past, Facing the Future: The CRCNA at 150* will be held Thursday, September 13 through Saturday September 15, 2007. The presentations at the plenary sessions will be published and made available to academic and general audiences as the firstfruits of this cross-denominational, cross-disciplinary component. The plenary sessions will review the experience of the CRCNA during the past fifty years and consider key dynamics that affect family, church, society, and psychological forces in the twenty-first century. Other sessions will further discuss these topics; review a new DVD production detailing the changes and diversity in worship; consider the place and role of the Reformed faith and the global church; view and discuss an ethnographical, historical drama on the future of the denomination once bound by a single ethnicity; and conclude with a general consideration of future developments.

A grant proposal was submitted to the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship to provide partial funding for this conference. In December, the committee received word that \$26,000 is being made available; remaining conference costs will be generated by conference registrations.

D. Art work

The painting, "Grace Through Every Generation," by Chris Stoffel Overvoorde was completed and formally unveiled at Synod 2006. Postcard copies were distributed to announce the availability of reproductions. Copies of the painting are available for purchase through Faith Alive Christian Resources.

E. Logo, hymn text, hymn tune contests

The committee conducted contests for a logo, hymn text, and hymn tune. The winning entries are available on the website, www.crcna.org, and have been incorporated in various distributed materials. They will also be part of the June 10, 2007, worship service.

F. Bulletin covers

Bulletin covers were produced for use in worship services marking the 150th anniversary of the CRCNA in 2007. These resources have been shipped

to congregations in quantities for a one-time use, but additional covers may be ordered through Faith Alive Christian Resources.

G. Sesquicentennial gift

The committee selected, and the Board of Trustees as well as synod, approved a \$5 million campaign for the denominational-designated gift for the benefit of future generations in the establishment of an Institute for Christian Leadership specifically designed to train Christian leaders for the challenges that will be faced in the future. The institute was designed in cooperation with, and with the support of, CRC-related educational institutions of higher learning.

H. Youth and young people

The published worship resource book has suggestions for youth groups and children's participation. Samples of resources for children's sermons were published on the website. Committee members met with Dynamic Youth Ministries several times, informing them of the 150th anniversary and encouraging them to consider ways in which they could incorporate this anniversary into their programming and materials.

III. Expenses

The committee received \$50,000 in the 2006-2007 fiscal budget, and \$263,705 has accumulated in the CRC Foundation for the committee's use, for a total of \$313,705. As of December 31, 2006, \$57,448 has been expended. We are anticipating additional expenses of \$190,000. Any funds remaining unspent will be transferred to the sesquicentennial gift (see section II, G above).

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 remind the churches of the endorsement provided by Synod 2006 for the \$5 million endowment campaign to establish 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.

C. That synod approve the work of the committee.

Sesquicentennial Committee

Peter Borgdorff

Moses Chung

Michael De Vries

Richard H. Harms, secretary

Miriam Ippel

Stanley Jim

Esteban Lugo

Darlene Meyering, chair

Cindy Vander Kodde

Nate Vander Stelt

Ed Vanderveer

Jack B. Vos

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) in response to recommendations made by the Committee to Provide Guidelines for Alternate Routes to Ministry. The members of the SMCC were appointed in 2004 and had met five times before Synod 2006 convened and when the SMCC brought its first formal report. Since Synod 2006, the SMCC will have met three more times before Synod 2007 meets.

Synod 2006 approved the SMCC mandate that initially had been prepared by the Board of Trustees at synod's request. The mandate reads as follows: 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, or who desires to be a ministry associate applying under Church Order Article 23.
- Maintain, clarify, and periodically review these standards.
- Assist the classes in the development of Classical 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 for ordination 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-a 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.

(Agenda for Synod 2006, pp. 314-15)

It should be noted that when Synod 2006 approved the mandate it added the assignment concerning ministry associates (Church Order Article 23) referred to above ("or who desires to be a ministry associate applying under Church Order Article 23").

The addition of responsibility for the ordination standards for ministry associates has expanded the work of the SMCC. The committee reviewed the background of the development of the office of ministry associate and has analyzed the regulations that govern ordination to that office. Because there appears to be substantial unevenness in the use of Article 23 and its regulations, the committee encourages churches, classes, and synodical deputies to

carefully review the regulations for Article 23 of the Church Order and the Supplements that pertain to it.

The SMCC feels compelled to remind the churches and classes that when a person is approved for a position of ministry associate such approval does not automatically give the person a license to preach in a church or classis. In some situations, the work of a ministry associate position involves preaching, and if so, that requirement must be clearly stated in the position description that is approved by classis and the synodical deputies at the beginning of the process. If preaching is part of the approved position description, then the classical examination must include the preaching of a sermon that has been evaluated by two members of the classis serving as sermon critics (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure 2006*, p. 49).

Furthermore, "when ministry associates accept another call, their ordination shall require the approval of the classis to which their calling church belongs, to which the ministry associates shall have presented good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life given to them by their former council and classis" (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure 2006*, p. 49).

II. Journey into ordained ministry in the CRC

After Synod 2006, the SMCC prepared a website that describes the work of the SMCC and the journey into ordained ministry in the CRC. That document is available at www.crcna.org/pages/smcc.cfm. The website also includes a toolkit with various forms that can be used in the journey to ordination.

Under the policies established by Synod 2006, the SMCC has become the "entry point" for requests for approval to begin the route to ministerial candidacy in the CRC using the path of Article 7 or 8. Since Synod 2006, many applicants have contacted the SMCC for approval to follow the path of Article 7 or 8 into ordained ministry in the CRC. A section addressing an overview of those applications can be found later in this report.

III. Financial support for individuals preparing for ministry

With reference to providing financial support to students preparing for ministry in the CRC, Synod 2006 considered an overture asking that the SMCC (rather than individual classes) maintain and administer a student assistance fund for students in need of financial assistance. Synod did not adopt the overture but did "encourage the SMCC to work diligently to provide clear leadership and advice to the Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLT) on the financial equity and balance of support for all who are studying for the ordained ministry" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 731).

The SMCC is addressing this concern by determining, first of all, what levels of financial support are given by the classes to assist students preparing for ministry and what kinds of programs are included in the support that classes provide. Some classes limit their funding to students enrolled in Calvin Theological Seminary. Others give assistance to students enrolled in a pre-seminary program at a college. After evaluating this data, the SMCC will prepare suggestions and guidelines.

IV. A modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC)

Synod 2006 decided that "synod require participation in a modified [Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy] EPMC program by all

persons seeking candidacy in the CRCNA by means of Church Order Article 7 or 8. Exceptions to this requirement can only be granted by the SMCC" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 663).

The committee has developed a modified EPMC program for candidates who desire to enter ministry in the CRC by way of Church Order Article 7 or 8. That program—and the differences between it and the EPMC program for Article 6 candidates—can be found on the website of Calvin Theological Seminary at www.calvinseminary.edu/degrees/epmc/modified.php.

The SMCC has worked with committee member Dr. Jay Shim and the Korean Council to develop a program to assist Korean pastors who lack sufficient skills in the English language to complete the modified EPMC program offered by Calvin Theological Seminary. That program, which is called the Korean Institute for Ministry (KIM), was offered in Grand Rapids for the first time in March 2007. All Korean pastors who qualify for participation in KIM, and who desire to enter ministry in the CRCNA by way of Article 8, must complete the KIM program.

V. Classical Ministry Leadership Teams

The SMCC is also helping classes form, and train if necessary, Classical Ministry Leadership Teams (CMLT), which will recruit, encourage, assist, and supervise individuals preparing for ministry in the CRC. The formation of those teams was mandated by an earlier decision of synod, and the teams are now in the process of formation.

Guidelines regarding these teams and a description of their function can be found at www.crcna.org/pages/ordination_classismandate.cfm.

VI. The SMCC's current perspective on the use of Church Order Articles 7 and 23

Synod mandated the SMCC to foster the development of pastoral leadership in the CRC *as well as* to achieve more consistency, fairness, and justice in the way various routes to ministry are used. A key historical consideration that gave rise to the creation of the SMCC was the exciting new ways in which the Spirit is at work in the CRC, including the growing variety of CRC ministries in North America and around the world, as well as a growing need for additional varied leadership and corresponding leadership development strategies. The challenge has been to fulfill each of these mandates without sacrificing the other.

The SMCC deeply desires to be a partner in the CRC's mission to transform lives and communities worldwide. It is our desire to do our work in a way that enhances the growth of CRC pastoral leadership rather than diminishes it.

Our current perspective on the CRC's use of Church Order Article 7 and Article 23 is presented to synod with the goal of enhancing the development of pastoral leadership *and* achieving more consistency, fairness, and justice in the way various routes to ministry are used.

A. Church Order Article 7

The SMCC presented to Synod 2006 a document entitled "Toward Ordination in the CRC," a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to guide the SMCC, classes, and congregations as they walk with candidates in the journey toward ordination as minister of the Word in the CRC. One

important purpose of these policies and procedures is to achieve the “consistency, fairness, and justice” envisioned in our mandate.

In the eight months between Synod 2006 and the writing of this report, the SMCC has received more than forty requests for a determination of which Church Order Article was the appropriate route to ministry for a given person to pursue (Article 6, 7, 8, or 23). (These inquiries are part of the new “inquiry stage” for all persons pursuing ministry in which the SMCC “determines which Church Order Article would be the most appropriate one for the individual to prepare for ministry under” [*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 332]). Seventeen (41%) of these requests reflected a desire to use Article 7. If this inquiry rate is annualized, the SMCC will have received twenty-five Article 7 requests between Synod 2006 and 2007.

Conscious of its mandate and of the precedent-setting nature of early decisions, the SMCC has spent much time this past year struggling with each Article 7 request and with the wording of Article 7 itself. Each time, the committee has been impressed with the high bar that the Church Order and its Supplement sets for Article 7 candidates: “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 [*italics added*].” The Church Order Supplement gives three additional criteria that reinforce (or perhaps even raise) the high bar of Article 7:

Declarations re Admittance by Way of Article 7

The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, in determining the suitability of an applicant for ordination by way of Article 7, shall be guided by the following criteria:

1. The “gifts” mentioned in Article 7 should be possessed by *an applicant* in a very exceptional measure. No one should be considered unless *the applicant* has extraordinary qualities.
2. Not only the qualifications mentioned in Article 7 should be considered but such *an applicant* should also possess exceptional knowledge of the Word, knowledge of spiritual needs, and native ability to apply the Word.
3. This article should never be used as a means to ordain lay workers who may desire such, and whose prestige would be increased by such action. The churches are reminded that the regular door to the ministry is a thorough academic training. This must be maintained in theory and practice.

(Adapted from the *Acts of Synod 1947*, p. 94)

When the SMCC applied these stringent criteria to the requests received this past year, in no case was it persuaded that the applicants met the high standards of Article 7.

It is important for synod to realize that these judgments have not been and cannot be made in a historical vacuum. A study of the history of Article 7 (see Appendix B) shows how the application of Article 7 has always been shaped by the particular historical circumstances in which the church found itself at the time.

Reflecting upon its deliberations over the past year, SMCC realizes that this is also true today. The SMCC is aware of at least three contextual considerations operative in its assessment of Article 7 candidates:

1. Assessing extraordinary spiritual giftedness (and hardship)

First, the SMCC inevitably compares how the spiritual gifts and life situations of Article 7 applicants compare with those of many seminary students pursuing the prescribed theological training at seminaries across Canada and the United States. In terms of spiritual gifts, it seems reasonable to assume that Article 7 candidates would be among the more godly, humble, spiritually mature, wise, articulate, and discerning students at a seminary. Moreover, in terms of life situation, which invariably is part of the rationale persons offer for seeking to be ordained under Article 7, we assume that the personal circumstances that Article 7 applicants frequently adduce for exemption from the educational requirements of Article 6 would have to be more difficult than the personal circumstances of previous and current students who have submitted to those requirements, namely, getting a seminary education.

By those comparisons, none of those requesting Article 7 consideration this past year cleared the bar. Calvin Theological Seminary and other seminaries across the country whose students become CRC pastors are blessed with many spiritually gifted individuals who have nevertheless seen fit to go to seminary. In terms of personal circumstances, many of those same seminarians have often left one or two careers behind and moved families with two, three, four, or five children across the country at great personal and financial sacrifice.

In this first contextual consideration, the question that makes it very difficult for the SMCC to say yes to an Article 7 applicant is: Is this applicant more gifted than most if not all seminarians, and are the difficult personal circumstances of this candidate more compelling than the circumstances of many seminarians who have made tremendous sacrifices to follow the denominationally prescribed route to ministry?

2. The greater accessibility of theological education today

A second contextual consideration is the reality that seminary education today is more accessible than ever before.

- Calvin Theological Seminary has made significant changes in its master of divinity program, not only to improve it but also to reduce its average length from four to five years to three to four years.
- Although seminary education requires great financial sacrifice, the CRC offers significant financial resources to persons pursuing CRC ministry, often including generous classical support as well as a host of scholarships available through CTS. (In just this past year, the CRC has added a \$200,000 Christian Day School Tuition fund for children of CTS seminarians attending Christian schools, and the seminary has added substantial resources for students in the form of scholarships and financial aid.)
- Breathtaking advances in computer technology and accompanying changes in the way in which biblical languages are taught and final

biblical language comprehensives are administered make language studies much less intimidating today than ever before.

- Students can attend seminaries in their region of the country and be eligible for candidacy in the CRC through an ecclesiastical program whose residency requirements at CTS have been scaled back from a full year to only one ten-week fall quarter and a two-week summer seminar.
- Students whose life circumstances make the ecclesiastical program’s fall quarter of residency at CTS burdensome can be granted an exemption from residency and thus take those courses online. The online option spreads the fall courses over two quarters so students can continue their jobs and still complete the courses.
- Some North American seminaries offer the entire master of divinity program online, thereby making it possible for people who live in other parts of the country and work full time to receive the prescribed theological education and never have to move.

In this second contextual consideration, the question that makes it very difficult for the SMCC to say yes to an Article 7 applicant is: Is it wise or defensible for the church to excuse more people from the prescribed route of seminary education at the very point in history when seminary education is more accessible than ever before and people have higher expectations of pastors than ever before?

3. Creating a separate denominational pool of candidates for ministry

A third contextual consideration that has weighed heavily in many of the SMCC’s deliberations is the fact that many people now seek to be declared a candidate for ministry under Article 7 without a church to call them. Whether intended or unintended, one of the consequences of Synod 2004’s removal of the “need” clause (especially when the need is urgent) from Article 7 is that people can now be more easily declared a candidate under Article 7 quite apart from a church’s commitment to call that candidate. Many Article 7 requests this year came from people with no church committed to call them. In the past, the need clause virtually assured that the church that *recommended* a person for Article 7 candidacy was also committed to *calling* this person. Now a person can be declared a candidate for ministry under Article 7 with no call from a particular church. In removing the need clause from Article 7 candidacy, did Synod 2004 envision that the denomination would create two denominational pools of candidates available for call—Article 6 candidates graduating from seminary and Article 7 candidates declared eligible for call but with no particular congregation committed to calling them?

In this third contextual consideration, the question that makes it very difficult for the SMCC to say yes to an Article 7 applicant is: Is it consistent, fair, and just for the SMCC to foster a system that requires most people to go to seminary but then creates an alternative and competing denominational pool of ministry candidates who have not been required to go to seminary?

At one level, the SMCC understands that contextual considerations such as these can be and, perhaps as much as possible, should be distinguished from the narrower consideration of extraordinary giftedness for ministry. However, the SMCC’s experience as a committee this past year has also

made it clear that an assessment of a candidate's extraordinary giftedness cannot be made in a vacuum or apart from these broader contextual considerations.

Where does that leave the SMCC and the church? The SMCC's first year of processing requests suggests that the CRC is entering a new period of its history in the way that it views and utilizes Article 7—a period much more in line with the centuries-long use of Article 7 by the CRC and its predecessors in the Netherlands—a period in which Article 7 will be used only upon a rare occasion. Since the SMCC's January 2007 meeting, at which it spent the most time of all of its meetings this year wrestling with particular cases and with the general issues outlined above, the SMCC has discouraged people from applying under Article 7. The SMCC envisions that it is entering a period in the CRC's life where Article 7 will be used exactly as the Church Order requires—in highly exceptional circumstances.

Finally, the SMCC requests that synod address this problem by adopting the following recommendation:

That synod declare that in addition to meeting the high standards of Article 7 a person who seeks to be ordained as a minister of the Word by way of Article 7 must also do so in the context of a particular congregation's desire and commitment to call that person to serve as minister of the Word.

Grounds:

1. Such linkage of candidate and a specific congregational call better aligns our present use of Article 7 with its historical usage. This declaration reflects the fact that our denomination has done this in practice for most of its history. The first exception to it occurred in 1999. From then on, only two more such exceptions were made.
2. Such linkage of candidate and a specific congregational call would preclude the creation of a denomination-wide pool of Article 7 candidates with no call alongside of a pool of Article 6 candidates with no call. Declaring candidacy and availability for call in every Christian Reformed congregation lies within the prerogative of synod—not a single classis (albeit with the concurrence of synodical deputies).
3. Licensure to exhort during the Article 7 period of probation is granted by a classis and restricts ministry activity to that particular classis. Hence, in distinction from Article 6 processes, there is no opportunity for congregations within other classes to make judgments about the singular giftedness of an Article 7 candidate; thus leaving only the synodical deputies to represent the entire denomination.

B. Church Order Article 23

As stated above, the SMCC's task is not only to achieve more consistency, fairness, and justice in the way various routes to ministry are used but also to foster the development of pastoral leadership in the CRC. The SMCC deeply desires to be a partner, not an impediment, in the CRC's mission to transform lives and communities worldwide. The SMCC wants to do its work in such a way that CRC pastoral leadership grows, rather than diminishes. Especially

given its perspective on the use of Article 7 set forth above, the SMCC feels a double burden to help the church find new and creative ways to use the gifts of its members, including some of the people who have pursued the Article 7 route to ministry.

The SMCC believes that one small but important step the CRC can take in this direction is to take another look at the office of ministry associate as it is currently regulated by Article 23 of the Church Order. Known for many years and until 2004 as the office of evangelist, the office of ministry associate is designed to be a highly flexible office that is responsive to a wide variety of leadership needs in the church. At the same time, the scope of a ministry associate's work is all-encompassing:

The task of the ministry associate is to bear witness to Christ through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, church education, pastoral care, evangelism, and other ministries in order that believers may be called to comprehensive discipleship and unbelievers may be called to faith.

(Church Order Article 24-a)

The office of ministry associate is also a highly accessible office. Church Order Article 23 sets forth clear character, knowledge, and skill standards to be met by ministry associates (see Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a), but the way in which those standards are achieved is not prescribed.

Why does the church allow ministry associates to do virtually everything a minister of the Word does, but with none of the educational requirements of the minister of the Word? Because ministry associates, by definition, serve a particular congregation with a particular and specialized ministry function. Key to the ministry associate office is the notion of specialized ministry in a specific congregation. To be sure, ministry associates may be and regularly are reexamined by a classis in order to serve a different congregation, but ministry-associate ordination is always linked to a particular congregation, in contrast to ministers of the Word who are ordained to the denomination as a whole and consequently have denominationally uniform and more stringent educational standards.

The SMCC believes that the CRC is blessed to have the highly versatile office of ministry associate and can more effectively meet its congregational leadership needs if the office of ministry associate is more valued, used, and supported.

1. The office of ministry associate must be more valued

A fundamental Reformed principle with respect to the offices of the church is that they "differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor" (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure 2006*, p. 7). Any notion that the office of ministry associate is somehow inferior to the office of the minister of the Word is simply false and goes against not only the Reformed principle of the equal dignity of the offices but also Paul's most basic teachings regarding the body of Christ in ministry (1 Cor. 12).

The analogy of ophthalmologist and optometrist seems helpful for explaining the relationship between the office of minister of the Word and ministry associate. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor (M.D.) specially trained in the medical and surgical care and treatment of the eyes.

Becoming an ophthalmologist can take twelve or more years of advanced education and training, including four years of college, four years of

medical school training, and four years of internship and residency training.

Optometrists (Doctors of Optometry, or O.D.s) attend four years of college and four years of optometry school where they are trained to examine the eyes to determine the presence of any eye or vision problems and deliver treatment options for many conditions. Optometrists prescribe glasses, contact lenses, and some medications.

The ophthalmologist and optometrist each fulfill a particular, specialized function in the broader ecology of clinical medicine. An optometrist does not have as much education as an ophthalmologist, which, in turn, limits the scope of an optometrist's practice and authority. The issue is not whether an optometrist is superior or inferior to an ophthalmologist but how each complements the other and contributes to the overall treatment of patients.

In the SMCC's judgment, the office of ministry associate is an office that must be more valued and appreciated than it has been in the past for the vital role it already plays and the even more strategic role it can play in the ministry of the church.

2. The office of ministry associate must be more used

By design, and analogous to the relationship of ophthalmologist and optometrist, ministry associates have a more limited role in ministry leadership. The ministry parameters of ministry associates are set forth in Church Order Article 23:

Article 23

- a. Ministry associates shall be acknowledged as elders of their calling churches with corresponding privileges and responsibilities. Normally, their work as elders shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as ministry associates.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-a

- b. Ordinarily, the office of ministry associates who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, ministry associates may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition.

- c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-c

- d. Ministry associates who desire to serve beyond their specific field of labor must secure the approval of their consistories and classes.

Based upon its own reflection and dialogue with various ministry leaders in the CRC, the SMCC recommends two small but significant changes in Church Order Article 23 that would expand the role of ministry associate without changing its basic design and still have a positive impact upon ministry leadership in the CRC.

First, the SMCC recommends that synod add the following sentence to Article 23-b (which describes ministry associates in emerging congregations):

Ministry associates who continue to serve a newly organized congregation beyond this reasonable period of transition must seek the permission of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

Grounds:

1. This provision acknowledges certain circumstances in which it may be appropriate for the ministry associate's service to continue beyond this reasonable period of transition and gives classis a way to validate and clearly legitimize such service.
2. By requiring classical permission, this provision maintains the exceptional nature of such continued service.

Second, the SMCC recommends that synod add the following sentence to Article 23-c (which describes ministry associates in organized congregations):

Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

Grounds:

1. This provision acknowledges that there are certain situations in which the time-tested relationship and ministry partnership of a particular organized congregation and particular ministry associate warrant exceptional consideration and an exception to the requirement that ministry associates serving organized congregations may only do so along with the minister of the Word.
2. This provision limits the service of a ministry associate as a solo pastor in an organized congregation only to those situations where the ministry associate has first served in that congregation with a minister of the Word.

Another analogy—this one from the world of engineering—may be helpful for understanding these recommendations. Sometimes people who do not have an engineering degree nevertheless work their way up in a company to the level where they do many of the tasks assigned to engineers and even fill engineering positions within the company. They work with certain limitations—they do not supervise other degreed engineers, they are not eligible for certain promotions, and they do not have the same technical expertise, especially in other areas of engineering in which they have not worked. It is also a given that they could not transfer to another company and take a position requiring a degreed engineer. In *this* company, however, given the relationship that developed over time with *this* employee, it works to have a person without the usual engineering education and licensing work in a specific engineering capacity.

These proposed additions to Articles 23-b and 23-c take into account that such a relationship between a ministry associate and an organized congregation may have developed over time and would make it possible for

ministry associates in that position to continue their service to that particular congregation.

The SMCC has wrestled with various objections that might be lodged mainly against these proposals. One objection is that having ministry associates serve as solo pastors of organized congregations fundamentally misapplies the office of ministry associate with its specialized ministry focus. The SMCC's response is twofold: First, this is why the SMCC recommends that such an arrangement be the exception and that it be limited to congregations where the ministry associate has already been serving. Second, in the present context in which ministry associates in this position often seek ordination to minister of the Word in order to continue their service in that congregation, it seems more appropriate to allow a ministry associate to continue service in one congregation, still as a ministry associate and only in that congregation, than to ordain a ministry associate to the office of minister of the Word under Article 7, thereby authorizing a de facto ministry associate to serve *any* organized congregation in the denomination.

A second objection is that this loosening of the restrictions upon the office of ministry associate in any way will only encourage wider use of the office of ministry associate in congregational leadership positions that the CRC has historically reserved for ministers of the Word. The SMCC's response is again to observe that this change in Article 23-c, coupled with a strong curtailment of the use of Article 7, will bring ministry practice more in line with the letter and the spirit of the Church Order than the status quo.

Finally, a third objection is that, given the fact that the office of ministry associate has no educational or other credentialing requirement; the use of this office should not be expanded. The SMCC acknowledges this disparity but believes that rather than limiting the use of the office, the denomination should look for ways to further support and enhance the office. That perspective leads to the committee's third conviction.

3. The office of ministry associate must be more supported

Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a offers a very helpful set of character, knowledge, and skill standards for ministry associates. The next step is the development of educational opportunities that can equip a wide range of ministry associates. (These educational opportunities can also meet the needs of hundreds of other persons who serve in staff ministry positions in Christian Reformed congregations with little or no education but with a great desire to grow in character, knowledge, and skills.)

The SMCC judges that the support and development of the office of ministry associate must be a collaborative effort of many agencies and institutions of the CRC. Rather than prescribe a single educational program for every ministry associate, the SMCC prefers to be a catalyst for the development of educational resources that will be closely tied to the standards for ministry associates but adaptable to a wide range of cultural contexts, educational levels, and church situations, yet be highly flexible in terms of delivery systems.

For example, it is exciting to envision a two-year, mentor-based curriculum of spiritual formation, Bible, theology, and ministry skills that is closely tied to the standards for ministry associates and delivered at a junior

college level for high school graduates or recent immigrants for whom English is a second language. It is also exciting to envision an online masters degree in pastoral ministry that is tied to the same standards for ministry associates but designed for those with a college education who desire significant training short of a master of divinity degree. Finally, it is exciting to envision churches who encourage and support ministry associates with obvious gifts for ministry who feel called to complete a master of divinity degree and follow Article 6 to the office of minister of the Word.

The key principle that must guide the SMCC and others in the development of educational resources for ministry associates is the principle of proportionality adopted by Synod 2000 in response to synod's mandate to clarify standards for effective ministry in the CRC:

The Reformed confessional heritage is 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.

(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 702)

While the ministry standards for those aspiring to be ministry associates are the same (Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a), the kind and amount of education required for ministry associates will vary in proportion to the level of ministry responsibility in a particular ministry setting.

The SMCC is aware of many initiatives across the country whose goals are aligned with the goals envisioned here. The SMCC envisions working with groups from Miami, Patterson, Los Angeles, Toronto, and elsewhere; with leadership development networks wherever these are located; with Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, CRWRC; and with combining efforts and sharing best practices all in an effort to develop ministry leaders in general but the office of ministry associate in particular.

In conclusion, it is important for synod to note the title of this section of this report, i.e., the SMCC's *current perspective* on Articles 7 and 23. The SMCC has no illusions that the *perspective* and recommendations set forth in this report are the whole answer or the final answer to the CRC's current ministry leadership challenges. Rather, the SMCC presents these perspectives and recommendations with the hope that they will serve the church well.

VII. Committee membership

The following people who make up the SMCC are: Dr. Albert Wolters (2012), Rev. Henry Jonker (2011), Rev. Thea Leunk (2010), Dr. Jay J. Shim (2010), Dr. Annalee Ward (2009), Mr. Rudy Gonzalez (2009), Rev. Emmett A. Harrison (2008), Rev. Roy Berkenbosch (2007), Mr. Norman De Graaf (2007), Dr. Peter Borgdorff (ex officio for the ED), Dr. Duane Kelderman (ex officio as the Calvin Seminary representative), and Dr. Paul L. Bremer (nonvoting committee staff).

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Thea Leunk, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, and Dr. Paul Bremer when the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod declare that in addition to meeting the high standards of Article 7 a person who seeks to be ordained as a minister of the Word by way of Article 7 must also do so in the context of a particular congregation's desire and commitment to call that person to serve as minister of the Word.

Grounds:

1. Such linkage of candidate and a specific congregational call better aligns our present use of Article 7 with its historical usage. This declaration reflects the fact that our denomination has done this in practice for most of its history. The first exception to it occurred in 1999. From then on, only two more such exceptions were made.
2. Such linkage of candidate and a specific congregational call would preclude the creation of a denomination-wide pool of Article 7 candidates with no call alongside of a pool of Article 6 candidates with any call. Declaring candidacy and availability for call in every Christian Reformed congregation lies within prerogative of the synod—not a single classis (albeit with the concurrence of synodical deputies).
3. Licensure to exhort during the Article 7 period of probation is granted by a classis and restricts ministry activity to that particular classis. Hence, in distinction from Article 6 processes, there is no opportunity for congregations within other classes to make judgments about the singular giftedness of an Article 7 candidate, leaving only the synodical deputies to represent the entire denomination.

C. That synod add the following sentence to Church Order Article 23-b (which describes ministry associates in emerging congregations):

Ministry associates who continue to serve a newly organized congregation beyond this reasonable period of transition must seek the permission of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

Grounds:

1. This provision acknowledges certain circumstances in which it may be appropriate for the ministry associate's service to continue beyond this reasonable period of transition and gives classis a way to validate and clearly legitimize such service.
2. By requiring classical permission, this provision maintains the exceptional nature of such continued service.

D. That synod add the following sentence to Church Order Article 23-c (which describes ministry associates in organized congregations):

Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical

deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

Grounds:

1. This provision acknowledges that there are certain situations in which the time-tested relationship and ministry partnership of a particular organized congregation and particular ministry associate warrant exceptional consideration and an exception to the requirement that ministry associates serving organized congregations may only do so along with the minister of the Word.
2. This provision limits the service of a ministry associate as a solo pastor in an organized congregation only to those situations where the ministry associate has first served in that congregation with a minister of the Word.

Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee
Paul Bremer, staff

Appendix A

Guidelines for Classical Ministry Leadership Teams in Preparing Ministry Leaders for the Christian Reformed Church

Synod 2000 adopted standards for ministry in the areas of character, knowledge, and skills. These standards are found below in bold print.

In adopting these standards, synod also adopted the following guiding principles:

- a. The Reformed confessional heritage is 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 disciplining others in the Christian faith and Reformed confessional tradition.
- b. 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."
(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 702)

By adopting these standards, synod reminded the church of the general scriptural teaching concerning personal qualifications for ministry as 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.

The Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) offers to Classical Ministry Leadership Teams (CMLT) and other related groups the sample questions that accompany each set of ministry standards listed below. The purpose of these questions is to guide classes as they prepare candidates for the position of ministry associate through Article 23 or for ministry of the Word through Article 7 or Article 8 of the Church Order.

The principle of proportionality explained above means that learning covenants among ministry associates, for example, will vary greatly depending upon the amount of responsibility that is in the position for which the

ministry associate candidate is being prepared. However, despite those differences in learning covenants and in the subsequent examinations a ministry associate might undergo, the SMCC judges that the questions below are examples of the kinds of questions that anyone who preaches God's Word to a congregation on a regular basis should be able to answer. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Mentoring and training programs for ministry leaders should not "teach to the test," i.e., simply go through a list of questions like the one below and make sure people can answer them. The goal of the training should be that candidates (again, in varying degrees, according to the principle of proportionality) be able to answer these kinds of questions.

Finally, classical examiners may find these questions helpful, and there is nothing to prevent an examiner from asking these kinds of questions in an actual classical exam, but the purpose of this communication is not to suggest, much less prescribe, the format of a classical exam itself.

I. *Character standards for all ministry positions and personnel, recognizing that they must be adapted to specific circumstances and situations*

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed church ministry position should be

- a. Publicly committed to Christ and his church, submitting to its discipline.
- b. Exemplary in piety and holy conduct of life, a humble person of prayer who trusts in God's providence.
- c. Of good reputation, emotionally mature, honest, trustworthy, and reliable.
- d. Caring and compassionate for the lost and the weak.
- e. Eager to learn and grow in faith, knowledge, and love.
- f. Joyful in affirming the goodness of God's creation and communicating to others a delight in its beauty.
- g. Sensitive to others in all their personal and cultural variety.

Questions:

1. Please tell the story of God's work in your life. When did you first know God's grace in your life? What are some of the key milestones in your spiritual journey?
2. Please describe your call to ministry.
3. In Colossians 3, Paul calls believers to put to death the old nature:

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Then he calls believers to put on the new nature:

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and

forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Reflect upon ways in which you daily put to death the earthly nature and put on the new nature. How has God been forming you for ministry? In what areas is God especially working in your life right now?

4. What practices of the Christian faith (e.g., prayer, study, hospitality, worship) sustain you and deepen your obedience to Christ?
5. Describe your practice of prayer.
6. How do you deal with criticism?
7. How do you deal with conflict in the church?
8. (If the candidate is married): What does your spouse see as his or her relationship to your calling?

II. Biblical-theological *knowledge* standards expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church

a. Biblical foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

1. Know the content of the Old and New Testaments.
2. Know and be able to explain the basic structure and flow of biblical redemptive covenantal history centered in Christ (promise and fulfillment).
3. Be able to identify main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, holiness) of Scripture as well as the large divisions (law, prophets, writings) and specific types of biblical literature.
4. Be able to articulate the significance of the various sections, books, or types of biblical literature to contemporary issues and questions.

b. Theological foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

1. 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, the last things.
2. Know, be able to explain, 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 baptism, millennialism, and the cosmic scope of the Reformed worldview.
3. 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.
4. Know the key concepts of CRC church polity such as a Reformed understanding of office and church government.

Questions:

Biblical foundations:

1. What is the central message of the Bible?
2. What is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
3. What is the theme of the book of Romans? Hebrews? Lamentations? Job?
4. Where in the Bible would you find the following things?
 - Jesus identifies himself as the Good Shepherd
 - The Beatitudes
 - “By grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not your own doing but is the gift of God . . . ”
 - “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble”
 - The story of the conquest of the land of Canaan
5. Where would you go in the Bible for perspective and guidance as you dealt with the issue of abortion? Racism? Capital punishment? Homosexuality? Marriage and divorce? Just war? Justice? Poverty? Stewardship of creation?
6. In Romans 5, Paul talks about Christ as the second Adam. What is the relationship between the first Adam and the second Adam, and why is this important for understanding the biblical message?
7. What is the cultural mandate?
8. What is the kingdom of God as that term is used in Scripture? What is the relationship between church and kingdom?
9. What is the difference in audience, message, and purpose among the four gospels?
10. What do we mean when we say that the Bible is inspired? Infallible? Authoritative?
11. Describe your approach to interpreting Scripture. What principles of interpretation guide you as you seek to discern the meaning of a text then and now?
12. Name some of the various literary genres of Scripture. Explain the importance of understanding the literary genre of Scripture for correctly interpreting Scripture. Give some examples.

Theological foundations:

1. “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.” Explain.
2. What is general revelation? Special revelation? What is the relationship between them?
3. What does the church mean when it says God is triune? Where would you go in the Bible to defend belief in the Trinity?
4. What does the Bible teach about predestination?
5. What does the Bible teach about the image of God in humanity? Why is the doctrine of the image of God in humanity so important?
6. What is the difference between original sin and actual sin? Between sin and evil?
7. What are the two natures of Christ? Where do we find biblical support for each?
8. What is the atonement of Christ?
9. Why did Christ have to be human and divine?

10. How does someone get saved?
11. Define the following terms and distinguish them from one another: regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, and perseverance.
12. What does the Holy Spirit do?
13. What is the relationship between gratitude and the Christian life?
14. What is the church? Its mission?
15. What are the offices of the church? What does the Bible teach about the function of pastors? elders? deacons?
16. What are the sacraments of the church? What is their relationship to their Old Testament counterparts?
17. Summarize the biblical case for infant baptism? What Bible passages support the case for infant baptism?
18. What does the Bible teach about the second coming of Christ?
19. What are the particular challenges the gospel faces in the twenty-first century?

III. Skill standards expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- a. Be prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks [you] to give the reason for the hope that [you] have” (1 Peter 3:15).
- b. Be able and willing to make a clear presentation of the gospel to an unbeliever.
- c. Be able to teach and disciple persons to deeper faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- d. Be able to prepare and deliver short biblically based messages for public occasions (nursing homes, prisons, civic occasions).
- e. Be capable of effectively leading a group in various tasks, including Bible studies, task completion, conflict resolution.

Questions:

1. What do you see as your areas of giftedness and strength when it comes to the church’s ministry?
2. What are areas of ministry that you do not feel particularly gifted for?
3. Describe how you go about preparing worship services?
4. How do you go about writing a sermon?
5. How do you deal with the issue of plagiarism in preaching? How do you go about deciding when and whether to acknowledge the sources of material in your sermon?
6. How do you make your sermon appropriate to the context in which you are preaching it?
7. What kinds of questions do you ask when you are assessing a church’s educational ministry?
8. How do you go about presenting the gospel to an unbeliever?
9. What kinds of questions do you ask when you go about assessing a church’s evangelistic ministry?
10. How does a church go about discerning the particular ministries to which God is calling it?

11. What is the pastor's role in helping the church discern the particular ministries to which God is calling it?
12. How do you sustain yourself in ministry?
13. What are important boundaries for a pastor to have?

Appendix B

Notes on the History of Church Order Article 7

Historically, the churches of the Reformation maintained that a thorough theological education is a requirement for admission to the ministry of the Word. However, almost from the very beginning, those same churches also provided for exceptions to that rule. The first such exception was put into a church order at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1574. It spoke of the qualities that must be present in those seeking to be declared candidates: "godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word." Interestingly, Dordrecht's provision was used infrequently except for four main "waves" of admissions: (1) in the 1570s when the Dutch Reformed Church was establishing itself in what had recently become a country free from Spanish occupation, (2) in the early 1600s when the Arminian controversy created great need, (3) in the mid 1800s when the churches of the secession of 1834 looked for like-minded ministers, and (4) in the late 1800s after yet another secession from the state church in 1886.

One of those who was admitted under this article shortly after the 1834 secession was W. H. Gispen, who became a well-known preacher and leading churchman both in the secession churches and the later Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). In 1880, he published an essay reflecting on the use of Article 8 (as it was then called). In it he wrote:

The reason to make frequent use of the provisions of Article 8 no longer exists. For our church too the heroic age is a thing of the past. We are moving more and more into ordinary church life and are getting established conditions. If there is someone here or there—a teacher, a tradesman, or someone else without academic training—who has "singular gifts," let us send him to the seminary in Kampen, and let us in that way demonstrate our love for the Church, and in that way advance the happiness of this brother, so that he will not be burdened throughout his life with the thought, "I am only an Article 8 man!"

In accord with this sentiment, the 1893 synod of the GKN (a union church made up mostly of members who seceded in 1834 and 1886) decided to put the brakes on the last wave of admissions by declaring: "The Reformed churches do not acknowledge any other route to the ministry of the Word than that of theological studies, except only in those extremely unusual cases where, by way of great exception, the Lord in his sovereign mercy bestows the necessary gifts through other means" (freely translated).

True to this tradition in its Dutch roots, the CRC has always been committed to requiring extensive formal theological education for its clergy. Recognizing that the Holy Spirit sometimes uniquely equips people for

ministry, the Church Order of the CRC includes a longstanding provision to admit to the ministry of the Word those who do not have the prescribed theological training. Church Order Article 7-a currently reads:

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.

Until recently, this article was very strictly applied, and there were very few pastors who were ordained to the ministry of the Word under Article 7 in the CRC—even during the times of great need around the turn of the twentieth century. However, since 1980, there has been an appreciable change in the application of Article 7. Of the approximately sixty persons who have been admitted to the CRC ministry under this article during our entire denominational history, almost all were ordained after that date. What had always been considered to be a highly exceptional possibility has come to be regarded as a regular route to ministry.

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

In the past year, Dordt College was given vivid reminders that our only comfort is that we are not our own but belong body and soul, in life and in death, to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. On October 2, 2006, Mrs. Deborah Haan, wife of Dordt's first president, Rev. B.J. Haan, went to be with her Lord. She stood side by side with her husband from Dordt's beginnings. We count it a privilege that we were able to share in her reflections of those early days, during our Jubilee celebrations in 2005.

On November 29, 2006, Dordt College was again called to cling to the promises of our faithful Savior. Freshman Jon Kooima was taken to be with the Lord after suffering an acute asthma attack. He was an exceptional student, a member of the Kuyper Scholars Program, who wrote in his application essay, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." While we have been forced to say goodbye to these two members of the Dordt College community, we rest in the knowledge that Christ assures us of eternal life and makes us wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

As a community, Dordt College equips students for lives of wholehearted service. In fact, our mission extends beyond students to our alumni and the broader community. It is a mission that we share with the Christian Reformed Church. Our relationship with the CRCNA has been essential to the progress we have made in disseminating our kingdom vision within our campus and beyond. We seek Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life and seek to expand and extend the impact of Christ's kingdom around the world. During past year, we have advanced our mission in several ways.

Last summer, the Dordt College concert band performed for audiences in Austria, Hungary, and Romania. Dr. Robert Horton, assistant professor of music, received national recognition at the American Guild of Organists, where he claimed two prizes in the national competition: the Reger Prize for the best performance of music by composer Max Reger and third prize in the Young Artist competition.

In an acknowledgement of Dordt's national presence, Representative Steve King chose Dordt College as one of the sites for a congressional field hearing on a public farm bill last summer. In addition, the Mid-American Rural Tour made a stop at Dordt College during the summer, where U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and Under Secretary Tom Dorr spoke on the topic of conservation and economic development initiatives in the Midwest.

Dordt College students also made a unique political contribution in November. Three students, along with graphic design professor David Versluis, served as members of the Nebraska ballot design group for the November general election. The Dordt College group helped the design process by conducting observations and satisfaction evaluations of the redesigned ballot and election day signs.

Dordt College has also been actively engaged in its mission at the local level. The college has been working with the Sioux Center community to restore part of Dordt's campus to its natural, prairie habitat. The restoration will include walking paths to provide easy access for bird watching, butterfly observation, wildflower and wildlife observation, and photography.

Through all of these activities, Dordt College has been able to reach beyond itself to make a connection with students, alumni, and the broader community. We continue our unshakeable dedication to the mission of Reformed Christian higher education with which we began, but we also continue our unshakeable dedication to spread that vision ever more completely and widely, all for the glory of God in whose name we serve. In pursuit of that mission, our partnership with the Christian Reformed Church has been an essential blessing on our path. We trust that, in return, the congregations of the CRCNA have been blessed as well.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) is the only university associated with the Christian Reformed Church that offers master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees in philosophy. The ICS focuses on foundational studies—the relationship between our Christian perspective and specific fields of knowledge. ICS grads serve as professors at many Christian and public universities, as well as being leaders for many other public and private institutions all around the world.

On October 20, at a special convocation, former *Banner* editor and Christian Reformed World Missions missionary, Rev. Dr. John Suk, presented his inaugural address as the new president. It was entitled “Until Wisdom and Compassion Embrace.” The address is available at www.icscanada.edu/events.

At the same convocation, the ICS conferred the honorary degree of doctor of letters on Mr. Gerald Vandezande. Mr. Vandezande is a member of Grace CRC of Scarborough, Ontario, and was previously invested as a member of the Order of Canada in 2001. For thirty-five years until his retirement in 1998, he worked with Citizens for Public Justice to promote justice in Canada, and during that time, had significant impact on social legislation and public policy debates in Canada.

Earlier in 2006, at its spring convocation, a record sixteen students graduated with master of worldview studies, master of arts, and doctor of philosophy degrees. This spring, we expect a similar number of graduates. The ICS is especially thankful for the leadership that interim president, Rev. Morris Greidanus, provided from 2005-2006, as he ably steered us through a major period of transition.

The ICS community was saddened, this past January, by the death of emeritus ICS professor Dr. George Vandervelde. A graduate of both Calvin Seminary and the Free University of Amsterdam, Dr. Vandervelde devoted himself not only to his students and scholarship, but also the Christian Reformed church. He helped write *Our World Belongs To God: A Contemporary Testimony* and helped shape the denomination’s ecumenical relations. Last year, a book in honor of Dr. Vandervelde, co-edited by Margaret O’Gara and Michael Goheen, was published under the title *That the World May Believe* (University Press of America, 2006).

The ICS also sponsored several conferences this past year. Pastors’ conferences in Lynden, Washington, and Toronto, Ontario, explored the relationship between the Word of God in Scripture and as revealed in creation and culture. Worldview conferences brought together hundreds of people in five cities to explore how the Old Testament is still a relevant text for guiding us as we struggle with contemporary questions. The ICS also continues to offer distance education toward a master of worldview studies degree. This program appeals to all sorts of people, but Christian schoolteachers, in particular, have made good use of it. The ICS’s online Faith and Learning Network, meanwhile, continues to expand as well. It now comprises more than four thousand bibliographic citations and complete text resources that bring together important Reformed resources in one physical and virtual location. To find out more, surf over to www.icscanada.edu/library/fln.shtml.

The ICS is especially thankful for the generous support of so many Christian Reformed congregations for its work. This year, church offerings from across Canada and the United States will contribute more than \$100,000 to our annual fund. We could not carry out our mission without these gifts; and the Institute for Christian Studies is profoundly grateful for your support.

Institute for Christian Studies
John D. Suk, president

I am very pleased to extend greetings on behalf of The King's University College community to the delegates to Synod 2007 of the Christian Reformed Church.

This year, visitors to The King's University College are very likely to hear references to *shalom* at some point during their stay. These references trace back to my inaugural address, "Restless Delight: Educating for Shalom" in September 2005. The King's community has found *educating for shalom* to be a wonderfully rich metaphor for what happens (or should happen) at a Christian university. Educating for shalom captures two crucial features of Christian higher education: first, awe and delight as we learn about the wonders of the world and as students develop their gifts; second, restless passion to join in God's redemptive project in the world by bringing the healing and reconciliation of the good news wherever shalom is absent.

At King's, we are exploring what educating for shalom means for what we teach, how we teach and learn, how we live and work as an academic community, how we do research, and how we serve the wider community. This engagement with our mission has fueled a great deal of energy and enthusiasm in our academic endeavors in the past year.

The leadership team at The King's University College underwent significant transitions in 2006. Dr. Harry Spaling, professor of geography and environmental studies, took over as vice president academic in July. In August, Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, director of interdisciplinary studies and campus minister, accepted an appointment as vice president for student life and campus ministries. Both Dr. Spaling and Rev. Berkenbosch are passionate about ensuring that the entire learning experience at King's shapes students for service in God's kingdom.

In September 2006, The King's University College experienced a significant enrolment decline of about fifty students. The reasons for our enrolment challenges are complex and are partly related to local factors. However, another important factor is an increasing consumer approach to higher education choices. In the Christian Reformed community, many students (and parents) are very price conscious and focus quite narrowly on job credentials rather than on personal and spiritual formation. In March 2006, Christianity Today published a very persuasive supplement, "Price versus Cost," pointing out that the (somewhat) lower price of secular education may come at a very high cost in terms of a student's Christian commitment and formation. This is particularly true for first-year university students as they shape their identity and strike out on their own.

I am sure my colleagues at other CRC-related colleges would join me in encouraging synodical delegates to make these issues a matter of prayer and discussion in the various CRC classes and congregations. My hope is that pastors, youth leaders, and parents would strongly encourage high school graduates to enroll in a Christian college for at least a year. The relationships and formative experiences will reverberate in their lives for a long time, and the academic credits are transferable should they decide not to stay.

Last year, King's was very pleased to receive from Alberta's Minister of Advanced Education, an Award of Distinction, as part of its

“Internationalizing the Teaching and Learning Practice” program. The award was for the course associated with the Honduras Water Project, an annual intensive cross-cultural learning and development experience. This project is conducted in cooperation with the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference and the CRWRC. The Minister’s Award is a wonderful affirmation of the effectiveness of this partnership between these denominational bodies and our university college. We are grateful for this cooperation and pleased to share this honor with our partners.

A recent conference at King’s marked the formal launch of the Micah Center, whose mission is to enable students to explore the challenge of Micah 6:8 to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.” Currently the Micah Center’s main activity is to provide students with opportunities for experiential learning in social justice through internships in developing countries. In the coming academic year, we will launch a Micah certificate program. The certificate will be roughly equivalent to a minor in global development studies and will include an internship requirement.

King’s is grateful for the support we receive from CRC congregations in the form of ministry shares and offerings for our institution, as well as for the generous support we receive from individual members of the CRC. 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

Kuyper College, founded as Reformed Bible Institute in 1939, is humbled and thrilled by the affirmation we have received over the repositioning of the college. This repositioning does not mean that our mission has changed, but it does mean that the ministry-directed focus of the college has been strengthened by program additions and accreditations that are helping us to be even more effective in *equipping students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve Christ's church and his world effectively*. Certainly, we are as keen as ever to provide graduates and services to the Christian Reformed Church as the denomination engages in ministry and service around the world.

Of specific interest to the CRC is a new scholarship that has been established to assist our pre-sem students going on to Calvin Theological Seminary. Structured as a forgivable loan, the initial \$500,000 donation is serving to attract new students and to enable individuals at the point of a career change to respond immediately to God's call to ministry. The donor, Mr. Dan Vos, along with Kuyper College, is seeking others interested in adding to this scholarship so that we can tangibly address the need for more ministers in the CRC.

A dedicated program in music and worship has also been established this year, thanks to a generous gift by Mr. Richard and Mrs. Helen DeVos. Initial courses are already being offered while we conduct the search for the full-time professor who will fill the Jack VanLaar Chair in this major. Professor VanLaar was the music professor at the college from 1952 to 1988.

International programs continue as a special aspect of education at Kuyper College. Our social work department has begun initiatives in the Dominican Republic as part of that major. Distance education with an eye toward Latin America (as well as for domestic service) is being organized at this time. Scholarships for international students also continue to fall into place as this aspect of the college grows. Additionally, we are very pleased to note that our non-Caucasian student population now exceeds 20 percent. Our efforts toward ethnic diversity have been and continue to be an important value and goal for us.

Another major initiative we are beginning to develop is sports ministry. Many of our international alumni and those working in inner-city contexts have communicated to us how important sports activities are in drawing young people into evangelistic contact. Accompanying this, we have begun an inter-collegiate sports program (by popular student vote, we are now the Kuyper Cougars) as members of the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA). This first year is being used for hiring personnel and organizing the program. We hope to field women's and men's basketball teams in 2007.

Thank you all for your continued interest in, support of, and prayers for Kuyper College. Your encouragement and sense of partnership mean much to us. Please join us in thanks to the Lord for the growth and impact we have seen in the life of the college.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Redeemer University College is thankful to the Lord for the blessings experienced over the past year and appreciates this opportunity to share highlights with you. In our twenty-fifth academic year, we have welcomed 858 (826 full-time equivalent) students this past September, our highest enrollment to date. Given the current challenging environment, we are thankful to have a 15 percent increase in our incoming class that has enabled us to make up for the record number of 180 students who graduated in May. This included the first graduates from the new bachelor of education program that we launched in September 2004. We continue to plan for growth to one thousand students by 2012.

Redeemer's students come from across Canada, representing eight Canadian provinces; from nine U.S. states; and from seven other countries. These students represent over 45 different denominations, a diversity that enriches our campus. Approximately 55 percent of students are from a Reformed background. Together, they contribute to a spiritually vibrant campus, led by our new chaplain, Dr. Syd Hielema. Over 25 percent of students are actively involved in a wide variety of ministry opportunities, including weekly volunteering at agencies in downtown Hamilton, mission trips during the reading week and summer, and field placements and internships.

Redeemer University College is thankful that we continue to attract well-qualified faculty. This year we have been able to add four faculty in replacement positions, as well as two in new positions (social work and chaplaincy). We now have forty-four full-time and thirty-nine part-time faculty members who provide instruction to our students in the context of a biblical worldview. Our faculty mentoring program is being strengthened, and we are seeking ways to include part-time instructors in this.

Redeemer University College has just approved a revision of our liberal arts and science core requirements, which is a major accomplishment. It will streamline and enhance these requirements, giving students more options in certain areas. We are examining whether to expand two programs—social work and youth ministry. Additionally, we would like to develop our continuing education program to make Redeemer more of a center of reflection for Christian leaders in the field by building on our summer program for in-service teachers.

Faculty have accomplished much in their scholarship, and our research centers have been active this past year. Research activities at the university have been supported by institutional grants and by the Natural Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Jackman and Herman Dooyeweerd Foundations, and other donors. The Pascal Centre is currently working with Brill Publishers to publish the proceedings of a 2005 conference on faith and science. The Dooyeweerd Centre continues to translate and publish the works of this noted Dutch Christian philosopher.

We have continued with the refurbishing and upgrading of our campus now that the South Wing and Peter Turkstra Library are completed, using funds from the \$11.5 million Growing With Integrity campaign, which has

now gone over goal and been completed at \$11.57 million. With our west entrance and adjoining street, Kitty Murray Lane, completed, we have now upgraded our roads, parking, pathways, and lighting, as well as the renovation of the residences in Luther Court. This summer and next, we will work on projects in our thirty-acre conservation and recreation park at the north end of campus to round out the campus improvements in time for our twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in the fall of 2007.

Redeemer University College is concerned about the rising cost of tuition and housing and is committed to work to moderate increases and raise additional funds for scholarships, bursaries, and work study through a three-year \$3 million Student Support campaign to ensure that a Christian university education remains accessible. In this context, 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

Trinity Christian College is celebrating God's blessings as the college enters its forty-eighth year of providing quality Christian higher education. Traditional-age enrollment reached a record 1,028 in the fall of 2006. Total enrollment came to 1,310. Fifty percent of traditional students are drawn to Trinity from the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed denominations. We give praise for the support from churches and individuals who are committed to making Christian higher education a priority for future generations of Christian leaders.

Trinity is also rejoicing in the growth of its campus facilities. Groundbreaking ceremonies in July marked the start of construction on the \$8.8 million Art and Communication Center. Work is also now underway on a structure adjacent to the college that was formerly a restaurant. It will soon be converted into the Trinity Bookstore Café. The location will serve both the college and the community as a meeting place for fellowship, coffee, and an opportunity to purchase books by Christian authors.

The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT) continues to strengthen local churches. This fall, the CCIT worked with classes Chicago South, Northern Illinois, and Illiana to present a Faith Engaged conference, which featured the Reverend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary for the Reformed Church in America. The CCIT is a partner with Calvin Theological Seminary, the Center for Excellence in Preaching, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Trinity's outreach efforts earned recognition in the community as well as across the country. Trinity was named to President George W. Bush's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for distinguished service in recognition of extraordinary student volunteer efforts to serve Gulf Coast communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Closer to home, the Office of Community Partnerships strengthened Trinity's relationship with area neighborhoods by offering new service-learning opportunities for students.

The Senior Academy of Learning at Trinity (SALT) and the Trinity Business Network (TBN) continue to draw leading Christian voices to campus for senior citizens and businesspeople. Recent SALT courses included one led by a friend of the college who was instrumental in the production of the PBS program "Walking the Bible." The most recent TBN event featured Mr. Bill Pollard, former CEO of ServiceMaster Corporation and author of *Serving Two Masters? Reflections on God and Profit*.

Trinity also received national recognition as one of America's best colleges. *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Trinity within the top thirty-five comprehensive liberal arts colleges in the Midwest.

This year, Trinity's Praise Team toured Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, Washington, and British Columbia during interim, visiting schools and churches in each state and province. Interim also featured nontraditional learning and service opportunities in England, Brazil, Argentina, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and the states of Hawaii and Arizona.

Trinity will continue to reach out to the community and beyond in 2007. In February, we will host hundreds of students from across the country for the Acting on AIDS: Student Leadership Summit. This summer, the college will

offer a variety of creative and athletic camps, as well as hosting several groups and organizations for worship, discussion, and fellowship. In September, Trinity will host the Through the Roof 2007 Summit, a program of Joni and Friends, featuring Joni Eareckson Tada, a recognized expert in church disability ministry.

Trinity covets your prayers as we continue our forward momentum to equip students for service in God's kingdom.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

In July 2006, Cadet counselors and their families made their way to Canmore, Alberta, for the annual convention. There they learned what it means to be shaped for service—formed by God himself with specific gifts, skills, and talents for the assignments he calls them to. That theme was first brought to the Cadets as the new season of ministry got underway in the fall of 2006 and then to congregations on Cadet Sunday in January 2007.

In July 2007, the convention returns to Grand Rapids, Michigan. The scenery and the message will not be quite the same, but the fellowship, training, and inspiration will be, Lord willing, as fine as ever. The theme this year is Now ... Pass it On! We have been given great truths, and we want to ensure that generation after generation will hear and experience them.

For the Calvinist Cadet Corps, the big news of 2006 was the opening of Africa to the Cadet program. Three men from North America brought the ministry to the Reformed Church of East Africa, who warmly embraced it and so far have six clubs operating in Kenya. Our trainers plan to return to Kenya in August 2007 to visit the new clubs, encourage the leaders, and train more men at the denomination's seminary in Eldoret, Kenya. Please pray that God's kingdom will grow through these efforts.

Plans are progressing well for the next international camporee, scheduled for August 6-13, 2008. We anticipate about fourteen hundred men and boys for a weeklong wilderness experience near Burk's Falls, Ontario, approximately 125 miles north of Toronto.

Cadet membership currently stands at 604 clubs, 77 percent of which are in Christian Reformed churches.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

In a culture saturated with "it's all about me" messages, GEMS Girls' Clubs seeks to help girls understand and embrace a proper, biblical worldview of their role in society. Redirecting girls' attention away from themselves and onto a lost and hurting world—helping them become activists for Christ—has been a primary emphasis of the ministry this year.

The Holy Spirit has led us to begin a program—Call to Africa. Much time and effort has been devoted to helping girls understand the tremendous needs of people around the world, and God's desire for all of us to be involved in helping meet those needs.

Partnering with another ministry, Every Orphan's Hope, GEMS Girls' Clubs organized an international team of volunteers to travel to Lusaka, Zambia, to help build The House that GEMS Built—a home for eight orphan children and one widow who will become their "momma." Following the construction of the home, girls from across the United States and Canada raised funds to finish and furnish the home. In May 2007, the orphans and

their momma are expected to move in to the completed home. GEMS Clubs will continue to raise support and care for the needs of these children.

GEMS also trained thirty-five women to become counselors in clubs started in Zambia. Culturally relevant curriculum was written, and four clubs were organized. Today, some 160 girls in Lusaka meet every week to learn more about Jesus Christ and how to follow him daily, as well as learning practical life skills.

Sister clubs were formed in the United States and Canada to partner with the clubs in Zambia. Each sister club has made a three-year commitment to relationship development and cross-cultural awareness through the establishment of pen-pal relationships and financial support to provide for club supplies and weekly snacks.

In addition to the great blessings that have come as a result of the Call to Africa, God continues to pour out his favor on all other aspects of the ministry. In 2006, we added more new clubs than ever before in our history, we have reached more girls in the United States and Canada with the truth of their identity in Christ through Believin' It Girlz Tours, and we provided outstanding training to the women who serve as mentors to girls—our counselors. Training is offered in areas where clubs exist locally, regionally, and nationally with our Annual Counselors' Leadership Conference scheduled for July 2007 on the campus of Concordia University in Irvine, California. The emphasis on partnering with parents continues as we seek to help facilitate parents in their role as the primary faith nurturers of their children. Get Connected! Camp, our week-long, international summer camp for early teen girls, is scheduled for the summer of 2007 at Miracle Camp, in Lawton, Michigan. Young women from Calvin, Dordt, Trinity, and Redeemer colleges will serve as camp counselors.

God continues to bless this ministry, allowing us the opportunity to serve more and more girls: *Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior*. We continue ever thankful for the many churches that embrace, value, and support their GEMS girls, counselors, and the overall ministry.

GEMS Girls' Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Youth Unlimited

Through today's teens, Youth Unlimited is challenged to grow and move in directions we never knew we could go. Youth Unlimited continues to serve God and his church with excitement for what he is creating in our midst.

On a regular basis, we hear testimonies from parents, pastors, youth leaders, and teens who share how God has become real to them, causing a change in the way they choose to live their lives. On the heels of these testimonies comes a host of perplexing questions from those who serve in youth ministry, "How can our youth ministry reach all of the teens in our community? What does that mean for our church?" Youth Unlimited wrestles with the similar question of how to define our purpose and have a lasting impact on this generation and the church.

The pursuit of being missional continues to rise to the top of the list of goals when these deep questions are posed. Youth Unlimited serves the church and

its teens, but how? It is through teaching and offering opportunities to live out a life of serving others as Christ has called us to do. It is beyond hammering a nail and painting a wall; it is coming alongside the people we serve while on a Youth Unlimited missions experience, learning about their lives and building relationships. It is taking the time to really listen to and hear their hearts. It is, then, returning home and making insightful decisions pertaining to consumerism, the media, peers, and other social issues that teens are facing today. It is beyond attending a five-day worship event for personal gratification. It is using that time to dig deep into relationship with God, to seek him, and to listen for his call. If this time is well spent, the impact of these mission experiences and five-day worship events will last for years.

Youth Unlimited's mission statement reads, "... helping churches challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform their world for Him." This is the statement Youth Unlimited stands by in all that we do. We understand that the role of a youth pastor or volunteer youth leader looks easier to accomplish on paper than it is in action. Through the support of Youth Unlimited resources such as Compass 21, eQuip magazine, the e-newsletter, and staff members committed to networking and caring for leaders, we hope to make this role a lasting calling.

We are thankful for the years we have been given to serve the churches of the Christian Reformed denomination. We look toward the future with excitement for what God is doing amongst this generation of teens.

Youth Unlimited
Rachael Cooley, executive director

STUDY COMMITTEE

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Appendices

Appendix A: Bibliography

Appendix B: Survey Results on the Third Wave in the CRC—Executive Summary

I. Introduction

In response to an overture from the council of Plymouth Heights CRC and a strong appeal from the floor of synod, Synod 2004 appointed a study committee

To examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications, and pastoral dimensions related to “third wave” Pentecostalism (spiritual warfare, deliverance ministries, and so forth), with a view to providing advice to the churches.

(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 608-9)

The grounds for the request indicate that while the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism still has much useful and applicable advice for our churches, the unique emphases of the third wave movement and its growing influence on various ministries within the CRC warrant further reflection.

Synod 2004 asked the committee to report to Synod 2006. Unfortunately, we were unable to make this deadline in part because of the sudden illness and untimely death of Dr. David H. Engelhard who served as chair of our committee for the first three meetings. We are grateful to Synod 2005 for granting our request to extend our mandate until 2007 so that we might complete our work and prepare the following report for the churches.

It is worth pointing out that the term *third wave Pentecostalism* is not in common use. We understand our mandate to refer to what Peter Wagner and others have designated as the "third wave of the Holy Spirit." The other so-called waves were the Azusa Street revival of the early twentieth century, which gave rise to the Pentecostal churches, and the charismatic movement (neo-Pentecostalism) of the 1960s and 1970s. Because the term *Pentecostalism* is not usually applied to the third wave, this report will henceforth speak simply of the third wave or the third wave movement.

Furthermore, because the committee sees itself as standing in fundamental continuity with the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism, it does not consider it necessary to duplicate that report's extensive material on the teaching of Scripture and the Reformed confessions on the work of the Holy Spirit (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 413-35), and we refer the churches to the excellent work reflected there.

In pursuit of its mandate, the committee as a whole met seven times, after which we decided (regretfully but amicably) to separate into a minority and a majority. The majority subsequently held one additional meeting.

While members of the committee brought a wealth of personal experience to our discussions, we also relied heavily on the writings of key representatives (see Appendix A) to acquaint ourselves with the third wave movement. In order to assess the familiarity with and influence of the third wave in the Christian Reformed Church, the committee drafted a questionnaire with the help of Dr. Rodger Rice of Calvin College, which was distributed to every congregation in the denomination. Its results were tabulated and analyzed by Dr. Rice for the benefit of this report. (See Appendix B for the executive summary. The full survey can be viewed online at www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm.)

Finally, we were greatly helped in our work of assessing this movement in light of the Reformed tradition by the academic submissions of a number of CRC pastors. Rev. John Algera developed an extensive twelve-session course entitled "Signs and Wonders of God's Kingdom," as part of his doctor of ministry degree with Westminster Theological Seminary in 1993. This project has been reworked as *Signs and Wonders: A Reformed Look at the Spirit's Ongoing Work*, a resource for adult small groups published by CRC Publications. As part of his initial project, Rev. Algera conducted a signs and wonders survey of the CRC that formed the basis for the survey used by this study committee. Rev. Stan Kruis completed the thesis, "Towards a Theology of Miracles: Reformed and Third Wave Contributions," as part of completing a master of theology degree in intercultural studies in 1999 at Fuller Theological Seminary. In his thesis, Kruis interacts with representatives of the third wave, primarily

Wimber, Wagner, and Kraft, from a distinctly Reformed theology and worldview. In addition, for an independent study at Fuller Theological Seminary in 2001, Rev. John Dykhuis prepared the paper, "The Healing Ministry of Jesus for Fellowship CRC Today," appealing for the place of healing ministry in the church today.

II. Continuity with the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34)

Although it is now more than thirty years old, the 1973 report (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 398-493) retains its value as a careful and balanced, yet, at the same time, bold and prophetic statement of a Reformed biblical response to the challenge of the charismatic movement a generation ago. Although the 1973 report was a response to what today is sometimes called the second wave of the broad Pentecostal-charismatic movement, its basic emphases are those that undergird the present committee's evaluation of the third wave of our own day. To a significant extent, we see our work as an updating of the 1973 report in light of contemporary developments.

The basic attitude of the 1973 report to neo-Pentecostalism (that is, "the charismatic movement" [443] of its day) can be described in the phrase *open, but cautious* (see chapter 2 in the helpful 1996 book edited by Wayne Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*). On the one hand, the report is remarkably open to the charismatic movement and its attendant phenomena, but, on the other hand, it is cautious, warning against specific theological teachings and emphases in the movement.

A fundamental part of the report's openness is that it directly challenges, on biblical grounds, the cessationism that had long been held in Reformed circles; that is, the teaching that some of the more unusual spiritual gifts of the New Testament era, such as healing and tongues-speaking, had ceased after the time of the apostles (445-46, 481). Furthermore, the report states quite plainly: "There can be little doubt that neo-Pentecostalism is essentially a revival movement within the confessional and traditional churches" (403), and it gives considerable space to the testimony of those who have been spiritually revitalized by the movement (403-6). It acknowledges that "any unprejudiced evaluation of neo-Pentecostalism must begin with the acknowledgment that two of its main emphases, viz., (1) that salvation must be a profound and transforming *experience* in addition to a confession of a body of doctrine, and (2) the importance of the Holy Spirit in applying salvation to sinners, are in accord with the Scriptures" (413).

With respect to Paul's teaching concerning the spiritual gifts or charismata, the report says, "it is clear that the apostle recognized that God in Christ had effected in the lives of believers by the Holy Spirit a 'third work' (other than conversion and sanctification). He has also given certain 'gifts' to members of the believing community" (423). In fact, the Holy Spirit may see fit to give charismatic gifts today that the apostles do not mention because the lists of charismata found in the New Testament should not be understood as either complete or normative (421, 424, 444). Other statements in the report are equally positive: "We gratefully acknowledge that the Pentecostals have focused attention on the Spirit, whose work has all too often been overlooked or ignored by the established churches." "Those who have experienced what they call 'the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit' show a remarkable change in their lives, eager to be vibrant Christians. We are grateful and praise God for

any and every manifestation of newness in Christ Jesus" (438). Furthermore, the gift of prophecy today need not exclude the possibility of prophetic prediction (452). After all, "nothing in Scripture forbids us to believe that the Lord may work signs and miracles in our day" (456). The report is also quite open to the present reality of demon possession and exorcism (463).

The openness of the 1973 report to many of the claims and phenomena of the charismatic movement is balanced by its equally forthright cautions against the errors and excesses associated with it. For example, it repeatedly points out that an emphasis on the charismatic gifts of the Spirit should not obscure the more fundamental value of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 (421, 423, 428, 443). It emphasizes that Scripture makes no distinction between miraculous (or spectacular or dramatic) spiritual gifts and those that we experience as ordinary (422, 444). It challenges the notion that to act spontaneously is somehow more Spirit-led than to act with deliberation or careful preparation (452). Similarly, it rejects the idea that guidance by the Spirit somehow rules out thoughtful and responsible deliberation on the part of believers (425, 461).

Perhaps the report's most serious criticisms of the charismatic movement have to do with two matters: its teaching concerning baptism in the Holy Spirit and its practice of interpreting Scripture. On the first point, the report states: "The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the most distinctive (and often the most precious) doctrine to the Pentecostals. The desire for this Spirit-baptism sweeps away every other doctrine into its vortex" (435). In the usual charismatic understanding, this term refers to an overwhelming experience of God's reality and presence—an experience that is subsequent to conversion and sanctification and that empowers the believer for service and witness. Against this view, the report argues that, biblically speaking, being baptized in the Spirit (or receiving the Spirit) marks the redemptive-historical transition from the old covenant to the new; therefore, "now to be in the new covenant is to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (437). It is something that happens at conversion in order that all who have faith in Jesus Christ have already been baptized in the Spirit, as indicated by 1 Corinthians 12:13 (480-81). Subsequent to conversion, the Holy Spirit may indeed give the believer one or more peak experiences of empowerment, but this is not what Scripture means by baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather, such an experience is a further filling with the Spirit (438).

However, it is on another point that the 1973 report is most critical of the charismatic movement. It is the way this movement tends to interpret Scripture. In a long section entitled *Hermeneutic and Individualism* (464-75), the report criticizes the private and individualistic way charismatics often interpret the Bible. Its hermeneutic or way of interpreting Scripture is guilty of violating the Reformed understanding of historical revelation and organic inspiration (467), and of "ignoring the linguistic and historical tools forged historically by the Christian community" (468). Furthermore, in the report's own detailed exegesis of the New Testament exhortations concerning the Spirit (424-29) and the charismatic gifts (443-63), it demonstrates again and again that the neo-Pentecostal interpretation of these passages tends to be tendentious and arbitrary, failing to take into account the basic rules of grammatico-historical interpretation.

As we shall see, in this more recent manifestation of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement, the teaching concerning a postconversion Spirit-baptism has ceased to be a defining characteristic, and it is no longer true that the third wave is marked by a dearth of hermeneutically responsible biblical exegesis. We now turn to a discussion of the third wave movement.

III. Overview of the third wave movement

In 1983, Peter Wagner was interviewed by Kevin Perotta of *Pastoral Renewal* magazine regarding what the Holy Spirit seemed to be doing. In response to a question about whether Peter Wagner was describing something new or whether this is just an extension of what we have seen in the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, Wagner used the expression *third wave* for the first time (Wagner 1988, 16). This became the title of the article, which was quoted and reprinted in several other places. In 1988, Wagner published a book with the title *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*. History appears to be showing that this term is accepted to describe a movement, also identified as the signs and wonders movement, which has its beginning in about 1980.

While the term *third wave* is used to describe a largely North American evangelical experience, the movement is part of a bigger, broader, global neo-charismatic movement that includes Christians who have received Pentecostal-like experiences, yet claim no association with either the Pentecostal or charismatic movements. Impetus for the third wave seems to have been initially prompted by experiences with charismatic phenomenon by Wagner and others in missionary settings, resulting in a desire to challenge the alleged complacency of contemporary Christianity in North America. The third wave now also has its own international impact through missionaries, teachers, and prayer teams shaped by the third wave over the past twenty years.

A. *Pentecostal, charismatic, and third wave*

The third wave is similar to the Pentecostal and charismatic waves that preceded it but with important differences. While appreciating both the Pentecostal and the charismatic movements, there is an intentional choice in the third wave not to be identified with either. The charismatic wave was largely a revival movement within confessional and traditional churches whereby participants sought to experience the living Jesus whom they felt was hidden behind the doctrines, liturgies, and unspiritual atmosphere of the churches (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 403). In Christian Reformed churches, the charismatic wave was often experienced as being divisive and judgmental rather than a source of renewal. It broke communities apart, resulting in dissension and pain. By contrast, the third wave tends to be predominantly an evangelical phenomenon that has not, by and large, fostered disruption in church communities but has encouraged renewal and spiritual vitality. Christians are largely drawn to the third wave out of a sense of inadequacy and inability to minister effectively through their own strength and, as such, seek empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

While adopting third wave emphases, these Christians uphold their evangelical convictions, including a high view of Scripture and its authority as the Word of God for faith and life. This is reflected particularly in the writings of many key representatives of the third wave who base their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit on a solid, hermeneutically responsible

interpretation of Scripture. While the 1973 report expressed a serious concern about individualistic biblical interpretation predominant in the charismatic movement of the 1970s, this hermeneutical approach to Scripture is not necessarily encouraged or modeled by leading figures of the third wave (see “Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave”).

Another significant difference between the charismatic and the third wave movements, is the matter of baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ministry under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit as evidenced in physical healing, inner healing, deliverance from evil spirits, prophecy, and other signs and wonders is considered the primary entryway into the third wave. In contrast, a spiritual experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues is emphasized in much of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements (Burgess and McGee 1988, s.v. “Third Wave,” 843-44). In fact, the third wave tends not to focus on baptism with the Holy Spirit, preferring to shift the focus to being filled with the Holy Spirit and placing its emphasis on the more evangelically acceptable area of spiritual gifts for ministry (See: “Excursus: Baptism/filling with the Holy Spirit”). The full range of the gifts of the Spirit is believed to be active today and is to be used for others for the good of the body.

Finally, rather than the big-name event characteristic of the charismatic movement, the third wave encourages ministry within a body of believers by ministry teams. Ministry is usually shared, and people are equipped and released to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit in their local ministry setting under the authority of their church leadership.

Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave

As we have seen, one of the main criticisms of the charismatic movement contained in the 1973 report was the way representatives of that movement interpreted Scripture. It was pointed out that its hermeneutic was frequently private and individualistic and tended to neglect the linguistic and historical tools that have traditionally been considered indispensable for responsible biblical interpretation.

In the meantime, the situation has changed significantly. Although it is undoubtedly still true of many in the general Pentecostal-charismatic stream of Christianity that their reading of Scripture seems arbitrary from a linguistic and historical point of view, this is now counterbalanced on the part of many others by a new respect for the traditional disciplines of serious biblical scholarship. On that score, this particular stream of the church universal is now not much different from many others. It is a symbol of this new situation that today one of the most respected evangelical New Testament scholars is Gordon Fee, a Pentecostal. It is fair to say that the Pentecostal and charismatic movements today include many exegetically responsible preachers and competent biblical scholars.

This general observation is true also of the third wave. Among respected biblical scholars who are associated with the third wave, we mention Peter Davids, Wayne Grudem, and Max Turner. One of the leaders of the third wave is Jack Deere, a former Old Testament professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, whose books contain much detailed exegetical argumentation. C. Samuel Storms, the representative of the third wave in the excellent book *Are Miraculous Gifts for*

Today? (1996) handles the exegetical issues with evident competence. As a further example of serious exegetical engagement in and with the third wave, we mention the book *The Kingdom and the Power* (1993), which is largely devoted to the work of John Wimber.

The point is not that the third wave is entirely free from poor interpretative practices in its dealing with the Bible. It is not. The point is rather that it is not exclusively, or even predominantly, characterized by such practices.

Excursus: Baptism/filling with the Holy Spirit

In the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is virtually *the* point of focus. In the third wave, multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion are expected for empowerment for ministry. "This empowering may be lifelong, preparatory for an office or particular ministry, or an instance that calls for an immediate and special endowment of power to fulfill an important and urgent need or spiritual emergency" (Storms 1996, 180). Some hold that the first of these empowerment fillings is baptism with the Holy Spirit, which serves as an initiation, but others maintain that these are all "fillings with the Holy Spirit" and that baptism in and/or with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion. Overall, there is flexibility and the willingness to address these as significantly synonymous and a matter of semantics so as not to be the lingering focus within the third wave. In an effort to avoid divisiveness, even those who believe that there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit that is theologically distinct from conversion for empowerment for ministry often choose to use the more common biblical terminology "filled with the Holy Spirit" as an acceptable synonym. In the most recent revision of *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* authored by Alvin J. Vander Griend and published by CRC Publications in 1996, there is an acknowledgement that empowerment for ministry is referred to in Scripture in various ways: baptism in (or with) the Holy Spirit, receiving the Holy Spirit, having the Holy Spirit fall on us, or being filled with the Holy Spirit (43). Interestingly, part of an application exercise is the call to "ask the Lord Jesus Christ to baptize you with his Spirit and with power so that you may be equipped to serve him with strength" (Vander Griend 1995, 45).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a respected Reformed thinker who served as minister in Westminster Chapel, London, England, from 1939-1968, preached and published sermons that included the teaching that baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience after conversion, or at least separate from conversion. A series of sermons that he preached on the Holy Spirit in 1964 were published in 1984 as *Joy Unspeakable*, resulting in a renewed impact in Reformed and evangelical circles. Dr. Lloyd-Jones cautioned against interpreting Scripture in light of experiences and called for examining our experiences in light of the teaching of Scripture. On the biblical teaching of baptism with the Holy Spirit, he held firmly that it is separate from conversion but is not to be associated with any one

gift of the Spirit. Among others, Dr. Lloyd-Jones identifies himself as standing with R.A. Torrey's teaching on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. R.A. Torrey was the first superintendent of Moody Bible Institute and a world-renowned evangelist and teacher in the early twentieth century. Torrey, too, taught that baptism with the Holy Spirit is separate from conversion and is for empowerment for witness and service. Torrey's teaching on this and other dimensions of the work of the Holy Spirit form the basic framework for the teachings of PRMI (Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International) in its books, courses, and conferences.

In the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC), the view that the baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion is held with great conviction as a "denominational" distinctive and is thus seemingly defended most strongly in these churches. This was the conviction of founding pastor, John Wimber, and comes through in the writings of Samuel Storms, associate pastor of the Metro Vineyard Fellowship of Kansas. Storms represents the third wave view in the excellent book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, edited by Wayne Grudem.

The 1973 report shares the view, developed in the Vineyard Association of churches and held by many in the third wave, that being baptized with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion (Holwerda 1974, 13, 44). The report charitably acknowledges the change in people who have experienced what they call "the baptism in/with the Holy Spirit" but questions the terminology used to describe their change, preferring to call this a new filling with the Holy Spirit, and that "being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event that believers must continually seek," albeit tying this more to increased vitality of faith than empowerment for ministry (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 438). It needs to be remembered that the 1973 report was faced with the challenge of a movement in which "the desire for this Spirit-baptism sweeps every other doctrine into its vortex" (435). Its response to that challenge was just as sweeping: It rejected altogether the teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit could be said to occur after conversion (481).

One point of this tension with the Pentecostal and charismatic movements on baptism with the Holy Spirit is that speaking in tongues is often considered to be the normative evidence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the third wave, tongues are considered to be a gift given to some and not to others to be used by some for ministry or prayer language. This is in contrast to their being the sign of baptism in or filling with the Holy Spirit. In agreement with everyone in the third wave, the 1973 report had already emphasized the view that the New Testament does not support the Pentecostal claims about tongues-speaking as a necessary evidence of Spirit-baptism (439).

The third wave, with its expressed focus on empowerment for ministry, seems able to accept a diversity of terminology for this experience of empowerment without its being a point of contention. In much of the third wave movement and materials, including in

resources with a deliberate Reformed identity produced by CRC Publications and Dunamis materials produced by PRMI, a diversity of terminology is used, including *baptism with the Holy Spirit*, as ways of naming the experience of empowerment for ministry.

B. Key representatives of the third wave

Some leading pioneering figures associated with the third wave movement include John Wimber and Peter Wagner who together taught a course on signs and wonders at Fuller Theological Seminary in the early 1980s and 1990s. Charles Kraft and Jack Deere have written extensively about the power of the Holy Spirit for ministry. A key representative in Reformed circles is Brad Long, executive director of Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International, who developed the Dunamis project and video courses that teach about empowerment of the Holy Spirit for ministry within a Reformed theology and worldview. Finally, as author of the Alpha course, Nicky Gumbel has greatly extended the influence of the third wave. This popular video course, designed to introduce unbelievers to the Christian faith, includes a weekend devoted to teaching on the Holy Spirit, addressing such topics as who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. (For more about the involvement of each of these figures in the third wave, please see "Excursus: Key Representatives.")

Many other names are identified with the third wave, some more globally than others. Because there is no formal organization to the third wave movement, pinpointing all who are associated with it can be challenging. Other representatives will be mentioned in reference to specific facets of third wave as described below. Some names are more closely identified with the charismatic movement, such as Benny Hinn, Jimmy Swaggart, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Peter Youngren, and John Hagee and will not be addressed directly in this report. However, while not being addressed personally, some of the ministry emphases and practices of the third wave certainly overlap with the charismatic movement; thus some of the assessments of these will also apply indirectly to representatives of this movement. Additionally, many local expressions of Holy Spirit empowered ministry represent a fluidity of influences across the spectrum of third wave, Pentecostal, and charismatic movements.

While the third wave seems to be a movement largely within evangelical churches and denominations, one denomination may be identified as third wave, that is, the Association of Vineyard Churches (AVC). The church John Wimber founded in 1977 later became known as the the Anaheim Vineyard when they joined a small group of churches started by Kenn Gullikson, known as Vineyard Christian Fellowships. Wimber became founder and leader of the Vineyard movement worldwide. The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, with John and Carol Arnott as founding pastors, began as the Toronto Airport Vineyard, but late in 1995 it disengaged from the AVC. The Toronto Airport Fellowship itself now has satellite churches and a network of Partners in Harvest that is beginning to take on the character of a denomination though not identifying itself as such.

Excursus: Key representatives

Prior to being leading figures in the third wave, John Wimber and Peter Wagner worked together as church-growth consultants with the Fuller Evangelistic Association. Wimber was among those who wondered why healing and other miracles were happening in Third World countries but not in North America. In 1981, Wimber delivered a lecture at Fuller Theological Seminary entitled “Signs, Wonders and Church Growth,” and subsequently taught the course The Miraculous and Church Growth (MC 510 and MC 511) with Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft from 1982 until 1985 when there was a course moratorium due to some disputed theological dimensions and practices in the classroom in addition to academic questions raised by faculty members. A twelve faculty-member task force was appointed to review the issues that had arisen. Their report was published in 1987 as *Ministry and the Miraculous: A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary* and edited by Lewis B. Smedes who was the leader of the task force and a member of the Christian Reformed Church. In 1987, a similar course, The Ministry of Healing and World Evangelization (MC 550), was reinstated. It was taught by Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft, professor of anthropology and intercultural communication at Fuller, with the participation of John Wimber until 1992. Wimber also continued a busy pastoral and conference schedule and wrote influential books on the third wave, including *Power Evangelism* (with Kevin Springer, 1986) and *Power Healing* (1987). A distinctive of John Wimber’s teaching, which some have called the “democratization” of healing, sparked the widespread emphasis in the third wave on equipping and empowering the laity to minister in the power of the Spirit.

Charles Kraft has also written influential books on the third wave, most prominently *Christianity with Power*, which explains his own journey to the third wave paradigm. In his book, he challenges the enlightenment-influenced Western worldview and embraces the Holy Spirit’s power for ministry in signs and wonders.

Another key shaper of the third wave is Jack Deere, who created his own waves when he left Dallas Theological Seminary and a cessationist paradigm. He went on to write about his own transformation, especially in his first book *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: Discovering How God Speaks and Heals Today* (1993).

In Reformed and Presbyterian circles, Brad Long is a key third wave leader. He became executive director of Presbyterian-Reformed Renewal Ministries International (now Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International or PRMI) in 1990, developed the Dunamis teaching materials since 1990, and authored several books including *Receiving the Power* (coauthored with Doug McMurry). In 2004, CRC Pastor Tom Swieringa became part of the staff of PRMI with the title, Advocate for Renewal in Reformed Churches. The primary focus of the Dunamis projects and Dunamis video courses sponsored and promoted by PRMI is to equip local church leaders and laity. PRMI also seeks to expand its leadership base through a

Dunamis fellowship, which provides for the equipping, empowerment, and encouragement of those with whom leadership is shared so as to broaden the scope and impact of the ministry regionally and in local churches. Several CRC pastors and members are part of this Dunamis fellowship.

Perhaps the most influential introduction to third wave emphases within the CRC is through Nicky Gumbel, author and teacher of the Alpha course. The self-identified influence of John Wimber on Nicky Gumbel is seen predominantly in the teaching of the Holy Spirit, including a weekend addressing such topics as who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit does, and how to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit weekend includes a moment in which participants are invited to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In addition, a session of the course addresses the dynamic of resisting evil, introducing spiritual warfare, and deliverance. Another session addresses how God heals today, including the use of words of knowledge and persistent particular prayer, modeled after a pattern introduced to Nicky Gumbel at a meeting led by John Wimber at Holy Trinity Brompton (London, England), recounted near the beginning of the Alpha session on healing. Our survey of the CRC revealed that 39 percent of churches used Alpha, including the Holy Spirit segment, within the last five years. Interestingly 70 percent of these are Canadian CRC churches but only 26 percent are U.S. CRC churches, perhaps revealing a greater acceptance of third wave emphases in Canada.

C. *Beyond the third wave: New apostolic reformation*

While maintaining certain emphases of the third wave, Peter Wagner has spearheaded a new development that he calls the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), described in his recent books *The New Apostolic Churches* (1998), *ChurchQuake!* (1999), *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (2000), *Changing Church* (2004), and *Freedom from the Religious Spirit* (2005). The greatest divergence from the third wave comes in stressing the contemporary relevance of the fivefold ministries of Ephesians 4:11 and principles of Ephesians 2:20, seeing apostles and prophets as the new foundational leaders of the church in the second apostolic age. Wagner himself oversees the organizational development, taking on roles such as heading the International Coalition of Apostles (ICA) administered through Wagner's Global Harvest Ministries. New apostolic government and territorial church alignment is seen as replacing denominational government and alignment; calling this a "new-wineskin" and explicitly maintaining that a corporate spirit of religion is an agent of Satan to prevent change and maintain the status quo by using religious devices. According to Wagner, the resistance from "old-wineskin" leaders, denominations, and churches is evidence of this spirit of religion. Internal reform is seen as inadequate and apostolic renewal as essential, such as withdrawing from denominations and hierarchies to embrace and encourage independent charismatic churches. A full explanation of the structural, leadership, and even doctrinal directions of NAR is in Wagner's book *Changing Church*. The NAR is a new development that draws from the third wave but is distinct in many ways from what is typically identified as the third

wave movement. The NAR is not part of how we identify the third wave for purposes of this report.

D. Distinctive facets of the third wave movement

By explaining some of the facets of the third wave, in no way do we wish to imply that these aspects of faith and life are not a part of the Pentecostal and charismatic wave or of many streams of evangelical Christianity. However, there are some unique ways in which each of these aspects of faith and life have been explained, experienced, developed, and prioritized in the third wave.

1. Prophecy and hearing the voice of God

In evangelical circles, no voice seems to speak louder and open more doors to prophets, prophecy, and hearing the voice of God than that of Jack Deere. His first book, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (1993) began the invitation, which was intensified by an even larger second book, *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions* (1996). More recently, Deere authored the book in The Beginner's Guide to . . . series, entitled *The Gift of Prophecy* (2001). Deere sets out prophecy primarily as the speaking of a truth about a person or situation, with there being no possible human way of accessing that information. Deere was influenced significantly by John Wimber, who is credited with catapulting prophecy and prophets into prominence.

All proponents in the third wave maintain that God speaks today. Some call it prophecy, while others refer to this hearing of God's voice as a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom. (These expressions from 1 Corinthians 12:8 are often taken, in charismatic and third wave circles, to refer to special insights from God received in a ministry situation.) This openness is most often, in theory at least, balanced with emphasizing the need for the gift of discernment in both, sensing if a word is from God, and also in how to interpret and apply a word that is discerned to be from God.

The universal acceptance in the third wave that God speaks today and that we can hear his voice contributes to the way in which prayer is understood and healing and deliverance ministry is engaged.

2. Powerful prayer

Prayer in the third wave has a distinct emphasis on its being powerful and effective—not just changing us but also changing reality and shaping the future. Alvin Vander Griend developed the coursebook *Passion and Power in Prayer*, a widely used resource published in 1991 by Church Development Resources, a ministry of CRC Home Missions. In it, he provides a familiar example of third wave emphases in prayer: Prayer is two-way communication with God; God speaks to us in several ways; and God works in response to the prayers of his people, with these prayers even moving the hands of God.

More recently Dutch Sheets, pastor of Spring Harvest Fellowship, has had a significant shaping influence on increased interest in and the practice of intercessory prayer in evangelical churches through his book *Intercessory Prayer* (1996). Sheets developed this material into a popular video-based teaching series for adult classes and small groups. His teaching became very accessible through the book on intercession in *The Beginner's Guide to*

... series, which is carried by Faith Alive Christian Resources of CRC Publications. Sheets develops typical third wave themes of a two-way relationship with God in prayer, prayer being powerful and that God does sometimes limit himself to the requests of humans in prayer.

Brad Long, executive director of PRMI, and Doug McMurry coauthored *Prayer that Shapes the Future: How To Pray with Power and Authority* (1999). Long encompasses many third wave prayer emphases in exploring dynamic prayer for building and shaping new realities in the kingdom of God that involve listening prayer, intercession, prayer of agreement, and warfare prayer. Long and McMurry teach that through these facets of dynamic prayer a vision for a new reality is conceived, birthed, and clothed and that this would not become reality except for dynamic prayer.

Prayer, of course, is found universally in the church. In the third wave, much of what is practiced in prayer traditionally in evangelical churches is included but with a distinct emphasis or accent on prayer as two-way communication and prayer as being powerful and as changing reality. These two key emphases often come together in hearing from God what is to be prayed for and against, as we see in prayer for healing and in spiritual warfare.

3. Healing ministries

John Wimber's healing prayer ministry became a major point of identity of the third wave, power healing being one of the primary signs and wonders of kingdom power for power evangelism. With Kevin Springer, he coauthored influential books on healing, including such titles as *Power Healing* (1987) and *Power Evangelism* (1985, 1992). Wimber practiced a model of healing ministry that brought together words of knowledge or prophecy with gifts of healing—a model he introduced in his teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. This model has had a widespread impact in the Association of Vineyard Churches and beyond, even being adapted by Nicky Gumbel for the session "Does God Heal Today?" in the Alpha course. In short, words of knowledge or prophetic words or other signs are sought in prayer to identify who God wants to heal, after which the power of the Holy Spirit and the release of gifts of healing are sought in prayer to work the healing.

Wimber was deeply influenced by the writing and teaching of George Eldon Ladd on the kingdom of God, seeing that there is an *already* dimension of the kingdom of God and emphasizing how this can be experienced in healing and other signs and wonders—marks or signs of the kingdom such as we see in the gospels and the book of Acts. The *not-yet* dimension is also part of Ladd's teaching, embraced by Wimber and in general in the third wave so that it does not tend to espouse a theology of faith healing that is based on a false understanding of the extent of the presence of the kingdom. Reasons for there not being healing in all cases fit within this theology of the kingdom of God.

Henry Wildeboer, Christian Reformed minister and author of *Miraculous Healing and You*, published by CRC Publications in 1999, also espouses this view of the kingdom of God that there is both the *already* and the *not yet*, a perspective that is deeply rooted in a Reformed theology and worldview. Wildeboer strongly contends that gifts of healing and miraculous healing

are for here and now and includes some specific steps for developing a healing ministry, thus urging traditional evangelical and Reformed churches to become more actively involved in healing ministry.

Peter Wagner also urged traditional evangelical churches to embrace healing ministry, writing what he terms a comprehensive guide in *How to Have a Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick* (1988; rereleased in 1992 as *How to Have a Healing Ministry in Any Church*). Wagner explores his and others' experiences with healing ministries in other countries, offering suggestions on the when, where, and how of healing ministry. He elaborates on Wimber's method, not seeing it as the only viable method but sensing that it seems to fit many evangelical churches.

Along with physical healing, a significant focus of the third wave is also inner healing. Inner healing is understood as ministering to emotional wounds experienced in the past because of what others have done to them that cause complications and exaggerated emotions in the present. Charles Kraft has taught and written extensively on inner healing, including *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing* (1993). PRMI has included healing as a significant focus of its ministry and teaching. One of the six topics of the Dunamis project is "Jesus' Healing Ministry," including a comprehensive understanding of healing but especially developing inner healing. Brad Long, executive director, and Cindy Strickler, pastor of the Dunamis Fellowship, coauthored *Let Jesus Heal Your Hidden Wounds: Cooperating with the Holy Spirit in Healing Ministry* (2001) and team-teach PRMI's advanced course, *Advanced Healing and Deliverance*. As in Wimber's model of healing, words of knowledge, visions, pictures, and the like are received by the power of the Holy Spirit to direct where to pray to release emotional healing.

4. Spiritual warfare and deliverance ministries

With its accent on the spiritual realm in its worldview, it is not surprising that in the third wave we find an emphasis on the presence of demons, personally and corporately, and a corresponding interest in the development of spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry. Novelist Frank Peretti, a former Assemblies of God pastor, is considered both to have ridden the crest of the wave of renewed interest and to have stimulated further interest. *This Present Darkness*, released in 1986, has been read by millions of North American evangelicals intrigued by the spiritual struggle over the fictional rural town of Ashton. To varying degrees, the worldview, demonology, and spiritual warfare tactics of Peretti's novel have been adopted and adapted in the third wave and beyond in the Christian world. Entertaining the possibility that demons are pervasive in everyday life was stimulated significantly by Peretti's early novels and his subsequent fictional writings in the same genre.

Interest in the topic of spiritual warfare has developed in several focused directions. At one end of the spectrum are individuals who are attacked, oppressed, or possessed by demonic powers. At the other end of the spectrum are geographical regions that are controlled by territorial demonic spirits. Between are family, church, ministry, and organizations attacked or controlled by demonic spirits.

In addressing individuals, it is not only the flesh and the world that are seen as contributing to temptation, leading into sin, and causing

manifestations of evil; demonic attack is also identified as a contributing factor to be dealt with, sometimes emphasized as the main factor to be addressed. The third wave also generally accepts that a Christian can be demonized, that is, indwelt by demons and oppressed by them. In the broader evangelical community, this is widely disputed, with arguments that a Christian belongs to God and that a Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and thus that they cannot be controlled or possessed by demons. This is in part the reason why those in the third wave avoid using the term *possession* in relation to demons, stressing that a Christian cannot be owned by demons. However, they do hold that Christians can have demons in them by inviting them in or by persistent unrepentant sin, and therefore they can be oppressed by being influenced or even controlled by demons. Some in the third wave differentiate types of demons that attack or oppress in various ways; going so far as to develop detailed rankings of demons.

Within the third wave, there is agreement that we have a spiritual enemy, but there are differences over how to deal in deliverance ministry with the demonic attack and oppression. These are sometimes differentiated as a truth-encounter or power-encounter approach. The truth-encounter approach seeks to help people understand and apply the basic truths of the Christian faith (e.g., repentance, forgiveness, identity in Christ) so that the ground an evil spirit may have attached to is removed, and the evil spirit leaves because there is nothing left for it to attach to or feed on. Neil Anderson, of Freedom in Christ Ministries, is the clearest example of this truth-encounter approach, which is also reflected in the book *Spiritual Warfare*, written by Neil Anderson and Timothy Warner in The Beginner's Guide to . . . series and also Jeff Stam's *Straight Talk About Spiritual Warfare* and *Battle of the Angels* (1999; youth curriculum), published by CRC Publications. Jeff Stam, a CRC pastor, founded Set Free Ministries, based in Grand Rapids, whose approach to ministry is that of the truth-encounter; their purpose is identified as "bringing victory and wholeness through prayer, truth and the power of God's promises in Christ." Set Free Ministries also serves to help churches establish freedom ministries.

The power-encounter approach involves a Christian's intervening, taking authority in Jesus name, and commanding an evil spirit to leave a person who is demonized or has a demon in them, sometimes called "casting out an evil spirit." Some examples of leaders in the third wave who tend toward this approach are Tom White, author of *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (1990), and Charles Kraft, in both *Defeating Dark Angels* (2001) and *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing* (1993). The third wave seems to have begun with a tendency toward the power-encounter approach, stimulated in part by Peretti's novels and evidenced in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, a collection of papers presented at a conference convened in 1988 at Fuller Theological Seminary by Peter Wagner.

A power-encounter approach is also primarily taken in relation to objects, buildings, and the like, that are dedicated to demons and in which occult rituals have taken place. Alice and Eddie Smith, founders and president and executive director of the U.S. Prayer Center, have written a widely read book, *Spiritual Housecleaning* (2003). The Smiths contend that physical things can sometimes carry spiritual significance, that attitudes and actions can determine the predominant spiritual presence in a home,

and that houses can be spiritually defiled. Seven steps of purification are provided that blend the truth-encounter aspects of repentance and sanctification with the power-encounter of dealing ruthlessly with Satan, renouncing his work, and casting him out.

The power-encounter approach is also prominent in the third wave in dealing with the spectrum of spiritual warfare involving geographical areas, cities, institutions, and the like. An emphasis on battling territorial spirits with warfare prayers has become a key element in a variety of third wave ministries. Peter Wagner coined the phrase *strategic-level spiritual warfare* (SLSW) to describe the strategy developed in his book, *Warfare Prayer* (1991) and several others published subsequently. Peter Wagner, along with Charles Kraft and Cindy Jacobs (cofounder of Generals of Intercession) were key leaders in founding the Spiritual Warfare Network (SWN) in 1990, an international coalition to strategize in light of the opposition of the demons to the spread of the gospel. The SWN also launched the AD 2000 and Beyond movement to intentionally pursue world evangelization.

Some, like Wagner, contend that it is essential to learn the names and ranking of territorial spirits in order to engage them in spiritual warfare. Such naming and ranking is based on Daniel 10:13, 20, 21, where we read of a prince of Persia and a prince of Greece who struggle in heaven with the angel Michael, one of the chief princes of the heavenly host. Others, such as George Otis, Jr., president of the Sentinel Group, which produces the Transformations videos, is less concerned about the name and more about the nature of deception of territorial spirits, engaging in what he has called spiritual mapping to seek to discern what is happening in the spiritual realm that is blocking people from responding to the gospel. Alistair Petrie, who directs Sentinel Ministries Canada and the overseas operations of the Sentinel Group, authored *Releasing Heaven on Earth: God's Principles for Restoring the Land* (2000). Petrie who teaches that actual land can be defiled and affect those who live or work on it, that the land can be healed from its curse through SLSW, and that God's blessings can be released, sees this as one dimension of stewardship.

Some in the Spiritual Warfare Network now also emphasize the importance of dealing with the corporate sin of a geographic territory, seeing sin as having provided the opening for a territorial spirit to establish a stronghold. In this way, dimensions of the truth-encounter approach are incorporated into SLSW. John Dawson, a member of the SWN and author of *Taking Our Cities for God* (1989) coined the phrase *identificational repentance* to describe this process of identifying and dealing with territorial sin.

Once preparations such as these are in place, a power-encounter takes place by attacking territorial spirits, commanding that their power be broken, and claiming the territory for the Lord.

E. Conclusion to the overview

This overview seeks to provide a snapshot view of a movement that is multifaceted and that is not monolithic. As such, it is no doubt incomplete and may well capture only some facets well and touch on others only tangentially. Such it may always be with the Holy Spirit's blowing where he wills, refusing to be captured neatly in a theological box; with human experience providing a mix of clarity and confusion; and evil spiritual powers always seeking to interfere and confuse.

In all this, Long and McMurry say it well when they determine that their task is to answer two frequently asked questions: "First, how can we understand this move of the Spirit of God so that we can open ourselves to all that is genuine, while closing the door to the counterfeit, the demonic and the merely human? Second, how can we advance the cause of Christ more effectively by relying on the Holy Spirit?" (*Receiving the Power*, 21).

IV. Why third wave has widespread appeal

From the survey the committee conducted regarding the influence of the third wave on the CRC, we learned that interest and acceptance of third wave practices is not an isolated phenomenon but finds widespread appeal among pastors and congregations. What the survey suggests is that over 60 percent of pastors have some familiarity with the third wave movement and almost 40 percent of pastors have engaged in training in areas associated with the third wave movement. Perhaps most revealing is the prevalent and uncontroversial use of the Alpha materials, including the teaching on the Holy Spirit. All of this indicates an openness and appreciation for the emphasis in the third wave on the Holy Spirit's empowering Christians for ministry.

Why, however, does the third wave have widespread appeal among Reformed pastors and churches? Why have the emphases of the third wave been so easily accepted within some CRC congregations? We believe there are a number of reasons.

A. *Theological compatibility*

The third wave is largely a renewal movement within evangelical circles. As such, it shares all the beliefs and convictions of evangelicalism, particularly the high view of the authority of Scripture. Specifically, Reformed ministries such as PRMI have gone a step further, showing how third wave emphases fit with a distinctly Reformed theology and worldview. Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature written from a Reformed perspective that endorses and encourages third wave practices (note particularly the adult studies published by CRC Publications). All of this has made facets of the third wave more accessible and attractive to Christians of the Reformed faith.

B. *Ongoing renewal within the church*

The 1973 report noted that those involved in the charismatic movement had a genuine desire and longing to experience the living Jesus and were disillusioned with the dogmatism and complacency of the established church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 407-10). While it accepted this critique of the established church, it also noted that the church was not ignorant of or indifferent to such critique but, rather, had welcomed reform and revival in the form of small-group meetings for prayer and/or Bible study, greater informality in worship services, greater congregational participation in worship, an emphasis on response or involvement in the religious education program, and the attempt to structure mission into the routine life of the entire congregation (410). In many ways, the influence of the third wave on the CRC can be understood as an extension and expansion of these very efforts at revival.

C. *Cultural context*

Like its predecessor, the third wave movement is a phenomenon rooted firmly in the context of contemporary North America. The 1973 report

described our cultural context as one that emphasizes experience as a means to knowledge and understanding; is disillusioned with reason, science, and technology; depersonalizes human beings; distrusts education as being ideologically based; and emphasizes the present moment (412). While this is an apt description of our contemporary context, we add to this our own observations. The disillusionment with reason's ability to achieve objective knowledge has led to the focus on practical knowledge, on how knowledge is used rather than whether it is true, and this has fostered the pragmatism prominent in today's world. If it works, it is good.

We also note in our culture a general despair about the future in the wake of growing doubt that human ingenuity can resolve global problems—the environmental crisis, AIDS, political and religious conflict, global inequity, and so forth. This despair has had two dominant effects. First, feeling powerless about the future, North Americans focus predominantly on the needs of the present moment. The notion of delayed gratification has been overshadowed by the call to seize the moment. There is a general fatigue with long-term plans and commitments and more interest in that which produces instantaneous results. Second, we note that many in today's culture have lost a sense of meaning and purpose in human life. The erosion of humanist ideals has resulted in a spiritual emptiness and an aching for something more in life. As such, we note a renewed interest in spirituality and the spiritual world. The astonishing rise of cults, Eastern religions, paganism, Wicca, Kabbala, and others in the last couple of decades attests to a longing to experience the spiritual world. Strikingly, however, while interest in spirituality is on the rise, Christianity as an organized religion is in decline, likely because many denominations practice a functional deism that leaves spiritual seekers to turn elsewhere for an encounter with the divine.

These cultural trends have created space for widespread acceptance of the emphases of the third wave. As a movement that seeks to recover the functional belief in the spiritual world, the third wave emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit and the reality of angels and demons. It reclaims spiritual disciplines such as listening to God in prayer, repentance, and submission. Finally, it creates space for the exercise of charismatic gifts that function as overt testimonies to a genuine encounter with the divine. In this sense, the third wave movement is able to engage the postmodern seeker of authentic spirituality with a Christianity that encourages a genuine experience with the Triune God.

Furthermore, the third wave tends to place a greater emphasis on the present over the future, focusing on the nowness of the kingdom of God. The release from suffering, inner and physical healing, and spiritual deliverance are all signs of the kingdom of God here and thus are desirable and actively pursued through prayer and gifts of the Spirit. While excessive emphasis on such things can result in a distortion of the good news and the loss of an understanding of suffering in the Christian life, there is also a sense in which the third wave reminds us that the kingdom of God is here and now and that we are called to join in God's mission to further that kingdom in the present.

Without undermining the genuine experience of the power of the Holy Spirit of some in the Christian Reformed Church, we believe that these variables (theological compatibility, ongoing renewal, and cultural context) have all contributed to the openness of our members to third wave emphases.

V. Evaluating the third wave movement

A. *Reformed worldview framework*

Like Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, the third wave forces us to reflect on the reality and biblical validity of such phenomena as tongues-speaking, prophecy, miraculous healings, and exorcisms. These are phenomena that are well-attested in the Bible and enthusiastically embraced in the third wave, but they are relatively unusual in Christian Reformed circles. On the one hand, many of us still feel most comfortable with the older Reformed view that such unusual manifestations of the Holy Spirit were restricted to the apostolic age, and we view with alarm the excesses and theological errors that not infrequently accompany an emphasis on such charismatic phenomena today. On the other hand, no one would deny that God is sovereign and that he can and does work (for example) miraculous healings even today. Many of us have experienced this in our own bodies or seen it with our own eyes. Furthermore, the denominational report on neo-Pentecostalism that Synod accepted in 1973 distances itself from the traditional cessationist view, and adopts a cautious but open attitude to the contemporary reality and validity of these extraordinary works of the Spirit. What is a biblical and Reformed worldview framework that allows us both to gratefully acknowledge these works and to warn against their perversion and misconstrual?

A key point of departure is the Reformed teaching that salvation is re-creation, that redemption means the restoration of creation as it was intended by God from the beginning. In redemption, God the Father stays true to the creational work of his hands; God the Son buys creation back from its bondage to sin; and God the Holy Spirit, in focusing our attention on Christ as the only Savior, works along the grain of creation.

One consequence of this is that, while God's mighty works of redemption are supernatural in their origin and power, they are thoroughly natural, that is creational, in their means and effects. God uses the ordinary words of preaching to engender new life, he uses our everyday emotional makeup to flood our hearts with joy, he uses the regular speech centers in our brains to gift believers with glossolalia, and he uses the regular patterns of family life to enfold children into the covenant community. Just as children are a gift of God and yet come through natural processes, and just as faith is a gift of the Spirit and yet is a generally human function, so all gifts of the Spirit are fundamentally creational. We might say that wherever the Holy Spirit liberates and redirects the ordinary patterns of his creational handiwork for the glory of Christ, there we have a charismatic phenomenon.

The significance of this Reformed emphasis on creational restoration is that it undercuts the spiritual elitism that can so easily infect and spoil powerful movements or waves of the Holy Spirit. In fact, it calls into question the propriety of speaking of waves of the Holy Spirit at all, at least if those waves are thought to apply only to Christian renewal movements marked by the charismata of Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. There is a wave of the Holy Spirit wherever the gospel spreads or wherever it leads to widespread and substantial liberation from prejudice, superstition, or oppression. At the same time, there is no reason to question or be suspicious of the contemporary manifestations of the charismata of which Paul speaks, as long as they conform to biblical directives and common-sense pastoral guidelines. In fact, there is every reason

to welcome and encourage the exercise of these gifts and to see them as enhancing and supporting the other gifts rather than competing with them or outshining them. By such other gifts, we can include not only the various graces of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5) but also such gifts as teaching and a way with children and social tact and artistic talent, whether or not they are specially listed as such in the Bible. All these, too, can be called charismatic gifts when they are touched by the Spirit to serve Christ and his kingdom. What all these charismatic gifts have in common is that they represent natural abilities that are supernaturally energized by the Spirit for the sake of Christ's lordship.

A further benefit of this holistic and integrated creational perspective is that it guards against a one-sided and distorted way of speaking about being Spirit-filled or about being interested in the things of the Spirit, as though these and similar expressions do not properly refer to Christians who have never spoken in tongues or are skeptical about the gift of prophecy but who have devoted their lives to Christian education or diaconal ministry. To be filled with the Spirit, biblically speaking, implies nothing about which gifts the Holy Spirit may have given to the individual in question, and the things of the Spirit include leadership, institution-building, and skillful craftsmanship as much as prophecy and the casting out of demons. Neither is there any reason to think that spontaneity or emotionality have a closer connection with the Spirit than faithful regularity or intellectual insight. No work of the Spirit is more worthwhile than any other, and all his gifts, however they may differ in prominence or the human recognition they are accorded, are on a par as to their potential to glorify God by serving Christ.

A Reformed worldview framework will emphasize not only the restoration of creation (broadly conceived) but also the reality of spiritual warfare (again, broadly conceived). In our own tradition, we have called this the antithesis, the opposition between Christ and Satan, between Spirit and flesh, between kingdom and world, and we have seen it as applying broadly to all areas of life. It is the genius of the Kuyperian or Neo-Calvinist heritage in which we stand and that is itself only one historical manifestation of an ecumenical tradition that goes back via Calvin and Augustine to Scripture itself that sees this spiritual warfare as pervading all of human life. We see a battle of the spirits not only in the lure of pornography or the fight against abortion but also in the movements promoting peacemaking and environmental stewardship and Christian scholarship. We ought therefore to be critical of those in the third wave who speak of spiritual warfare as though it were exclusively or primarily a matter of demon possession (perhaps more appropriately called demonization) and the casting out of unclean spirits in Christ's name. An unhealthy preoccupation with deliverance ministry and the occult is likely to distort the biblical understanding of all of human life as religion.

However, this is far from saying that all cases of deliverance ministry are a matter of ignorant superstition or that all claims of demonic influence on people today are a naive, prescientific misunderstanding of psychological symptoms. The Scriptures are perfectly clear that demons are real and can take over a person's life in horrible ways. They are also perfectly clear that demons can be cast out by Christ's authority. There is also no reason to believe that such demonization and such deliverance happened only in apostolic times. There is abundant testimony from church history and contemporary witnesses that demonization has been, and continues to be, a terrible and persistent

reality up to our own times. Although it is undoubtedly true that severe psychological conditions have in the past been tragically misdiagnosed as cases of demon possession and that it is therefore crucial to recognize ways in which true demonization can be distinguished from mental illness, it is a serious error to reduce the former to the latter. Contemporary believers have much to learn in this respect from the long tradition of Christian exorcism, as well as from the more recent experience of evangelical and Reformed Protestants, many of them in the third wave, who have once again begun to engage in various kinds of deliverance ministry. This is a complex and even dangerous area of ministry, fraught with spiritual and theological risks, but one that we may not abandon. When we read the apostolic injunction, “Test the spirits, to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1), we should apply it, not only to cultural and ideological discernment, as we have often—and rightly—done in the past but also to the practice of a deliverance ministry, which may well have been what the apostle primarily had in mind.

A Reformed worldview that stresses the twin realities of creation and antithesis (both understood in a comprehensive sense) will help us both to welcome and to affirm the marvelous work of the Spirit in the so-called third wave and to warn against various ways in which that work has been misconstrued and distorted. We do this in a spirit of both humility and gratitude, acutely aware that we are feeling our way in what for most of us is unfamiliar territory. At the same time, we are assured that this is a territory where God is at work and where our own rich theological heritage can be of ecumenical service.

B. Evaluation

A Reformed worldview framework provides a grid to examine the third wave movement described in the overview. Again, we recognize that we have not summarized every particular way in which the third wave is expressed. There are times when it blends with other traditions in its expression. It is international in its broad scope. It is also lived out through people and their personalities in local settings. What we seek to provide is an informed evaluation of this North American expression of a worldwide movement from a Reformed perspective. We share most tenets of faith with this largely evangelical movement, flowing from a shared affirmation that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and our authority for faith and life. This provides us a common point of reference as we seek to place every area of life and ministry in submission to God’s teaching in the Scriptures. Our evaluation of each area begins with affirmations; there are many aspects of this movement that are positive and serve as a good corrective to areas of underdeveloped ministry. However, we also recognize the potential for excesses and aberrant beliefs and behaviors. Therefore, we also add some points of caution to help the church to be discerning about beliefs and practices associated with the third wave.

1. General

a. Affirmations

- 1) God calls, equips, and empowers his people to participate in his mission in the world. The Holy Spirit continues to give the full range of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12) and continues to empower the church to do all that Jesus Christ commands, to the glory of the Father.

- 2) While the apostolic age is unique as the foundational period for the establishment and spread of the Christian faith and the church of Jesus Christ, the same God continues to pour out his Spirit to empower his church today. As such, we should not be startled, and we should even expect that God would act in wonderful and surprising ways to authenticate the gospel. The Holy Spirit empowers the church for ministry in word (proclamation), deed (service), and signs and wonders (miracles and manifestations).
- 3) Covenant community is lived out in ministry that takes place in the church under the spiritual authority of the leadership. The church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, continues Jesus' ministry on earth. Jesus continues to be the head of the church, with spiritual authority being delegated to leaders, and ministry fittingly taking place with the blessing and approval of the leadership.
- 4) There are two senses in which the biblical text, especially in Luke's writings, refers to being filled with the Holy Spirit. This distinction in usage is observed by exegetes and developed by Reformed and evangelical theologians (for instance, J.H. Bavinck, D.G. Molenaar, Sinclair Ferguson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Michael Green). These two senses can be expressed as the ongoing filling for sanctification and intensification of our relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as the more episodic multiple fillings for empowerment, sometimes called an anointing to equip and empower for ministry. These fillings are then differentiated primarily in terms of the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts or manifestations of the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit can refer to either or both of these senses in both the biblical text and in actual experience. Ideally, the two manners of filling are in balance in a believer's life and complement each other, with the fruit of the Spirit providing the essential Christlike character to flow into the wise expression of gifts in ministry.
- 5) The greatest miracle and gift of the Holy Spirit is saving faith that results in new birth. No miracle can compare with the power or evoke greater gratitude than the miracle of eternal life. The Canons of Dort express this affirmation: "[conversion] is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead" (*The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine*, Article 12).

b. Cautions

- 1) There is an ever-present danger to be more fascinated with the manifestations and to chase after demonstrations of God's power than to love God and others. This danger of sensationalism can be countered by keeping the Word of God as the foundation, Jesus Christ as the focus, and the gifts in their proper place—not as ends in themselves but for the building up of the church through service and witness to Jesus Christ.
- 2) There can be a tendency to measure value according to gifting, which lead to a spiritual elitism in which those with the most

manifestational gifts are esteemed the most. An antidote to this tendency is emphasizing that all spiritual gifts are equally manifestations of the work and power of the Holy Spirit and that these gifts are given at the Holy Spirit's discretion for the common good.

- 3) There are practices that claim Holy Spirit empowerment that are antithetical to the honor, dignity, and glory of God. There are other manifestations of power that are counterfeits of manifestational gifts. Therefore, the church must be discerning when faced with charismatic phenomenon. The discernment process includes principles shared by many that are captured helpfully in questions used and promoted by Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International (PRMI):
 - Does it give glory to Jesus Christ in the present and the future?
 - Is it consistent with the intention and character of God as revealed in Scripture?
 - Do other people who are filled with the Holy Spirit have a confirming witness?
 - Is there confirmation in objectively verifiable events or facts?
- 4) While the New Apostolic Reformation is not part of how we identify the third wave, we strongly caution against this new development and perceive it to be a disturbing deviation from the overall direction of the third wave, especially in NAR's claims of the contemporary office of apostle and its antidenominational stance and divisive character.

2. Prophecy

a. Affirmations

- 1) The spiritual gift of prophecy operates by receiving a word from the Lord as a special insight for a specific situation. This word from the Lord may not supersede or disagree with Scripture and is given for building up the body of Christ and advancing the kingdom of God. It may be for an individual, church, community, or country.
- 2) For the gift of prophecy to be safely expressed, it must be coupled with the gift and process of discernment and be regulated by ministry leadership. Prophecy needs to be evaluated for its validity and to determine the most appropriate setting in which to be shared.
- 3) Prophecy and preaching are related but distinct ways of responding to God's revelation. Preaching primarily involves a process of study, interaction with the biblical text, and often consultation with others. It may involve an element of prophecy—but not necessarily. Prophecy involves a believer's response to a message from God that is not directly tied to the exposition of Scripture. It may convey a direct word from God for the entire church community, or it may be for specific situations and individuals.

b. Cautions

- 1) The difference between the specific insight received and the way it is interpreted and applied must be carefully differentiated, lest the

interpretation and application also be attributed to a special revelation from God.

- 2) Prophetic words that produce division, confusion, and fragmentation are not in keeping with the intent of the gift, which is given for the unity and edification of the church (1 Cor. 14:3, 31).

3. Prayer

a. Affirmations

- 1) The renewed emphasis on prayer as two-way conversation is deeply embedded in traditional Christianity and is compatible with Reformed spirituality, especially the pietistic tradition. We can benefit from this renewed emphasis on listening to God in prayer.
- 2) Intercessory prayer is effective, which is a healthy antidote to fatalism and inevitability. In God's sovereignty, he does sometimes choose to allow things to happen because of prayer and other things not to happen because of a lack of prayer. This idea that prayer can make a difference is not a new notion in Reformed circles but has a renewed emphasis in the third wave.

b. Cautions

- 1) The messages received in listening to God in prayer may not supersede or disagree with Scripture and must be discerned.
- 2) As with prophecy, care must be taken and tentativeness expressed in hearing from God. What is received from God must be carefully differentiated from how it is interpreted and applied, lest this full process be attributed to God. Spiritual elitism must be avoided in any sharing from listening prayer; this sharing being tentative and providing room for discernment.
- 3) God in his sovereignty chooses how to work in response to the prayers of his people. Intercessory prayer is not mechanical or magical in a direct cause-and-effect manner. God does not automatically fail to act because of lack of prayer, and while he loves to work in response to prayer, there is no guarantee that he will do so in a specific way.

4. Healing

a. Affirmations

- 1) Prayer for healing has always been a part of the life of the church, whether they be public or private prayers. Our survey results show that prayer ministry teams, special services for healing, and inner healing are also embraced in our circles. Our survey results also show that belief that these ministries are for today and are biblical is even stronger than the embracing of them in practice.
- 2) A diversity of ministries of healing fits with the biblical teaching that there are gifts of healing. Spiritual, emotional, and physical healing are differentiated, though often interconnected, forms of healing.

- 3) Inner healing recognizes that we can be wounded emotionally while living in a fallen world and that wounds from the past can affect our lives in the present. Inner healing ministry provides pathways to follow for lies to be replaced with truth, for repentance to be walked out, and for forgiveness to be processed. All of these emphases are healthy dimensions of biblical discipleship that we are called to express in our lives.
- 4) Healing ministry is part of experiencing the *already* dimension of the kingdom of God. Gifts of healing and miraculous healing are for here and now, and healing prayer ministry avoids the fatalism of illness taking its course or of the medical field being the only recourse to seek healing.
- 5) The *not-yet* dimension of kingdom theology is affirmed in avoiding the positive confession often present in the charismatic movement where those being prayed for or those who are praying are challenged to believe that they already have what they are asking. In acknowledging the *not yet*, there is an acknowledgement that full healing in this lifetime is not always experienced.

b. Cautions

- 1) When words of knowledge—understood in a third wave way as images, impressions, nudges, words of Scripture, and so forth—are part of the process of healing ministry, these must be discerned and shared tentatively.
- 2) Healing should not be an automatic expectation of healing ministry. As with any form of intercessory prayer, so it is also the case with healing ministry prayer that God in his sovereignty chooses how to work in response to the prayers of his people. Healing prayer, like any form of intercessory prayer, is not mechanical or magical.
- 3) While freedom from physical and emotional pain is what God ultimately desires for us, we recognize that suffering is part of our present life, and we also must emphasize that it is often used by God to strengthen and build up our faith. Suffering has a place in the Christian life, and, therefore, we ought not be hasty about seeking release from our pain or look for quick fixes in promises of God's power.

5. Spiritual warfare

a. Affirmations

- 1) Demonic powers are at work in every aspect of life, there being no facet of life over which demonic forces do not want to maintain or reassert their perverse and unhealthy influence. There is also no aspect of reality over which Jesus Christ does not claim rule and reign. Reformed tradition has identified this as the “antitheses,” which is another way of expressing “spiritual warfare.”
- 2) Demons can attack, oppress, and possess human beings. Christians cannot be demon-possessed because they belong to God. However, Christians can be attacked, oppressed, or even inhabited by demons,

often called demonization, and demons can be present and can control the thoughts and behavior of Christians.

- 3) Both truth- and power-encounters have their place in spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry. Truth-encounters recognize the role of repentance, submitting to God, resisting the devil, and embracing the truth in bringing freedom from demonic attack and demonization. However, there are times, especially with strong inhabitation, when believers should exercise authority in Christ in a power-encounter, commanding the demon to leave.

b. Cautions

- 1) Along with demons, ungodly influences of the world and the evil inclinations of the flesh also contribute to perverse and unhealthy temptation and sin. Each needs to be taken into account and their interconnectedness recognized, or there is the danger of oversimplification that if the demon is identified and cast out of a person, territory, or people group, that the problem will be solved.
- 2) Strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW), especially its specific foci of identifying territorial spirits, detailed naming and ranking of demons, and engaging and confronting so-called territorial spirits, have little or no biblical basis and overall reflect an unhealthy interest in and overemphasis on the demonic.
- 3) While identificational repentance is a helpful way for Christians to deal with corporate sins, there seems to be no biblical warrant for Christians to engage in this practice for the sins of an area or for an unbelieving people group.
- 4) We should not be overanxious or unduly fearful of the demonic, for Christ has delivered us from the authority of darkness (Col. 1:13), and we have authority in Christ, as well as God's awesome power backing up our exercising that authority over the devil's works and power.

c. Unresolved

We recognize that demonic forces are at work in countries, regions, people groups, territories, or cities. However, we are not in agreement that spiritual mapping is a helpful way to address this reality. There are some indications that it may well be a helpful way to discern how to pray for the people in the area or group or how to pray for the grip of demons to be hindered and obstructed by God so that the gospel can be proclaimed. It may also discern specific areas of discipleship to focus on in a particular group or an area to resist ways in which demonic forces are especially at work. However, after discussion, the committee felt unresolved about this practice.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Dr. Al Wolters, chair; and Rev. Amanda Benckhuysen, reporter; as representatives of the majority report for the study committee.

B. That synod address to the churches the following counsels regarding the contemporary Christian renewal movement known as the third wave:

1. Gratefully accept all the ways in which this movement manifests the work of the Spirit, notably in demonstrating the present reality of the spiritual gifts (charismata) recorded in Scripture and of being filled with the Holy Spirit in different ways and on multiple occasions.
2. Beware of any tendency to make dramatic emotional or miraculous experiences the center of the Christian life, to underplay the foundational value of the fruit of the Spirit in sanctification, to restrict the things of the Spirit to charismatic phenomena, or to minimize the positive way God uses suffering for our good.
3. Acknowledge the gift of prophecy today, subject to the overriding authority of Scripture and the discernment of the Christian body.
4. Beware of any claim to prophecy that goes beyond Scripture, that does not respect the authority of the church leadership, or that fosters dissension rather than loving edification.
5. Be fervent in prayer and expect God to do great things as a result. Think of prayer as a dialogue, not a monologue, and be attentive to what God is saying as you pray.
6. Accept with gratitude that God continues to give both physical and emotional healing in response to prayer, whether through the marvelous sophistication of contemporary medical science, or through medically inexplicable ways. At the same time, accept that God in his sovereignty often does not heal and manifests his love in and through suffering and death.
7. Acknowledge the present reality of the demonic impact on human life and the authority of Jesus Christ to liberate humans from its enslaving and oppressive impact on every area of life. With discernment and caution, engage in a deliverance ministry in the authority and name of Jesus Christ against demonic powers.
8. Affirm that the apostolic office belongs to the foundational period of the church, giving rise to the canonical writings of the New Testament, and reject all claims of contemporary leaders to the apostolic office.

C. That synod receive the report of the study committee and recommend it to the churches for study and discussion.

D. That synod declare the work of the committee completed and dismiss the committee.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism
Majority Report
Amanda Benckhuysen, reporter
Paul Taming
Ray Vander Kooij
Al Wolters, chair

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Appendix B

Survey Results on Third Wave in the CRC—Executive Summary (prepared by Rodger Rice, Ph.D.)

I. Survey purpose and background

- Purpose of the survey was to learn the extent of familiarity, types of experience, and variety of views of third wave Pentecostalism among CRC parish pastors.
- Survey was sent to 684 parish pastors by e-mail; 419 or 61 percent returned it completed.

II. Familiarity with this topic

- Familiarity of parish pastors with third wave Pentecostalism: twenty-one percent intimately familiar or a lot of familiarity, 42 percent some familiarity, and 37 percent little or no familiarity.

- Extent of reading 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism: fifty-nine percent say read all or most of it, 11 percent read selected parts, 11 percent scanned it, and 20 percent did not read it at all.
- Helpfulness of 1973 report today: two percent say so helpful no new guide needed, 45 percent very or somewhat helpful, 14 percent little or not at all helpful, and 39 percent unable to say how helpful (had not read report and/or not familiar with third wave Pentecostalism).
- The greater the extent of pastors' reading the 1973 report, the more helpful they found the report.
- The greater the familiarity of pastors with third wave Pentecostalism, the more helpful they found the report.

III. Experience with this topic

- Attendance of conferences, seminars, courses, and workshops on third wave Pentecostalism topics such as inner healing, deliverance ministries, signs and wonders, and spiritual warfare: Thirty-eight percent of pastors attended at least one of these or related topics.
- Use of training materials in their congregations on topics of inner healing, deliverance ministries, signs and wonders, and spiritual warfare: Twenty percent of pastors used such materials in last five years.
- In last five years, 39 percent of pastors used Alpha course, 17 percent used Freedom in Christ Ministries studies, and 8 percent used Dunamis video courses in their congregations. Almost half (48%) used at least one of these three in last five years in their congregations.
- Alpha course: Seventy percent of pastors in Canada used it in last five years, 26 percent of pastors in United States did. Used more in organized churches and Anglo congregations; used most frequently in largest churches.
- Freedom in Christ Ministries studies: Eighteen percent of pastors in Canada used in last five years, 16 percent of pastors in United States. Used most frequently in largest churches.
- Dunamis video courses: Thirteen percent of pastors in Canada used in last five years, 6 percent of pastors in United States.
- Of twenty-five practices associated with third wave Pentecostalism, three—public prayers for healing, private prayers for healing, and prayer ministry teams—took place frequently in last five years in the congregations of nearly half or more of pastors. Each of the other twenty-two practices were said to have taken place frequently in their congregations by fewer than 20 percent of pastors.
- Eighty-four percent of pastors say their congregation frequently experienced at least one of the twenty-five practices in the last five years; 39 percent of pastors say their congregation frequently experienced at least one of twenty-two practices (excluding public and private prayers for healing and prayer ministry teams) in the last five years.
- Over 90 percent of pastors say that mass conversions and shaking of the sanctuary room never happened in their congregation in last five years; 80 percent to 90 percent say same about holy laughter, being slain in the Spirit, public speaking in tongues, holy dancing in the Spirit, interpretation of tongues, and uncontrollable shaking; and 60 percent to 80 percent

say same about exorcism of demons, confrontation with demons, miraculous instant healings, and speaking a prophecy.

IV. Views on this topic

- Using same list of twenty-five practices associated with third wave Pentecostalism, 90 percent or more of pastors say five are biblically based: public and private prayers for healing, calls to fasting, miraculous instant healings, and other miracles; 80 percent to 90 percent say same about anointing with oil, interpretation of tongues, supernatural demonstrations of God's power, prayer ministry teams, confrontation with demons, and mass conversions. Sixty percent to 80 percent say same about another nine ranging from speaking a prophecy to free uninhibited praise.
- Holy laughter, uncontrollable shaking, and being slain in the Spirit are thought not to have biblical basis by more than 50 percent of parish pastors.
- Using the list of twenty-five practices, more than 80 percent of pastors say four should be part of the life of the Christian church today: public and private prayers for healing, prayer ministry teams, and calls to fasting. Sixty percent to 80 percent of pastors include other miracles, inner healing, anointing with oil, special service of healing, supernatural demonstrations of God's power, miraculous instant healings, and praying in the Spirit.
- Whether pastors are asked about how often they occur in their congregations, whether they have a biblical basis, or whether they should be included in the life of the church today, in all three cases, the way in which pastors ordered the twenty-five practices is very similar.
- Level of frequency of the twenty-five practices is much less than level of their support expressed by pastors, gauged either by thought to have biblical basis or by deserving inclusion in life of the church.
- At almost a two-to-one ratio, more pastors agree (51%) than disagree (27%) that they need to guard against the dangers of church members' looking for outward signs and gifts.
- At more than a six-to-one ratio, more pastors agree (79%) than disagree (12%) that they need to guard against the dangers of church members' preoccupation with the spectacular.
- At a three-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (58%) than agree (19%) that manifestations of the spectacular gifts of the Spirit have resulted in an increase in involvement in the church's ministry to the community.
- At a six-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (66%) than agree (11%) that manifestations of signs and wonders have resulted in an increase in involvement in the church's ministry to the community.
- At a six-to-one ratio, more pastors disagree (66%) than agree (12%) that influences of third wave Pentecostalism have affected the numerical growth of their congregation.
- While a majority of pastors feel the need to guard their flock against the dangers of certain third wave Pentecostalism practices, a majority of pastors are of the opinion that manifestations and influences of third wave Pentecostalism have not resulted in greater involvement in the church's ministry to the community or numerical growth of the congregation.

Outline of the report

I. Introduction

II. A theology of power

III. Brothers and sisters in Christ

IV. Drawing lines in the sand

V. Reasons for rejecting the third wave

Appendices

Appendix A: Another Reading and Interpretation of the 1973 Report

Appendix B: Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians: The Lordship of Christ and the

Power of the Spirit in the Church in the Context of the Powers of This World

Appendix C: Selected Critiques of Third Wave

Appendix D: Notes on Third Wave Leaders

Appendix E: Reflections on Contemporary Evangelicalism

Appendix F: Bibliography

Creemos en el Espíritu Santo, Señor y dador de vida,
que procede del Padre y del Hijo,
y que junto con el Padre y el Hijo
recibe adoración y gloria.
El habló por medio de los profetas.

(From the Nicene Creed)

I. Introduction

After seven meetings of the synodical Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism as a whole, we amicably separated to write majority and minority reports. The separation was long in coming, as we of the minority became more and more convinced that we could not in good conscience recommend that synod affirm the third wave movement, albeit with cautions.

We are calling on synod to warn churches to be very cautious about the third wave. We believe that the majority report gives a virtual *carte blanche* to the movement in asking synod to “gratefully accept all the ways in which this movement manifests the work of the Spirit” (VI, B, 1). If, of course, all the ways were in fact the work of the Spirit, the churches should obviously accept them, but such generalizations must be unraveled with care.

At stake are foundational elements of the CRCNA identity—biblical, theological, ecclesiastical, and church polity central beliefs and practices—which will be seriously affected if we accept and follow the recommendations of the majority report.

Our Reformed heritage is not founded on postapostolic revelations and visionary experiences. The words of an old hymn are ours:

Spirit of God, who dwells within my heart,
wean it from sin, through all its pulses move.
stoop to my weakness, mighty as you are,
and make me love you as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
no sudden rending of the veil of clay,
no angel visitant, no opening skies;
but take the dimness of my soul away.

(1987 *Psalter Hymnal*, 419)

II. A theology of power

The third wave lays claim to a theology of power. The term *power* (as used in the title of Charles H. Kraft's book, *Christianity with Power*) is perhaps the single most significant word associated with the third wave. Terms such as *Holy Spirit* and *spiritual warfare* and *spiritual gifts* are also very prominent but almost always connected with *power*.

C. Peter Wagner, John Wimber, Charles Kraft, and others have emphasized the need for a *theology of power*—a theology evident throughout third wave writings.

This theology, according to Paul Heibert, is misguided: "Here Wimber's teaching is particularly weak. . . . Many Christians testify to the fact that it was in times of sickness and suffering that they were drawn closest to Christ and learned important lessons of faith. Those are times when people realize their own vulnerability and their dependence on God" (Heibert, "Healing"; see also Appendix C below.)

The CRC has a rich history of bowing before the sovereign will of God. We humbly accept the pain and suffering we do not understand. We are not among those Christians who cry out with an expectation that God will cure the terminal illness of our loved ones because we have a special claim to *power*. As a committee, we together grieved the loss of Dr. David H. Engelhard, a man who was not just our committee chair but also a beloved and highly respected denominational leader. Was God unfaithful in not curing our friend David? The words of Job come to mind: "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised. . . . Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 1:21, 13:15).

Some members of the CRCNA are more open today to a Pentecostal-charismatic form of spirituality than they were in decades past. With this spirit of appreciation and inclusion, it might seem natural for the CRC to endorse the third wave. There are, however, many reasons why the CRC should be very cautious about moving in this direction.

III. Brothers and sisters in Christ

Before outlining some of these reasons, we wish to state that there are some positive aspects of a more charismatic and subjective spirituality, not the least of which are expressions of outward warmth and emotion that are sometimes lacking in more formal spiritual settings. We recognize our third wave sisters and brothers both outside and inside the CRC as ones who are sincerely seeking spiritual growth along with others who are not associated with the

third wave. We resonate with the words of Michael Horton (1992) in the introduction to his edited book, *Power Religion*:

Every issue we address in this volume is a matter for debate within the body of Christ. None of the authors suggest that those who support . . . the signs and wonders movement . . . are non-Christians or enemies of the faith masquerading as disciples of Christ.

So, the issues are of immense importance (it's not just a matter of different *emphases*), but are to be addressed in a spirit of humility, reconciliation, and love of both the truth and of our brothers and sisters. In fact, none of us suggest that there is nothing to learn from [this movement]. . . .

This book, therefore, is not meant to draw lines in the sand between true and false brethren. Rather, its goal is to point out what we believe to be serious distractions from the core mission and message of the Christian faith.

IV. Drawing lines in the sand

We likewise do not draw lines in the sand, but we do believe the third wave presents “serious distractions from the core mission and message of the Christian faith” in ways that seriously affect central practices and beliefs of the CRCNA. When we began our work on the committee, we regarded the topic of the third wave to be an important issue to study, but we did not comprehend the far-reaching potential that the third wave has to lead the CRCNA in a misguided direction.

Though we do not draw lines in the sand, others have done so. In the forward to Kraft’s book (2005, vii), Clark Pinnock writes that the third wave of power ministries “requires that we decide which camp (pro- or anti-Pentecostal) we belong to.” Kraft, a long-time professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, is a strong advocate of the third wave. He and others have drawn lines in the sand. Some pastors have drawn lines as well, suggesting that church officeholders should be only those who possess the so-called third wave gifts.

Whether lines are drawn or not, the matter is critical, and it falls on the CRC to decide. Other denominations have weighed in on this matter (see Appendix D). It now behooves the CRC to do the same.

V. Reasons for rejecting third wave

A. The 1973 report (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 398-493) leads us to offer strong cautions against the third wave movement as being incompatible with our high view of Scripture and our Reformed theological tradition. If we are in “fundamental continuity with the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism” (majority report, introduction), a careful reading of that report will show that those areas in which the 1973 report expressed its strongest cautions and warnings, are those that today are at the forefront of the third wave movement. (See minority report Appendix A that demonstrates our claim overlooked in the majority report’s, introduction, and section II.)

B. We must be very careful with the unchecked generalizations, offered by the majority report, that present the third wave movement in a positive light. For example, the majority report overview (majority report, section III and elsewhere) presents the third wave as predominantly an evangelical

phenomenon that has not, by and large, fostered disruption in church communities but has served to rejuvenate the personal faith life of those touched by the movement (III, A). No sociological or statistical information is offered to warrant such claims.

On the contrary, there are significant statements from evangelical denominations and scholars (as the ones we present below) that show the rejection and strong warnings against the third wave. Even the survey ordered by the committee shows no significant growth due to third wave influence (majority report, Appendix B). The claim made in the majority report (section IV, C) that the openness of our CRCNA members to the third wave emphases is due to theological compatibility, ongoing renewal, and cultural context is supported by no solid evidence.

C. An arbitrary selection and classification of people and representatives of the third wave is given (majority report, section III, B) to make such movement acceptable for the CRCNA. For example, Peter Wagner (a founding leader of the third wave) is placed as “beyond the third wave.” Yet, he remains a pioneer and innovator for the movement (he is used several times by the majority report to make important points). His writings are highly influential among third wave circles. Influential people, such as Benny Hinn, John Hage, and others, are classified as charismatics, while others, such as Robert Tilton, are not mentioned at all.

D. While the majority report distances itself from Peter Wagner’s New Apostolic Reformation, it affirms the prophetic office (a key Wagner emphasis) and commends it in positive terms. It also maintains that this foundational doctrine “contributes to the way in which prayer is understood and healing and deliverance ministry is engaged” (III, D, 1).

E. Reference to CRC Publications that affirm the third wave does not add weight to the majority report. A CRC publication does not carry the *imprimatur* of synod.

F. The main practices and beliefs of the third wave weaken the CRC’s high view of Scripture and its authority as the Word of God for faith and life. Third wave practices—revelatory prophecy, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and dialogical prayer (in which revelations from God are received to guide life)—serve to contradict that essential belief. These subjective claims of revelation easily become a norm and guide for life. Historically and today, such revelations easily take priority and become a canon within the canon in church life.

G. The implicit practices of the third wave are in direct contradiction to the ecclesiology and church polity of the CRCNA. Deliberations, study committees, consensual agreements, majority votes, friendly, and not so friendly disagreements are not part of the ecclesiastical ethos of third wave circles. Charismatic leaders guide churches due to their elite status.

H. The New Apostolic Reformation, led by Peter Wagner, is not just a movement beyond the third wave. It is a logical result and outcome of it and remains an integral and leading part of the third wave. When leaders with special knowledge (such as the ancient Gnostics) are acknowledged as privileged recipients of prophecies and revelations, the church is on a dangerous course.

I. The whole issue of spiritual warfare is another example of poor exegesis (see minority report Appendix B). The issue has been reduced to a key word for the third wave: *power*. Such power is understood in terms of great signs and wonders. However, in Ephesians, spiritual warfare has to do with ethical qualities in the church (righteousness and truth), with proper relations among the members (unity and peace), and with prayer and the power of a life of service and love (see minority report Appendix B).

In the section on evaluating the third wave (V, B, 5, a, 2), the majority report affirms that Christians can be “inhabited by demons.” Just before that affirmation, however, the majority report says, “Christians cannot be demon-possessed because they belong to God.” Such subtle distinction must be clarified. It seems to us that even the idea of being inhabited by demons has no biblical support and must be rejected (see minority report Appendix B).

J. The criteria (four questions) that the majority report adopts from PRMI (section V, B, 1, b, 3) to discern between genuine practices and counterfeits are subjective. It is similar to the WWJD phenomenon (What would Jesus do?). Those questions do not direct or appeal to objective, biblical criteria but are left to be answered subjectively and arbitrarily.

K. Recommendation B, 1 in the majority report, endorses uncritically and dangerously third wave practices. Who is going to determine and discern “*all the ways* in which the movement manifests the work of the Holy Spirit”? Are all the practices in third wave manifestations of the Holy Spirit? The recommendation posits that those ways are *notable* in “demonstrating the present reality of the spiritual gifts (charismata) recorded in Scripture and of being filled with the Holy Spirit in different ways and on multiple occasions.” To give just one example: This goes against the argument Paul develops in 1 Corinthians 13, where the fruit is emphasized over the use of gifts. The majority report suggests that the claimed manifestations of charismata in the third wave are the work of the Holy Spirit, and we must receive them “gratefully.” Synod must be wary of such a blanket reception.

L. Recommendation B, 3 calls us to “acknowledge the gift of prophecy today.” Yet, the interpretation of the gift of prophecy by the majority report is highly reductionistic because it seems that it only refers to “special insights” for specific situations (III, D, 1). A quick look at the prophetic literature of the Old Testament and New Testament shows that prophecy was much broader: It included an interpretation of God’s law (Calvin) and history. It was a critical conscience for the present (announcement and denouncement) to guide God’s people into God’s ways. It also provided hope and predicted judgments and salvation in the future (see the 1973 report’s definition, minority report Appendix A, I, B, 1). Thus, to adopt recommendation B, 3 of the majority report would be contrary to the biblical teaching on prophecy (Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). We already have the prophetic message as something completely reliable.

M. We are instructed in recommendation B, 5 to “think of prayer as a dialogue, not a monologue, and be attentive to what God is saying as you pray.” A quick look at the book of Psalms, the prayer book of Israel and the church, will show immediately how reductionistic is this recommended concept of prayer that stresses the revelational aspect of it. How can I discern that the

voices I hear in prayer are God's, my own, or even the Devil's? Where in the Old Testament or New Testament are we encouraged or recommended to hear new revelations from God in prayer?

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Drs. Ruth Tucker and Mariano Avila as writers of the minority report.

B. That synod reject the counsel given by the majority report in Recommendations B, 1, 3, and 5 and require a clarification of section B, 7 in light of their previous affirmations (see our reason I).

C. That synod issue a strong warning against third wave as a movement that seriously affects foundational elements (biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical) of the CRCNA's identity.

D. That synod recommend the minority report to the churches.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism
Minority Report
Mariano Avila
Ruth Tucker

Appendix A

Another Reading and Interpretation of the 1973 Report

I. Biblical/theological significance

The 1973 report is comprehensive in the way it covers the Old and New Testament teachings with regard to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We encourage a careful reading and study of such sections (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 413-29). It also provides a careful selection of teachings from our creeds and confessions that contributes to a better understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit (430-35).

One of the largest sections is devoted to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it includes a detailed study of individual gifts (443-63), some of which we again need to pay special attention to because they are prominent in the third wave movement (prophecy, healing, signs and wonders, and gifts of understanding such as words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and discernment of spirits as well as gifts of guidance and exorcism).

The 1973 report aims to respond directly to major concerns—the experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the emphasis in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the spectacular ones. It responds clearly to them and offers wise advice that *must be studied carefully* because such practices and teachings are an integral part of the new third wave movement.

We do not need to repeat the extensive and comprehensive study on the Holy Spirit that the 1973 report provides. Rather, using it as a background, we address here some of the most significant aspects of the third wave movement.

A. *Developments, new emphases, and practices related to scriptural teachings*

Special attention must be paid to the advice offered in the 1973 report with regard to the gifts of speech and those of understanding. Relevant among them are the gifts of prophecy (450-53); interpretation of tongues (450); and other so-called words of wisdom, knowledge, discernment, and guidance (457-62). These latter gifts, in contrast, for example, to the gift of tongues, are more significantly used in the third wave and have become more central in the development of the theology of the movement.

While the 1973 report is quite open and sympathetic toward neo-Pentecostalism and recognizes the validity, permanence, and use of spiritual gifts today in the churches in dealing with all the previously mentioned gifts, the 1973 report had clear disagreements with the way the neo-Pentecostal movement defined and understood them.

The 1973 report parted ways with neo-Pentecostalism in the understanding of those gifts. While it never closed the door to acknowledging the supernatural manifestations of such gifts (“supernatural revelation of facts past, present, or future, which were not learned through the efforts of the human mind” [458]), it challenged their reduction to that area, which is exactly what the third wave does. The 1973 report also suggested definitions more in line with the ministry of gifted teachers, theologians, and biblical scholars. We must follow their balanced advice.

There is a tendency in neo/Pentecostalism [prominent in third wave, we add] to seek...“guidance” as the only sure way to know the Spirit’s leading. Moral decision-making is suspect as giving too much room for the reassertion of the “mind of the flesh,” as though the Spirit were incapable of illuminating and sanctifying the mind.

(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 425)

B. *Considerations and cautions of the 1973 report with regard to specific gifts*

1. Prophecy

The 1973 report provided a definition of this gift that is more in accordance with the Bible and is not reduced to foretelling or revelations. Prophets are seen as interpreters of the law, as inspired men who expose evil conditions, and as those who also predicted judgments and blessings. Prophecy is clearly identified with preaching (451).

Today in the third wave movement not only is the gift of prophecy claimed as operative in the churches (and frequently reduced to its predictive function), but also the *office of prophet* is considered essential for the ministry of the churches (thus, with the New Apostolic Reformation and with the practice of third wave circles). As a direct revelation from God, such prophecies go regularly unchallenged, and, in the minds of many believers, the words of the prophet(s) are as normative as the word of God. As a matter of fact, the prophets become in many cases authoritative interpreters of Scripture and of social reality. They regularly offer their insights and interpretations of social, economic, and political events.

This is the way prophecy is defined by the majority report in the affirmations about prophecy: “The spiritual gift of prophecy operates in receiving a word from the Lord as a special insight for a specific situation” (V, B, 2, a, 1).

This is what 1973 report says about such kind of prophecy:

The frequently stated or implied definition of prophecy as “supernatural speech in known language from the Spirit and not from the intellect” contradicts everything we know about the prophets from the Bible, and does not honor the biblical teaching that our minds are subject to (not cancelled out by) Christ. If the aforementioned definition of prophecy were correct, the result would be at least equal to the authority of Scripture, and therefore not in need of testing.

(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 452)

2. Gifts of understanding—utterances of wisdom and knowledge

The 1973 report defines the word of wisdom as “to give the mind of Christ, especially in defense of the gospel” (457). That is directly related to the revelation of Scripture.

The word of knowledge is defined as “a heightened insight and understanding of the Scriptures and the ability to communicate this to others in teaching” (458). The report challenges the “easy claims which are made relative to this gift” as divine guidance, as it is common in third wave circles.

3. Discernment of spirits

The 1973 report considered carefully the biblical teaching on this gift and understood that it had to do with detecting false prophecy (1 John 4:1-3, 6) and thus had to do with distinguishing between truth and error. In light of this, the 1973 committee pointed out that this was a task not only of the theologian and faithful biblical scholar but also of the insightful Christian layperson.

When the 1973 committee analyzed the interpretation of neo-Pentecostalism, it concluded that this movement was putting experience above the Bible. “The excesses of the neo-Pentecostal movement alone should teach us to be wary of elevating experience above scriptural discernment . . . we would warn the church to be on its guard” (459-60). This was their advice: “The church must maintain . . . that experiences must always be subject to and tested by the total witness of the Scriptures as none other than the words of the Holy Spirit himself (Heb. 3:7a)” (459).

In the third wave movement, this gift is now understood almost exclusively in terms of spiritual warfare. Where is the serious exegesis by key representatives of the movement? It has been developed in such a way that there are now specialists in not only discerning the spirits but also in mapping and exorcising them.

4. Spiritual warfare

The 1973 report recognizes the reality and existence of Satan and of spiritual beings hostile to God and human beings. It acknowledges the biblical truth that Satan and his hosts suffered a significant defeat when Christ and his kingdom came to this world. Nevertheless, it also assents to the strong activity of demonic forces in this world that will surely increase as the end of history approaches.

The study even offers some hints to diagnose demonic possession and how to expel the demon from a person (463).

At the same time, the report expresses great reservation about some of “these reports and the indecent eagerness with which some gospel practitioners ‘diagnose’ cases of demonic possession, when the difficulties are cases of hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the

gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness or diseases . . . ” (463). The report concludes saying: “We caution against a too hasty assumption that most cases of moral lapse and resistance to the gospel are instances of demon possession” (463).

In the third wave movement, spiritual warfare is one of the prominent strategies for ministry. Actually, all kinds of problems—personal, social, and national—can be and must be resolved with prayer (see minority report Appendix B).

C. *Extra-biblical practices*

While some of the practices just described exhibit a biblical basis, the following list of practices have no parallel with or origin in the clear teachings of the Bible. Usually it is the experience people have had and the authority of the leaders of the movement that establish such practices in the liturgical life of congregations. They are prominent in the third wave.

1. Anointings

This has been a major and distinctive part of religious services. A person who has been endowed with special powers ministers to people by praying for them, and, as a result, worshippers receive a special blessing in the form of being stricken by the Spirit (falling backward and staying unconscious for some time), holy laughter (uncontrolled laughter as a sign of the Spirit’s anointing), holy drunkenness (mindless behavior as a drunk person that is attributed to the Holy Spirit), and many other manifestations (dancing, jumping, swirling in the Spirit). Another example of recent modalities, is that some people claim to see streams of gold falling from heaven as they are praying and interpret that as another sign of the prosperity God is bringing to their lives. There is no end to the novelties that are practiced in third wave circles.

2. Mapping and expelling of the territorial evil spirit

An extrabiblical practice that arose out of the allusion in the book of Daniel to the princes of Persia and Greece (Dan. 10:12-14, 20) has become a central ministerial practice. It is a strategy and methodology to map spirits that rule over places, regions, cities, and countries in order to detect and expel them. In this way, major moral perversions and sinful practices are dealt with.

For example, pastors and leaders in a small town in Argentina (training ground of Peter Wagner) paid a huge amount for the services of an apostle with this gift. He mapped the spirit (located the precise place where it dwelt), and then the apostle proceeded to anoint the city with oil by air (using a helicopter), sea (with a yacht), and land (with prayer walkers also pouring oil everywhere) to exorcise the evil spirit that ruled over the city. Yet, nothing has changed since then.

D. *Genealogical links with previous waves*

The 1973 report established a connection, a genealogical link, between Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism. We believe also that the third wave is a part of that genealogy and that new developments such as the New Apostolic Reformation are the logical result of the third wave. The churches must be aware of this.

1. There is a genealogical link between neo-Pentecostalism and the third wave movement. The link between the first two waves, Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism, was described saying that neo-Pentecostals “for the most part do not come from the Holiness communions but from those communions which have long standing confessional and theological traditions to which they generally remain true. Its participants also come from the middle and upper economic classes and from the better to highly educated people” (402). We must add that the third wave is also reaching people from the lower classes, but the kind of fidelity to traditional churches is not necessarily present and in some of its modalities is actually questioned in light of “what the Lord is doing now to renew the church.”
2. The third wave movement puts a great stress on individual and intense religious experiences (granted by the Spirit, according to the third wave) as well as a critique of traditional churches’ emphases on doctrine, liturgy, and institutional structures and orders. Some of the new and most influential modalities of the movement are proclaiming a New Apostolic Reformation in which God is renewing his church. The day of denominationalism is gone, and a new leadership with new forms of being the church is slowly and persistently being developed. It is true that the majority report distances itself from the New Apostolic Reformation, but we believe that they fail to see that it is a logical and historical result of third wave.
3. There is a profound interest in the power, baptism, gifts, and fruit of the Holy Spirit. While some of the old language of Pentecostalism is still used (i.e., baptism of/with/in the Spirit), new experiences (anointments, blessings, liberations from evil spirits, and so forth) are also introduced in addition to the gifts of the Spirit. A major claim is made, not absent before, and it is this: People receive power for service. *Power*, interpreted in a peculiar way, is a major feature in the third wave, as we already indicated. Such understanding, however, is not necessarily in line with biblical teaching (see minority report Appendix B).
4. There is a heightened awareness of the demonic and a corresponding interest in spiritual warfare. This has become a major component of the third wave movement under the name of *spiritual warfare* (see minority report Appendix B).

II. Cultural relevance

The cultural context of the early 1970s was an important key for the committee that created the 1973 report as it attempted to make sense of the movement. We also believe that a cultural assessment is necessary to understand the third wave in our contemporary North American culture. The following elements are offered as marks of the North American culture that also have impacted the third wave movement. Of course, in some of the third wave modalities those elements are more evident than in others.

North America is a therapeutic culture. A predominantly narcissistic culture can easily adopt for its lifestyle or worship those elements that fit well with its own values. That is why fitness, health at all costs, pain-free practices, comfort, and so forth, are central for most people. When they are contextualized and integrated into religious practices, people will adopt them easily. In

such a context, promises of complete physical, emotional, mental, economic, and spiritual healing are highly appreciated, sought, and valued. The prosperity gospel (salvation, health, and wealth) has been effective in reaching many people, and it is a central component to many who subscribe to the third wave.

The Americanization of the CRCNA is another important factor. In its openness to North American cultures and its assimilation to evangelical models, the CRC has been losing in a significant way the norm that was once revered and highly valued in its doctrinal tradition and has become more eager to adopt many of the practices and implicit doctrines of the evangelical and neo-Charismatic world.

While there are positive things in such an attitude and while some negative traits are being slowly rejected (the canonization of *Dutch* CRC culture, ethnocentrism, and racism, among others), there are other central marks of our church that must be kept. Among them are the centrality of Scripture as the norm for faith and doctrine (as well as a responsible hermeneutics of them), the guidance of Reformed theology, and a world and life view to articulate our thoughts and practices. Reformed creeds and confessions may not speak directly and explicitly to concerns raised by the third wave movement, but they provide a theological framework within which a response can and must be articulated.

Pragmatism is another central value of North American culture. If it works in other churches, why not adopt it and practice it in our own congregations? The obsession with numbers and the reality that every year the CRCNA is losing membership also plays a major role. Megachurches have become the norm for what we would like to become, and the praxis of such churches has become a significant part of the training ground for our church planters and evangelists. Concerns for theology and biblical teaching are reduced to a minimum. Managerial and marketing gifts are more appreciated.

In an instantaneous culture, the search for instantaneous results is another mark that is reflected in the third wave movement. So-called blessings that bring immediate growth and change are central in the movement. Lifelong processes of sanctification and growth are neglected and exchanged for practices that supposedly bring immediate results and transformation; for example, the many forms of blessings and anointments. The long-term obedience of Christian discipleship is not common in many modalities of the third wave movement.

The manipulation of the divine, common in pagan magical practice, is something that needs to be constantly discerned and avoided. In many instances, we find gifted charismatic leaders who claim to control the circumstances, times, and places for receiving special blessings and anointments that bring to worshippers powerful experiences of God's presence (for example, healings, words of knowledge, and liberations from evil spirits). We must be aware that some of the experiences and blessings touted in the third wave movement are not exclusively Christian. They are common in Afro-Caribbean religions such as Santeria, Macumba, Umbanda, and other similar animistic and religious practices in African and Asian countries.

Of course, our main concern is that some of those practices and rituals are being baptized as Christian practices. In countries in the Two-Thirds World, where those practices are part of the pagan religious rituals, evangelical Christians are more sensitive to them and reject them easily. The problem for

North Americans is their lack of reference and experience with such practices and rituals.

This is one of the conclusions of the fourth Latin American Congress of Evangelization (CLADE IV), celebrated in Quito, Ecuador:

We consider that [it] is not right to draw from animist cosmovisions in order to better understand the biblical cosmovision and, thus, to affirm the existence of territorial spirits. . . . In their effort to delimit an excessively rationalist form of Christianity, [third wave leaders] have inaugurated an animist form of Christianity. . . .

The "battle" must be fought in terms of an integral and ethical testimony, of a fight for justice, for peace, for human rights and reconciliation. That "battle" must have as a priority to make accessible and to extend God's Kingdom here on earth, showing thus to the visible and invisible worlds that the cosmic battle was decided once and for always in the cross at Calvary.

(Voth 2002)

Appendix B

Spiritual Warfare in Ephesians: The Lordship of Christ and the Power of the Spirit in the Church in the Context of the Powers of This World

The lessons from Ephesians, that we will highlight in the following paragraphs, provide perspectives and correctives that we need today to understand, face, and fight the spiritual warfare described at the end of the letter (6:10-20). In other words, the teaching on spiritual warfare is given in the framework and context of the extraordinary power of God. If there is a letter where a theology of power is articulated, that letter is Ephesians.

Having said that, however, we need to read Ephesians carefully so that we do not interject into the letter our own meaning and understanding of power. That is especially true of the third wave understanding of power as truth- and power-encounters in which the authority over demonic forces is expressed in loud exorcism rituals, physical strength, and even technical abilities of the specialists performing and producing deliverance and healing.

While we do not deny the importance of exorcism rituals (when warranted and only after extensive research and investigation of other medical, psychological, familial, social, and spiritual causes of a person's problem), we do affirm that to reduce spiritual warfare to that aspect is to lose sight of the comprehensiveness of the biblical teaching with regard to our battles and victories over demonic forces.

These are the main teachings from Ephesians with a direct significance to spiritual warfare:

1. God the Father appointed Jesus Christ as the supreme Lord of the universe, the head of all of creation, and he has authority over all things in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10 cf. Matt. 28:16-20). Do not make Satan and his armies absolute powers.
2. In his exaltation to the heavenly realms, Jesus overcame the most powerful enemies in creation: Death and the spiritual powers. Jesus was seated at the right hand of God "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:20-22). Jesus, not the spiritual evil forces, is the Lord.

3. God has manifested his extraordinary power in the church, giving life to those he has resurrected from death (Eph. 2:1, 4-5), and delivering them from the extraordinary powers that have dominion over creation: the world, the Devil, and our fallen sinful nature (2:1-3). Yes, the church participates in Christ's victory now (*already*), although in a preliminary way, and has received the Spirit as first fruits and guarantee (1:13-14) of its final and complete redemption (*not-yet*). There is an *already, not-yet* tension in which believers live.
4. As a matter of fact, the head and Lord of all creation, Jesus Christ, is now the head of the church and fills it with his incomparable great power, through his Spirit (Eph. 1:18-19, 23; 2:21-22).
5. The church is God's poem (Eph. 2:10) and the first fruits of God's new creation; it is indeed God's new humanity (2:15) that has been elected, called, and sanctified to live for the glory of God (1:6, 12, 14).
6. Shalom (Eph. 2:14, 15, 16, 17) and unity (1:10; 2:14-17) are the main manifestations of this new society. By God's grace and power (2:4-7), the church is now composed of peoples from all the nations. Jews and Gentiles are now members of God's family (2:19-22). We must underline the biblical emphasis on the church as a community. The spiritual warfare is fought by the church as a community in being an inclusive, multiethnic people; thus, expressing the shalom and harmony that God creates in this world.
7. The church is called to live a life worthy of her calling, in unity, with an ethical behavior characterized by truth, justice, and love: virtues that make it possible in everyday communal life to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). Such virtues are summarized in love (5:1-2) that expresses itself in constant mutual submission and service in the church (4:1-16) and family life (5:18-6:9). Thus, the church is called to live in this world as a testimony and manifestation of God's gracious love and shalom to all peoples (2:11-22), including the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (3:10).

The following are exegetical notes on Ephesians 6:10-20:

1. The passage that describes what today is called spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6:10-20, serves as the climax of the letter as a whole. In this final section of the letter, the five imperatives reiterate the thirty-one imperatives of 4:1-6:9. That has a highly significant meaning: The spiritual warfare is fought properly when we live a life pleasing to the Lord as required in chapters 4 to 6.
2. Paul uses the prophecy of Isaiah on the armor of Yahweh and his Messiah (Isa. 11:4-5; 59:17; 49:2; 52:7) to describe the armor for the people of God. Those attributes of God that constitute his armor against his enemies (justice and salvation, Isa. 59:17), in an unjust and oppressive society (see the context of Isaiah 58 and 59), are used by his Messiah (justice and truth, Isa. 11:4-5) to establish a kingdom of shalom and justice in the world (Isa. 11:6-9). They are also fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 5:9), an integral part of the armor of God's people (truth and justice or righteousness, Eph. 4:24; 6:14), a people called to be agents of God's unity and shalom on earth.

3. The introductory eulogy and thanksgiving of the letter is connected to our pericope forming with it an inclusio. The blessings received in heavenly places are to be used now in our warfare against evil forces in the heavenly places. Christ is reigning, seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:20). The church, seated with Christ in the heavenly places (2:6), participates in his life and power. This is so because God's "intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (3:10). Before them, the church is called to stand its ground (6:11,13,14) as it engages in the spiritual warfare.
4. Thus, our new identity in Christ (Eph. 1:3-14) is essential to dress ourselves (4:22-24) for the battle. Who we are in Christ, thanks to God's grace, and by the powerful presence of the Spirit is a reality we need to appropriate constantly. The first step in winning the war is falling on our knees in grateful and deep adoration to the triune God, as Paul does in the first half of the letter. Instead of looking at the enemy, we contemplate the gracious and merciful God who freely loved us, making us partakers of his great salvation.
5. We must consider the previous teaching that Paul gave with regard to spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 1:19-23; 2:2; 6-7; 3:10; 4:27; 5:16; 6:10-20). For Paul, there is an integral, intimate connection between the Devil, the world, and our sinful nature (2:1-3). They all work together as a system of evil that battles against God's eternal purpose: to establish his shalom and kingdom in this world.
6. Consider some of the key expressions in this key passage:
 - a. An urgent call (Eph. 6:10-11a)

Be strong; be able because the power is there. Notice the emphasis in the full armor of God (vv. 11 and 13) described in verses 14-20—not just a part, but all the panoply. To reduce spiritual warfare to prayer is to deny the clear emphasis on all the armor of God.
 - b. A clear purpose (Eph. 6:11b, 13)

Stand firm (4:14, 27): This is not a conquest; it is resistance. Hold your ground against the devil's schemes (4:14) and clever military strategies.
 - c. A powerful reason (Eph. 6:12)

The nature of our enemies: "For our struggle is not against . . . but against rulers, against authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."
 - d. A sufficient armor (Eph. 6:14-20)

The idea of putting on the armor is a reminder of 4:22-24. Here, the parts of the armor are mentioned in the order in which they are put on.

 - The belt of truth – integrity, loyalty, reliability (Eph. 4:24, 5:9; Isa. 59:17; Eph. 1:13; 4:15, 21, 24, 25; 5:9).
 - The breastplate of righteousness – A person of one piece, just and blameless (4:25; 5:9). Of special significance are ethical qualities such as truth and justice or righteousness (v. 14) that previously were identified as key qualities of the fruit of the Spirit (5:9).

- Your feet fitted . . . readiness . . . gospel of peace – always ready to make peace (Isa. 52:7; Eph. 1:2; esp. 2:14-18; 4:3; Eph. 1:13; 3:6; cf. 2:17; 3:8). The preaching of the gospel of peace and reconciliation (v. 15) is carried on by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, according to Paul's own experience (chap. 3). The Spirit illumines and opens the eyes of the preacher (3:3) and of the messenger (3:5), and gives him or her the power to communicate it (3:7), even to the heavenly evil forces (3:10).
- The shield of faith – trust in God, security of salvation (Gen. 15:1; Ps. 5:13; 18:3, 31; 28:7; 33:20; 1 Pet. 5:9; Eph. 1:1, 13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13). The spirit works in human beings giving them the faith to believe in the Word (1:13-14; 2:8) and continue believing (1:17-18), in such a way that it is used as a shield against the Devil (6:16).
- The helmet of salvation – security in the love of God (Rom. 8:28-39; Isa. 59:17; 1 Thess. 5:8; Eph. 1:13; 2:5, 8; 5:23).
- The sword of Spirit, the Word of God – the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess. 4:8; Rev. 19:15; Isa. 11:4; Eph. 1:13; 5:26). The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (6:17). That is why for Paul it is so important to be able to speak it with full confidence (6:19-20).

The final admonition is to pray in the Spirit, always, for all saints, and for preachers (Mic. 13:33-37; Col. 4:2-4). What better model do we need (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21)? We need to be aware in our battles that we depend on the Spirit's support in prayer (6:18), especially when we are under severe suffering (Rom. 8:26-28).

In summary, we affirm, with Ephesians, that the spiritual warfare is fought by putting on the whole armor of God, which means to be:

1. A shalom community that lives united and harmoniously in this world and thus becomes a living demonstration of the good news in this world and to the rulers and powers in the spiritual realms. Then, God's good news of grace and peace are a powerful sword that no forces of evil can resist.
2. A holy and just community that is clothed with the righteousness and integrity with which Jesus equips it through the Holy Spirit and is always ready for everyday battles. The fruit of the Spirit manifested in ethical qualities keeps the church healthy, united, and serving. Such virtues are the best protection against the enemies' attacks.
3. A worshiping community that believes, lives, celebrates, and proclaims daily God's grace manifested in the free salvation in Christ and that has put on the armor that empowers believers—the best helmet, shield, and sword for spiritual warfare.
4. A praying community that ceaselessly prays for its missionaries, pastors, and leaders is the most feared, horrifying, and majestic army (Song 8:3) against which the gates of hell will never prevail (Matt. 16:18).
5. A serving community that follows its Savior's example of self-sacrificing love (Eph. 5:1-2) in this world, and whose leaders use their gifts continually to equip God's people for works of service (Eph. 4:12), possesses the most

powerful weapon with which our Lord Jesus, on the cross, defeated the rulers of this age (1 Cor. 2:8).

Appendix C

Selected Critiques of Third Wave

I. Other denominations and third wave

A. Wesleyan

It is significant that the CRC is not the first denomination to address issues relating to the third wave. For example, the matter has recently been addressed by Wesleyans. In an article entitled, “Third Wave of the Spirit and the Pentecostalization of American Christianity: A Wesleyan Critique,” Laurence W. Wood writes:

The greatest challenge to a self-understanding of the Wesleyan tradition today is the trend toward the “pentecostalization” of many Christian denominations throughout the world. By pentecostalization I mean placing the categories of spiritual gifts, physical manifestations, and spiritual warfare (demon possession) in the forefront of Christian meaning and ministry.

The choice to emphasize these things is a choice not to focus on the essentials of the gospel. . . . To emphasize *gifts, phenomena, and demon possession* is to de-emphasize the *gift* of the Spirit in justification and sanctification; it is to overdo issues which are secondary in the Scriptures. A choice to emphasize these pentecostal themes is a choice against a Wesleyan-evangelical-catholic interpretation of the Christian life. . . . My purpose here is to show that these pentecostal distinctives may at times be legitimate aspects of ministry, but they are not the focal point of the gospel. . . .

The Wesleyan theological tradition has discouraged the tendency to redefine life in the Spirit in sub-Christian terms such as acquisition of personal power to perform miracles. . . . The drawing power of pentecostalism is undoubtedly related to the epidemic need for the masses of people in the world today to feel good about themselves. However, this anthropocentric focus may become a narcissistic substitute for the source of true spiritual identity, which is being renewed in the image of Christ.

(Wesley Center Online)

B. Assemblies of God

Even Pentecostals themselves have been concerned about third wave manifestations, and this concern dates back more than a half century. The Assemblies of God dealt with the Latter Rain—a movement of the 1940s that has many similarities to, and connections with, the third wave of today. In 1949, the General Council of the Assemblies of God held in Seattle, overwhelmingly approved a resolution disapproving of the following practices:

- The overemphasis relative to imparting, identifying, bestowing, or confirming of gifts by the laying on of hands and prophecy.
- The erroneous teaching that the church is built on the foundation of present-day apostles and prophets.
- The extreme teaching as advocated by the “new order,” regarding the confession of sin to man and deliverance as practiced, which claims prerogatives to human agency that belongs only to Christ.

- The erroneous teaching concerning the impartation of the gift of languages as special equipment for missionary service.
- The extreme and unscriptural practice of imparting or imposing personal leadings by the means of the gifts of utterance.
- Such other wrestlings and distortions of Scripture interpretations that are in opposition to teachings and practices generally accepted among us.

C. *Mennonite*

Other denominations have also encountered and critiqued the third wave. In "The Third Wave Worldview: A Biblical Critique," Gilbert (a professor of Old Testament), addresses the issue from a Mennonite perspective ("Third Wave Worldview").

Likewise, Paul Heibert ("Healing"), a well-known Mennonite missiologist and scholar has written extensively on matters relating to the third wave:

Contradictory as it may seem, by overemphasizing miracles, in the long run we reinforce secularism. To the extent that we focus our attention on the "miraculous" nature of some events and differentiate them from other events viewed as "natural," we reinforce our old Western dualism that consigns God to other-worldly matters and explains natural phenomena purely in scientific terms. If we take this approach, claims of miracles do initially remind us of God's work in this world. As these miracles become routine, however, they lose their impact. They are no longer seen as extraordinary—as real miracles. Consequently, we must look for new and ever more spectacular miracles to reassure us that God is with us. In the long run, the net effect of this escalation is the secularization of our thought. We do not see God at work in ordinary, natural processes. As miracles become commonplace, they no longer remind us of God. In the end, the quest for ever new demonstrations of God's presence breaks down, and we are left in a totally secularized world in which there are few ways for God to speak to us.

II. Reformed voices on the third wave

The third wave has drawn the attention of Reformed theologians and biblical scholars both inside and outside the CRC.

A. *Herman Bavinck*

Decades ago, Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck (2003, 1:512-27) cautioned Christians about placing too much emphasis on subjective claims of divine revelations.

When two voices are given to speak to the church, one will always speak with the loudest voice, and human nature and church history conspire to teach us that it will always be the human voice not the divine voice speaking in the Bible. . . . Indeed, the voice that carries the day is the voice of so-called individual revelations and communications from heaven that a particular Christian or minister has received. . . . The traditions of men . . . have supplanted the pure Word of God.

B. *J.I. Packer*

J.I. Packer (1981, 39) writes:

While it is not for us to forbid God to reveal things apart from Scripture, or to do anything else (he is God, after all!), we may properly insist that the New Testament discourages Christians from expecting to receive God's words to them by any other channel than that of attentive application to themselves of what is given to us twentieth-century Christians in holy scripture.

C. Philip Yancey

Throughout church history there has been the temptation to affirm a form of Gnosticism through claims of higher and special knowledge that is only given to a few. The terms spiritual power and words of knowledge should be used with care (Yancey 2000).

The same evangelical tradition that spurs us on to greater intimacy also invites abuse. "I asked the Lord what to speak on and he said, Don't speak on pride, speak on stewardship." "The Lord told me he wanted a new medical center in this city." . . . The wording implies a kind of voice-to-voice conversation that did not take place, and the fudged report has the effect of creating a spiritual caste that down-grades others' experiences.

D. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

The debate over third wave is not dealing with the matter of whether healing and other miracles are valid today. All evangelicals affirm such, including Richard B. Gaffin, who writes from a cessationist position: "I certainly do not hold that all gifts of the Spirit have ceased or that the church is devoid of such gifts today. . . . Nor do I argue that miracles have ceased" (Gaffin 1996, 41).

His central concern is summed up in a question: "Would not such continuation [of the prophetic gifts] take us back to the open canon situation of the early church, and do so without the control of a living apostolate?"

His concern must be taken seriously. Should the CRC, like some in the third wave, affirm the presence of a living apostolate?

III. Non-Western voice on the third wave

Some writings give the impression that the critiques of the third wave come from the Western world only. That is not true.

Dr. Vishal Mangalwadi

Vishal Mangalwadi (1949-) is an international lecturer, social reformer, political columnist, and author of thirteen books. Born and raised in India, he studied philosophy at universities, in Hindu *ashrams*, and at L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. He, with his wife, founded a community in 1976 that serves the rural poor in India and continues his involvement in community development serving at the headquarters of two national political parties. His first book, *The World of Gurus*, was published in 1977 by India's Vikas Publishing House, and serialized in India's then-largest weekly, *Sunday*. It was his book, *In Search of Self and India: The Grand Experiment* that first brought his works to the attention of the American public (<http://www.vishalmangalwadi.com/biography.php>).

It is necessary to articulate afresh a Christian vision for India because the language of the "spiritual warfare" movement has become the main justification for the present persecution. (If a tiny section of the American church has declared India to be an "enemy territory" that has to be "conquered," surely the target group has a right to defend itself.) Is our mission driven "by the love of God that constrains us"? Is God seeking to bless India or to conquer it? The Indian church needs to have theological maturity to stand up to the teams of naive young missionaries from America who today assume they are the ones to define what "spiritual warfare" is all about. Their naiveté derives from a theology of spiritual warfare that is neither from the Bible nor from Church history, but from Frank Perretti's excellent fiction. Understandably, it does confuse the focus of some Indian Christians.

(Mangalwadi, "Can *Hindutva* Survive?")

IV. CONELA

We must add also that CONELA, the Evangelical Confraternity in Latin America, had their continental meeting in Panama in the year 2004 and issued strong warnings against the third wave. The majority of the members come from historical Pentecostal churches and many charismatic groups.

Likewise, CLADE IV, The Latin American Evangelization Congress, published in 2002 a strong criticism of spiritual warfare. Below is a quote from Esteban Voth:

Consideramos que no es aconsejable recurrir a cosmovisiones animistas para comprender mejor la cosmovisión bíblica y, de esa manera, afirmar la existencia de espíritus territoriales...

En su afán de contrarrestar un cristianismo excesivamente racionalista, ha inaugurado un cristianismo animista...

La “guerra” se debe dar en términos de un testimonio ético íntegro, de lucha por la justicia, la paz, los derechos humanos y la reconciliación. Esa “guerra” debe tener como prioridad acercar y extender el Reino de Jesús aquí en la tierra, demostrando así al mundo visible e invisible que la batalla cósmica fue decidida una vez y para siempre en la cruz del Calvario.

(Voth 2002)

The translation follows:

We consider that it is not right to draw from animist cosmologies to better understand the biblical cosmology and, thus, to affirm the existence of territorial spirits. . . .

In their effort to delimit an excessively rationalist form of Christianity, they have inaugurated an animist form of Christianity. . . .

The “battle” must be fought in terms of an integral and ethical testimony, of a fight for justice, for peace, for human rights and reconciliation. That “battle” must have as a priority to make close and to extend God’s Kingdom here on earth, showing thus to the visible and invisible worlds that the cosmic battle was decided once and for always in the cross at Calvary.

(Voth 2002)

Appendix D

Notes on Third Wave Leaders

Most third wave leaders subscribe to historic orthodoxy. To reiterate such positions is not necessary, but synod should be aware of biblical and theological positions that are significantly outside mainstream historic orthodoxy. A few such examples are cited below. These names are ones that are most often associated with third wave.

A. *C. Peter Wagner*

The third wave, like the first wave of Pentecostalism in the early twentieth century and the second wave, the charismatic movement of the 1970s and beyond, makes unusual claims of supernatural experiences and gifts that are not referenced in Scripture—for example, having the gift of being able to smell the presence of both God and the Devil. Some such claims have been widely published in books on spiritual warfare.

Through his writing and teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, C. Peter Wagner has been the theoretician behind the movement. In his book, *Warfare Prayer* (1992), he tells how his awareness of strategic-level spiritual warfare was sparked by Pastor Omar Cabrera of Argentina who had “personal experiences of identifying and binding the territorial spirits controlling cities in which he was pioneering new works.”

The widespread interest in spiritual warfare, however, came through fiction. Wagner continues: “Undoubtedly, the single-most influential event that has stimulated interest in strategic-level spiritual warfare among American Christians was the publication of Frank Peretti’s two novels, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*” (Wagner 1992, 13, 19).

Through warfare prayer, Wagner claims that demonic powers were *evicted* from Adrogué, a suburb of Buenos Aires. “At 11:45 that evening, they . . . felt something break in the spiritual realm. . . . The year of the victory was 1987!” (Ibid., 22).

In a chapter section entitled, *Calling the Generals*, Wagner features the work of his wife Doris and their friend Cindy Jacobs, a so-called expert in warfare prayer from the organization, Generals of Intercession. They traveled to Argentina to train teams of people to “engage in frontline warfare.” Dozens of the trainees congregated at a crowded plaza and “engaged the spirits in five hours of spiritual battle. Only then did God give them an assurance in their spirits that they had broken through.”

Wagner does not believe that all Christians are equipped for this ministry. “I myself feel that God may be calling, equipping and enabling a relatively small number of Christian leaders to move out in frontline, strategic-level spiritual warfare,” he writes. “God, I think, is in the process of choosing an expanding corps of spiritual Green Berets . . . who will engage in the crucial high-level battles against the rulers of darkness.”

What have these spiritual Green Berets accomplished? Among other things, they have been able “to bring down the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain” and “to depose Manuel Noriega.” They were able “to lower the crime rate in Los Angeles during the 1984 Olympics.” Wagner also writes, “I believe God used my wife, Doris, and Cindy Jacobs to turn around the economy in Argentina.” Additionally, Wagner writes, “I feel sure the territorial spirits over Japan received a significant setback” (Ibid., 139, 163-64).

B. John Wimber

John Wimber, as the founder of the Vineyard movement, has been equally prominent in the third wave. He and Wagner taught a popular course on signs and wonders at Fuller Seminary that demonstrated healing powers during class sessions. Due to its controversial nature, the course was cancelled and later revived under a somewhat different format.

In *Power Evangelism*, Wimber refers to signs and wonders as “the calling cards of the kingdom”—experiences that are as important as words in the proclamation of the gospel. “God uses our experiences,” he writes “to show us more fully what he teaches in Scripture, many times toppling or altering elements of our theology and worldview” (Wimber and Springer 1988, 109, 89).

“So, shortly after I saw my first healing, I asked myself, ‘Is it possible to develop a model for healing from which large numbers of Christians may be

trained to heal the sick?' I thought the answer was yes and became committed to developing that model" (Wimber and Springer 1987, 169).

C. Jack Deere

Another high-profile personality in the third wave movement is Jack Deere (1996), a former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. In *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions*, he illustrates his word of knowledge ministry. His student, Robert, stopped by his office. "That's when it happened:"

As I was listening to Robert, he faded away and in his place I *saw* the word "PORNOGRAPHY" in large, capital block letters. . . . For months, I had been praying for God to speak to me like this. . . . I decided to obey God.

When Robert denied that he had been struggling with anything that would offend God, Deere decided not to pursue the matter. But, he says, "As soon as I made the decision not to say any more to Robert, the vision came back. This time the word "pornography" started blinking on and off." After a time, Robert confessed his sin of pornography (15-16).

D. Paul Cain

One of the so-called prophets strongly endorsed by Jack Deere was Paul Cain. Below is a statement published by Deere and others regarding Cain. Deere and his fellow ministers are to be commended for not launching a cover-up of Cain, but the situation points to the problem of giving individuals a forum as modern-day prophets:

Paul Cain has been used mightily by the Lord to touch many lives in our times. He is esteemed by many around the world as a major prophetic voice and as a spiritual father. It would be hard to estimate the number who have been healed, delivered, or saved through his ministry. We have especially benefited from his friendship and ministry in too many ways to count. It is therefore with great sorrow that we publish the following.

In February 2004, we were made aware that Paul had become an alcoholic. In April 2004, we confronted Paul with evidence that he had been recently involved in homosexual activity. Paul admitted to these sinful practices and was placed under discipline, agreeing to a process of restoration which the three of us would oversee.

However, Paul has resisted this process and has continued in his sin. Therefore, after having exhausted the first two steps of Matthew 18:15-17, we now have a responsibility to bring this before the church. Our sincere hope remains to see Paul restored. . . . If restored, we believe that Paul can once again have an extraordinary ministry and be a significant blessing to the body of Christ.

We apologize to the body of Christ for our lack of discernment in promoting Paul's ministry while he had these significant strongholds in his life. . . . We also do not feel that this should in any way negate or reduce the great benefit that Paul's ministry has been to so many in the past. We hope that Paul can yet be restored and used again for the glory of God in the wonderful way that so many of us have been blessed to see in the past.

With our deepest regrets and sincerity,

Rick Joyner, Jack Deere, Mike Bickle

Appendix E Reflections on Contemporary Evangelicalism

Recent trends

The third wave cannot be properly understood apart from the broad realm of historical and contemporary evangelicalism. The Pentecostal movement that arose in the first decade of the twentieth century and the subsequent charismatic and third wave movements have profoundly influenced and infiltrated mainline evangelicalism. Today, we see significant evangelical trends related to third wave of which synod ought to be aware. Below are selected quotes and reflections:

TIME magazine

Most unnerving for [many concerned evangelicals] . . . is the suspicion that they are fighting . . . something more daunting: [that being] . . . Protestantism's ongoing descent into full-blown American materialism. After the eclipse of Calvinist Puritanism, whose respect for money was counterbalanced by a horror of worldliness, much of Protestantism quietly adopted the idea that "you don't have to give up the American Dream. You just see it as a sign of God's blessing," says Edith Blumhofer, director of Wheaton College's Center for the Study of American Evangelicals. . . . "The tragedy is that Christianity has become a yes-man for the culture," says Boston University's Prothero.

(Van Biema and Chu 2006, 55-56)

Eugene Peterson

Peterson offers a very straightforward down-to-earth—and biblical—approach to spirituality, part of a multivolume series being released by Eerdmans. Here, he offers practical advice:

I've been a pastor most of my life, for some 45 years. I love doing this. But to tell you the truth, the people who give me the most distress are those who come asking, 'Pastor, how can I be spiritual?' Forget about being spiritual. How about loving your husband? Now that's the place to start. But that's not what they're interested in. . . . We've all met a certain type of spiritual person. She's a wonderful person. She loves the Lord. She prays and reads the Bible all the time. But all she thinks about is herself. She's not a selfish person. But she's always at the center of everything she's doing. "How can I witness better? How can I do this better? How can I take care of this person's problem better?" It's me, me, me, disguised in a way that is difficult to see because her spiritual talk disarms us.

(Peterson 2005, 42)

Richard Foster

From an entirely different perspective, Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*, illustrates how some unusual theological views have entered the mainstream.

He argues: "Real prayer is something we learn." Indeed, one of the main reasons our prayers are not answered in the affirmative is because we have not properly learned how to pray.

"One of the most critical aspects in learning to pray for others is to get in contact with God so that his life and power can flow through us into others," he writes. "Often people pray and pray with all the faith in the world, but nothing happens. Naturally, they were not tuned in to God."

Like many other writers on prayer, Foster emphasizes the necessity of *listening*. "Listening to the Lord is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary for successful intercession."

Such advice is not an obvious conclusion one could draw from Scripture, nor is Foster's counsel that prayer for major concerns demand more proficiency than prayer for little things.

"In physical matters," he writes, "we always tend to pray for the most difficult situations first: terminal cancer or multiple sclerosis. But when we listen [to God], we will learn the importance of beginning with smaller things like colds or earaches. Success in small corners of life gives us authority in the larger matters. If we are still, we will learn not only who God is, but how his power operates" (Foster 1988, 38-39).

That a beginner in prayer should start with colds and work up to cancer is simply not a biblical concept. It is much more reminiscent of a shamanistic religion. In such religious cultures, a seasoned witch doctor is equipped to take on big cases—ones that a novice would avoid. This is not the way of the Christian faith, nor is his conclusion that when "nothing happens," it is obvious that the person who prayed was "not tuned in to God." How does one *tune into God*? Is such a term even valid? Is it determined by results alone? (See Tucker 2006, 125.)

Bruce Wilkinson

The most recent best-selling treatise on prayer—less than one hundred pages—is *The Prayer of Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson. Its popularity is based in part on a nearly universal tendency toward self-absorption. This tendency is a common element in prayer—what Bill Hybels refers to as "the 'Please God' syndrome. 'Please God, give me . . . help me . . . comfort me . . . strengthen me . . .'" (Hybels 1990, 20).

This please-God syndrome, of course, is not blatantly selfish. Indeed, it is marked by a concern for others: "Please God, bless me so that I can bless others. In *The Prayer of Jabez*, based on one verse in the Hebrew Bible, Wilkinson develops a philosophy of prayer:

If Jabez had worked on Wall Street, he might have prayed, "Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios." When I talk to presidents of companies, I often talk to them about this particular mind-set. When Christian executives ask me, "Is it right for me to ask God for more business?" my response is, "Absolutely!" If you're doing your business God's way, it's not only right to ask for more, but He is waiting for you to ask. Your business is the territory God has entrusted to you.

(Wilkinson 2000, 30-31)

Wilkinson states the purpose of the book in the preface—*teaching* people how to pray: "I want to teach you how to pray a daring prayer that God always answers. It is brief—only one sentence with four parts—and tucked away in the Bible, but I believe it contains the key to a life of extraordinary favor with God."

Is this single verse an illumination on communication with God? Does it provide the key to unlocking the secret of prayer?

God Talk

The book *God Talk: Cautions for Those Who Hear the Voice of God* by Ruth Tucker (2005), places the third wave within the broader realm of contemporary

evangelicalism and shows how traditional evangelicals have gradually moved into the expansive sea of charismatic religion.

It is politically incorrect to suggest that God might have told President Bush not to bomb Baghdad (or the reverse), but why not? God spoke to military leaders in the Old Testament.

Today, God speaks on mundane matters. The voice sounds eerily like our own. Rebecca's story is an example. She tells how she had forgotten the tatting her grandmother taught her. "She spent an entire morning trying to tat" but "ended up with nothing more than a tangled mess of knots," ready to give up: "Lord, I prayed: *Grandma is gone now. Please don't let me lose what she taught me too.* Just then a small voice seemed to whisper, 'You've got to flip it, Becky.' It all came back in a rush. I flipped the piece around and started looping a knot, then another. They formed a ring. Once again I was making lace" (Tucker, 2005, 20).

Rebecca's story, many would argue, is harmless. It is an example of a message from God routinely claimed by evangelicals who would not imagine themselves part of the third wave movement. God speaks on tatting, but God is not permitted to speak on war and other weighty matters.

"Have we fashioned for ourselves a domesticated talking god of tatting? Such is not the God of Scripture. God either intervenes and speaks today or God does not. But to argue that God intervenes in tatting but not bombing simply will not do" (Tucker 2005, 21).

Prayer as a Dialog

The majority report calls on the CRC to "Think of prayer as a dialogue, not a monologue, and be attentive to what God is saying as you pray" (VII, B, 5). Such a definition of prayer is common in broader evangelical circles.

The story of Marilyn in *God Talk* is an example. She speaks of routine experiences of two-way prayer. One case related to a little girl she had seen on the school playground without a winter coat.

[Marilyn] decided that she would go to Sears and buy a coat for the girl, but on her way out of the house, God said to her, "Go back to your prayer closet." There, God told her to go not to Sears but to a high-end specialty shop. . . . The clerk informed her that a coat in the size she needed had been selected by a local charity and set aside in the back room for that very purpose. Marilyn graciously accepted the coat and brought it to the little girl.

Marilyn . . . does not represent some extreme charismatic wing of the church, and she came across as sounding very sincere and credible. . . . Was she just making these stories up? I would not make such an accusation, though I am reminded of an observation C. S. Lewis made about his own spiritual shortcomings: "Those like myself whose imagination far exceeds their obedience . . . easily imagine conditions far higher than we have really reached. If we describe what we have imagined we may make others, and make ourselves, believe that we have really been there—and so deceive both them and ourselves."

But is it possible that stories like Marilyn's do not serve the cause of Christ? If we think that giving coats to poor children involves supernatural intervention from God, are we less likely to respond to the root causes of such social issues? The underlying problem was not the lack of a coat. There were surely other issues involved—whether parental neglect or alcoholism or racism or unemployment or just plain poverty. . . . Even if the root problem were lack of a coat, are we less likely to dig into our own pockets if we are waiting to hear the voice of God on the matter?

I do not know how to explain Marilyn's extraordinary claim to routinely hearing God's voice. I find no comparable instances of God carrying on daily conversations with ordinary individuals in Scripture. In Acts 9, we read of Dorcas who gave clothing to the needy, but there is no mention that such good works were prompted by a voice from God or that the clothing was supplied miraculously. Rather, Dorcas was remembered in life and in death for her charitable deeds. The miracle associated with Dorcas was the astounding account of the Apostle Peter's raising her from the dead.

(Tucker, 2005, 116-18)

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OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATION

Overture 1: Allow Ordained Ministers of Emerging Churches to Serve as Delegates to Classis**I. Background**

As in most classes, churches in Classis Grand Rapids North send two delegates to classis meetings—a pastor and an elder (or two elders if the church is vacant). This is in keeping with Church Order Article 40. These delegates have the right to speak when issues are discussed, and they have the right to vote. However, under our present system, this privilege applies only to delegates from organized churches.

Where does that leave ordained pastors who serve unorganized churches? They are welcome, maybe even encouraged, to attend as guests but they do not have the right to speak unless it is specifically granted by the chair. They are welcome and encouraged to attend but do not have the right to vote. They sometimes serve on classical committees but do not have the right to vote at meetings of classis. The churches they serve are often churches planted by classis but, again, they have no right to vote. Not only that, but their attendance at classis meetings is not even required or expected, but optional.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2007 to either amend Church Order Article 40-a or add wording to Church Order Supplement, Article 40-a that would allow ordained ministers of emerging churches to serve as delegates to classis.

Grounds:

1. Such delegation will give greater recognition to the ministry of these pastors in the classis.
2. Such delegation will also benefit classis by their expected presence at the meetings and their contribution to all matters under consideration.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 2: Allow the Interpretation of Church Order Article 40-a to Include Delegates from Emerging Churches As Well As Organized Churches

I. History

Classis Holland, by a majority vote at its September 2006 classis meeting, approved the seating of delegates to classis from emerging as well as organized churches. The primary opposition to this motion was voiced by those who believed that the classical decision was contrary to Church Order Article 40-a. In an excellent letter from the Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church council, asking Classis Holland to delay the implementation of the September decision until we could address an overture to synod, they wrote:

We want to begin by whole-heartedly stating our support for the emerging and mission churches. God has drawn many into His sheepfold through these wonderful works of ministry. Having these churches more fully represented at our classis meeting would enrich the organized churches and hopefully strengthen and encourage them as well. Central Avenue supports the drafting of such an overture for consideration at Synod.

Therefore, at the January 2007 classis meeting, we voted to delay seating delegates from emerging churches in Classis Holland. We did so in order to seek a ruling from synod that would allow us to send delegates from both emerging and organized churches to the meetings of Classis Holland.

We understand that the common interpretation of Church Order Article 40-a (“The council of each church shall delegate a minister and an elder to the classis”) means that only an *organized church* may send delegates to be seated as a classis meeting; therefore, for many years, small, financially dependent churches have been barred from full participation in classis meetings. One church in Classis Holland has been a so-called emerging church for seventy-one years, another church has been an emerging church for forty-seven years. Each of these churches have all the New Testament marks of the church and are engaged in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the exercise of discipline, care for the poor, family visiting and pastoral care, and community involvement. In addition, ordained pastors or evangelists lead the church, they are self-governing either by elected elders and deacons or by an administrative team, they are self-propagating through evangelism, they support classical and denominational ministries, they follow the Church Order, and they send and support missionaries.

Classical church visitors are convinced that they have a sufficient number of leaders who meet all the criteria for the office of elder and deacon, yet, because they are in very economically depressed areas and still need financial help from the other churches in Classis Holland, they have continued as emerging churches and therefore are denied full participation in meetings of classis.

Classis Holland has ministered to racially diverse groups within its boundaries. We have a ministry to Cambodians, Laotians, and Hispanics. After eighteen years, the Cambodian church has become an organized church. One of our Hispanic churches has been organized but only after twenty-seven years as an emerging church. The other Hispanic church has been an emerging church for more than ten years. Once again, these churches have all the marks of the New Testament church, and they have leaders who could function as elders and deacons, but, for many of these churches, many years went by

because of financial poverty before they could participate fully in classical meetings. They were finally permitted to organize when Classis Holland (1) waived the rule that they had to be financially independent and (2) promised continuing financial support through classical grants and offerings from the churches.

Classis Holland has adopted a bold plan for planting new churches. Some churches will be planted in communities that are economically challenged and racially diverse. Other churches will be planted in up-scale communities where financial independence will not be a problem. We do not want to discriminate against the churches in economically challenged or racially diverse communities by withholding the right to be full members of Classis Holland with all the rights and privileges given to other churches.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Holland overtures Synod 2007 to allow the interpretation of Church Order Article 40-a (“The council of each church shall delegate a minister and an elder to classis”) to include delegates from emerging as well as organized churches.

Grounds:

1. Currently, the words, *the council of each church*, are interpreted to mean an *organized* church. Synod 1964 declared “that only ministers who have been delegated by *organized churches* (emphasis ours) shall be seated as members of a classical session” (*Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 57).
2. Small emerging churches who do not meet the current requirements for organization are nevertheless churches in the full sense of the New Testament criteria for a church. Dr. David H. Englehard and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman in *The Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government, 2001 Revision* wrote: “Groups of believers, although too small to be fully organized do constitute the church . . .” (p. 238).
3. According to the practice in the Christian Reformed Church, emerging churches are given the right to fulfill all the duties and responsibilities of the church with the exception of being delegated to classis. For instance:

<i>Organized Churches</i>	<i>Emerging Churches</i>
Preach the Word	Preach the Word
Administer Sacraments	Administer Sacraments
Exercise discipline	Exercise discipline
Have ordained pastors or evangelists	Have ordained pastors or evangelist
Self-govern	Self-govern
Self-propagate/evangelize	Self-propagate/evangelize
Care for the poor	Care for the poor
Support classical/denominational causes	Support classical/denominational causes
Have family visiting/pastoral care	Have family visiting/pastoral care
Have community impact	Have community impact
Follow the Church Order	Follow the Church Order
Send and support missionaries	Send and support missionaries
Are seated as delegates to classis	Are not seated as delegates to classis

- d. It is our denominational goal to become more racially and ethnically diverse; however, many of these racially and ethnically diverse churches have found it difficult to meet the current standard for becoming an organized church and therefore are unable according to the current interpretation of Church Order Article 40-a, to fully participate in our

classis meetings. The adoption of this overture will be a significant step in achieving our denominational vision for racial and ethnic diversity and equality. It will bring our classis and, ultimately, the denomination another step closer to the full ethnic and racial riches merited by Christ and revealed in Revelation 7:9, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.”

Classis Holland
Anthony L. Louwerse, stated clerk

Overture 3: Transfer First CRC, Prinsburg, Minnesota, to Classis Minnkota

Classis Minnkota overtures synod to transfer First Christian Reformed Church of Prinsburg, Minnesota, from Classis Lake Superior to Classis Minnkota.

Grounds:

1. First Christian Reformed Church of Prinsburg has requested this transfer.
2. Classis Minnkota has considered the reasons for which First Prinsburg desires a transfer and finds these reasons to be acceptable.
3. Classis Minnkota would welcome First Christian Reformed Church of Prinsburg into its classical fellowship.
4. Classis Minnkota has diminished in size over recent years, and a realignment that increases the size of our classis will be beneficial.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 4: Reinstate the Position of Canadian Director of Chaplaincy Ministries

I. Background

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has a long history of chaplaincy ministry both in armed forces and in all kinds of institutions. That ministry has been a rich blessing to countless individuals and has been instrumental in spreading the gospel of God’s saving grace to people who were often beyond the reach of the institutional church.

Next to the grace of God, the ministry has been blessed abundantly by the inspired leadership of synod-appointed directors of Chaplaincy Ministries.

However, Canadian chaplaincy ministry has suffered in the last few years for lack of its own administrative office as well as the absence of a Canadian director of chaplaincy whose mandate included uniquely Canadian aspects of the ministry.

II. Overture

It is with this situation in mind that Classis Toronto overtures Synod 2007 to reinstate the position of Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries and ensure that sufficient ministry shares be available to cover this position.

Grounds:

1. A Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries is necessary for support for and collaboration with Canadian chaplains.
 - a. The director of Chaplaincy Ministries does an exceptional job of connecting with approximately one hundred chaplains. However, the geography of the North American continent makes it impossible for one person to adequately service the wide-spread locations where CRC chaplains are employed and also to connect with their calling churches.
 - b. Assistance in fulfilling this vital task is essential. In this connection, it must be noted that the formation of a Canadian website or chatroom for Canadian chaplains to provide support and advice would be extremely helpful.
2. A Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries will establish a Canadian identity in chaplaincy.
 - a. In spite of the fact that our denomination is international, it is nevertheless imperative to acknowledge the need for Canadian executive positions in the management of its affairs. The Canadian perspective in chaplaincy often differs from that of the United States and its focus, of course, reflects this. For example, there is an important difference in the assimilation process of immigrants between the United States and Canada. Where in the United States the “melting pot” absorption is seen as ideal, there is in Canada a greater emphasis on preserving one’s cultural heritage. Hence, chaplaincy in Canada tends to be more of a multicultural and multifaith character. The Canadian model of chaplaincy, while complimentary to its U.S. counterpart, is different and as such should be encouraged to develop in a way that is distinctly Canadian. This can only be done with the reinstatement of the position of Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries.
 - b. The present director of Chaplaincy Ministries has provided a strong voice and exemplary leadership in developing and representing chaplaincy in both Canada and the United States. He has been very supportive of Canadian chaplains and their ministries; however, there is an understandable and natural desire for Canadian chaplains (and prospective Canadian chaplains) to connect with someone in their own country.
3. A Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries will pursue opportunities for chaplaincy.
 - a. There are many opportunities for Chaplaincy Ministries to promote, develop, and provide expertise on chaplaincy matters to CRC churches in Canada. The previous Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries was already exploring some of these opportunities, but these efforts did not come to fruition because of the loss of the central networking office in Canada.

These various opportunities include, among others:

- 1) Developing liaisons with Classical Ministry Committees (CMCs).
 - 2) Developing chaplaincy policies and/or models for a growing number of seniors' residences and nursing homes.
 - 3) Developing a liaison/support with existing Seaway Ministries in Montreal and Vancouver and possibly Halifax at a later date.
 - 4) Chaplaincy promotions, liaisons, and/or presentations to Christian colleges (e.g., Redeemer and King's colleges).
 - 5) Developing liaisons and programs for an increasing number of lay chaplains.
 - 6) Promoting and providing a Canadian connection for Canadians interested in pursuing chaplaincy.
 - 7) Developing a liaison with Canadian campus chaplains.
4. A Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries will provide for provincial and national representation.
- a. CRC Chaplaincy Ministries requires a staff person with a Canadian address and phone number to work effectively with Canadian government agencies, institutions, and professional organizations. Just as Canadians would have difficulty accessing U.S. organizations, the reverse also applies. Many chaplaincy positions are provincially or federally financed and regulated. It is mandatory that cooperation in the regulatory process be done by a Canadian citizen. Also, Canada and the United States have different professional regulatory organizations.

The following are a few examples where the CRC in Canada requires more involvement:

- 1) In the past, the Canadian director represented the CRC on a provincial agency called the Ontario Multifaith Council (OMC), which, among other things, oversees spiritual and religious care in provincial institutions. The OMC operates several Regional Multifaith Committees (RMCs), which provide advice and evaluations for local provincial institutions. Presently, CRC representation on RMCs is very low as departing members are not replaced and remaining reps have nowhere to connect back to the CRC.
- 2) There are ongoing efforts to form a Canadian College of Chaplains. The CRC should be a part of these negotiations.
- 3) The Canadian Council of Churches, through a subcommittee called NAGEP is presently developing collaborative strategies for possible emergencies, including pandemics. Although chaplaincy ministries is represented here, a Canadian CRC office should be receiving resulting reports to enable decisions to be made about its level of participation and preparation not only regarding chaplaincy but also regarding relief efforts in conjunction with other Canadian churches.
- 4) The Federal Interfaith Committee has a CRC Canadian chaplain representative but resulting discussions do not find their way to a central Canadian source.
- 5) CRC representation on other chaplaincy-related national and regional organizations is haphazard at best. Representation does sometimes occur but it is usually the result of individual initia-

tives. None of the resulting measures and decisions find their way to a central Canadian office (i.e., Burlington).

5. A Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries is necessary to develop a restorative justice program.
 - a. Synod 2005 encouraged churches to participate in restorative justice programs. Using restorative justice principals as a means to address violations within society is a growing trend. Instead of going through the traditional court system, incidents are dealt with by those directly affected so that harm is acknowledged and all people involved can begin to work toward rebuilding relationships and community integrity.
 - b. Salem Christian Mental Health Association, a CRC sponsored agency in Hamilton, is developing a restorative justice pilot program in partnership with the Ontario Multifaith Council. Training is provided and conferences are arranged in participating churches with the complete agreement of not only local judiciary and police forces but the victim and offender as well. CRC's in British Columbia have also done extensive work in restorative justice.
 - c. It is an opportune time for the CRC in Canada to provide leadership in coordinating and developing a comprehensive restorative justice program. The process could begin under the auspices of a Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries.

III. Summary

Chaplaincy Ministries in the CRC has lost much over the past decade. By its very nature, it is not a highly visible ministry and therefore is easily downgraded and marginalized without much noticeable effect within the church itself. Over the years, it has lost its agency status along with thousands of dollars supposedly targeted for chaplaincy development. Staff has been reduced from three full-time U.S. positions plus one part-time Canadian position to one full-time plus one part-time U.S. position.

Chaplaincy development in the CRC has stagnated while opportunities have increased immeasurably. The reinstatement of the position of Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries would be strategically prudent and has the potential to benefit the CRC in countless ways.

Following is a proposed job description for Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries:

1. Report to the director of Chaplaincy Ministries, establish a collegial relationship, and provide assistance to him or her as required.
2. Submit a yearly plan to the director of Chaplaincy Ministries and the director of Canadian ministries stating goals, rationales, strategies, resources required, and timelines for year one, year three, and year five.
3. Maintain informative contact with the director of Canadian ministries and, when and where possible, provide support and information from the chaplaincy perspective to all ventures initiated by the Canadian ministries that have their offices in Burlington (e.g., become an active member of the Canadian Ministries Team).

4. Provide support, endorsements, evaluations, and liaisons with Canadian chaplains, their calling churches, and places of employment.
5. Represent CRC chaplaincy where possible on Canadian regulatory and promotional organizations and advocate for chaplaincy policies and positions.
6. When and where possible recruit candidates for chaplaincy.
7. Examine needs and opportunities for possible new positions for chaplains.
8. Explore and implement ways and means to develop and promote chaplaincy within Canada.
9. Act as a resource and consultant for Canadian chaplaincy matters.
10. Begin coordinating and developing restorative justice practices for the CRC (30 percent time allotment).
11. Develop a Canadian website and/or chatroom for Canadian chaplains.
12. Form an advisory committee to meet bimonthly to provide support and advice and to act as a sounding board to the Canadian director of Chaplaincy Ministries.

Classis Toronto

Henk Bruinsma, stated clerk

Overture 5: Appoint a Review Committee to Evaluate the Denominational Board of Trustees and Require the BOT to Adhere to Synodical Deadlines

I. Background

Over the past few years, a shift in policy seems to be taking place on a denominational level. In procedures and decisions, it appears that the role of the denominational Board of Trustees (BOT) is expanding in ways that trouble us. This expanding role does not appear to be happening intentionally but incrementally and in ways that appear to blur the distinctiveness of our Reformed polity.

As we understand it, synod's authority, while above the lower assemblies, is delegated from those lower assemblies (Church Order Article 27-b). We also understand that the BOT is subordinate to synod, doing the work of synod between synodical gatherings—similar to the way a classical interim committee does the work of a classis between its meetings. However, it seems that the BOT is increasingly making not only broad policy decisions but is also making unilateral decisions and strategies that are increasingly bypassing both the upper and lower church assemblies. It is unclear to us whether this expanding role of the Board is helpful to the life of the CRCNA.

II. Specific concerns

A. By meeting and making significant decisions in May, the Board adopts and recommends matters that cannot be included in the Agenda for Synod. Their decisions (generally, not specifically) are forwarded to councils and classes. However, the timing of these meetings and the receipt of the reports provides insufficient time for any local or regional discussion of those decisions. This leaves any discussion of Board actions until either the floor of synod or fall meetings of classis. For example, in 2006, the Board's May report arrived less than a month before synod convened and at or after the time spring classis meetings were held. Such scheduling gives the Board at least two benefits that no other body has: (1) it has no need to adhere to the rules regarding synodical deadlines, and (2) the lower assemblies have no opportunity for discussion or input until after decisions are already in place.

A council within Classis Zeeland and the Classis Zeeland classical interim committee attempted to address items found in the Board's May report in 2006. The churches received the May 2006 BOT report days before Classis Zeeland met. With this schedule, there was insufficient time for a formal overture on timeliness regarding synod or classis or council. Within a week of receiving this report, this council (endorsed by the CIC of Classis Zeeland) responded with a communication to synod. However, there was no record that the correspondence was even received in the Acts of Synod 2006. The explanation for this from the executive director was as follows: "Because you (sic) letter was a matter of communication rather than an overture and it *arrived late in the process* it was handled as correspondence." (Email correspondence, dated October 6, 2006 [emphasis added].) Both lower bodies expedited these concerns, yet they still "arrived late in the process." No agency should be allowed such a loophole that prevents input from the lower assemblies.

Furthermore, the current structure of the BOT's representation makes it very difficult for U.S. councils or classes to give or obtain feedback from their Board representatives. At neither the spring nor fall 2006 meetings was the Board's regional representative present in Classis Zeeland meetings. The Board has become more and more distant from the local and regional assemblies.

In summary, by the timing of its meetings and by its deciding and reporting, the BOT is able to decide significant matters that neither make the Agenda for Synod nor reach councils or classes in time for a formal response to synod.

B. The Board is also making significant policy decisions that create the appearance that synod supports the Board, not the other way around.

1. The BOT is making decisions regarding the budgets and ministries of various agencies—and making those decisions unilaterally. Classis Zeeland received the following report from the regional team of Home Missions in May 2006:

Classis Zeeland should take note of a sharp reduction in ministry share receipts being proposed by the Board of Trustees for CR Home Missions. While the factors behind the decision are complicated, the end result is that CR Home Missions will have an \$820,000 decrease in ministry share, which represents a 13.4% decrease from previously budgeted amounts. These monies, along with a BTGH decrease of 8% and a World Missions decrease of 1% will go to the unfunded programs enacted by Synod 2005, particularly the

Christian education recommendations (discipleship training, tuition assistance to CTS students), the deficit in the denominational services budget (reduced to \$500,000), mandated ministry share for smaller churches (\$900,000), and \$300,000 to bolster the every household Banner.

The end result of all this is that less money will be available from CR Home Missions for church planting, education ministry (campus ministry), mission focused churches, and smaller churches. This means that a greater portion of the costs of new ministry initiatives will be borne by the local classis and the local church.

(Christian Reformed Home Missions Regional Partners Team
Report to Classis Zeeland, May 9, 2006)

The Board's decision concerns us on several levels. First, it seems unwise to us that legitimate matters of purely internal denominational concern (e.g., shortfalls in *The Banner*, denominational services) are being paid for from the budgets of Home Missions, World Missions, and the BTGH. We believe these should be the last agencies to bear the brunt of administrative shortfalls. When the mission of the church is cut back for internal concerns, the kingdom rarely benefits.

Second, it appears that the BOT was given the admittedly difficult task of creating denominational ministries (discipleship, assistance to CTS students) without specific or mandated funding. Rather than address this oversight openly, the BOT has merely shifted the burden to existing agencies. This, once again, leaves several unanswered questions: Why were certain agencies targeted, but not all? Why was no appeal made to synod to address the lack of funding for new ministries? Rather, the BOT decided unilaterally to support new ministries by significantly diminishing existing ministries.

Third, if this reallocation is an internal budgeting matter, it still causes much confusion because of the possible reasons—reasons that are listed in their report as “complicated,” but are not defined. We consider that the following options are real possibilities:

- It may be that the Board is dealing with matters that should only be before synod. If so, then one wonders when synod relinquished its responsibility to approve agency budgets. The BOT seems to have become able to step in and inform agencies such as Home Missions that they would be receiving a significant shortfall. Who gave the BOT that authority? Does not that authority make the board of Home Missions and its relationship to synod irrelevant?
 - This may also be a simple reallocation of ministry shares. If so, there is still an integrity issue at stake: monies given in good faith by individuals, churches, and classes as designated ministry shares to specific agencies cannot be unilaterally reallocated. Even the appearance of a unilateral reallocation erodes local trust in our denominational structures and agencies.
2. Another instance of the BOT's shifting relationship to synod is its response to a recent synodical instruction. Synod 2006 responded to an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest (Overture 7) regarding the selection of synodical officers. The synodical decision reads:

That synod instruct the BOT to modify the Rules for Synodical Procedure . . . to provide a brief bio of all delegates and a classis recommendation regarding any who have qualifications and a willingness to serve as an officer of synod.
(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 682)

The Board responded to synod's instruction with the following:

[The Board] decided that it is not feasible to implement synod 2006's request for more information from classes about delegates who could serve as officers of synod.

(BOT Highlights from Sept. 28-30, 2006)
(E-copy dated Oct. 22, 2006)

Once again, there are several concerns:

- The BOT altered the language of the synodical mandate from instruction to request. As we understand it, there is a significant difference between an instruction and a request. There are avenues of disagreement for a synodical instruction (appeal, overture). However, the BOT choose none of those legitimate paths. It unilaterally decided that compliance with synod's instruction was not feasible.
- We are also very concerned by the precedent set by the BOT's refusal. If any agency or body can decide unilaterally that a decision from a higher body is difficult or inconvenient, we violate the heart of our Reformed church polity. The Board appears to be sending the message that synod's decisions have become optional—at least to the BOT. One wonders how this will ripple into the lives of the churches if left to stand. Which decisions and instructions can individual churches or classes deem to be optional?

III. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2007 to instruct the BOT to meet and report prior to the annual deadline for the Agenda for Synod. The Board must also provide to classes and councils a full report of its decisions, not merely highlights of its meetings.

Grounds:

1. This requires the BOT to function under the same time restrictions as all other denominational agencies, classes, and councils.
2. This allows the lower assemblies the time to respond to the BOT decisions in a timely manner.
3. This maintains the proper relationship between the BOT and the lower assemblies according to our Reformed church polity (Church Order Article 27-b).

Furthermore, Classis Zeeland requests that synod appoint a review committee (whose members are independent of the BOT and the Denominational Office) whose task it is to investigate the current role of the denominational Board of Trustees. Such an investigation should review Board representation, its role as distinct from synod, the limits and extent of its authority, and the actual responsibility of the Board within our distinct Reformed polity. It should also determine if the current expanding role of the Board has helped or hindered the life and ministry of the CRCNA and its churches.

Grounds:

1. The BOT is making decisions that should be restricted solely to the deliberative bodies of the CRCNA, thereby overstepping its authority.
2. The churches and classes would benefit from an objective understanding of the Board's expanding role. This would also give synod the means to judge whether the currently expanding role of the BOT is both consistent with our polity and a benefit to the ministry of the CRCNA.
3. Only an independent committee sufficiently separate from existing authority structures can take these matters into account without Board or denominational influence.
4. An independent review will also be able to address the awkwardness of the Board's makeup: Canadian members of the BOT are elected directly by each Canadian classis, assuring ownership for and feedback to these lower assemblies; United States BOT members are only elected by regions. Such regional representation has distanced the U.S. classes and members from the work of the BOT.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 6: Address Issue of Undocumented Workers

I. Background

In its January 17, 2007, meeting, Classis Zeeland received the following report from an appointed study committee, and, among other recommendations, adopted the following:

That Classis overture Synod to provide leadership to the church in (i) educating the church to the issues surrounding illegal immigration, and (ii) speaking with a prophetic voice to our government, calling for a just and equitable legislative response to the present immigration issue. This report can serve as background information for this overture.

II. The report

A. The committee's understanding of its mandate

In response to an overture from the Rusk CRC, Classis Zeeland, at its meeting in January 2006, appointed a study committee to examine the question: May the church receive into membership and invite to the Lord's Table people living in the United States who are known to be working illegally?

This mandate can be understood in both a narrow and a broad sense. The narrow sense understands the question as essentially one of discipline. In this case, the committee is being asked to determine whether official church discipline is an appropriate response to those living and working in this country illegally. To withhold membership from a church and to refuse admittance to the Lord's Table would be an act consistent with Church Order Article 81-a, which reads: "Members who have sinned in life or doctrine shall be faithfully disciplined by the consistory and, if they persist in their sin, shall be excluded from membership in the church of Christ."

The committee, therefore, is being asked to determine (1) whether those living and working in this country are "persisting in sin" and, (2) if so,

whether official church discipline is an appropriate response. This is a narrow view of its mandate.

At the same time, the committee recognized that there is also a broader understanding of this mandate. Implied in the question from Rusk CRC are numerous questions of justice, hospitality, and compassion. Even if the committee determines that discipline is warranted, what then should the response of the church be? How should the church respond to those who have lived and worked in this country illegally for many years? What might diaconal ministries look like? If, as Church Order Article 78 says: "The purpose of admonition and discipline is to restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation . . .," then what might this look like in the case of undocumented workers who cannot be restored? What about families where the parents are illegal, but the children are citizens? Should deportation be the immediate and sole answer? If so, does that end church involvement and responsibility?

As the committee reflected on these and many more questions, it recognized the need (1) to educate the church as to the complexity of this issue, and (2) to provide pastoral advice and guidance to churches that will increasingly be confronted by this issue.

B. An introduction to the immigration issue

While it is not possible to state accurately how many illegal immigrants currently reside in the United States, recent estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center place the number anywhere between 11.5 to 12 million people. The report estimates that about 850,000 illegal immigrants have arrived in the United States each year since 2000; 56 percent come from Mexico; 22 percent from other Latin American countries, mainly in South America; 13 percent come from Asia; and 6 percent come from Europe and Canada combined.

Of the total number of illegal aliens, about 7.2 million are undocumented workers, making up about 5 percent of the country's workforce, or about one out of every 20 workers. It is estimated that illegal aliens fill a quarter of all agricultural jobs, 17 percent of office and house cleaning positions, 14 percent of construction jobs, and 12 percent of food preparation jobs.

Although government enforcement of U.S. immigration laws has been lax in the past, over the last few years, enforcement has been steadily increasing. According to the General Accounting Office, the number of notices of intent to fine issued to employers for hiring unauthorized workers dropped from 417 in 1999 to three in 2004. Yet, from 2004 to 2005 the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) worksite enforcement criminal investigations increased from 465 to 511. These investigations have resulted in 127 criminal convictions nationwide in 2005, up from 46 the previous year.

Illegal immigration has mixed effects on the American economy. It has been shown that undocumented workers tend to depress wages for low-skilled jobs. According to Dr. Jorge Borgas from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, by increasing the labor supply between 1980 and 2000, immigration reduced the average annual earnings of U.S.-born men by an estimated \$1,700, or roughly 4 percent. Among those born in the United States who did not graduate from high school, the estimated impact was even larger, reducing wages by 7.4 percent. The negative effect on U.S.-born black and Hispanic

workers is significantly larger than on whites because a much larger share of minorities are in direct competition for jobs with immigrants. Borgas does point out that the reduction in earnings occurs regardless of whether the immigrants are legal or illegal, permanent or temporary. It is the presence of additional workers that reduces wages, not their legal status.

However, though depressing wages for low-skilled workers, illegal immigration benefits the rest of America by providing lower prices for such things as restaurant meals, agricultural produce, and construction. Economists generally believe that when averaged over the whole economy, the effect of illegal immigration is a small net positive. Borgas claims that the average American's wealth is increased by less than 1 percent because of illegal immigration. Additionally, the economic impact of illegal immigration is far smaller than other trends in the economy, such as the increasing use of automation in manufacturing or the growth in global trade. Those two factors have a much bigger impact on wages, prices, and the health of the U.S. economy.

Clearly, the American economy has a hunger for low-wage, unskilled labor. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that the American economy requires roughly 485,000 full-time, year-round new immigrants each year. Current immigration laws provide only 5,000 visas for such workers annually.

In considering illegal immigration, it should be noted that immigrants want to come, live, and work legally. Previously, there was a seasonal flow of migrants to and from the United States; they would enter the United States for a period of months, work primarily in three states and then return home to their families at the end of the season. In the post-North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and 9/11 years, as border enforcement was stepped up, this seasonal flow was disrupted due to the increasing difficulty in crossing the border. Migrants stayed and increasingly became a part of the permanent U.S. population. According to Princeton University professor, Dr. Douglas Massey, trying to stop the seasonal flow of migrants has "transformed what had been a circular flow affecting three states into a settled population of families scattered throughout the 50 states, all at the cost of billions of taxpayer dollars."

Unfortunately, increasing enforcement only serves to aggravate this situation. Not only is border crossing becoming more and more dangerous—in 2005, 282 people died attempting to cross the border in the Tucson area—but because of the difficulty and danger involved, illegal aliens become much more reticent to return home even for a visit. Instead, they seek to reunite their families here, thereby increasing the number of illegal aliens in this country.

Many undocumented workers have planted roots in our communities. They have families, jobs, own homes and businesses, and have children who are American citizens. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, up to 70 percent of illegal aliens living in the United States have been here for more than five years. This begs the question of whether it is realistic to expect persons to pack up and leave their families, children, employment, and communities behind, should laws be made that would require them to leave the United States.

In considering illegal immigration, the root causes of migration need to be taken into account. Often migration is fed by factors such as environmental, economic, and trade inequities. Treaties are formed and economic policies are adopted that often benefit one party at the expense of another.

For example, we can consider the world of coffee. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) promised strong economies for Mexico and the United States. It claimed that job opportunities would increase after Mexico removed tariffs for incoming goods and subsidies for local products. Corporations would cross the borders freely, unhindered by environmental standards or trade unions.

In places such as Chiapas State, low coffee and corn prices drove people off the land. According to Christian Peacemaker Teams, the price of coffee plummeted from thirty pesos to eight pesos per kilogram. It is estimated that twenty-five million small-scale coffee farmers in the developing world saw a drop in price that has cost them a staggering \$4.5 billion a year. This has had a catastrophic effect for workers, the local community, and the future sustainability of the entire coffee industry.

Compounding this devaluation of the price for coffee, NAFTA also forced Mexico to drop the subsidies that had been in place for corn farmers. Chiapaneca families could no longer sell corn that would be competitive with U.S.-subsidized corn. The result was that the native population in Chiapas traveled north with other impoverished Mexicans so they could support their families.

Of course, this is not the whole picture. Not all illegal immigrants are the victims of social or economic injustice, yet, clearly, all are coming in pursuit of a better life. They are attracted to the United States for the same reason that many of our forbearers were attracted—because the United States promises freedom and opportunity.

Unfortunately, for many illegal aliens, this promise only ends up being an empty illusion. Many immigrants are victimized by coyotes who charge large fees to help cross the border and by shady lawyers as well as others who charge large fees for documentation that is often illegally obtained and false.

While it is true that illegal immigrants have made choices to cross the border illegally, culpability does not rest solely with them. Illegal immigration is part of a larger problem encompassing globalization, international treaties, oppressive economic realities, and even the historical force of population migration. As Mr. Kevin Appleby, head of the Office of Migration and Refugee Polices at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops says, “people need to understand greater forces are at play than a person deciding to cross the border—that in globalization, for example, labor is moving as much as capital.”

Dr. Douglas Massey of Princeton University echoes this thought. He says that,

at the heart of NAFTA lies a contradiction: even as we move to promote freer cross-border movement of goods, services, capital, and commodities we simultaneously seek to prevent the movement of labor . . . [to integrate] all factor markets except one. . . . To maintain the illusion that we can somehow integrate while remaining separate we have militarized our border. . . .

(www7.nationalacademies.org/DBASSE/Doug_Massey_Senate_Testimony_PDF.pdf)

Clearly, governments have the right and responsibility of governing and restricting border crossing and immigration. Yet, it is also clear that our present system of immigration laws is broken and out-of-date. Any attempt to

address the issue must include not only increased enforcement but also a compassionate response to the needs of those having lived here long-term as well as a vigorous defense of global economic justice.

C. *Theological issues*

1. Immigration status and the nature of sin

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (Rom. 13:1-7)

As the apostle Paul demonstrates in Romans 13, submission to governing authorities directly correlates with our faith commitment to Jesus Christ. Not only do governments have the right and responsibility for governing and restricting border crossing and immigration, but, as Christ-followers, we have the responsibility of submitting to these laws. As Dr. John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, says in a sermon on this text:

...the argument of the text is clear. Submit to civil authority 1) because it's instituted by God, 2) because it is good for you that there is civil authority, 3) because you will get punished if you don't, and 4) because if you don't your conscience will condemn you for breaking the higher moral law of God.

(Subjection to God . . . Part 2)

(www.desiringgod.org/ResourcesLibrar/Sermons/ByDate/2005)

The Belgic Confession, Article 36 elaborates on this same theme. It begins by confessing that:

We believe that because of the depravity of the human race our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings.

After describing the role of civil government as ordained by God, the confession then states:

Moreover everyone, regardless of status, condition, or rank, must be subject to the government, and pay taxes, and hold its representatives in honor and respect, and obey them in all things that are not in conflict with God's Word, praying for them that the Lord may be willing to lead them in all their ways and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life in all piety and decency.

Unless immigration laws are therefore determined to be contrary to the Word of God, as Christians, we are called to live in obedience to them. This call would extend also to immigrants who find themselves living and working in the United States illegally.

The apostle Peter provides further impetus for Christians who are living and working illegally in the United States to pursue ways of living in submission to civil authority. He does this by making a connection between our testimony of faith and the way we live in this world. In 1 Peter 2:12-17 he writes:

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

At a very simple level, it is clear that, as Christians, we are called to submit to civil authority not only because this authority is divinely ordained, but also because, in submitting, our own testimony is strengthened and God's glory is increased.

Can we therefore say that to live and work in the United States illegally is a sin? If we adopt L. Berkof's definition of sin as "essentially a breaking away from God, opposition to God, and transgression of the law of God" (*Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], p. 230), then yes, living and working in the United States illegally is a sin, which would therefore beg the question, is this a sin worthy of official discipline.

However, it may be good for us to reflect more deeply on this question of sin. Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, in his book *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), defines sin as culpable shalom breaking and he goes on to say that

Culpable disturbance of shalom suggests that sin is unoriginal, that it disrupts something good and harmonious, that (like a housebreaker) it is an intruder, and that those who sin deserve reproach. To get our bearings, we need to see first that sin is one form of evil (an agential and culpable form) and that evil, in turn, is the disruption and disturbance of what God has designed.

This design naturally includes not only the proper relation of people to people and of people to nature and of nature to God but also the proper relation of people to God. . . . In sum, shalom is God's design for creation and redemption; sin is blamable human vandalism of these great realities and therefore an affront to their architect and builder. (p. 16)

Clearly, in considering the immigration issue, the breaking of shalom is not perpetrated solely by those who have broken immigration laws by living and working in the United States illegally. Guilt or culpability is shared by coyotes who charge large fees to help immigrants cross the border, by shady lawyers as well as others who charge large fees for documentation that is often illegally obtained and false, and by business' that hire undocumented workers to cut labor costs to a minimum. Guilt or culpability is also shared by all of us who benefit from economic policies that enhance American standards of living at the expense of others throughout the world (for example, see the above discussion regarding coffee).

Guilt or culpability is also shared by all of us who so often turn a blind eye to the needs of the poor and the oppressed around the world. Far too often, it takes a tragedy such as a tsunami or an earthquake or stories of

mass starvation before we are moved to act. While it is true that Jesus tells us that the poor will be with us always (Mark 14:7), this in no way frees us from our biblical responsibility of serving the needs of the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed.

In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus reminds us that loving our neighbor means serving those who are in need. It means caring for those who are victimized and oppressed. In this era of globalization, this means that our neighbor is anyone in need no matter where he or she might be in this world. If we benefit from unjust economic policies and we remain silent, then we also are guilty of the sin of breaking shalom.

Clearly, persons who surreptitiously cross the border to work illegally in the United States bear full culpability for their sin and need to be held accountable. In the same way, so does a business that knowingly hires workers “under the table,” paying them substandard wages. However, is this same level of culpability held by a young man who was brought across the border as a child and now finds himself, after ten years, unable to legally work and reside in the only country he has ever known? What level of culpability is borne by those who remain silent and blithely unaware of how they have benefited and continue to benefit from unjust and even oppressive economic policies?

In Romans 3, the apostle Paul reminds us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; “there is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10). As Reformed Christians, we need to acknowledge that to assume a position of innocence is always a dangerous place for us to begin. In relation to the immigration issue, it is far too easy for us to assume that there are those who have sinned and there are those who are innocent. If this simple dichotomy is correct, then clearly those who have sinned need to be reproached, and they need to do something to correct the situation. The solution lies, therefore, solely in the repentance of *the other*, which in this case would entail either becoming a legal resident or returning to one’s home country.

Perhaps this immigration issue is a clear demonstration of the truth that “there is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10). While we need to reproach and call the other to repentance, we must do this from a position that recognizes our own guilt and culpability. As we do so, we will then be able to hear the reproach and the call to repentance coming from the other. We will then see that the solution does not lie in the hands of one party, but rather it lies in all of us to humbly seek to structure our world in such a way that it reflects God’s design for creation and redemption.

Clearly, sin permeates every facet surrounding the issue of illegal immigration; very few connected to the issue bear no culpability. Yet, it is also clear that guilt is not equally shared. These variations in the level of culpability must therefore be considered as we reflect on the question of immigration status and discipline.

2. Immigration status and the nature of discipline

All sin is deserving of discipline but, as noted by the committee for the Church Order Revision in its report to Synod 1962, “all members of the church are happily not deserving of ecclesiastical discipline, but when they sin in any way, they are entitled to the church’s correction” (*Acts of Synod*

1962, p. 407). All sin deserves discipline and correction, but not all sin is deserving of ecclesiastical discipline.

Building on this distinction, the Committee to Study Section IV of the Church Order in its report to Synod 1991 stated that:

In view of the pastoral responsibility which all members must show to each other (see Church Order Art. 78), the official discipline of the church must be based upon Christian care and concern and be done pastorally, as the complement to the privilege the members have of serving one another. Unless official discipline has as its basis this mutual concern and care, it will seldom meet the purpose of restoring the sinner and promoting his/her own self-discipline.

(*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 267)

In considering whether ecclesiastical discipline is an appropriate response in a given situation, not only does the manner in which discipline is carried out need to be considered but so also does the purpose of discipline. Church Order Article 78 states,

The primary purpose of admonition and discipline is to restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation, to maintain the holiness of the church, and to uphold God's honor.

Expanding on this, the Committee to Study Section IV of the Church Order in its report to Synod 1991 stated that: "At the heart of admonition and discipline lies the restoration of the sinner to a living, obedient relationship with his Lord and full fellowship with God's people" (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 271).

As the church considers the application of ecclesiastical discipline in situations surrounding these issues of illegal immigration, care must be taken to take into account both the possibility of restoration as well as issues of pastoral care and concern. Church leaders must exercise wisdom in the application of discipline, using great discernment in determining when ecclesiastical discipline is appropriate. Yet, in all cases, faith communities must engage all people in a life of discipling and disciplining, leading all to a richer, deeper fellowship with God and his church, and in the process, confronting and challenging dynamic structures of injustice.

3. The biblical call to hospitality

As the church engages in this collective ministry of discipling and disciplining, the biblical call to hospitality must shape the context of these relationships. Throughout Scripture, Christians are enjoined to practice hospitality, making operational their faith in acts of love and service to the "alien within their gates," (Exod. 20:10) the stranger amongst them.

Perhaps no person better exemplifies a stranger than the person living and working illegally in the United States. Dr. Christine Pohl, in her book *Making Room* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), identifies the stranger as "those who are disconnected from basic relationships that give persons a secure place in the world. The most vulnerable strangers are detached from family, community, church, work, and polity" (p. 13).

She goes on to say:

When we offer hospitality to strangers, we welcome them into a place to which we are somehow connected—a space that has meaning and value to us. This is often our home, but it also includes church, community, nation and various other institutions. In hospitality, the stranger is welcomed into a safe, personal, and

comfortable place, a place of respect, acceptance and friendship. Even if only briefly, the stranger is included in a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations. (p. 13)

Dr. David Smith and Dr. Barbara Carvill, in their book *The Gift of the Stranger* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), identify two types of hospitality. Each type is relevant for our discussion. The first type they identify as the *diaconal* or *Good Samaritan* hospitality, perhaps best illustrated in Matthew 25. In diaconal hospitality, the church is called to minister to the needs of the poor and those in distress. This is done primarily through instruments such as food pantries, thrift stores, car repair ministries, free medical clinics, and so forth.

A second type of hospitality that Smith and Carvill identify is *xenophilic hospitality*. Like diaconal hospitality, xenophilic hospitality receives the stranger as an image bearer of Christ, as *imago Dei*. However, xenophilic hospitality is different from diaconal hospitality in that it

is motivated by the eagerness to receive strangers first and foremost because they come from another nation and culture. With this kind of hospitality we graciously invite a foreign guest, a foreign tongue, foreign ways into our homes, lives, minds, and hearts. (p. 86)

Clearly, in order for the church to accomplish restoration, the purpose of all discipline and discipling, then it must do so within the context of practicing not only diaconal hospitality but also xenophilic hospitality. If the faith community is not actively seeking to receive the stranger, then what purpose is furthered by taking steps to exclude the stranger? If the church fails to practice both diaconal and xenophilic hospitality, then the practice of ecclesiastical discipline becomes a panacea that serves solely to cover up our own failures. As Jesus so succinctly reminds us in Matthew 7, before we can seek to remove the speck (sin) in another person's eye (life), we must deal with the *plank* in our own.

4. In pursuit of justice

"Let justice roll on like a river," proclaimed Amos (5:24). Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). God calls us to live upright lives and to do justice to our fellow citizens and neighbors.

Today, we hold a wide range of clashing perspectives on issues surrounding public life. As the website for the *Center for Public Justice* notes:

Christians often stand at odds with one another: some drive for political dominance, some pursue special interests, others retreat for purity's sake. Individualism and morally divided leadership fragment our country. Many citizens mistrust government and are disengaged from the political process. Interest-group politics rule the day. Bipartisan agreement is all too rare. And the poor and weak suffer most from the consequences of injustice.

(www.cpjustice.org/about.html)

While clearly Christians are called to work for justice, one problem that we quickly encounter is that justice has different meanings for different people. So what is justice? In answering this question, we quote from the website of the Office for Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA) of the Christian Reformed Church:

Some think justice has to do only with the legal system, with crime and punishment. Others believe that justice has to do with people using power in the right ways, or with having the right procedures in place to protect people's rights and freedoms. However, the scope of justice in the Bible is much larger than this. Justice refers not only to punishing those who break laws, or refraining from oppressing others, but also includes caring for the poor and vulnerable, and righting the results of our sinful nature. This is one of the practical ways we live out the command to love our neighbor.

Striving for justice means striving to realize God's original intention for human society: a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and shalom (peace) reigns. We believe that each of us is called to live in obedience to God, in whatever place or time God has put us. A biblical understanding of justice is based on this idea. Justice, according to what we see in the Bible, means making sure that everyone has the resources and opportunities they need to live out their God-given calling.

(www.crcna.org/pages/osjha_gettingstarted.cfm)

As Christians of the Reformed persuasion, we are called to strive for justice, working to make sure that all people have the resources and opportunities necessary to live in God's shalom. In doing so, it may be good to remember the values that drive this work forward. As articulated by OSJHA on their website, we value:

- Relationships with and among the poor, marginalized and oppressed characterized by humility, service, and a willingness to be advocates for justice.
- God's gifts of wealth and power as given for the greater good of all, to be used especially for the good of those who are oppressed, marginalized, and impoverished.
- Theological reflection that informs and is informed by the practice of social justice.
- Addressing the root causes of poverty and suffering; including systemic change at a local and global level, as well as personal transformation.
- Collaborative engagement with all people seeking justice, and especially with those who follow Jesus.
- Individual and local social action, as well as collaboration at a broader level.
- Institutional expressions of truth and justice (whether testimonial, prophetic, confessional) concerning pressing social issues of our day.
- Biblical teachings that motivate to action, as well as theological reflection.

(www.crcna.org/pages/osjha_about.cfm)

Clearly, as the church seeks to respond to this issue of illegal immigration, it must also respond to issues of social justice. Toward this end, more theological reflection needs to take place so as to inform and guide the church as it seeks to practice social justice. Diaconates must sensitize themselves and their churches to the pressing needs of undocumented workers, as well as to the root causes of suffering in the lives of the individuals they encounter. Then, they must lead and equip the church in using God's gifts of wealth and power to bring hope, healing, and blessing into the lives of those who are suffering. For each person and family encountered, the response may look different, simply because the particulars of each circumstance will be different. This, therefore, calls for wisdom on the part of the church as it seeks to restore wholeness and holiness while ministering with compassion and love.

As the local church responds to the issues of seeking personal transformation at the local level, denominational structures must engage this issue on a national and international level. While the local church can explore

what systemic changes are needed at the local level, it is the voice of the broader church that is needed in order to address this issue at the national and global level. In our nation today, the issue of illegal immigration and undocumented workers is a pressing social issue. Now is not the time for the church to be silent. Rather, it should engage in deep biblical and theological reflection, collaborating with others and providing guidance, leadership, and support to the church as it then speaks with a prophetic voice that calls for justice.

5. Living in grace

Throughout all of this reflection and ministry, the church must remember that we live and breathe in a community of grace. Wherever and whenever possible, the church must work toward restoration, a restoration that takes place at multiple levels. On an individual level, we are to work toward restoration in terms of one's status before the law; at the same time working toward restoration and healing of families that are often fragmented and broken because of immigration issues. Concurrently, the church must work toward restoration of shalom at the local, national, and international levels, actively pursuing social justice.

Yet, as the church engages in this activity, it must remember that we live in an in-between time. Restoration and social justice will not be perfectly achieved until our Lord returns. Therefore, in this in-between time, a spirit of grace must permeate our ministry, our work, and our lives together.

III. Conclusions (Recommendations adopted by Classis Zeeland on January 17, 2007):

A. That classis urge the churches, as they minister to and with persons living and working in the country illegally, (1) to take into account both the possibility of restoration as well as issues of pastoral care and concern, and (2) to exercise wisdom in the application of discipline, using great discernment in determining when ecclesiastical discipline is appropriate.

B. That classis remind the churches that discipline takes place within the context of the discipling ministry of the church and that the overall goal is the restoration of the individual and the community to a right relationship to God and his world. For some, this may mean working toward legal status; for others, this may mean returning to their country of origin. For yet others, the problems may be so complex that there is no "good fix." In these situations, wisdom and grace need to be exercised.

C. That classis call the churches to engage in both diaconal hospitality—demonstrating the mercy of Christ—and xenophilic hospitality—practicing a love for the stranger; in the process actively working to break down any cultural, ethnic, or relational barriers that may exist.

- Diaconal hospitality is found wherever the mercy of Christ is demonstrated by way of ministering to the practical needs of life. This includes, but is not limited to, things such as providing food, clothing, and shelter for those in need.
- Xenophilic hospitality is found wherever there are personal, intentional acts of love and kindness. This form of hospitality opens one's home and

life to the stranger and welcomes them at our kitchen tables; in short, we embrace the other with arms of love and friendship.

D. That classis, recognizing the growing cultural diversity of our community, urge our churches to engage in cross-cultural evangelism and ministry.

E. That classis overture synod to provide leadership to the church in (1) educating the church to the issues surrounding illegal immigration, and (2) speaking with a prophetic voice to our government, calling for a just and equitable legislative response to the present immigration issue. This report can serve as background information for this overture.

F. That classis receive the report of the study committee and recommend it to the churches for study and discussion.

IV. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2007 to provide leadership to the church regarding the issues surrounding illegal immigration (1) by recommending Classis Zeeland's report on ministry to illegal immigrants to the churches for study, discussion, and application, and (2) by instructing the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to speak (by letter) with a prophetic voice to our government, calling for a just and equitable legislative response to the present immigration issue.

Grounds:

1. The extensive research, discussion, and conclusions of our study may be valuable to other churches and classes who are facing this issue.
2. This current issue is one to which justice and mercy call us to speak with a united voice to "the powers that are ordained by God."

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 7: Enforce Establishment of Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Teams

I. Introduction

When in the night I meditate on mercies multiplied. . . . One needs only one letter from the tortured soul of a previously abused SWIM team member, written at 2:00 a.m., to realize that nighttime meditations have a huge variety of reasons. She realized that this pastor was a chronic, sociopathic predator who had never been prosecuted, and the closest she had come to a response from "the Church" was the statement that "he is old and withered so we think the problem is over." Where does a person like this SWIM team member go for justice?

Our synod has recommended safe church teams in every classis and effective abuse prevention programs in every church. Four out of five abuse cases are never heard because no such programs exist in the local church and no such team exists at the classical level. Seventy percent of churches and classes in the denomination have not responded to synod's recommendations to ensure that justice is done for victims of abuse. In some cases, churches have

actively resisted the implementation of abuse prevention committees, although, given the biblical mandate for doing justice, loving mercy, and walking obediently with God, one wonders why.

Let us refuse to cover up abuse by our church leaders, and let us act responsibly to ensure that the teams synod recommends are established at the local and classical levels. For this purpose, Classis Pacific Northwest submits the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to require:

- A. That beginning with the 2008 *Yearbook*, an icon be published next to the name of each church to indicate that this church has an abuse prevention team.
- B. That beginning with the 2008 *Yearbook*, an icon be published next to the name of each classis to indicate that this classis has a safe church team.
- C. That beginning in 2010, a church of the denomination may not call a pastor until the church implements an abuse prevention program consistent with the denominational guidelines.
- D. That beginning in 2010, all classes of the denomination must have a safe church team in place and functioning.
- E. That beginning in 2010, all churches and classes of the denomination must carry adequate liability insurance to cover possible litigation arising from alleged cases of abuse.

Grounds:

1. This overture in all of its points will bring the churches and classes in line with the recommendations of synod (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 526; *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 682; *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 775).
2. Every organized church and every classis needs an abuse prevention program and a safe church team to protect the most vulnerable part of our church populations. The church needs to be a safe haven for its members.
3. This will indicate to the members of our churches that we are serious about “doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God” in regard to abuse prevention and the desire to help victims of abuse.
4. Without an effective program of abuse prevention, there is often no resolution for victims of abuse.
5. It is the loving and right thing to do as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Timothy Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 8: Allow Candidates to Be Called from the Reformed Church in America

I. Background

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) are now in full fellowship with each other. This means, among

other things, that ministers of the CRC are eligible to receive a call from an RCA congregation and an RCA minister is, likewise, able to be called to serve a CRC congregation without sustaining a classical exam. Church Order Article 8-b reads, "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." If that is already true, why are not the seminaries of a denomination in full fellowship given equal honor regarding the call?

II. Overture

Christ Community Church overtures Synod 2007 to allow candidates for ministry to be called from the Reformed Church in America seminaries because the RCA is in full fellowship with the CRC. Church Order Article 6-b could then read,

Graduates of theological seminaries of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America who have been declared candidates for the ministry of the Word by the synod of the CRC or the RCA shall be eligible for call in both denominations.

Grounds:

1. We now accept ministers of the RCA according to Church Order Article 8-b without going through a colloquium doctum. The same ought to apply to candidates according to the required calling process.
2. RCA master of divinity graduates already meet the requirements of Church Order Article 6-a.
3. Our denominational CR Home Missions is constantly looking to expand the pool for church planters. Because the CRC has a history of having a strong emphasis on higher education, specifically seminary education, seminary graduates out of the RCA ought to be considered.
4. The present system of requiring a half year or more of courses from Calvin Theological Seminary adds an undue burden to an RCA seminary graduate who has already sustained oral exams and a lot more education than many who come into the denomination through other routes (i.e., Church Order Article 7).

Christ Community CRC, Tualatin, Oregon
Cal Taylor, clerk

Note: This overture was presented to Classis Columbia but was not adopted.

Overture 9: Do Not Approve Changes to the Church Order Re the SMCC

I. Decision of Synod 2006

Synod 2006 approved a new structure for the ordination of ministers of the Word via Church Order Articles 7 and 8. This new structure made the SMCC the exclusive path for candidates who wish to enter the ministry of the Word. This committee is made up of representatives from some of our colleges, from Calvin Theological Seminary, and from some appointed leaders. The appointment to this committee was done by the Board of Trustees. This committee is the most powerful committee for ministerial leadership in the CRC.

II. A history of the discussion

The issues involved in Synod 2004's creation of and Synod 2006's extension of the SMCC are:

- Prior to 2004, Calvin Theological Seminary's Board of Trustees recommended candidacy to synod for all Church Order Article 6 candidates.
- Prior to 2006, the classes, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, declared Article 7 and 8 special candidates and approved people from these Articles for ordination by local churches within their classes.
- After 2004, the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC) has approved all candidates through Article 6. This removed the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees from the responsibility of evaluating candidates that they did not know from seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary.
- In 2006, synod extended the mandate of the SMCC to have authority over Article 7 and 8 candidates. Both of these Articles were historically handled by the classes with the concurrence of synodical deputies. Now all people seeking to be candidates for minister of the Word, regardless of the Article must be approved by the SMCC. Now all candidates for ministry from Articles 7 and 8, except those educated at Calvin Theological Seminary, must study for one quarter (10 weeks) at the seminary. (Ministers in the RCA are no longer considered to be Article 8 candidates.)
- There is talk within the CRC of the SMCC being entrusted with authority for evaluating people seeking to become ministry associates.

III. The problem with these changes

While Article 7 candidates do tend to vary more widely in abilities than ministers who were educated at Calvin Theological Seminary, they have played a vital part of having leadership in the CRCNA. The recent changes can potentially deprive the CRCNA of gifted pastors and church leaders. These changes also do not fully recognize and deal with the unique issues in the local church and classical context. There are a number of issues that the SMCC does not address and needs that the SMCC can not meet.

A. Rural needs – In many rural classes, it is very difficult to get enough Article 6 ministerial candidates to take calls in their classis. They must look for biblically sound men in their classis who can feed their sheep.

B. Ethnic needs – The Southern California and southwestern classes, as well as many individual congregations, are dealing with a variety of ethnic backgrounds where seminary education is not really possible.

C. English as a second language – Some very gifted potential pastors, who could lead vibrant Christian Reformed congregations, may have limited English-language skills; thus making ten weeks of study at the seminary difficult if not impossible.

D. Geographical needs (not West Michigan) – The reason some classes have many Article 7s and others have none is context. In West Michigan, where the seminary is located, it would be less likely that these classes would need an

Article 7 candidate. Those who enter the CRCNA by Article 7 find the seminary conveniently close and accessible if they live in West Michigan.

E. Personal hardship – For many candidates, the requirement by SMCC of moving for ten weeks to Grand Rapids means uprooting family or leaving them altogether. In addition to this family hardship, it can also cause economic hardship.

F. Congregational hardship – Having a leader active in the local church and then leaving for ten weeks of classes causes the local church hardship. The leader-preacher-pastor is gone for an extended period of time.

G. Bureaucracy – For any Article 6, 7, or 8 candidate, the SMCC must approve them. This includes interviewing every individual and declaring him or her a candidate for minister (Article 6), approving licensure to exhort (Article 7), or giving permission to proceed with doctrinal conversations (Article 8). This adds a layer of bureaucracy as well as additional hoops.

H. Nonflexible approach – This approach gives little flexibility to ministry in the CRC. Every ordained pastor must go through a prescribed cookie-cutter approach to ministry.

I. Takes away from the local church – The SMCC ties the hands of the local leaders in congregations and classes to raise up or recruit leaders for unique local or church-plant needs.

The SMCC as a denominational board consisting largely of academics from our Christian colleges and CRC ministers in *low-need* CRC classes does not appear to be well equipped to understand the needs for leadership in classes with severe leadership shortages. The beauty of our Reformed polity lies in a delicate balance among consistories, classes, and synod. The old system already had a synodical element behind Articles 7 and 8. No minister in the past several decades has been ordained without the consent of synodical deputies.

Taking the authority to make judgments on Article 7 and 8 candidates from classis denies the contextuality of ministry. In the past, the CRC received many ministers from Article 8 coming as immigrants to this country.

IV. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures synod to not approve changes in the Church Order concerning the SMCC. Instead, Classis Illiana overtures synod to make the SMCC *one* of the possible avenues, but not the exclusive avenue, for ordaining ministers of the Word by way of Articles 7 and 8 and that synod retain our historical practice that allows the classes the authority to grant permission for ordaining ministers of the Word with the consent of synodical deputies as was the case prior to Synod 2006.

Grounds:

1. The SMCC exclusive avenue
 - a. Hurts the new decentralization direction. The leadership directives in the agencies have gone toward grassroots initiatives. CRWRC and Home Missions have developed regional concepts for their work, and

critical to their work is their working with local churches in identifying and recruiting ministerial leadership.

- b. Often creates an unnecessary bureaucratic obstacle because of the exclusive nature of the current SMCC mandate.
- c. Loses the local context of ministry
2. The SMCC's exclusive avenue hurts the local church in raising up or recruiting new ministerial candidates. Local churches who have a mission to raise up leaders for ministry find it difficult to work with an exclusive avenue without the possibility of working with an avenue that suits its local situation.
3. The SMCC exclusive avenue may lead to a one-perspective-only ministerial candidate. The SMCC is centrally controlled by appointed rather than elected officials of classis. This opens the future ministry evaluation avenue to unhealthy control by a homogeneous group representing a specific perspective that may not be supported by the church at large.
4. The Korean classis (Pacific Hamni) has already been exempted from the SMCC's exclusive avenue. This classis, our most growing American church movement, sees the SMCC as unwise.
5. The SMCC's exclusive avenue will hurt the diversity direction of the CRC. There are now different people groups within the CRC. These people groups are racial, economic, geographical, and ethnic. A strong SMCC exclusive avenue will hamper the indigenous development of identifying and recruiting leadership, especially if a local classis option is not possible.
6. The SMCC makes it difficult to recruit and enfold existing congregations, with their pastor, into the CRCNA.
7. The current proposal loses the heart of our Reformed polity as to the authority of the local church and classis. No longer does the local context make decisions. The SMCC as the *exclusive avenue* violates our Reformed polity of authority residing first in the local congregation, second in the classis, and third in synod.

V. Conclusion

If we want to be a diverse denomination, it will only be rhetoric if our leadership structures do not allow classis and regional teams to initiate, evaluate, and mobilize local pastors, ministry associates, and leaders.

Classis Illiana
Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

Overture 10: Do Not Approve Changes to Church Order Articles 7 and 8 Re the SMCC

I. Overture

Classis Northern Illinois overtures synod to not approve changes to Church Order Articles 7 and 8 concerning the SMCC. Instead, Classis Northern Illinois overtures synod to make the SMCC *one* of the possible avenues, not the exclusive avenue, for ordaining ministers of the Word by way of Articles 7 and

8 and that synod allow classes the authority to grant permission for ordaining ministers of the Word, *with the consent of synodical deputies*, as was the practice before the changes proposed by Synod 2006.

Grounds:

1. The SMCC exclusive avenue hurts the CRC in the following ways:
 - a. It hurts decentralization by creating an unnecessary bureaucratic obstacle and loses the local context of ministry.
 - b. It hurts the local church in raising up or recruiting new ministerial candidates. Local churches who have a mission to raise up leaders for ministry find it difficult to work with an exclusive avenue without the possibility of working with an avenue that suits their local situation.
 - c. It will hurt the diversity direction of the CRC. There are now different people groups within the CRC. These people groups are racial, economic, geographic, and ethnic in nature. An SMCC exclusive avenue will hamper the indigenous development of leadership identification and recruitment, especially if a local classis option is not possible.
2. The Korean classis (Pacific Hamni) has already been exempted from the SMCC exclusive avenue. This classis, our most growing American church movement, sees the SMCC as unwise.
3. The current proposal loses the heart of our Reformed polity as to the authority of the local church and classis. No longer would the local context make these decisions, but the SMCC would, as the exclusive avenue; thus violating our Reformed polity of authority residing first in the local congregation, second in the classis, and third in the synod.

II. Conclusion

If we want to be a diverse denomination, it will only be rhetoric if our leadership structures do not allow classical and regional teams to initiate, evaluate, and mobilize local pastors, ministry associates, and leaders.

Classis Northern Illinois
Gregory Schuringa, alt. stated clerk

Overture 11: Broaden the Use of Ministry Associates

I. Introduction

As the Christian Reformed Church celebrates 150 years of ministry in North America, we have many reasons to rejoice. One of God's great blessings is the growing multicultural nature of our denomination. We are truly becoming a church of many nations ministering to many nations, even on the soil of North America. Christian Reformed people worship in North America each Sunday in over a dozen different languages. The diversity of our congregations is greater now than at any point in our 150 year history. This is the new reality. We believe that this reality brings glory to God, that this reality is truly celebrated in heaven, and that this reality be celebrated on earth.

We in southern California are privileged to work at a focal point of this new reality. Our community and our classis have enormous cultural and ethnic variety. Our ministry field is very diverse and fertile. Our denominational

vision of being a church of all nations is attractive to many independent congregations, as is also our deep commitment to the authority of the Word and our expression of the Reformed perspective. Over the past ten years, Classis Greater Los Angeles has had a significant number of ministers and ministries join the CRC, and we see no real end to this trend. The majority of these ministries are from non-Anglo ethnic groups. These congregations and their pastors truly enrich and bless us, locally and as a denomination, by seeking to fulfill the Great Commission while becoming multiethnic.

II. Challenges

During this same decade, our denomination has been discussing routes to ministry and the issues of appropriate standards for those who serve in ministry in the CRC. The CRC synod in the past few years has established a Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), with part of its mandate that of processing, with local classes, the individuals who seek to enter CRC ordained pastoral ministry through Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8.

As that committee is now fully functional, they have set in place various procedures and standards that will seek to serve the church and uphold our traditional value of a well-educated clergy. We as a classis endorse the concept of consistent standards throughout the denomination as well as the value of a well-educated clergy. We are ready to work with the SMCC on a classical level in order to welcome, train, and assimilate those who are ordained in other denominations who wish to become ordained in the CRC.

However, the new procedures for many of the potential pastors who are entering the CRC in our region are cumbersome and even impossible to meet. As second-language English speakers, or persons with little English, the training mechanisms of the MEMPC (Modified Ecclesiastical Ministry Training Program) will be cumbersome. For those pastors with full-time secular jobs or with congregations that depend on them, to spend hours in training to become part of the CRC will not seem to be possible. We in Classis Greater Los Angeles have been discussing a local, contextual training program with the SMCC, but our program will likely not meet the desired standards for ordination through Article 8 (the route that many of our new pastors have taken into the CRC in the past decade). How are we to reconcile the occasional dissonance between the values of *contextualization* and *appropriate standards*? How are we to both honor our tradition of a well-trained clergy and also welcome those clergy trained in other contexts by other means? We wrestle with these questions at the classical level, and we wrestle with these questions in conversation with the SMCC. We trust that the denomination as a whole is invested in this struggle.

One particularly difficult circumstance frequently presents itself in our classis. Some of the multiethnic congregations that join us are officially organized: By their tradition and practice, they have functioning leadership who fill the roles of elder and deacon. They have a good relationship with their pastor, and they do meaningful ministry. However, some of these same congregations are rather small in size (by traditional CRC standards). They do not have some of the established church habits assumed by traditional CRC congregations. For instance, the members do not have the habits or values of purchasing health insurance or retirement plans, either for themselves or their pastors. In some of these cases, they have pastors who have been trained in

ways that are different than our traditional mechanism, and the expectation that such pastors go through our MEPMC program, no matter how welcoming it has become, presents a significant difficulty. As mentioned above, for these pastors, the realities of bi-vocational ministry, fragile congregational life, and English as a second language make entry into ordained CRC ministry under Article 8 very impractical and nearly impossible.

III. Options

As a region, we have wrestled significantly in the past decade, as have others in the denomination, regarding the proper way to address these difficulties. A number of options have been considered and discussed:

- We could lower the bar for Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8, and make a new norm for persons to enter CRC ministry with less theological training.
- We could adapt our system through the use of Article 23, making a way for people with less theological training than has traditionally been required in the CRC to still enter ordained ministry in the CRC.
- We could refuse to adapt our system in any significant way and observe the resulting loss of many of our multiethnic congregations and pastors.

As a classis, we see great wisdom in some form of the second option. We are of the understanding that our denominational SMCC also favors this option. The exact nature of the modifications that are required and advisable needs to be determined, but moving in this direction seems to be a very wise course of action.

We have wrestled with other options and other solutions to this problem. It has occurred to us that we could simply tell such congregations that they are not candidates for organized status. Such a judgment seems rather proud and fails to respect the cultural values of the congregation, which experiences their church life in a very organized or established fashion relative to their cultural experience. It has also occurred to us that we could tell pastors of these congregations to simply function as an elder, which our Church Order currently allows them to do (Church Order Articles 53 and 55). Such a solution does not honor the history or calling of these pastors, and, again, feels like the action of a dominant culture lording it over a minority culture. Finally, it has occurred to us that we could do everything possible to encourage and enable such pastors and congregations to make use of our MEMPC program via Article 7 or 8. We are convinced that, although it is a wise strategy in many instances, it will not be effective with a number of the pastors who enquire about the CRC. We are convinced that this response will result in a decline of the multiethnic population of our denomination, and keep us from experiencing the new reality we described in our introductory paragraphs.

The burden of this overture is to speak on behalf of congregations who are officially organized, who have a self-concept and history of healthy self-sufficiency, yet who, by traditional CRC standards, are not able to demand or require a pastor to get the type of training and education currently required for those who enter CRC ordination through Article 6, 7, or 8. We seek to speak for these congregations and their pastors. We wish to honor those who pastor such congregations, as seems right in the Lord. Without eroding our denominational expectations and standards for well-trained ministers, we want to

make a place at the table for pastors and congregations for whom our standards and expectations are not realistic. We are blessed as a classis by the presence of many such pastors and congregations. We believe that the denomination will also be blessed and be well served as it makes ways for such pastors and congregations to be fully accepted as participants in our denomination.

IV. A proposal

Classis Greater Los Angeles proposes a modification to Church Order 23 that will allow a carefully selected type of church to ordain a ministry associate as a solo pastor. The churches we have in mind are small, less economically blessed congregations from cultural settings currently unfamiliar with our denominational values relative to ministerial training. Our proposal recognizes that this change needs to be seen as an exceptional accommodation to a particular circumstance. The judgment of both the classis and the denomination needs to be made regarding each case.

Furthermore, we propose that such pastors who serve as solo pastors in established congregations be allowed to serve as delegates to synod and to serve on denominational boards as pastoral representatives, should the local classis choose them as delegates. Such a step is consistent with the tone of respect that prompts the earlier request. This second change, as well as the first, would be quite minor in the experience of the broader church but would be significant in the freedom and welcome we give to these pastors. This practice would allow another type of pastor to serve the church at both the local and the denominational level. The truth is that at synod there are many classes who send ordained ministers and ministry associates as elder delegates. We would observe that often the composition of synod is unhealthily tilted toward ordained ministers. Pastors outnumber elders, even though our Church Order imagines an equal number of elders and pastors. Although our proposal does not directly address this problem, it would allow more open slots for traditional elders—this particular type of ministry associate pastor could now fill the pastor slot at synod. We would further observe that often associate pastors properly ordained as ministers of the Word serve as pastoral delegates to synod and on our boards. We would assert that solo pastors who would be ordained as ministry associates bring just as many pastoral gifts to the table. They are every bit as qualified by the Holy Spirit and by the church to serve at synod and on our boards as are those in non-solo pastoral roles who have been ordained as ministers of the Word. Yet, the main reason for this aspect of our proposal is one of mutual respect and honor. We are seeking to find practical ways to use and honor the office of ministry associate while at the same time preserving the tradition of a well-educated clergy.

The criteria for our first proposal, that of recognizing the exceptional circumstance for ministry associates serving as solo pastors in established congregations, would be as follows: The congregation is (1) small, (2) unable to financially support a minister of the Word in the traditional CRC manner, and (3) emerges from a context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Church Order Article 8 are not presently practical. Although technically (and in an appropriate sense) organized or established by CRC Church Order definitions, such congregations are also (in just as real a sense) emerging or nonorganized. Indeed, it is characteristic of emerging churches

that they are small in size, less able to support themselves financially, and less developed in the normal practices of congregational life. We believe that the office of ministry associate, already used for leadership in other emerging-church ministries, is appropriate for such technically organized, practically emerging congregations.

We ask Synod 2007 to approve these two proposals. The goals of such changes would be (1) the allowance of established ethnic congregations to continue to appeal to their more traditional pools of candidates when seeking a new pastor, (2) the ability of pastors from such congregations to be accepted and recognized in classis and the denomination as pastors, and (3) the opportunity for the CRC to fully benefit from the presence of such congregations and pastors. The safeguards we propose would preserve this practice as an exception to our normal procedures. Adopting this exception would help avoid the tension that sometimes is experienced between our values of contextualization and the standards being mandated for ordination as a minister of the Word under Articles 6, 7, and 8.

We hope that synod will see the wisdom and the urgency of this request. Our denomination is experiencing a significant shortage in pastoral leadership, a trend that is likely to continue. In the next ten years, there are likely to be 300 pastors who retire, 200 who drop out of parish ministry for various reasons, and 300 who are needed as church planters. This is a total of 800 pastors needed in the next ten years. Yet, in the past ten years, Calvin Theological Seminary has had close to 250 graduates entering parish ministry, the denomination has admitted close to 200 pastors through Church Order Articles 7 and 8, and approximately 75 church-planting ministry associates have been ordained. This total of 525 new pastors is an alarmingly 275 pastors short of the anticipated need. We have not even touched on the many other associate pastoral ministry roles to be filled by Articles 6, 7, 8, and 23.

The CRC wants to plant more churches, we need to fill vacancies that are being created by a large number of retiring pastors, and we want to grow in our cultural and ethnic diversity. We currently have and will want more types of CRC congregations in North America than have ever previously been experienced or imagined. In a sin-sick world, we as a denomination need to do all we can to accommodate the need for ministers and for pastoral leaders in our congregations. We offer the analogy of the medical community: Often a physician's assistant, rather than a physician, is able to provide appropriate and sufficient medical care in a clinic, even working on his/her own. In many communities there are not enough physicians to provide all the medical care needed, and physician's assistants provide an appropriate and significant service.

There are numerous instances of precedent in the CRC for this use of solo pastors ordained into the office of ministry associate in established churches. This step has been taken in at least ten classes, presumably with the concurrence of synodical deputies and the resulting approval of synod. Established congregations in Anaheim, California; Crownpoint, New Mexico; and Surry, British Columbia are among over a dozen that we know of that have been blessed by such an exceptional arrangement. We are proposing that the denomination as a whole now validate this practice.

V. Considerations

Certainly there are other modifications to Church Order Article 23 that could be considered and made. Our burden is to speak for this particular need. We certainly support other innovation and creativity relative to the ordination of pastors, the recognition of their calling, and the supervision of their work. Since its insertion into the Church Order, the office formerly known as evangelist has provided a wonderful flexibility to our church as it seeks to be sensitive both to good order and to the wind of the Spirit moving among the needs of our modern world.

Since the recognition of the office of evangelist nearly twenty years ago, the church has seen fit to make many modifications. The office of ministry associate was originally recognized as a way to ordain those in ministries of church planting as evangelists. Through the years, the office has been broadened to include those working in associate ministry positions as ministers of outreach, youth ministry, and worship. Although in theory we continue to try to tie the office of ministry associate to the office of elder, such a connection has not always been clear. The value of tying this office to elder work has been made subordinate to the value of following the Spirit into a new way of doing things. The church has the right and responsibility to use the Church Order as a tool. It ought never be a slave to rules or order for their own sake. We would suggest that in our current practice many ordained ministry associates are already recognized by the church as having a distinct pastoral calling in addition to their calling as elder. Our proposals admittedly ask the church to follow the Spirit into this broader understanding of the office of ministry associate. We believe that with the safeguards proposed it will not harm the church. Instead, it will help the church to live in the new reality that we wish to celebrate. These two proposals neither violate the spirit of the Church Order nor erode our commitment to a well-trained clergy. With the commitment of the church, through our SMCC, and by means of our local classical leadership committees, the values and opportunities for training in ministry can be expressed and developed.

VI. Training

We fully support the value of the denomination to have a well-educated clergy, and we support the work of the SMCC in this regard. We imagine that some who serve as solo pastors as ministry associates may decide, after a time, to receive the training required for ordination as minister of the Word (just as some physician's assistants decide to go to medical school to become physicians). As a classis, we would certainly encourage all ministry associates to consider such an option.

Training could be done for these ministry associates at the classical level. Indeed, we would be glad to work with the SMCC in establishing such training, and we have communicated to them our desire and an outline of a program. It is our belief that it would serve the church to develop a training mechanism for all Church Order Article 23 people, regardless of their particular calling. The training for those serving as solo pastors would likely need to include some additional elements not necessary for those serving in other ministries as ministry associates, such as an understanding of the CRC Church Order, CRC history, the confessions, and the Reformed perspective.

VII. Conclusion

By adopting our overture, Synod 2007 can enable the task of pastoring to be delivered to more communities than we will be able to serve if ministers of the Word are the only ones authorized to provide such a ministry. As we currently allow elders in vacant congregations to preach and present the sacraments, this practice would provide another form of relief for congregations unable to find an ordained minister of the Word. Allowing needy established congregations to ordain a ministry associate as their pastor would offer congregations one more option. Allowing ministry associates serving as solo pastors to be delegated to synod and denominational boards will build a sense of inclusion and honor between them—those serving as ministers of the Word and the church as a whole. Through these two changes, we would honor people who enter CRC ministry after they have been pastoring as ordained ministers in other settings. Such people would be truly recognized as ordained CRC pastors, as they had been in their previous community.

VIII. Overture

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures Synod 2007 to

A. Add to Church Order Article 23 a new lettered statement:

Ministry associates may also serve as solo pastors in established congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations have fewer than 150 members, have economic need, and are from a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Article 8 are not presently practical.

Grounds:

1. This arrangement provides a path into CRC ministry for pastors entering the CRC who do not have a master of divinity degree or do not meet the other standards required for Church Order Article 8 ordination to minister of the Word.
2. This arrangement acknowledges a particular set of circumstances that make it valid for an organized or established congregation to be recognized as an emerging or nonorganized congregation.
3. This arrangement preserves Articles 6, 7, and 8 as the normal routes to pastoral ministry in the CRC.
4. This arrangement helps the denomination address the significant current and anticipated need for pastors to serve in our churches.
5. This arrangement has already been a blessing to a number of congregations in the Christian Reformed Church.

B. Declare that ministry associates serving as solo pastors may be sent as pastoral delegates to synod and nominated to serve in other denominational functions where a person must normally be a minister of the Word to qualify.

Grounds:

1. This arrangement allows the classes and the broader church to recognize and make use of the pastoral gifts of those serving as solo pastors who are ordained as ministry associates.

2. This arrangement honors the calling of this unique type of pastor and offers a healthy expression of honor to such ministry associates.
3. Such pastors are every bit as qualified and capable of representing the pastoral ministry as are ministers of the Word ordained into pastoral and associate ministry roles.
4. This arrangement allows the denomination to take a bold step into the new reality of a multiethnic world where leaders of various cultures are fully accepted.

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Gary M. Stevens, stated clerk

Overture 12: Approve the English Standard Version of the Bible for Use in Worship

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2007 to designate the English Standard Version (ESV) as acceptable for use in CRC worship services.

Grounds:

1. "The ESV is an 'essentially literal' translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on 'word for word' correspondence. . . . Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and meaning of the original" (from the preface to the English Standard Version [Good News & Crossway, 2001]).
2. The ESV follows the grand translation of the American Standard Version and Revised Standard Version, which have long been approved by synods for use in CRC worship services. (The National Council of Churches, copyright holder of the RSV, gave permission to the ESV Translation Oversight Committee to build the ESV upon the RSV framework.)
3. The ESV will be a good worship and Bible study supplement to translations currently approved for use in CRC congregations.

Classis Columbia
Howard Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 13: Do Not Adopt the Decision of Synod 2006 Re Church Order Article 59

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2007 not to adopt the decision of Synod 2006 concerning Church Order Article 59 and to retain the language of Church Order Article 59 prohibiting children who have not yet made a public profession of faith to partake in the Lord's Supper.

Grounds:

1. Church Order Article 29 says that decisions are settled and binding unless it is proven that they conflict with the Word of God. Synod offered no biblical proof.
2. Church Order Article 47 says that no substantial alterations can be made unless synod did not give churches time to consider the proposed changes.
3. The change in Church Order Article 59 by Synod 2006 is a substantial change as defined by Church Order Supplement, Article 47-a: "A substantial alteration is any alteration . . . which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms or . . . principles and elements of worship. . . ."
4. The prior opportunity specified by Church Order Supplement, Article 47-b was not granted to the churches.

Classis Columbia

Howard Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 14: Revise Synod's Decision to Admit Children to the Lord's Supper

Classis Pella overtures synod to revise the synodically approved response of Synod 2006 to Overture 16 (i.e., that synod allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord's Supper on the basis of their full membership in the covenant community).

Grounds:

1. The Lord's Supper is not the Passover meal. It is the typological fulfillment of the Passover meal (as well as other Old Testament ceremonial feasts and offerings). Paedocommunionists contend that there is clear precedence that children participate in the Lord's Supper because they participated in the Passover meal. This is inferred from the story of the first Passover in Exodus 12. What is often neglected in the argument is the progressive revelation of Scripture. When this is considered, it becomes clear that the first Passover was unique to the one-time event and should not be considered as a definitive argument for having children at the Lord's Supper. Consider the following:
 - a. There is no indisputable evidence for or against the claim that children ate the meal at the first Passover (see Ex. 12, esp. verses 14 and 26-27). Even if we recognize that young children partook, infants would not be able to consume roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. One can argue just as well that while the Passover meal was being eaten, the children were participating as they observed the ceremony and asked questions (Ex. 12:26).
 - b. The original Passover took place in the home. God changed the location of the feast in subsequent passages to the temple (Deut. 16:2, 6). Many of the practices originally given to the fathers as part of family worship, were later restricted to a specialized priesthood at the temple.

- c. It is clearly stipulated that in the later Passovers only the male members of the covenant community were required to participate (Deut. 16:16; Ex. 23:17; 34:23). Though this does not stipulate that women and children could not participate, it does seem to show a significant change in the way the Passover was to be celebrated.¹ (Could this possibly be why the disciples did not question Jesus about not having their families at the Passover meal?)
- d. In Numbers 9:6-12, we read how God made special provisions for men who were defiled or away on a long journey. These men could celebrate the Passover in the following month. This special provision would have little effect on women who were unclean due to their menstrual cycle.² The implication is that if women, let alone children, were to always participate, God would also have made provisions for them.
- e. In the renewing of the Passover feast under Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 30:1-27, we learn that faith was a necessary requirement for coming to the Passover. A letter was sent out to come to celebrate the Passover (interestingly in the provisional month, see *d* above) that called the people not to be like their fathers “who were unfaithful to the Lord” (vv. 7-9). At least at this event, the people were to come in faith and repentance.
- f. Though the Passover is the primary meal typified in the Lord’s Supper, the death and resurrection of Christ is a fulfillment of *all* the ceremonial feasts and offerings. Along with the Passover, this would include the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. Only men were required to attend the feasts (Deut. 16:16). Likewise, the guilt offering (Lev. 6:17-18), the sin offering (Lev. 6:25-30; 7:10), the grain offering (Lev. 6:16-17), and the trespass offering (Lev. 7:6-7) all point to the sacrifice of Christ himself who is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). In all of these practices, only the male offspring of Aaron, the priest, were allowed to eat the meal. These feasts and offerings should not be neglected in consideration of the Lord’s Supper.
- g. When Jesus refers back to the Passover with the words, “This is my blood of the covenant . . .” (Matt. 26:28), he is not making reference to the first Passover. These words are taken from Exodus 24:8, in the setting of confirming the covenant at Mount Sinai. Immediately after this, Moses took the seventy elders up the mountain to eat and drink with God. A particularly interesting parallel between this event and the Lord’s Supper is that this event occurs at the beginning of the establishment of what, for them, was a new covenant (the Sinai Covenant). Likewise, God in the flesh (Christ) eats a covenant meal with the heads of the new nation (the new covenant church) at the Lord’s Supper.³

¹ Cornelis Venema, “The Old Testament Evidence Regarding the Participation of Children in Covenant Observance (part 3),” *The Outlook* 56, no. 7 (2006):20-21.

² Brian Schwertley, “Paedocommunion: A Biblical Examination,” Reformed Online Library, accessed: 20 February 2007 <<http://reformedonline.com/>>:4.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

h. Though it is not explicitly stated, it is reasonable to infer that when Jesus came to the Passover at the age of twelve, it was his first time attending the feast. Many scholars⁴ believe that this was in preparation for becoming “a son of the law” (Bar Mitzvah). Young males would be heavily catechized at the age of twelve in preparation for the following year ceremony.⁵

In observing these points, it seems clear that the argument that because children participated in the first Passover, then they ought to participate in the Lord’s Supper is not persuasive. The first Passover was unique and extraordinary. It did not carry through into the life of the Israelites as it had been first practiced.

In the shift from old covenant to new, there is continuity and radical discontinuity. To argue that the children of the new covenant should be welcomed to the Lord’s Supper because children of the old covenant were welcomed to Passover ignores the unique peculiarities of the two covenants. The minority report of Synod 1988 rightly affirms, “If children are to participate in the Lord’s Supper simply because they participated in the Passover, then the church will also have to baptize only male infants since they were the participants in the Old Testament rite of circumcision” (*Agenda for Synod 1988*, p. 300). As we have shown though, the evidence that the children participated in the Passover cannot even be conclusively determined.

2. The decision overemphasizes the promise side of the covenant at the expense of the obligation side.

The apostle Paul requires participants in the Lord’s Table to “discern the body of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:29), “remember” the Lord (1 Cor. 11:24), and “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). How can our youngest children examine themselves or recognize the body of the Lord? These cognitive requirements for admission to the Lord’s Table would exclude our very youngest covenant youth from the Lord’s Table.

Following Paul’s teaching, the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. and A. 81) warns against welcoming to the Lord’s Table those who have not yet experienced conversion and thus have not yet turned with displeasure from their sins and put their trust in Jesus Christ. While we may recognize that in infancy the children of believing parents may have experienced the new birth, and may already have the germ of faith and repentance,⁶ (even though they cannot express it) we cannot presume that they are regenerate. John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15), and David claims: “Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God” (Ps. 22:9). Infant regeneration and conversion is a wonderful possibility.

⁴ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 183.

⁵ Schwertley, “Paedocommunion,” 6.

⁶ John Murray, *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 199.

Nevertheless, there is no biblical warrant for contending that all baptized children may be presumed to be born anew by the Spirit of God. The promise to Abraham, that Yahweh would be a God to him and his offspring, is not an unconditional promise (Gen. 17:7). The promise validated in circumcision and later baptism is wonderfully powerful. Nevertheless, there are no fool-proof guarantees. Those covenant youth, who fail to embrace Jesus Christ and walk in his footsteps, will have to deal with the knife of the Lord in a more radical way.⁷ The promise given must be ratified with sincere faith and obedience. How then may we welcome to the Lord's Table those who presently give no evidence of faith in the Lord of the covenant? A significant number of these youth may never come to Christ. If they should partake in the Lord's Supper, would they not be "eating and drinking judgment to themselves"? (HC Q. and A. 81; 1 Cor. 11:29).

The approved response to Overture 16 indicates that there must be an expression of faith on the part of baptized children who come to the Lord's Table, but then waters that faith-response down to "hearing the 'invitation' to communion" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 729). How credible a profession of faith is that? Underinstructed visitors could come forward to receive communion at the invitation of the pastor or elder in charge. However, that does not mean they should. Taking up the words of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus speaks of people "ever hearing but never understanding" (Matt. 13:14). Young children could indeed have a credible profession of faith as evidence of the new birth, but they ought to understand the most basic elements of the Christian story. Synod 1995 had set in motion adequate systems that could validate that understanding in each local assembly, so with joy children could celebrate their first communion.

3. The decision does not reflect a clear distinction between the covenant understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The paedocommunion view says that if we give our children the sign of baptism, then, to be consistent, we should also offer them the sign of the Lord's Supper. It is often argued that if children cannot come to the Lord's Table based solely on the covenant promises, then we are, in effect, treating them as if they were excommunicated members. However, baptism and the Lord's Supper have some distinct differences that must be kept in mind. Consider the following:⁸

- a. Baptism is a one-time initiatory outward sign and seal of the inward act of regeneration. In the act of regeneration, the individual remains passive as God acts upon the heart. All that is required for a baby to be baptized is that at least one parent be a professing Christian and a member in good standing in a biblically faithful church. The baby does not need to understand what is going on to receive the sign of baptism. In the sign of baptism (like circumcision) we are reminded

⁷ Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 43.

⁸ Schwertley, "Paedocommunion," 9-11.

that this regeneration can take place at any time in the life of a person—in the past, in the present, or in the future.

- b. The Lord's Supper is a repeated ordinance that, along with the preached Word, is used for ongoing spiritual nourishment. It requires knowledge, understanding, and faith. As Bavinck says, "Although Baptism and the Holy Supper have the same covenant of grace as their context, and although both give assurance of the benefit of the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Supper differs from Baptism in this regard, that it is a sign and seal not of incorporation into but of the maturation and strengthening in the fellowship of Christ and all His members."⁹
- c. The Lord's Supper is also different from baptism in that it necessitates active participation. Believers are commanded to "take and eat" (Matt. 26:26; 1 Cor. 11:24). It involves the use of all the senses. How would an infant ever "take and eat" in an active way? If, according to the paedocommunion position, we are treating our children as if they were excommunicated, then we would have to administer the sacrament to even the smallest children (who cannot take and eat) or be accused of this act.

Even though baptism and the Lord's Supper are born out of the same promises of the covenant of grace, they operate in distinctively different ways. One reflects regeneration, the other sanctification.

4. The decision undermines the general or universal guidelines of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Paul is speaking to a specific situation in the Corinthian church where members were taking part in the Lord's Supper in a corrupted manner, but he takes the opportunity to set forth general or universal guidelines for the church at all times. This can be seen in his use of language. For example, in verse 27, he speaks of "*whoever* eats the bread and drinks the cup." In verse 28, he writes these words, "*let a person* (ESV) examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." Again, in verse 29, he says, "For *anyone* who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself." The language shows that Paul's words provide a general understanding that is to be carried out whenever believers commune at the table of the Lord.¹⁰ Consider the following:¹¹

- a. The Lord's Supper involves *commemoration* (vv. 24-26). This involves the ability to meditate and reflect on who Jesus is and what he has done on our behalf. Remembering is an act of cognitive faith or understanding in that which you are remembering.
- b. The Lord's Supper involves *proclamation* (v. 26). This is done both individually and collectively as the church (*kataggellein*). It involves the ability to speak and act in a way that exhibits the fruits of faith.

⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 542.

¹⁰ Cornelis Venema, "The New Testament Evidence Regarding Paedocommunion (part 4)," *The Outlook* 57, no. 3 (2007):24.

¹¹ Schwertley, "Paedocommunion," 12-13.

- c. The Lord's Supper involves *examination* (vv. 26-29). First, this examination is in the context of the whole church as the body of Christ. This is clear from the context of the passage and the immediate concerns of Paul. We must not fracture the communion of God's people by means of class status (note that the passage does not say anything either way about age). Second, by extension, this examination involves our relationship as individuals and as the church in its relationship to the sacrifice of Christ. This is evident from Paul's quotation of the original words of institution from Luke 22:19 where the Lord's body is revealed as an atonement for our sins. Third, there must be a proper recognition of the elements as set apart for holy use (v. 29). The elements are set apart from a common to a sacred use. Therefore, it is wicked and dangerous to use them in a profane manner.
- d. Finally, the Lord's Supper involves *communion*. This is the ability to look to the resurrected Savior as spiritually present with his people, actively strengthening their faith and encouraging their hearts.

In order for these principles to be fully realized, faith must be active in the life of the individual. Allowing children at the Lord's Supper based solely on the covenant and prior to a profession of faith would undermine the meaning and richness of these activities.

5. If we accept Paul's teaching in Romans 10:14-15 that the normal means by which youth or adults come to saving faith in Jesus Christ is the preaching of the gospel, we short-circuit the process by welcoming the youngest children to the Lord's Table when they have not yet had a chance to digest the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Paul declares, that "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Dr. Richard Mouw speaks to this in an excellent article in the November 2006, *Calvin Theological Journal*, where he speaks of baptism and the salvific status of children.¹² Mouw quotes the Canons of Dort, Third and Fourth Points of Main Doctrine, Article 11 where we read,

When God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised.

(Psalter Hymnal, pp. 938-39)

6. The decision undermines previous decisions of Synods 1988 and 1995 as well as the baptismal vows of parents who are called to do all in their power to challenge our youth to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Even though Recommendation 2-d asks the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force that will propose approaches to further the discipleship of professing and communicant children (a very good thing),

¹² Richard Mouw, "Baptism and the Salvific Status of Children," *Calvin Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (2006):238-54.

Recommendation 1 drains the recommendation of its power. Throwing open the door to the Lord's Table before a credible profession of faith removes one of the strongest incentives imaginable for taking a public stand for Jesus Christ—admission to the Lord's Table. You remove the motivation for making a radical change of mind (i.e., repentance) at a significant milestone in our children's journey to the city of God.

Classis Pella
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 15: Do Not Adopt Changes to Church Order Article 59

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2007 not to adopt the change in Church Order Article 59, allowing children to participate in the Lord's Supper, until a careful and more clearly expressed biblical study on this issue can be provided to the churches. In addition, such a study should include not only the grounds for such a change but also careful and clear guidelines for implementation.

Ground: The biblical case for covenant children at the Lord's Supper is not yet well understood, particularly by our parishioners; therefore, the current practice is not easily dismissed.

Classis Illiana
Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

Overture 16: Appoint a Study Committee to Address the Issue of Who Can Present a Child for Baptism

I. Historical background

A. Communications from Hancock CRC to Classis Lake Superior

1. Request for advice, September 2005

The consistory of Hancock Christian Reformed Church requests advice and further pastoral counsel from the broader CRC community on the subject of infant baptism for the children of nonprofessing baptized members who are under the guardianship of professing members. In the case confronting the Hancock consistory, the infant is under the guardianship of his grandparents. The consistory is aware that the Church Order requires that at the very least one parent of the child be a believer (Church Order Article 56). The consistory is also aware that the Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government defines believer as one who has made a "personal profession of faith" (*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 316). This definition, however, has not been addressed by synod since 1902. We believe that, given the climate of today's youth culture and the increase in the number of children born to teenagers still living at home, the denomination should take up the issue in a biblical yet contemporary manner to provide guidance for pastors and consistories who are duty bound to see that children of believing parents in the church have requested baptism and that it be administered as soon as is feasible.

2. Overture, March 2006: Overture from Hancock Christian Reformed Church to Classis Lake Superior requests that Classis Lake Superior overture Synod 2006 to appoint a study committee re infant baptism

a. Background

At the fall 2005 meeting of Classis Lake Superior, classis advised the churches regarding a couple who had requested baptism for their grandchild born to a daughter, who at that time was still at home. The Church Order requires that at the very least one parent of the child be a believer (Church Order Article 56). The Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government defines believer as one who has made a personal profession of faith (p. 316). This definition, however, has not been addressed by synod since 1902. Because a rapidly growing demographic in our culture is grandparents who are raising grandchildren (presently 6%, from current census data), we believe that the denomination should take up the issue in a biblical, yet contemporary, manner to provide guidance for pastors and consistories who are duty bound to see that children of believing parents in the church have requested baptism and that it be administered as soon as is feasible.

b. Overture

Hancock CRC overtures Classis Lake Superior to overture Synod 2006 to appoint a study committee to revisit the definition of *believers and their children* in the administration of the sacrament of baptism to infants through the study of the Scripture, the confessions, and the Church Order, and to answer, *inter alia* the following questions:

- 1) Is it necessary from a biblical and confessional position that a believer be a full confessing member of the local church with all the responsibilities attached to such membership?
- 2) Is the covenant of grace given to believers and their children or to believers and their descendants?
- 3) What was the nature of *household baptisms* in the early church and its subsequent history? Are all baptisms necessarily limited to nuclear families within the households?
- 4) Should baptism be withheld from children of believers who are incapable of keeping the vows due to immaturity or inability?

Grounds:

- 1) The present cultural reality of children being born to children within Christian families requires a biblical-pastoral response in a contemporary manner.
- 2) Although the subject of baptism has been addressed by synod, the above definition has not been addressed for over a century.
- 3) Because the definition of *believers and their children* in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* is a synodical one, any reconsideration of this definition should be handled by the same body.

B. *Classis study committee*

In March 2006, the overture from Hancock CRC was tabled and a study committee was appointed. The committee primarily researched the church-polity issues surrounding the question of who may present a child for baptism. Abbreviated minutes of the study committee follow:

1. Representatives from Hancock CRC were asked to introduce the story and the issues that gave rise to Hancock's requests to classis. The story had also been presented in a background document received before the meeting.
2. Questions and issues were raised concerning the best way to address the issue of whether grandparents could present a grandchild for baptism.

As we considered these issues, two significant documents were considered. First, a section from Martin Monsma's *The Revised Church Order Commentary*, 1967, was considered. This section reads:

If an illegitimate parent reveals no repentance of sin committed and should even live a life of indifference and godlessness, but places the child under the control of God-fearing relatives, then these relatives may apply for baptism and act as sponsors at the time of baptism. (This position is also that of Voetius [Pol. Eccle. 1:653] cf. Jansen; *Korte Verklaring*, p. 250). The child belongs to the seed of the covenant and the relatives are competent to assume the baptismal vows.

(Monsma, 1967, pp. 221-22)

While the situation is not identical to what Monsma described (the child's mother has not separated herself from the church, but merely does not feel ready to make public profession of faith), the assertion that God-fearing relatives are competent to assume the baptismal vows seemed to be a clear and direct positive answer to the desire of the council at Hancock CRC. This position could be described as emphasizing the grace of the covenant.

Also considered were selections from the *Acts of Synod 1898* and *1902* (translated) that strongly argue for the need for at least one parent of a child being baptized to be a professing member. These *Acts of Synod*, particularly 1898, appeared to be reversing a previously allowed system in which children of baptized members could be baptized (a system that, the *Acts of Synod 1898* states, had been repeatedly questioned before previous synods). This position could be described as emphasizing the responsibility of the covenant.

3. At this point, an extensive discussion was held as to the weight of these apparently contradictory documents. It was noted that a commentary on the Church Order is not the same as the Church Order itself, although Synod 1966 approved the commentary. It was also noted that the *Acts of Synod* are also not the same as the Church Order itself. The Church Order itself, it was noted, is somewhat vague, stating that "the covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism" (Church Order Article 56). The term *believers* is not further defined in Article 56 nor is there a Supplement. So the defining of *believers* as one or two parents who are professing members is not in the Church Order itself but rather stems from Synods 1898 and 1902. It was unclear why Monsma's commentary made no mention of 1898 or 1902. It was similarly unclear why Monsma's argument is not addressed by later commentaries on the Church Order.

4. As it became clear that we had defensible arguments for either allowing or refusing Hancock to proceed, we considered our options. The possibility of a majority report (in favor of allowing Hancock to proceed) and a minority report (against) was raised. Rather than taking this route, we agreed on an alternative report that presents this ambiguity to classis for further instruction.

Note: Additional conversations after our meeting clarified the weight of Monsma and Van Dellen's opinion, resulting in the modification of our presentation to classis. Our report was not presented to classis in its written form. Instead, a shortened version of our minutes and summary of our findings was verbally presented. The next section details the conclusions that were verbally presented.

C. *Conclusions of classis study committee*

1. Church Order Article 56 is somewhat vague in referring to *children of believers* without further definition of *believers*.
2. The current *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, based on the decisions of Synods 1898 and 1902, argues that children of believers should be understood as children with at least one parent as a professing member.
3. Monsma and Van Dellen, in the *Revised Church Order Commentary* (see above), seem to point toward the possibility that other relatives can serve as sponsors in the event of the inability of the parent(s) to present a child for baptism. While Monsma and Van Dellen only necessarily represented their own opinions, their citation of Voetius as support suggests a long-standing difference of opinion from current practice.
4. The differing opinions of the current Manual and Monsma and Van Dellen's commentary led our committee to discuss allowing Hancock to proceed as it deemed appropriate on the basis that the Church Order (Article 55) grants the local congregation original authority to administer the sacraments.

D. *Decision of classis, September 2006: Overture synod to study the matter*

Classis decided on the following mandate: Draft a resolution for discussion in March 2007.

II. **Overture**

Classis Lake Superior overtures Synod 2007 to appoint a study committee to consider the propriety of professing grandparents or other professing relatives presenting children, in their care, for baptism.

Grounds:

1. The opinions of Monsma and Van Dellen, and particularly their citation of Voetius, suggest the presence of studied differences of opinion on this matter. The opinion presented would allow other relatives to present a child for baptism in the case of the inability of the parent(s) to do so.
2. The very existence of Monsma and Van Dellen's opinion in a work still cited and referenced by congregations and their leaders is a potential cause of confusion to congregations and their leaders when attempting to sort through the pastoral and church polity related issues surrounding a request for baptism in single-parent or nonprofessing parent situations.

3. The *Acts of Synod 1898 and 1902*, cited by the current *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* as support for requiring at least one parent presenting a child for baptism to be a professing member, appear to have been addressing a different church polity issue: a system in which baptized members were allowed to present their children for baptism. (It seems to us that grandparents who are full members and who make the baptismal promises present a different issue.)
4. The definition of a family in the contemporary setting and of the household in the New Testament setting may both be more flexible than the *Acts of Synod 1898 and 1902* consider. Demographic data demonstrate that modern households have become quite complex. The April 2006 issue of *The Banner* featured an article entitled “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.” The article included the statement that “an estimated 6 million children in the United States and 57,000 children in Canada live in the home of a grandparent or other relative” (*The Banner*, April 2006, p. 35). Further exegetical study of the New Testament household and household baptisms might indicate a biblical reason for a more flexible church polity response.

Classis Lake Superior
Steven Zwart, stated clerk

Overture 17: Appoint a Study Committee to Study the Growing Practice of Infant Dedication and the Practice of Infant Baptism

Classis Alberta North overtures Synod 2007 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to appoint a study committee to study the growing practice of infant dedication in our churches in the light of the Scriptures, our Confessions, and the practice of infant baptism, and to provide guidance to our churches in these matters.

Grounds:

1. An increasing number of churches in the CRC desire to be inclusive communities of faith, embracing all who believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, including those who subscribe to the doctrinal positions of the CRC with the exception of infant baptism. This raises sensitive pastoral issues.
2. Synod appears to have moved from a strict response to those members who disagree with the doctrine of infant baptism (i.e., discipline; Synod 1888), to a more lenient position (i.e., disagreement with infant baptism may be acceptable for members; Synod 1964).
3. More than forty years have passed since synod last addressed infant baptism. We live in a different day than when synod last addressed these matters, and the churches would be well served by carefully considering together questions not previously raised surrounding infant dedication, as well as be provided with a fresh articulation of the practice of infant baptism.

Classis Alberta North
Anna Feddes, stated clerk

Overture 18: Establish a Group to Study Ways in Which to Allocate Denominational Ministry Shares among Local Congregations

I. Background

Currently, each June synod receives requests from various denominational agencies for funding for the next year. These requests are broken down to a per-active-member amount that is built on the projected active membership of the Christian Reformed Church. (Calvin College's ministry share amount varies based on the geographic location of the local church.) The active membership counts of each local congregation should have been submitted to the denomination the previous October and are published in the *Yearbook* each year. Each local congregation is charged with collecting and remitting a synodical ministry share to the denomination based on the published active membership of that congregation multiplied by the synodically approved dollar amount per active member. For 2007, that amount in Classis Grand Rapids East is \$326.99 per active member.

Over the years, synod has adjusted the synodical ministry share formula. In 1987, a sliding scale was introduced, reducing the total synodical ministry share based on the size of the local congregation. Congregations with fewer than seventy-three members are now required to remit 50 percent of the full synodical ministry share.

Synod has also adjusted the way in which members are counted. Local congregations are allowed to exclude from membership counts, for ministry share purposes, inactive members—members who have not attended services in the past two years. Other exclusions exist for communicant members 18 years or younger. In addition, local congregations may petition their classis to exclude certain members who are, in the congregation's and classis' view, unable to financially support the charge of ministry shares. College students, members in nursing homes or on government assistance, and military personnel typically qualify.

Changes to the method of funding ministry shares have been requested (Overture 20, Synod 1997; Overtures 5 and 6, Synod 2002; Overtures 1 and 2, Synod 2004) and suggested in the near past ("Voices," *The Banner*, June 2003). This suggests that churches may find the present system inequitable, unwieldy, or burdensome to their ministry. In addition, the Board of Trustees has begun questioning the number of claimed inactive members and/or reductions in letters to congregations, suggesting a tension between the denomination and local congregations in counting and reporting the present ministry share participation (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 50-54; *Agenda For Synod 2005*, pp. 49-52).

II. Past synodical decisions

A. Synod 1949

In 1949, an Englewood, New Jersey, congregation's overture that requested a downward revision of ministry shares (then called quotas) for congregations with fewer than one hundred families and upward for congregations with more than two hundred families was defeated by synod (*Acts of Synod 1949*, p. 80). The overture was rejected because:

1. The computation was deemed too complicated, resulting in “endless mathematical computations,”
2. Large congregations were shown to have other significant obligations than just denominational quotas, and
3. Synod believed the present relief (unspecified in the *Acts of Synod*) was deemed sufficient.

A similar overture in 1952 from Classis Muskegon was also referred to this decision.

B. *Synods 1962 and 1963*

Synod 1962 adopted Overture 1 from Classis Chatham requesting a study committee to look into revising ministry shares (quotas) for Canadian churches based on:

1. The difference in cost of living and average salaries in Canada versus the United States, and
2. The difference in the financial capacity to support quotas between Canadian and U.S. churches (*Acts of Synod 1962*, p. 477).

The study committee reported in 1963 (*Acts of Synod 1963*, pp. 406-11). In their report, they noted that there was no empirical data available from outside sources on which to make a comparison. In addition, even if such a comparison were available, government data could be reported on a country-wide average, not taking into account the variations between regions of any particular country. Finally, any outside data could be averaged across all occupations and earnings in the country, which could be substantially different from the occupational and financial makeup of members of the Christian Reformed Church.

The study committee concluded that, while Synod 1962 acknowledged that there were differences in the standards of living at that time between the United States and Canada, there was not an apparent mechanism available to quantify that difference into a shift in the ministry share computation. Therefore, the ministry share for Canada was not adjusted.

C. *Synods 1965, 1968, 1969, and 1970*

Synod 1965 appointed a committee to study the entire quota and quota equalization matter and report to Synod 1967. That study report was postponed until 1968 while a survey of churches regarding quota matters was conducted.

The resulting report (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 512-27) was referred to the churches for consideration. The supplement reported on a statistical study that attempted to answer the question of whether the quota system was equitable among churches of various sizes and nationality. The committee concluded that a change to the quota formula “at this time is not wise” (p. 521). In the late 1960s, congregations met most of their denominational requirements on a timely basis. The committee opined that “developing a quota formula based on a number of factors may tend to increase arbitrariness rather than decrease it” (p. 521).

The Standing Advisory Budget Committee and the study committee jointly evaluated the responses to Supplement 46. Recommendations were presented to Synod 1969 (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 196). Synod instructed the Standing Advisory Budget Committee “to solicit actively the reactions of the consistories” (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 104) to the 1968 and 1969 reports and to make recommendations to Synod 1970.

The recommendation of the committee (*Acts of Synod 1970*, pp. 499-509) adopted by Synod 1970 was that “the present system of adopting and publishing the average denominational requirements per family be continued” (p. 506). The committee cited a survey of congregations, representing a cross-section of small, medium, and large churches, showing that 85 percent of the responding churches agreed with the recommendation. (However, it should be noted that only 85 of the 658 congregations in the denomination at that time furnished any response to the survey.)

D. Synod 1972

Synod 1972 begins a series of overtures to synod regarding the synodical quota system. Overture 11 (Classis Pella) requested holding the 1973 increase to cost of living, citing the increasing burden of quotas at the expense of other nonquota causes. Overture 25 (Classis Chicago North) went much further in asking synod to freeze present quota amounts and have the denominational agencies rely on above-quota offerings for any increases, citing the biblical differences between freewill offerings and required sacrifices. The overture cited widespread “dissatisfaction with the present quota system” (*Agenda for Synod 1972*, p. 641). While it seems that the correspondence voiced the concerns and, apparently, undue burdens inflicted by the quota system, they did not cite any evidence or voice any solutions to the present difficulty. Synod rejected any changes to the quota system and affirmed previous decisions (*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 84-86).

E. Synod 1992

Report 32 addressed by Synod 1992 was a landmark reevaluation of denominational ministry funding and an examination of the so-called mood of local congregations to quotas. The report detailed the beginning trend of local congregational ministry funding against denominational projects and programs. It also focused on the strength of the quota system at that time, the changes in funding trends in the CRC and other denominations, the use of money as power in withholding quotas, the shifting denominational demographics, and the lack of knowledge of denominational agencies, funding, and programs on the part of local members.

The report also dealt with three subsequent overtures submitted to Synod 1991 requesting:

1. Use of a per-member component for calculation, rather than families (Overture 83). This suggestion was incorporated into the final report.
2. Eliminating the experience factor in determining ministry shares (Overture 84). This mechanism of inflating share requests to account for the difference between projected and actual receipts was retained at that time as necessary to ensure proper budgeting.

3. Changing the calculation method to a percentage of average of the present and prior two year's local congregation's budget (Overture 85). This change was rejected by the study committee as being too disruptive to local congregational budgets.

Other than a shift from a per-family calculation to a per-member calculation and a change in name to ministry shares, the actual method of computation and payment of denominational quotas at the local church level remained unchanged. The study committee also recommended a program to educate local members about denominational programs and finances, along with some internal standardization of procedures on how ministry shares are allocated among agencies and remitted to the denomination.

F. Synod 1997

Synod 1997 rejected Overture 20 (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 450-54), which asked for a study to determine if a faith-promise method of funding ministry shares could be implemented. Synod deemed the method impractical for budgeting purposes (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 706).

G. Synod 2002

Synod 2002 dealt with two overtures on ministry shares. Overture 5 from Classis Holland asking for a proportionate voice in the use of ministry shares based on assessment amounts alluded to a "percentage of congregational expenses" ministry share plan as being more equitable. They asked for a cap on ministry shares for very large megachurches (*Agenda of Synod 2002*, pp. 362-63). Overture 6 from Classis Alberta North asked for a study committee to examine the viability of the current ministry share system based on the growing gap between actual and projected ministry share receipts (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, pp. 363-64). Synod rejected the overtures, citing no new information to contradict Report 32 (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 385-409). Synod also noted that the decline in ministry share receipts concerned the advisory committee but did not require any immediate changes (*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 494-95).

H. Synod 2004

Overture 1 (Alberta North) asked that ministry shares be adjusted to an amount the denomination "may realistically expect to receive" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 404). Overture 2 (Grandville) asked for a study committee to reexamine "if there is a new, better, or more equitable way of raising funds to meet denominational ministry needs" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 405). Synod rejected both overtures, citing:

1. No new information was presented that may supersede Report 32, *Agenda for Synod 1992*,
2. The present system raises significant funds at little cost, promoting mutual covenant obligations, and
3. The percentage of actual receipts to projected receipts has stabilized, and the requested ministry share amount is adjusted each year to take into account this shortfall (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 625).

III. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to establish a study committee or a task force to explore alternative methods by which denominational ministry share contributions could be allocated each year among local congregations.

Grounds:

1. The current funding method ignores important financial considerations such as the earning power of the local congregation's membership, the state of the local economy where the congregation is located, and the financial well-being of the local church. Presently, the ministry share calculation accounts for only the relative size of the local congregation with the sliding scale and, indirectly, some demographics and hardship designations using certain membership categories.
2. The current funding method has highlighted a tension within some churches between counting members for pastoral purposes and minimizing membership counts for financial purposes that was not anticipated in Report 32 (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 385-409). A study exploring the feasibility of:
 - a. Eliminating the need for congregations to classify members in different categories, such as active, inactive, 18 or younger, or hardship and/or
 - b. Removing membership counts as a factor in the ministry share formula to resolve this tension and return membership status primarily to the pastoral arena of elders where it belongs.
3. The current funding method has not been extensively reviewed since 1992. Technology since that time has vastly changed financial modeling, information-gathering, and reporting. These changes may yield a sustainable ministry-share contribution method that embraces the differences in our local congregations.
4. As reported in *The Banner* (July 2006, p. 39), Synod 2006 noted that only 70 percent of projected receipts were actually collected. In 2002, the present ministry share system generated only 71 percent of its projected yearly receipts, up from 61.3 percent at its lowest point in 1997 (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 404). Thus, the present system is clearly not reliable. A study may determine whether the shortfall is due to local financial pressures, real and/or perceived inequities in the ministry share calculation, or sheer disregard for the ministry share calculation. Report 32 (*Agenda for Synod 1992*) was undertaken partly as a result of a drop in actual ministry share receipts from 88 percent (1980) to 78 percent (1990) of projected receipts. In light of this further drop in actual ministry share receipts, despite the changes from the 1992 report, it is time to determine whether there is a problem with perception, the formula, or the level of funding of ministry shares.

Note: Since 1993, the difference between actual denominational receipts and projected denominational receipts is only available to synodical delegates in the financial supplement they are given at synod. More detailed information on this yearly shortfall has not been available to the local membership since 2002.

5. The annual counting and classifying of members as active, inactive, or hardship as well as the procedures required by classis to approve membership counts has become a source of tension among the Board of Trustees, classes, and the local congregations—so much so that implications have been made that local congregations are “manipulating numbers” (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 50-54; *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 49-52).
6. Alternative biblically based funding models exist. For example, one alternative, the synodical tithing (“Voices,” *The Banner*, June 2003), is based on the funding of the tabernacle (and later the temple in Jerusalem) as found in Numbers 18, especially verses 21-29 and is reinforced in Nehemiah 10:37-39.
7. The current funding method is derived primarily from the needs of various denominational agencies. A study may be able to discover an alternative method that forges a balance between present denominational needs and the funding abilities of local congregations.

Classis Grand Rapids East
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 19: Provide Pension Subsidy for Institutional Chaplains Not Covered by Employers' Pension Plans

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 made changes to the design of the denominational pension plan with the result that there are now chaplains who personally need to bear the cost of providing for their pension. It should be noted that pension coverage includes disability coverage; thus, coverage not only deals with future income but also with the present reality that some chaplains might become disabled and be in need of income coverage before retirement age. We overture synod to instruct the Pension Office, the Denominational Office, or Chaplaincy Ministries to fully subsidize the cost for those chaplains who are not provided pension coverage by their employer.

II. Background

Until 2004, pension coverage was provided for all chaplains. This coverage was based on a synodical decision (Synod 1970) that ministers would not be disadvantaged when entering into chaplaincy and that they should expect to receive no less than what they might expect to receive had they continued in the parish ministry. Denominational coverage was provided in recognition of the fact that there would be cases when an employer might not provide pension coverage. Chaplains were encouraged to negotiate, if possible, pension coverage, but serving in a chaplaincy ministry was not to be determined by an employer's unwillingness to cover the cost or the expectation that the chaplains would bear the cost.

Recognizing that the denomination would cover pension costs and that in most cases the chaplain also had employer coverage, a rule was established that no chaplain would be able to double dip. This rule has worked well. No chaplain has been disadvantaged for entering into chaplaincy ministry, and the denomination did not pay out pension when the chaplain had coverage.

The denominational pension rules maintain that the employer is the primary agent responsible for pension coverage, and coverage is seen as a work benefit. Synod has seen pension coverage as a way to ensure that those who have labored in ministry are also provided for in retirement. Pension coverage is, therefore, not simply a work benefit, even as salary for a parish pastor is not purely a work benefit, but the result of the Church Order's mandate that a minister shall be adequately cared for.

Synod 2004 also decided that the denomination would continue to provide coverage for military chaplains because these chaplains are not vested until they have been in the military for twenty years.

III. Discussion

Synod determined in the past that there should be parity between parish pastors and those entering chaplaincy ministry. Chaplaincy was seen as an extension of the ministry of the denomination. Chaplaincy positions needed synodical approval; therefore, no chaplain could enter into the marketplace with his skill to seek a living. Chaplains are supervised by their calling churches; thus, ministry is more than an employer-employee relationship, and provisions of compensation cannot therefore simply be guided by the principle: see what the market can bear. Pension coverage needs to begin with the principle of what is fair and equitable for all ministers. We do not wish to see changes made to the synodical decision of 2004. Employers might be expected to cover pension costs. The action of synod, however, unfairly places the burden upon the individual institutional chaplains when their employer refuses to cover pension costs or if they do not have a pension plan for their employees.

In deciding to continue denominational coverage for military chaplains, synod's action has created disparity among chaplains. In the case of the military chaplains, the denomination provides coverage because it recognizes that the employer (the government) refuses to provide pension for years spent in the military prior to the twenty years. In the case of institutional chaplains when their employer (the institution) refuses to pay coverage or has no coverage, the chaplain bears the cost. Synod's action in providing coverage for military chaplains is inconsistent with its policy that the employer pay the cost as that policy is, for example, applied to institutional chaplains.

Chaplaincy ministries has provided endorsement and support for new chaplaincies when there was no guarantee of pension coverage because the denomination through its endorsement (which includes synodical approval) determined that there are ministries where it is strategic to the ministry of the church to begin new positions. The new policy will deter ministry in the future.

While the chaplain has been offered financial assistance during a time of transition, this help does not mitigate the fact that these chaplains will still bear the cost when financial assistance ends. There are chaplains who may need to leave his or her position because of the inability to afford the cost of paying the premiums themselves.

Financial assistance is granted to smaller churches when they cannot meet their obligations, but the onus will not be on the pastor to pay for pension. It will be on the local church as a body of believers. In the case of the chaplains, they, as individuals, must bear the cost.

There is also the matter of dealing equitably with the present chaplains. Chaplains have accepted work in a ministry that is part of Christ's work for

the church. Such ministries should not be ended because the chaplain may feel that he cannot afford to continue. Synod might be more pastoral in stating that the present chaplains will continue to be subsidized in their present ministries until they retire or they leave their position and that a new position should only be entered into if the chaplain will accept that denominational coverage will not be provided.

The action of synod with its focus on the employer's being responsible for pension coverage need not be changed. As a matter of fact, the denomination can provide full subsidies for the chaplain rather than providing coverage as the employer of the chaplain. Subsidies are not seen as entering into the area of who is responsible for pension coverage—the denomination or the employer. Subsidies are provided in recognition of disparity and that some chaplains are being treated unfairly. Subsidies can also determine in the future how many chaplains might enter into positions where pension coverage is not provided. Thus, a cap on subsidies will allow the denomination to properly plan without having to increase costs whenever a chaplain is endorsed.

Further, it should be noted that chaplains provide valuable ministry on behalf of the denomination. The actual cost to the denomination is very minimal. Salaries are paid for by nondenominational resources. Providing full subsidy in relatively few cases is not onerous for the denomination. Most chaplains will, in fact, have coverage. This overture addresses those situations in which there is no coverage, and chaplains themselves must bear the cost.

IV. Overture

The council of First CRC, Barrie, Ontario, overtures Synod 2007 to instruct the Denominational Office, or Chaplaincy Ministries, as an ongoing policy, to fully subsidize the pension cost of those chaplains who enter new positions and who will have no coverage provided by their institution, or at least fully subsidize those who are in present chaplaincy positions.

Grounds:

1. Parity should exist between parish pastor and chaplain and between military and institutional chaplain.
2. No extra financial burden should be placed on an individual chaplain to bear the cost when no other pastor in the denomination is expected to do so.
3. Pension costs could be expected to be paid by employers; however, in today's economic situation, this is not always so. Ministry should not primarily be dependent upon the marketplace standards and practices. Providing a subsidy derives from the recognition that the denomination provides support for the carrying out of ministries.
4. The changes that synod has made are and will adversely affect individual chaplains, especially those in their middle years.
5. Chaplains who cannot afford to pay the pension premiums will also lose disability coverage.

Council of First CRC, Barrie, Ontario
Gonnie Vos, clerk

Note: This overture was not sustained by Classis Toronto.

Overture 20: Change the Pension Fund Policy So It Does Not Discriminate Against Pastors of Small Churches

Classis Lake Superior overtures synod to conduct a survey to measure the impact of the Minister's Pension Fund funding policy.

Grounds:

1. The present way of funding discriminates against pastors who choose to serve small churches.
 - a. It discourages pastors from taking calls to smaller churches that are unable to pay the pension fund amount.
 - b. Smaller churches that are financially strapped often have to choose between keeping the doors open and paying the pension fund amount (e.g., high utility bills make this choice a problem).
 - c. Often pastors will take a call to a smaller church even when the church is unable to pay them what they would be making for their years of experience because they feel called to keep the ministry going. They are unable to pay the pension fund themselves. They also lose out on being fully vested with their pension because of the call they have accepted.
 - d. The present policy does not credit to the pastor's account what is paid on the pastor's behalf unless it is the full amount. At least, if a church is trying, the amount they pay should be credited to the pastor for whom they are paying.
2. It flies in the face of our covenant relationship as churches. We need to make sure that those who serve do not suffer loss in retirement because of the churches they have chosen to serve.

Classis Lake Superior
Steven Zwart, stated clerk

Overture 21: Adopt the Changes to Church Order Article 3-a Proposed by Synod 2006 without the Conditions Imposed by Synod

I. Background

A. Synod 1995

Although the debate in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) on whether women are permitted to serve in the offices of the church goes back at least to the late 1970s, for our purposes, we can begin with Synod 1995. The synods that immediately preceded 1995 had debated back and forth on whether to open the offices of elder, ministry associate (at that time evangelist), and minister of the Word to women. Having reached what seemed to be an impasse on the issue, Synod 1995 boldly and unexpectedly proposed a way through. This far-reaching decision had three interlinked parts.

The heart of the decision is stated in the first among several recommendations adopted by synod: "That synod recognize 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

1995, the basic question of whether or not it was biblical for women to serve in the offices of the church was not able to be decided, and living with two different perspectives was an entirely new way to approach the matter. If indeed the church could not come to a single position on the matter, then the question was no longer who was right but, rather, how to live with two different positions in one denomination.

This overture does not reopen that fundamental decision but, instead, considers where that decision leads us. The biblical cases both for and against opening the offices of the church to women have been extensively argued and compared. Most recently, the study committee that reported to Synod 2000 carefully laid out both cases (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 351-407) and concluded that the issue is not so much a matter of our fundamental confession as it is a matter of wisdom. (Synod 1989 had already said, “the women in office issue has not been regarded [by previous synods] as a creedal matter, but a church matter” [*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 433]). Wisdom, the writers of the 2000 report go on to say, helps “people pull together insights and truths from a number of spheres: the nature of the created order, observable societal principles and circumstances, and, in particular, the nature of humankind as illuminated by God’s special revelation” (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 375). In particular, wisdom allows the church to take account of context and change—to recognize that what works in one part of our denomination may not work in another or that what worked in 1995 may not work in 2007.

The second part of the 1995 decision was a set of regulations designed to facilitate our living together in one denomination with two different convictions on women in office. These regulations were purposively placed among the supplements to the Church Order, which are easier to change than the church order itself. Church order supplements are synodical decisions that interpret and regulate the provisions of the Church Order. These supplemental regulations have been revisited and adjusted at five-year intervals, most recently in 2005.

The third part of the decision was to declare that these decisions would be in effect for five years, until the year 2000 in the first instance, at which time they would be reviewed. Synod 2000 proposed the same five-year pattern of decision and review, with the provision that a study committee be appointed in 2003 to “review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and to report to Synod 2005” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 621).

B. *Synod 2005*

Unlike the previous synods (1995 and 2000), Synod 2005 did not propose a new five-year decision with a review for Synod 2010. Nor did synod decide or even consider the fundamental issue itself—whether the denomination should continue to attempt to honor both the position that women are biblically mandated to serve in all of the offices and the position that women are biblically proscribed from doing so. That both positions should be honored was taken for granted.

By honoring both positions, the CRC has declared that any church may deny to women the right to serve as an elder, pastor, or ministry associate in that church. Furthermore, the CRC has declared through its synods that any classis may deny to women the right to serve as a delegate to that classis.

These are weighty decisions. They require that those who firmly believe that women, just as men, are called to serve the church as pastors and elders allow others in the same denomination to deny to women the right to serve in those offices. Real lives are affected by such decisions. In the same way, those who believe that women are for biblical reasons not to serve in these offices are required to allow churches and classes among them to affirm women in these offices. Here, too, convictions run strong.

At the local and classical level, the disputes that arise as a result of these convictions can usually be mitigated, although inevitably there is some bumping up against each other. One can join another congregation or another classis (although these options are often costly for those forced to choose among them). Most of the regulations in the supplement to Church Order Article 3-a are attempts to figure out creative ways to live with each others at these levels. At the denominational level, it is more difficult. There is only one synod—one venue for denomination-wide decisions. The regulations adopted by Synod 1995 and reaffirmed by Synods 2000 and 2005 have denied this one venue to women, with the unhappy result that decisions about women's participation in ministry have been and continue to be made only by men, even if for the past few years a limited number of women have been allowed to speak to them. The question faced by Synods 2005 and 2006 is whether the continued denial of access to the floor of synod to women can be maintained, and on this crucial question, the two synods made radically different decisions.

Synod 2005 moved distinctly in the direction of inviting the participation of women as delegates to the synods of the CRC. They did so in two ways. First, they opened the position of synodical deputy to women, provided that one of the deputies from a given classis, whether the deputy or the alternate, be a man. This last provision was made so that classes that do not permit women to serve in the offices of minister of the Word, elder, and ministry associate have the option of requesting a male deputy rather than a female deputy. Synodical deputies do synodical work, so this was seen as a step in the direction of women's participation in the work of synod.

Second, Synod 2005 created the expectation that women would be permitted to be delegated to synod in the near future by instructing the Board of Trustees to "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 explained *revisit* as meaning "that when the threshold has been passed, the Board of Trustees will take note of that and recommend appropriate actions in their report to the next synod" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 760).

C. *Synod 2006*

Less than a year later, the threshold set by Synod 2005 (one more than half the classes declaring the word *male* inoperative) was passed. In response, taking account of what Synod 2005 had said, Classis Grand Rapids East sent an overture to Synod 2006 asking that synod revise the supplement to Church Order 3-a to read, "Classes shall be permitted to delegate women officebearers to synod" (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 480). In its supplemental report, the Board of Trustees recommended that synod adopt the proposal of Classis Grand Rapids East. The BOT paragraph supporting this recommendation is worth quoting in its entirety:

It is the judgment of the Board that further study or prolonged discussion of the overture's proposal [to permit the delegation of women to synod] will not help the CRC as a whole come to resolution. Such an approach has not helped much in the past. It is more likely that further study will create more unproductive ferment and will only delay the full implementation of what in spirit has already been decided by previous synods. The fact is that the CRC has changed its position relative to women serving in the offices of the church, and, increasingly, congregations and classes are bringing their own practices into conformity with that change. It is important that synod give clear leadership in finalizing what other synods have said and practiced for a decade or more. The Board sees no benefit in synod's responding ambivalently to the proposed change and advises synod to speak clearly for the change [allowing women to serve as delegates to synod].
(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 565)

This is precisely what Synod 2006 did not do. The paragraph quoted above from the Board of Trustees report argues two things: that (1) the CRC is and has been moving for some time in the direction of equal status for women in all matters pertaining to ecclesiastical office and that (2) any delay in taking the last decisive step in this direction (delegation of women to synod) is likely to exacerbate the latent conflict in the CRC and not alleviate it. Synod 2006 ignored this advice and did precisely the opposite: it interrupted, even reversed, the direction taken by previous synods, and it decided in favor of delay, proposing that delay would allow time for healing.

Thus, synod, in a series of recommendations, decided to (1) propose to Synod 2007 the deletion of the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, but only "provided that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies" and that (2) the church be encouraged "to undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes in the Church Order before revisiting this action in the assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 723-24). In what follows, we will look a little more closely at these decisions.

II. Analysis

A. *The change in Church Order Article 3-a*

As indicated above, the first and most important decision taken by Synod 2006 in regard to the participation of women in church office is the proposal to Synod 2007 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, "provided that women . . . not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies." It is important to note that this provision has not yet been *adopted*; it has only been *proposed*. Church Order Supplement, Article 47, which regulates changes to the Church Order, states that the first synod proposes; the second adopts. The proposal of the first synod has the same status at the subsequent synod as the recommendations of a study committee. This much is clear.

What is less clear is the status of the qualifying clause, "provided that . . . women not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies." Does this mean that Synod 2007 cannot adopt the proposed Church Order change unless it also agrees to this provision? Clearly, that is what Synod 2006 intended, but one synod cannot bind another in this way. Indeed, Synod 2006 reversed Synod 2005 on the matter of women serving as synodical deputies. It appears to us that Synod 2007 is perfectly free to adopt the proposed Church Order change but not consider itself or the church bound by the provision that women not be permitted to be delegated to synod. The first is a proposal for

the change of the Church Order; the second is a ruling of a synod. These should have been taken up separately by Synod 2006, but they were not, so it will be up to Synod 2007 to separate them.

B. The proposed Sabbath rest

The delegates of Synod 2006 who argued in favor of a provision for a Sabbath rest probably thought that they had precedent for such a moratorium in the proposal of Synod 1995 that its actions not be reviewed for five years. This agreement held—held twice, as a matter of fact—with reviews of 1995 coming only in the years 2000 and 2005. What made the earlier agreement work were two factors: (1) the widely shared perception that the decision materially advanced the discussion after years of synod's going back and forth and (2) that it marked a place at which the church could rest for a while. Neither of these are true of Synod 2006 decisions. These decisions are not a settled place where the church can rest easily, nor do they materially advance the discussion. They merely delay it. That this is true has been demonstrated by the anger with which the decisions of Synod 2006 have been met (see the letters to *The Banner* August 2006, September 2006). Moratoria of this nature cannot be legislated. Any synod can reverse the action of a previous synod. They must constitute a broad agreement among the parties. There is little evidence of such an agreement.

The main justification for this proposal to delay is that it will allow a time of healing. Would this really be the case? Delay is not always healing; sometimes what is required is decisive action. To paraphrase the ancient preacher, there is a time to wait and there is a time to act. This is essentially the argument of the Board of Trustees, which averred that delay would only bring more dissension. We concur in that judgment. In one of our congregations several years ago, a decision on whether to open all ecclesiastical offices to women or to delay was being actively debated. The debate threatened to consume the congregation, deflecting it from many other things that needed to be done. Compromises were proposed, but, instead, the people simply continued the conversation. Finally, the council, convinced that the issue needed to be decided, made the decision to open the offices. The majority supported the decision; a strong minority opposed it, but no one left the congregation. Indeed, the unity of the congregation was enhanced by taking decisive action and agreeing to move on.

It would be too much to hope for this same result in our denomination, but the general principle is still valid. There comes a time when it is necessary to decide something and move on. In this case, the decision that permits us to move on as a denomination is a decision to invite women to serve as synodical delegates and synodical deputies.

C. Violation of conscience

The last consideration is not explicitly raised in the documents but is always a significant part of the discussion whenever these matters arise. At some point in the discussion, a delegate—often more than one—will say that by admitting women to participate at synod, he will thereby be effectively barred from synod. To participate in a synod at which women serve as delegates would, the delegate goes on to say, constitute a violation of his conscience. In the history of the discussion, this argument has had considerable weight, for no one wants to bar one group by admitting another nor does

anyone want to violate the conscience of another. However, does this argument hold? Do we, by admitting women, exclude some men—namely, those who believe that women should not be permitted to serve in these offices?

Here, it is important to make a point frequently overlooked in these discussions. Conscience can not only be a matter of one's feelings and thoughts about something. Conscience must and can be instructed. Consciences, of both individuals and groups, can be wrong or insensitive. One's conscience may lack sensitivity to what one ought to be sensitive to, as in the case of someone who is born into a racist society and never thinks further of it. Contrarily, one's conscience may be sensitive to what one ought not to be sensitive to, as in the case of the apostle Peter's refusal to eat what he regarded as unclean food. Claiming conscience all by itself is not an argument for or against a certain policy. An argument must show why the issue in question deserves to be a matter of conscience.

In policy matters, synod needs to make its decision on the basis of what the body as a whole regards as best. Failing to do so can result in a fruitless war of consciences. Those on the one side can say that serving with ordained women violates their consciences; those on the other side can say, with the same merit, that serving in an assembly from which ordained women have been excluded violates their consciences. There is no winning this sort of battle. Synod must make up its mind whether or not a given matter rises to the level of conscience, and this is just what our synods have decided. By saying that the issue of women who serve in church office is not a creedal matter and by agreeing that we must live with both convictions on this issue, synod has said that in our denomination women pastors will serve alongside those who think there should be no women pastors. Women and men are part of the same denomination. Women and men serve together on denominational boards and committees. Women and men are listed in the same directory. To single out synod as the one venue where women cannot serve alongside men seems less than compelling. If one can be a member of a denomination that embraces both practices without violating one's conscience, one can be a member of an assembly, which is simply a smaller instance of the same thing, without violating one's conscience.

III. Overture

Therefore, Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 2007 to:

A. Adopt the change in Church Order Article 3-a proposed by Synod 2006, deleting the word *male*, so that it reads, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate."

Grounds:

1. This change recognizes what has been the settled reality of the CRC for some time—for many of our churches and classes, maleness is not a qualification for office nor femaleness a disqualification.
2. The practice of declaring the word *male* inoperative is clumsy. In view of the fact that a majority of classes have now taken the step of doing so indicates that it is time to bring the Church Order into conformity with our practice.

B. Remove Regulation 1 from Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a. (The regulation now reads: "A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not, out of consideration for the conviction of other classes, delegate women officebearers to synod.")

Grounds:

1. This change is consistent with the direction taken by previous synods and with the expectation created by Synod 2005 that when more than half of the classes had declared the word *male* in Article 3-a inoperative, the proscription against delegating women to synod would be dropped.
2. With women as delegates, synod will come more and more to resemble the members and the leaders of the CRC, who are both women and men.
3. For many years, the boards that govern the CRC, including the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, have encouraged the participation of women, not only on the boards themselves, but in all positions of leadership. It is inconsistent to limit the participation of women at the synodical level.
4. At this point in the history of the CRC, it is wiser to act decisively than to continue to draw out the discussion. There are many more issues that we, as a denomination, need to focus on.
5. Each of us must act according to our own conscience, but, in matters of conscience, we must also listen to the community. The community has said in words and practice that the participation of women is a matter of order, not of confession. We have agreed to live with each other on this, and taking this step is part of living with each other.

C. Return to the language adopted by Synod 2005 for Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, Regulation 2, so that it reads:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

Grounds:

1. This regulation facilitates the use of the gifts of women as synodical deputies while respecting the right of neighboring classes to choose to be served by men.
2. This return to the direction taken by Synod 2005 is consistent with our previous recommendation and its grounds.

Classis Lake Erie

Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 22: Adopt Proposal of Synod 2006 to Delete the Word *Male* from the Church Order but Allow Women to Serve as Synodical Deputies or Delegates

Classis Huron overtures Synod 2007 to adopt the proposed change in the Church Order, removing the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, but *not*

to adopt the decision to prohibit women ministers and elders of our denomination from serving as synodical deputies or synodical delegates.

I. Background

A. History

Synod 2006 proposed that the word *male* be deleted from Church Order Article 3-a provided that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies.

This contradicts the denomination's official position that "both of the two different perspectives and convictions on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate are within the bounds of biblical authority and Reformed theology" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722). The decision of 2006 is not a compromise. The decision of 2006 honors *only* those who oppose the delegation of women and attempts to silence those who favor it. Those women who serve faithfully in these offices have been locked out of the decision-making body of the denomination. They preach, they disciple, they care for the spiritual well-being of our congregants, they serve us well, but they have no voice at the denominational level. This does not honor those women or men who are deeply convicted that women can and should serve the church of Christ. It only honors those who would keep them subordinate.

More than half of the classes in the CRC have welcomed women to the classis table, and yet synod does not reflect this reality.

Historically, the CRC has honored both positions by granting freedom to individual churches and classes to use the gifts of women without obligating them to do so. A decision to allow classes to delegate women to synod would follow this same spirit. No church and no classis will be obligated to appoint female delegates. All classes will finally be free to send whomever they wish to synod.

B. Sabbath rest

Synod 2006, "understanding the difficulty of the issue, encouraged the church to undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes in the Church Order before revisiting this action in the assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724).

Calling it a Sabbath rest will not make it one. It is a silencing of opposition and a denial of the reality of the situation that exists in our denomination where men and women serve side by side in a majority of our churches. Not only have the voices of women been silenced, but now synod aims to silence the voices of males who support women who seek to serve in all roles in the denomination.

If the goal is truly to allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries, then we should allow women to do their work at all levels.

C. Diversity

Synod should look like the denomination it governs. The Christian Reformed Church is not made up of only males, yet, when one looks at the floor of synod, that is what one sees. Women advisers sit off to the side although at least 50 percent of the CRC is female and more than 50 percent of

our classes have officially stated that females have sound biblical support for serving in church office. How does this segregation honor both positions? How does this segregation honor the gifts of all of our members and the diversity of our denomination? One day, we will all serve and worship at the feet of Jesus, our Lord. Must we wait until then to see the church whole?

II. Overture

Classis Huron overtures Synod 2007 to:

A. Adopt the decision of Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a.

Ground: More than half of the classes in our denomination have declared the word *male* inoperative. This should be reflected at the synodical level.

B. Not accede to the caveat that women may not be delegated to synod or serve as synodical deputies.

Ground: Permitting classes to delegate women officebearers to synod, while not obligating a classis to send women delegates, honors both convictions present in our denomination.

Classis Huron
Edward Den Haan, stated clerk

Overture 23: Adopt Proposal to Delete the Word *Male* from Church Order Article 3-a

I. Background

We celebrate the decision by Synod 2006 to propose the removal of the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a. This proposal opens all church offices to women, affirming the rich life we experience on a congregational and classical level. This decision brings our language in line with our practice.

We grieve the proposal by Synod 2006 to prohibit women elders and ministers from serving as synodical delegates and/or synodical deputies. This decision does not allow women elders and ministers to live into the full responsibility of their office. Women receive the same charge as men when they are ordained. It is inconsistent to limit their ability to faithfully respond to that charge. Our collective life is diminished by denying the full voice of our officebearers.

We are troubled by the suggestion made by Synod 2006 that we take a seven year "Sabbath rest" from discussing this matter. This moratorium was asserted in order to "effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724).

We believe such a moratorium is a misuse of the gracious gift of Sabbath. We believe that encouraging men and women to use the gifts that God has given them for the good of the church and the good of creation is central to our ministry. It is not something tangential to the gospel. Seven years of silence does not honor the men and women who are currently studying to serve

Christ, church, and creation. Would we not pray about and talk about their future?

We encourage councils, congregations, classes, and synod to continue talking together, praying together, and listening to one another. Six years of work and one year of silence seems more in keeping with Sabbath.

Our life has been enriched by the full use of women's gifts, but, we have seen gifted and well-trained women leave our fellowship to find other settings in which they can live out their calling. They do not experience a fullness of encouragement or a breadth of opportunity in the CRCNA. When they leave, we are diminished of gift, talent, and servants' hearts. Seven years of silence does nothing to slow this drain.

As of October 2006, twenty-six of forty-seven classes have extended the privileges and responsibilities of office to all officebearers. While we understand the offense and pain this causes the minority in the CRCNA, we offer this overture in the prayerful hope that they will stay at the table with us in communion, conversation, and commitment. We long for a framework in which all can faithfully live out their convictions.

Our witness is weaker without one another. While our hermeneutics and interpretations are diverse and fallible, we are united in our desire to serve the infallible Sovereign Lord.

II. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures Synod 2007 to adopt the decision to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, while removing the provision: "that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or deputies" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722).

Grounds:

1. All responsibilities and privileges should be extended to all officebearers—both men and women. To withhold some of those responsibilities and privileges from women respects neither them, their office, or their ordination.
2. As the majority of classes have extended the privileges and responsibilities of office to all officebearers; and as women have or are currently serving in a variety of synodical roles (i.e., home and world missionaries; professors at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary; members of the Board of Trustees, which is a synodical interim committee; and so forth), it is appropriate that women officebearers be able to serve as synodical delegates and deputies.

Classis Chicago South

Richard E. Williams, stated clerk

Overture 24: Do Not Adopt the Proposal of Synod 2006 to Remove the Word *Male* from the Church Order

Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan, overtures Synod 2007 *not* to adopt the proposal of Synod 2006 to remove the word *male* from the Church Order, while not allowing the seating of woman delegates at synod and declaring a seven-year Sabbath on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. Instead, we

overture Synod 2007 to establish a committee to reconsider and implement a better approach to the whole issue that recognizes both God's creation order of male headship and the gifts God has given to women to be used in the church in a way that complements the equality of men and women in image-bearing and salvation, yet respects the different roles men and women are called to in the home and in the church.

Grounds:

1. The proposal of Synod 2006 is contrary to the biblical qualifications for the office of pastors and elders (see 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; and 1 Corinthians 14:33-39).
2. The proposal of Synod 2006 is contrary to the Belgic Confession, Article 30.
3. Galatians 3:28 speaks clearly of all being justified by faith in Jesus Christ, Jew, Greek, slave or free, male or female we are all one, meaning united in salvation through Jesus Christ. This text is not addressing the issue of qualifications for officebearers. Therefore, it is an error to read and take *equality* in this verse as referring to an equality of roles, or to read *inclusion* into texts of Scripture that actually address the issue of who is to serve as officebearers in the church.
4. The proposal of Synod 2006 does not work toward unity in the church. Because it is not based on Scripture (both male headship and women's gifts complementing each other) it forces the church to take positions that are not consistent with previous decisions (i.e., the decision of Synod 1995 to honor both positions).
5. It would be wise to humble ourselves as a denomination and prayerfully choose people who could study the Bible and study other churches and denominations that have found a way to complement the different roles and responsibilities that the Bible lays out for men and women in the home and in the church. If by God's grace we can do this, we can expect the CRC to be richly blessed by God with men, women, and a future church flourishing in healthy congregational life and witness for our Lord Jesus, the head of his church.

Council of Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan
Michael Sietsema, clerk

Note: This overture was presented to Classis Grand Rapids North but was not adopted.

Overture 25: Honor the Women Officebearers of Our Denomination

I. Background

A. Introduction

Synod 1970 appointed a committee "to examine in the light of Scripture the general Reformed practice of excluding women from the various ordained offices in the church" (*Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 119). Thirty-seven years later, our women officebearers are still excluded from the full privileges and responsibilities associated with church office in spite of repeated synodical encouragements to use their gifts. When we ordain elders and deacons, we charge the

congregation, “Hold them in honor; . . . respond to them with . . . respect” (Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons, *Psalter Hymnal*, p. 1005). When we ordain ministers, we ask the congregation to “promise to . . . respond to [the pastor’s work] with . . . respect” (Form for Ordination/Installation of Ministers of the Word, *Psalter Hymnal*, p. 993). Yet, we continue to withhold from our women officebearers the honor and respect that is entailed in the Reformed view of office. This year, our denomination celebrates its 150th anniversary. There is no better way to begin the years ahead than to honor our women officebearers by removing the restrictions that prevent them from using their gifts in the service of the denomination and the Savior they love.

B. Honor our women officebearers by continuing to follow our denominational pattern of respecting both convictions among us

As early as 1947 when synod began discussing whether women should be permitted to vote in congregational meetings, it was apparent that there were two different convictions in our denomination. Some wanted women to participate fully in the life of the church; some wanted to restrict women from particular areas of participation. In 1957, the year we celebrated our 100th anniversary, synod began a pattern that it has consistently followed in its decisions regarding the participation of our women members. Synod 1957 said that any council may permit women members to vote, but no council is required to do so (*Acts of Synod 1957*, p. 90).

Synod 1984 followed the same pattern with the office of deacon. Synod said that any council may ordain women to the office of deacon, but no council is required to do so (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 655).

The same pattern was followed by Synod 1995 with the office of elder. Synod said that any council may ordain women to the office of elder, but no council is required to do so (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). Synod 1995 also said that any classis may ordain women to the office of minister, but no classis is required to do so (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). The same synod said that synodical deputies, all of whom were male ministers, may participate in the examination of a woman candidate, but no synodical deputy is required to do so (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

Synods 1957, 1984, and 1995 used this pattern to deal evenhandedly with the two convictions present in our denomination, and, until Synod 2006, there was every indication that this pattern would continue. Synod 2007 should return to this pattern.

C. Honor our women officebearers by permitting them to serve as synodical deputies

Synod 2005 continued the pattern that had been effectively used since 1957 when it indicated that a classis may elect a woman minister to serve as a synodical deputy, but no classis is required to do so. In addition, if a female minister is elected as the synodical deputy, a male minister is to be elected as the alternate (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 760). Thus, a neighboring classis may invite a female synodical deputy, but no classis is required to do so. Again, both convictions are honored.

Unfortunately, Synod 2006 overturned that decision, abandoning the pattern that synod had effectively used for almost fifty years. Synod 2006 encouraged Synod 2007 to declare that all classes are required to elect male synodical deputies and that no classis may elect a female. This honors neither our women officebearers nor the pattern we have followed to respect both

convictions among us. Synod 2007 should not adopt Synod 2006's proposal to reinstate the exclusion of women officebearers as synodical deputies but should retain the fair balance that was created by the decision of Synod 2005.

D. Honor our women officebearers by permitting them to serve as synodical delegates

A number of synods have built the expectation that, as soon as the majority of classes had declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative, synod would use the same pattern with respect to the service of our women officebearers as synodical delegates. Three members of the study committee that reported to Synod 2000 urged synod to permit women officebearers to serve as synodical delegates beginning in 2002 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 388). They said, "First, doing this flows quite naturally out of the nature of the position that was adopted in 1995. If we say we have two interpretations of Scripture and both of them need to be honored, . . . women should also be permitted to be delegated to synod. A second reason. . . is this: eleven years is a long time. We must remember that this decision was made in 1995. If the proposal from the advisory committee is adopted, then what we are looking at is that the earliest a woman may possibly be delegated to synod is the year 2006. . . . We need to keep in mind that the time factor is very long" (*Tape recording of Synod 2000 proceedings*). Synod 2000 did not adopt this recommendation. In one of its grounds for continuing this exclusion, synod did raise the expectation that this restriction would be removed when the majority of classes welcomed women officebearers as delegates to their meetings. It said, "Since the majority of classes have not exercised the classical-local option, the classes that have taken that decision ought to refrain from delegating women to synod" (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 690).

Because almost half the classes permitted women officebearers to be delegated to their meetings, the four women who served on the 2005 review committee recommended that synod permit women to serve as delegates to its meetings. Among other reasons, they asserted that this flowed naturally from the 1995 decision (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 316). The six men on the committee recommended "that synod revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315).

In support of the recommendation offered by the male members of the study committee, one synodical delegate said, "This is not a radical decision. It simply says that we continue this until such a time when a majority of classes have declared the word *male* inoperative. That might not be a long time, but it at least recognizes that there needs to be a majority before we move in any other direction than that which we have followed for ten years" (*Tape recording of Synod 2005 proceedings*). Another said, "We're putting the cart before the horse. We first need to look at Article 3 and take the word *male* out. . . . Let's take the word *male* out instead of doing this *inoperative* stuff. Once it's gone in Article 3, then this discussion isn't needed" (*Tape recording of Synod 2005 proceedings*). Synod 2005 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 decided "to revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 759).

By the time Synod 2006 met, a majority of the classes had declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3 inoperative. Thus, our denominational Board of Trustees recommended that synod delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a and extend to our women members the same privileges and responsibilities extended to our male members (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 565). In taking such action, synod would have followed the pattern previous synods followed when they honored the service of our women officebearers. Women officebearers would have been *permitted* to attend synod, but no male officebearer would be *required* to do so. Instead of following our typical pattern, Synod 2006 encouraged Synod 2007 to declare that all classes are *required* to elect male synodical delegates and that no classis *may* elect a female. This honors neither our women officebearers nor the pattern we have followed in respecting both convictions among us. Furthermore, it does not honor the expectation created by previous synods that all the privileges and responsibilities of office would be extended to our women officebearers when a majority of classes had declared the word *male* in Church Order Article 3 inoperative. The majority of our classes have demonstrated that men and women can serve well together when all officebearers may attend but no officebearers are *required* to attend. There is every reason to believe that the same reality will be achieved on the floor of synod. Synod 2007 should not adopt the proposal of Synod 2006 to continue to withhold from our women officebearers the opportunity to serve as synodical delegates. Rather, it should specify that female officebearers *may* attend synod, but no officebearer is *required* to do so.

E. Honor our women officebearers by not adopting the "Sabbath rest" proposed by Synod 2006

Synod 2006 proposed that the assemblies of the church—councils, classes, and synods—not discuss the use of the gifts of our women officebearers until 2014. Synod stated that “this course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries” (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724).

This proposal is very troubling because it misuses a very beautiful biblical concept that calls Christians to “rest from [their] evil ways, let the Lord work in [them] through his Spirit and so begin already in this life the eternal Sabbath” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 38, *Psalter Hymnal*, p. 909). To suggest that our assemblies refrain from discussing the deep concerns of a segment of our membership and not allow opportunity for God’s Spirit to speak to this issue is not Sabbath rest.

Synod dishonors current women officebearers when it proposes that our assemblies not discuss their concerns. Synod also fails to give adequate guidance to women who believe God is calling them to the gospel ministry. It is unrealistic for a denomination, whose “Prayer Guide” repeatedly encourages us to pray that people will enter the ministry, to declare that for the next seven years—while those people are attending college for four years and seminary for three—the church will not discuss the field of service to which God is calling them.

Similarly, to assert that our assemblies can better concentrate on ministry if they do not discuss the use of women’s gifts is contrary to the experience of many churches and classes. Many have found that the service of women

officebearers enhances their ministries, and their desire to include women officebearers as full partners in the gospel of Christ has increased. To assert that ministry will be enhanced when our assemblies do not discuss the use of their gifts respects neither our women officebearers who desire to use their gifts nor those who seek to encourage such women to respond faithfully to God's call.

What is more, to encourage our assemblies not to discuss the use of women's gifts is precisely the opposite of what previous synods encouraged. Though it made no provisions for formal conversations, Synod 2000 discussed this matter at length. One denominational executive said, "In my judgment this denomination is in desperate need of dialogue" (*Tape recording of Synod 2000 proceedings*). An elder delegate said, "I want to encourage discussion, and I want to encourage every member of this synod to go home and do whatever they can to get discussion on this issue started in their church and in their classis, remembering that silence will not unite us" (*Tape recording of Synod 2000 proceedings*).

The review committee that reported to Synod 2005 specifically encouraged dialogue, and synod asked the denominational Board of Trustees to post sections of the 2000 report on the denominational website, encouraged classes to provide a forum for the study of this material, and encouraged church councils to study this material and recommend its inclusion in their education ministry (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 758). The desire of Synod 2006 to discourage discussion on this matter is contrary to the need for discussion identified by Synods 2000 and 2005.

Synod 2006 recommends silence. The silent treatment does not bring health to marital or personal relationships. It will not bring health to our denominational relationships either. Synod 2007 should not adopt the proposed Sabbath rest. Rather, as synod opens all areas of service to our women officebearers, it should encourage our members to continue to talk with each other in the midst of differing opinions.

E. Honor our women officebearers by respecting our 1984 decision on headship

Since 1995, the matter facing every synod has been, "How can we best make room for each other now that we acknowledge that both positions among us honor Scripture?" Unfortunately, a different discussion occurs at each synod. Some seek to withhold from our women members opportunities to use their gifts in the offices of the church by citing the headship principle, essentially asserting that one position among us does not honor Scripture after all.

Unfortunately, the leadership of synod does not inform delegates that, after a careful examination of Scripture by a synodically appointed study committee, synod adopted an official position on this matter. Our position is "that there is insufficient scriptural evidence to warrant the conclusion that a headship principle holding man's rulership/primary leadership and direction-setting over women is a creation norm extending over the whole of human life" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 624). A specific motion asking synod to declare "that the headship of the man in the church implies that women should not be admitted to the offices of minister, elder or evangelist" was defeated (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 624). If delegates contradicted our official position on any other matter discussed, synod's leadership would inform them of our official denominational position so the matter would be discussed

in an appropriate context. The leadership of synod needs to honor our women members by reminding delegates of our official denominational position on headship when delegates seek to use that issue in an attempt to assert that one of the convictions among us does not honor Scripture.

G. Honor our women officebearers now, not at some future date

A poster printed when the United States was discussing civil rights pictured a black man with four words above his head: "If not now, when?" The same question can be asked about our denomination's unwillingness to extend privileges and responsibilities to our women officebearers. "If not now, when?" The patience of our women members does not alter the fact that their wait to use their God-given gifts has been much too long. Beginning in 1947, we discussed whether women could vote in congregational meetings, citing the same texts we still cite in our discussions concerning the full use of women's gifts in our assemblies. Fifty years ago, when we celebrated the 100th anniversary of our denomination, we honored the gifts of our women members by beginning a pattern that created room for them to serve without requiring those opposed to such service to violate their convictions. Synod 2006 was correct when it determined that now is the time to delete the word *male* from our Church Order, thereby eliminating all barriers to the full service of our women officebearers. Synod 2006 was incorrect when it proposed that certain restrictions be maintained for another seven years even though the word *male* is deleted.

Now, not some future day, is the time to honor our women officebearers by extending to them all the privileges and responsibilities entailed in their office. The sixty-year wait of our women members has been long enough and must not be extended another seven years. The majority of our classes have invited women to their assemblies, demonstrating that our members are both willing and able to find solutions that respect each other's convictions as they use the gifts of all God's people. In 2007, our denomination celebrates its 150th anniversary. There is no better way to begin the years ahead than by honoring our women officebearers by removing the restrictions that prevent them from using their gifts in the service of the denomination and the Savior they love.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to honor our women officebearers:

A. By adopting the decision proposed by Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a (and to make related revisions), and by not adopting the restrictions connected with that proposal, namely "that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722).

Grounds:

1. All the privileges and responsibilities of their offices ought to be extended to all officebearers. To withhold some from women while extending them to men respects neither the concept of office nor our women officebearers.

2. The majority of our classes, twenty-six of forty-seven, have honored our women officebearers by extending all the privileges and responsibilities of office to them. Synod ought to show the same honor.
3. The restrictions proposed by Synod 2006 do not follow the pattern of previous synodical decisions that have created room for our women officebearers without requiring those opposed to such service to violate their convictions.

B. By not adopting the proposal of Synod 2006 to encourage a Sabbath rest of seven years where the matter of the use of women's gifts is not discussed in the assemblies of the church.

Grounds:

1. The desire of Synod 2006 to discourage discussion on this matter is contrary to the need for discussion identified by Synods 2000 and 2005 and contrary to the normal way that people resolve their differences.
2. Using the term *Sabbath rest* to prohibit discussions in our assemblies about the concerns of a segment of our membership and to curtail opportunities for the Spirit to speak to the church is an abuse of the term.

C. By instructing the officers of synod to remind delegates of the official position of the denomination regarding headship.

Grounds:

1. It is apparent that many delegates do not realize that our denomination, after appointing a committee to thoroughly study the teaching of Scripture on this matter, has an official position on it.
2. Informing delegates of our official denominational position on this matter will assist delegates to discuss this matter in a context that honors both our position and our women officebearers.

Classis Grand Rapids East
George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 26: Adopt Recommendation to Delete the Word *Male* from Church Order Article 3-a; Reject Prohibition against Women Synodical Deputies

I. Background

The debate over women serving in the offices of the church has consumed considerable energy and heartache in our denomination for nearly forty years. During this time, some members left the denomination, including entire congregations, because of their opposition to women serving in the offices of the church. During this same period, other individuals and families left the denomination or refrained from affiliating with our denomination because of our resistance to women serving in the offices. The numerical loss does not exhaust the difficulties this issue has brought with it. Peace is sought by all. However, rather than foster peace, the indecisive stance taken by Synod 2006 sends a conflicting and confusing message to the churches and to the world and perpetuates the conflict.

Past synodical decisions concerning this matter hold that the denomination recognizes that this issue is neither a creedal matter nor a central issue in our proclamation of the gospel. Synod 1995 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. 731). In light of this decision, it is incumbent on members of our denomination to live at peace with one another and to respect each other even though there may be disagreement among us as to whether the offices should be open to women as well as to men.

Having reached the above conclusion, the denomination permitted congregations to utilize the gifts of women in all the offices and to delegate women to their respective classes provided that classis had declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. The matter of women serving in the offices was on the agenda of Synod 2006 because more than half of the classes had declared the word *male* inoperative.

II. The decisions of Synod 2006

Synod 2006 decided the time had come to change Article 3 of the Church Order that had limited the offices to only qualified male members. It is sending the following revision of Article 3 to Synod 2007 for adoption:

All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate.

Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 723)

Synod 2006 is also sending a revision to the Church Order Supplement, Article 45-b.

Regulations pertaining to the choosing of delegates to synod and synodical deputies: With reference to the decision of Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3, synod also added the provision that women ministers and elders may not be delegated to synod or serve as synodical deputies.

(see *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722)

Note: The same sentence would appear in the Supplement to Church Order Article 48.

The grounds given for allowing women to serve in all the offices but prohibiting them from serving as synodical delegates or synodical deputies are as follows:

Grounds:

- a. This allows women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and ministry associate on the local and regional level while honoring and respecting on the synodical level those who oppose women serving in the offices of minister or elder.
- b. For over a decade, the denomination’s official position has been that both of the two different perspectives and convictions on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate are within the bounds of biblical authority and Reformed theology.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722)

There is a significant error in the first ground that supports the decision to withhold women from being delegated to synod and to serve as synodical deputies. That error is the contradictory message that this recommendation sends the churches and the world with respect to the meaning of the term *office*. According to our Church Order, are women fully ordained and authorized officers in the CRC or not? The prohibition of woman from being delegated to synod and to serve as synodical deputies can only lead to the conclusion that women are not fully ordained and authorized officers in the CRC. That is certainly not the message sent by the decision to eliminate the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a. How can there still be gender-based prohibitions to any level of service when the Church Order no longer defines eligibility to office in terms of gender?

The first ground is significantly flawed; therefore, the decision that rests upon it is flawed and should not stand.

Finally, Synod 2006 offered the following encouragement concerning this matter:

That synod, understanding the difficulty of this issue, encourages the church to undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes in the Church Order before revisiting this action in the assemblies.

Ground: This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724)

It is a mistake to limit discussion on this issue because it involves the consistent and just application of the Church Order to many members of our denomination. The ground suggests that including women as officers does not fit as one of our “ministries.”

III. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures Synod 2007 to:

- A. Adopt the proposal of Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a of the Church Order (and make related revisions).
- B. Reject the proposal of Synod 2006 to revise Church Order Supplement, Articles 45-b and 48 that prohibit women from serving as synodical delegates or synodical deputies.

Ground: Rejecting the proposal that prohibit women from serving as synodical delegates or deputies avoids the error of sending a contradictory message to the church and the world with regard to serving in office in the CRC.

Classis Muskegon
Allen Petroelje, stated clerk

Overture 27: Do Not Adopt the Change to Church Order Article 3-a

Classis Illiana overtures synod not to adopt the change in Church Order Article 3-a proposed by Synod 2006 that deleted the word *male* from the Article.

Grounds:

1. The grounds that were given were not in any sense new.
2. No new scriptural arguments were advanced for such a change in the Church Order.
3. Adoption of the change proposed by Synod 2006 threatens to bring a breakdown in unity and cooperation at the classical level. If women elders or pastors are delegated to classis, churches that believe that the Bible disallows such ordination would construe their classis as being “unbiblically constituted.” As a consequence, any business transacted by a classis with women delegates would be held by such objecting churches as unlawfully conducted. Thus, the delegating of women elders or pastors would cause a division that would threaten the ability of churches to work together for their common good.

Classis Illiana

Robert L. Jipping, stated clerk

Overture 28: Do Not Impose Restrictions on Church Order Article 3-a

Classis B.C. South-East overtures Synod 2007 to strike the words “provided that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies” from the proposal of Synod 2006 and to make appropriate revisions in the Church Order in light of that decision.

Grounds:

1. No restrictions ought to be attached to the decision to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a. All the privileges and responsibilities of their offices ought to be extended to all officebearers.
2. The majority of classes (twenty-six of forty-seven classes as of October 2006) have extended all the privileges and responsibilities of office to all officebearers. Further delay in withholding some privileges on a synodical level is unnecessary, especially when our women members already serve in numerous capacities at the synodical level.

Classis B.C. South-East

Gerrit J. Veeneman, stated clerk

Overture 29: Permit Women Ministers and Elders to Serve as Synodical Delegates or Deputies

I. Background

Synod 2006 proposed to remove the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, but it also added a provision “that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies” (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722). This change must be adopted by Synod 2007 before it takes effect. We believe that synod’s decision to add the prohibitive provision represents a grievous inconsistency and was based on faulty and inaccurate grounds. Consider the following analysis of the decision.

II. The 2006 decision

That synod recommend that the word *male* be deleted from Church Order Article 3-a (and make related revisions) provided that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722)

A. *Ground a*

This allows women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and ministry associate on the local and regional level while honoring and respecting on the synodical level those who oppose women serving in the offices of minister or elder.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722)

This is not true. Women are already serving in many ways on the synodical level: home missionaries, world missionaries, chaplaincy ministries (military, hospital, institutional), denominational boards, synod's interim committee (the BOT), the chair of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, Dean of the chapel at Calvin College, professors at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and so forth.

Since 1995, the church has been attempting to find ways to honor both convictions on all levels—not just on congregational and classical levels.

B. *Ground b*

For over a decade, the denomination's official position has been that both of the two different perspectives and convictions on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate are within the bounds of biblical authority and Reformed theology.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722)

The above statement is true as it stands. However, the decision of synod to prohibit women from serving as synodical deputies or delegates does not honor one of the two positions. To use this ground to support the action taken does not reflect the whole truth.

The way the church has consistently honored both positions is to declare that congregations and classes are free, but not obligated to use, the gifts of women:

- 1957: Any congregation may invite women to vote at congregational meetings, but no congregation must invite women to vote.
- 1984: Any congregation may ordain women deacons, but no congregation must ordain women deacons.
- 1995: Any congregation may ordain women elders, but no congregation must ordain women elders.
- 1995: Women may be ordained in classes that permit such ordination, but no classis is obligated to permit such ordination.
- 2005: Synodical agencies may appoint or approve the appointment of women as ministers of the Word for fields of labor within classes where women are permitted to hold office. Women ministers may not be approved for fields of labor outside North America where our partner churches do not permit the ordination of women (Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, 6).

2005: A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and ministry associate may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate (Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, 2).

When Synod 2005 permitted the appointment of a female minister as a synodical deputy as long as a male minister was the alternate, it honored both convictions in the denomination. Synod 2006 reversed this arrangement and said that only male ministers could serve as synodical deputies. Synod claimed that this decision honored both positions. Clearly it does not. It defers to the conviction that Scripture and Reformed theology do not support the use of women's gifts as ministers, elders, and ministry associates.

Synod 2006 said that only males could serve as synodical delegates and said that this honored both positions. This is not true. Both positions will be honored when males and females are permitted to serve as synodical delegates. Following the pattern we have followed for the past thirty years, any minister or elder ought to be permitted to serve as a synodical delegate, but no minister or elder ought to be obligated to serve as a synodical delegate.

Synod created the expectation that as soon as the majority of classes permitted the delegation of women to their meetings (declared the word *male* inoperative) synod would invite women delegates to its meetings:

1. Three members of the study committee that reported to Synod 2000 urged synod to permit women to serve as synodical delegates beginning in 2002 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 388). They said,

First, doing this flows quite naturally out of the nature of the position that was adopted in 1995. If we say we have two interpretations of Scripture and both of them need to be honored . . . women should also be permitted to be delegated to synod. A second reason for our suggesting this is this: eleven years is a long time. We must remember that this decision was made in 1995. If the proposal from the advisory committee is adopted, then what we're looking at is that the earliest a woman may possibly be delegated to synod is the year 2006. . . . We need to keep in mind that the time factor is very long.
(Tape recording of Synod 2000 proceedings)

Synod 2000 did not adopt this recommendation. Instead, it continued to exclude our women members from synod. In one of its grounds for this exclusion, synod raised the expectation that this restriction would be removed when the majority of classes voted to permit women to be delegated to their meetings: "Since the majority of classes have not exercised the classical-local option, the classes that have taken that decision ought to refrain from delegating women to synod" (Acts of Synod 2000, p. 690).

2. Although the majority of classes had not exercised that option by 2005, the four women who served on the review committee reporting to Synod 2005 recommended that women be permitted to serve as synodical delegates. Among other reasons, they asserted that this flowed naturally from the 1995 decision (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 316). The six men on the committee recommended "that synod revisit the issue of female delegates to synod at such a time when a majority of classes has declared the word *male* inoperative" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 315). Once again, it was painfully obvious

that our female members desired the opportunity to make full use of their gifts and that our male members desired to exclude them from exercising those gifts.

3. In support of the continued exclusion of female synodical delegates, one delegate said,

This is not a radical decision. It simply says that we continue this until such a time when a majority of classes have declared the word *male* inoperative. That might not be a long time, but it at least recognizes that there needs to be a majority before we move in any other direction than that which we have followed for ten years.

(Tape recording of Synod 2005 proceedings)

The majority was achieved by the time Synod 2006 convened, yet synod decided to continue its exclusion of women delegates.

4. Another delegate said, "We're putting the cart before the horse. We first need to look at Article 3 and take the word *male* out. . . . Let's take the word *male* out instead of doing this *inoperative* stuff. Once it's gone in Article 3, then this discussion isn't needed" (Tape recording of Synod 2005 proceedings). Synod 2006 voted to take the word *male* out of Article 3 but also prohibited women from serving as synodical delegates and deputies. Putting the horse before the cart made absolutely no difference.
5. Synod 2005 decided "to 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). In spite of the fact that in 2006 the majority of classes permitted the delegation of women to their meetings, Synod 2006 continued to exclude women and recommended that they be excluded for seven years after its decision is officially adopted (2014).

C. *Sabbath rest*

That synod, understanding the difficulty of this issue, encourage the church to undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years following the adoption of these changes in the Church Order before revisiting this action in the assemblies.

Ground: This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries. (This ground is taken from *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735.)

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724)

Two of our female ministers responded to this recommendation in the September 2006 issue of *The Banner*:

1. Rev. Ardean Brock wrote: "We do ourselves a huge disservice when we refuse to talk about the issue at hand. Marriages that lose the communication factor are sure to fail. 'Putting a cork in it' only guarantees an explosion down the road. Let's not succumb to pious manipulation and call it 'Sabbath rest.' We were made as male and female to be interdependent. Any committee, organization, or institution that is exclusively one sex is unhealthy and not able to fully realize completeness in Christ."
2. Rev. Ruth Boven wrote: "I'm deeply disturbed over synod's use of 'Sabbath' to halt debate over women delegates to synod. Sabbath is God's gift. It frees

us to celebrate who we are as the people of God. In Exodus God instructed Israel not to gather manna on the Sabbath. In response to God's grace and deliverance, they were to rest in their identity as God's people, thereby proclaiming to the world God's immense love and care. It takes all our voices and gifts to tell the world all that God wants to say about himself. Let's not call the silencing of some of our voices 'Sabbath.' Let's call it what it is: sin."

It is simply not true that encouraging our assemblies (councils, classes, and synod) not to talk about the use of women's gifts will "allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724). Many churches and classes, concentrating on their ministries, have been blessed by the service of women, and their ministries have been enriched and increased. It is the very concentration on their ministries that has shown them how ministry is hindered when women continue to be excluded from areas of ministry that flow naturally from their office.

In the past eleven years, only three synods have discussed this matter. The discussion at Synod 2006 was promoted by the decision of Synod 2005 to revisit this matter when a majority of the classes had invited women as delegates to their meetings. Before that, an evaluation committee appointed by Synod 1995 reported to Synod 2000. That synod had a lengthy discussion on how necessary dialogue on this matter was. For example, the denomination's executive director of ministries said, "In my judgment this denomination is in desperate need of dialogue" (Tape recording of Synod 2000 proceedings). No mechanism was established to facilitate such dialogue. Another committee reported to Synod 2005. It specifically encouraged dialogue (CRC Publications to post on the denominational website parts of the report to Synod 2000, classes to provide a forum for the study of this material, and church councils to study the material and include it in their education ministry [*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 758]). The desire of Synod 2006 to stifle discussion on this matter is contrary to the need for discussion identified by Synods 2000 and 2005.

Repeatedly, we ask the Spirit to guide the church and pray that we will be responsive to the Spirit's leading. To declare that we will not talk about this matter in our assemblies for seven years does not demonstrate openness to the leading of God's Spirit.

III. Synod's leadership

A. Synod 1995 lamented that "our history of dealing with this issue has been one of a number of reversals which is regrettable" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 727). Synod 2006 repeated that history by reversing the decision of Synod 2005 regarding synodical deputies and by reversing the expectation that synod had created for years in terms of the service of women as synodical delegates.

B. Our denominational Board of Trustees, pointing to an overture that asked synod to delete the word *male* from Article 3 and to permit the delegation of all duly elected officebearers to synod, advised synod:

Further study will create more unproductive ferment and will only delay the full implementation of what in spirit has already been decided by previous synods. The fact is that the CRC has changed its position relative to women serving in the

church, and, increasingly, congregations and classes are bringing their own practices into conformity with that change. It is important that synod give clear leadership in finalizing what other synods have said and practiced for a decade or more. The Board sees no benefit in synod's responding ambivalently to the proposed change and advises synod to speak clearly for the change.

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 565)

The fact that Synod 2006 did not give such clear leadership is regrettable because such action does not instill confidence in the leadership of synod. It is even more regrettable because once more our female members, who have no voice at synod, continue to be treated as second-class citizens.

IV. Headship and other arguments to oppose the service of women

Whenever synod discusses the use of women's gifts, some delegates argue that the Bible prohibits such service.

A. Synod 1995 declared that both positions honor Scripture and asked the church to strive to live together in such a way that both positions are honored. To continue to argue about whether the Bible does or does not allow the use of women's gifts in the office of the church ignores the reality of the 1995 decision. Our task is to find a way to live together while honoring both positions.

B. A synodical committee specifically appointed to examine the matter of headship reported to Synod 1984. A motion asking synod to declare "that the headship of the man in the church implies that women should not be admitted to the offices of minister, elder or evangelist" was defeated (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 624). The official position of our denomination on headship is "that there is insufficient scriptural evidence to warrant the conclusion that a headship principle holding man's rulership/primary leadership and direction-setting over women is a creation norm extending over the whole of human life" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 624). Each year, delegates ignore the official position of our denomination on headship by citing it as a reason to continue to withhold from our women members the opportunities to use their Spirit-given gifts.

C. Synod 1995 called the denomination to honor both positions. The same synod adopted a number of regulations that continued to exclude women from certain areas of service; thus giving our traditional position greater honor than the position that called for the inclusion of women in all areas of service. Repeatedly, the exclusion of women from certain areas of service was defended with the so-called ocean liner argument wherein the church is described as a large ocean liner that takes much more time to turn rather than a small speed boat that can be turned on a dime. Those who bore the brunt of that argument, our women members, have waited patiently for the ocean liner to turn. It appeared that Synod 2006 would make the turn complete because the majority of classes had invited women to attend their meetings. However, Synod 2006 reversed the turn by taking away the opportunity for women to serve as synodical deputies and by continuing to exclude women from serving as synodical delegates, contrary to the expectation created by at least three synods. How much longer can we expect our female members to wait patiently before the males at the helm of the ocean liner decide to make the turn complete? We need to give our female members all the privileges and responsibilities that belong to their offices.

D. Synod 1970 appointed a committee “to examine in the light of scripture the general Reformed practice of excluding women from the various ordained offices in the church” (*Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 119). Thirty-seven years later, women members of our denomination are still excluded from various privileges and responsibilities associated with the church offices to which they have been called in spite of synod’s repeated encouragements to utilize their gifts and synod’s repeated promises that their position would be honored. This year, our denomination celebrates its 150th anniversary. A wonderful way to begin our future years together and to demonstrate respect for our sisters in Christ is to remove the restrictions that prevent them from using their gifts in the service of the denomination and the Savior they love.

V. Overture

Classis Kalamazoo overtures Synod 2007 to adopt the proposal of Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, but not the added provision “that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies” (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722).

Grounds:

1. The provision is inconsistent with the deletion of the word *male* as a qualification for service as ministers, elders, and ministry associates.
2. The provision does not honor the conviction that Scripture and Reformed theology support the service of women as ministers, elders, and ministry associates.
3. The provision is incongruent with the increasing number of women already serving at the synodical level.

Classis Kalamazoo
Henry De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 30: Adopt Proposal to Delete the Word *Male* from Church Order Article 3-a without Restrictions

I. Background

The decision of Synod 2006 to recommend the removal of the word *male* from Article 3-a of the Church Order marks an important milestone in the long journey toward equality between women and men in holding ecclesiastical office in the Christian Reformed Church. We applaud this decision because it officially recognizes that both men and women bring gifts of service and leadership to the church. It also brings the Church Order in line with the practice within the majority of classes. However, we are troubled by the proposal of Synod 2006 to prohibit women elders and ministers from serving as delegates to synod or as synodical deputies. This proposal is inconsistent with the overall responsibilities of ecclesiastical office. As is true with male officebearers, women officebearers, officially ordained by their congregations using the same charge as male officebearers, should be permitted to exercise their responsibilities in all spheres of their office. The official removal of the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a must open the door for women to serve as full ordained elders and ministers without restrictions.

Synod 2006 not only made a decision that is inconsistent with the nature of ecclesiastical office, but it also appears to be content to live with this inconsistency for seven years (at least) by suggesting that synod take a seven year “Sabbath rest” from discussing it. This proposal is unfair to all women and especially to those who have waited for decades to be fully recognized as ordained officebearers. It also unnecessarily perpetuates an inconsistency. What hope is expressed by this moratorium? That the problem will go away? Or that what is not acceptable in 2006 will be acceptable in 2013? After decades-long discussions on the role of women in office, we see no principle that can be invoked to justify waiting seven more years (or longer) to embrace women in full and equal membership in all church offices. Thus, we present Synod 2007 with the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Alberta North overtures Synod 2007 to adopt the 2006 proposal to delete the word *male* from Article 3-a of the Church Order but without the provision: “that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies,” and to make appropriate revisions in the Church Order in light of that decision.

Grounds:

1. No restrictions ought to be placed on the ability of ordained officebearers to exercise their responsibilities to serve and lead the church. All responsibilities and privileges should be extended to officebearers, both women and men, equally.
2. It is timely to make this decision now as a matter of principle. Further delay in removing the proposed restriction perpetuates inconsistency and constitutes injustice toward current women officebearers, as well as toward all women hoping to serve the church in ordained offices in the future.

Classis Alberta North
Anna Feddes, stated clerk

Overture 31: Adopt Change to Church Order Article 3-a But Not Its Restrictions

Classis Northern Illinois overtures synod to adopt the proposal by Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a and to not adopt the restrictions connected with that proposal, namely “that women ministers and elders not be allowed to serve as synodical delegates or synodical deputies.”

Grounds:

1. This brings our practice, our order, and our beliefs into harmony. A majority of our classes operate in this manner already.
2. This avoids the needless dishonoring of and lording it over the women officebearers in our churches.
3. Finally, closing off this squabble frees us to focus on other pressing ministry opportunities.

Classis Northern Illinois
Gregory Schuringa, alt. stated clerk

Overture 32: Open All Denominational Positions of Ordained Leadership to Women

I. Background

As a classis, we have for a number of years allowed local congregations to make their own decision regarding the ways in which women may serve in ministry. In our classis meetings and functions, those churches who allow women to serve as elders and pastors have been free to send women as delegates, and those who do not send women have never been criticized or marginalized. We have lived in peace with this issue, recognizing the statements of the CRC synods that declare that more than one Reformed understanding of Scripture is possible in this matter.

We are, however, saddened by the actions of Synod 2006 regarding this issue. In what was intended to be a peaceful resolution leading into a seven year Sabbath rest in our denominational discussion, the opportunities for women to serve were decreased. Resolutions were passed that are inconsistent with each other. The church is confused and more distressed. The tone of the discussion at Synod 2006 ended up being political, with each party being asked to give and take, with the opportunity for women to serve being held in the balance. Although the intention was to make peace, Synod 2006 failed to recognize that there can be no peace without honesty. The truth is that members of the CRC have divergent viewpoints on this issue, yet all are agreed that it is not a salvation issue.

We would observe that in Classis Greater Los Angeles and in numerous other classes we have been able to function peacefully in this area. Our practice in Greater Los Angeles allows each congregation on the local level to decide how to handle this matter. On the regional level (i.e., at meetings and functions of classis), each local congregation delegates whomever it feels appropriate. Those who have so-called problems in principal with women in roles of leadership show forbearance during such regional gatherings. Those who have problems in principal with the exclusion of women in leadership roles show forbearance by not being critical of other congregations and by not interfering with their local decisions.

We would be so bold as to suggest that the solution we have found in Classis Greater Los Angeles would well serve the denomination as a whole. We do not favor prolonging this painful discussion for another decade. We feel that it is possible and advisable for synod to make a decision that will allow us to move on to other important matters. Therefore, we offer the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures Synod 2007 to open all denominational positions of ordained leadership to women.

Grounds:

1. This practice is in keeping with the numerous biblical studies that the CRC has done on this matter.
2. This practice honors the convictions of those who oppose women in office in that it allows them to not experience women in office in their local setting where they spend most of their church life.

3. This practice honors the conviction of those who favor women in office in that it allows full use of women's gifts throughout our denominational ministries.
4. This practice allowed a peaceful coexistence of brothers and sisters in Christ in a number of our regional bodies.

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Gary M. Stevens, stated clerk

Overture 33: Revise (1) the Seven-Year Sabbath Rest from Discussing Women in Office and (2) the Justice of Barring Women Officebearers from Serving as Synodical Delegates and Deputies

I. Observations

The reaction to Synod 2006's decisions not to allow ordained women to serve as synodical delegates and synodical deputies as well as its decision to implement a Sabbath rest from these discussions has been overwhelmingly negative, especially as seen in nearly all the letters to the editor in the September 2006 edition of *The Banner*, where it is noted that the letters printed therein represent "an accurate balance of the letters received" by our denomination's magazine.

This should not have come as a surprise. With more than half of the classes in our denomination ordaining women, Synod 2006 voted to remove the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, thus allowing women to be ordained in every office of the church in any local church that desires it (see *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722). However, with the restriction that ordained women cannot serve as synodical delegates and deputies (see *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 722), it is not difficult to understand how many see a woman's ordination as not a full ordination: It appears that men can enjoy *full* ordination while women can experience only *partial* ordination. If ordination bestows certain honors and duties, it is only logical that everyone who is ordained assumes those honors and duties. Excluding some from these things based on gender is unjust if the terminology of *ordination* continues to be used. As Mr. Bill Lucas wrote to *The Banner*: "I understand the decision was made to keep the peace; however, the injustice done to many of our members, both male and female, is difficult to understand and justify" (Sept. 2006, p. 8). If this is indeed an injustice, we would be wise to remember how the Bible often commands us to "not deny justice" (Ex. 23:6); to "follow justice and justice alone" (Deut. 16:20); to "maintain justice and righteousness" (2 Chr. 9:8); and to "administer justice every morning" (Jer. 21:12).

Moreover, this undoes a decision of Synod 2005 that put into the Church Order an authorization for classes to "appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighbouring classes, a male minister is the alternate" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 760).

Note: Because of Synod 2005's decision, Classis Grand Rapids East already has a female synodical deputy. This reversal occurred without input from the churches, as is customary when changes to the Church Order are proposed. This reversal also undermines Church Order Article 29, which states that

decisions of the church's assemblies "shall be considered settled and binding" (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*, p. 14) because, among other reasons, "it is unsettling and divisive for the same issues to be raised in the church without weighty grounds" (*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 2001 ed., p. 173). It is debatable whether "weighty grounds" were given in the reversal of the decision of 2005 at Synod 2006; the reference to honoring the two different perspectives on the issue in the grounds could have been used to *retain* ordained women as synodical deputies.

Looking at the bigger picture, the actions of Synods 2005 and 2006 are beginning to look like the harmful actions done by numerous subsequent synods in the 1990s, where one year it was decided women could be ordained, and the following year it was decided they could not. This ping-pong back and forth created great strain in the denomination. It finally ended when individual classes were given the option to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a in 1995. If history repeats itself, ordained women will one day be synodical delegates and synodical deputies when the repeated reversals finally end. Thus despite good intentions, the decisions of Synod 2006 will not keep the peace and these decisions are beginning a similar harmful sequence of events as seen in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, Synod 2006 has "encourage[d] the churches to undertake a Sabbath rest of seven years . . . before revisiting this action in the assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 724).

Synod 2006 uses the biblical term *Sabbath rest* inaccurately, though, because there is no biblical evidence to support the delay of discussion or debate on issues of concern to the nation of Israel. On the contrary, in Deuteronomy 31:10-13, Moses declares God's will that the sabbatical year must be one of teaching and training, during which the Israelites are to "listen and learn to fear the LORD your God." Rather than deny the opportunity for discussion on the issue of women in office, our church should "listen and learn."

Because definition of a *moratorium* according to *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* is "a waiting period set by an authority," this decision can be technically classified as a moratorium and will be referred to as such throughout the remainder of this overture.

The grounds for the present moratorium come from a similar decision made by Synod 1995, which argued that:

1. This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its church to concentrate on their ministries,
2. It will also allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue,
3. A period during which the issue is not hotly and bitterly debated will allow the denomination to prayerfully reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

It must be noted that the following year, an advisory committee reported to Synod 1996 that "a synod cannot impose such a moratorium, nor did Synod

1995 do so” because “the fact that this issue is before Synod 1996 indicates that further debate was not proscribed” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 546).

It should also be noted how the grounds for the cessation of debate in 1995 are wrongly applied to our current situation. After twenty-five years of debate about the issue of women in office, thirty overtures out of eighty presented to Synod 1995 were still about this issue. Even after the 1995 moratorium, Synod 1996 received twenty overtures and two communications related to the previous year’s decision. By comparison, the *Agenda for Synod 2006* included only one overture related directly to the issue. It is an exaggeration to import the language from 1995 and state that this issue is still being “hotly and bitterly debated.”

If this time the denomination successfully enforces the moratorium as adopted by Synod 2006 (which, as noted above, is not presently occurring, similar to 1995-1996), we are essentially telling individuals who are struggling with this decision to keep it to themselves and keep quiet. We are not continuing in dialogue with the points given above. This is not healthy. Rev. Ardean Brock put it well in her letter to *The Banner*: “We do ourselves a huge disservice when we refuse to talk about the issue at hand. Marriages that lose the communication factor are sure to fail. ‘Putting a cork in it’ only guarantees an explosion down the road” (Sept. 2006, p. 8). A moratorium that forces the silence of some of our voices may end up creating more *unrest*.

Thus, Classis B.C. North-West would like to see the seven-year moratorium nullified so that discussion may continue, particularly discussion about and reexamination of ordained women not being allowed to serve as synodical delegates and deputies.

II. Overtures

A. Classis B.C. North-West overtures Synod 2007 that the seven-year moratorium from discussing the issue of women in office be lifted.

Grounds:

1. The actions of Synod 2006 require more open and formal discussion as is evident by the reactions generated by those actions.
2. Synod 2006 uses the biblical term *Sabbath rest* inaccurately. Sabbath as revealed in the Bible differs from the Sabbath encouraged by synod.
3. Synod does not have the authority to impose such a moratorium as we learned in the 1990s.
4. Synod 2006 inaccurately equates the current situation with that in 1995 when a similar moratorium was encouraged.
5. Telling people to keep silent about something that is critically significant to them is not healthy and may indeed create more *unrest* in the future.

B. Pending the approval of the above overture, Classis B.C. North-West overtures Synod 2007 requesting that the matter of ordained women being barred from serving as synodical delegates and deputies be reexamined.

Grounds:

1. The actions of Synod 2006 are not keeping the peace as was hoped.
2. By barring ordained women from serving synodically, our denomination gives the impression that women do not enjoy a full or complete ordination. Moreover, voices in the denomination are calling this unjust.

3. The reversal made by Synod 2006 was not presented to the churches for consideration.
4. The reversal made by Synod 2006 undermines Church Order Article 29, which states that decisions of the church's assemblies shall be considered settled and binding.
5. We are creating a ping-pong effect where synod one year is reversing the decision of the previous synod. This practice of making a decision and then reversing it the following year and then reversing it once again the next year was harmful to our denomination in the 1990s.

Classis B.C. North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

Overture 34: Do Not Adopt Seven Years of Silence Re Use of Women's Gifts

Classis Chicago South overtures Synod 2007 to revise the decision of Synod 2006 encouraging a seven-year silence concerning the matter of the full use of women's gifts.

Grounds:

1. Both Synods 2000 and 2005 encouraged the churches to discuss this matter. The desire of Synod 2006 to stifle this discussion is contrary to the need identified in these previous synods and is contrary to the normal way in which people resolve their differences.
2. Our discussions on this matter at the congregational, council, classical, and synodical levels in the past have contributed to a better understanding of one another and the mutual hope for healing and reconciliation.
3. Using the term *Sabbath rest* to prohibit discussion about this crucial matter does a disservice to the biblical concept of Sabbath.

Classis Chicago South
Richard E. Williams, stated clerk

Overture 35: Do Not Adopt a Seven-Year Sabbath Rest

Classis B.C. South-East overtures Synod 2007 not to adopt the recommendation of Synod 2006 to encourage a seven-year period where the matter of the use of women's gifts is not discussed in the assemblies of the church.

Grounds:

1. Our discussions of this matter on the council, classical, and synodical levels in the past eleven years since the 1995 decision have been beneficial to the church and have contributed to healing and better understanding.
2. Both Synods 2000 and 2005 encouraged the churches to discuss this matter. Synod 2005 encouraged several ways to do that and posted material on the denomination website to facilitate that (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 758). The desire of Synod 2006 to stifle discussion on this matter is contrary to the need identified by Synods 2000 and 2005 and contrary to the normal way that people resolve their differences.

3. To refer to this period of time as a *Sabbath rest* is a misuse of the term. Biblical Sabbath is intended for justice to prevail. This Sabbath appears to do the opposite.
4. The experience of Classis B.C. South-East has been that we are one of the classes that have deleted the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a, yet there remain churches that do not have women in office. We work harmoniously even as women delegates are seated at classis.

Classis B.C. South-East

Gerrit J. Veeneman, stated clerk

Overture 36: Withhold Action on the Recommendations of the Majority and Minority Reports of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism and Appoint a New Committee

I. Background

That which follows is our response to the majority and minority reports of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism.

We believe that the majority report has a number of strengths. It gives a helpful overview of the third wave movement. Its analysis of why the third wave has widespread appeal is insightful. The Reformed worldview framework that it develops for use in evaluating the third wave is one with which we generally agree. However, in our view, the majority report also has some significant weaknesses. In several key areas, the report raises more questions than it answers and fails to fulfill its mandate “to examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications, and pastoral dimensions related to ‘third wave’ Pentecostalism.”

We agree with a number of the concerns expressed in the minority report, but we believe that there is more to be said regarding those concerns and that the minority report also fails to fulfill the committee’s mandate. (We note that there appear to be a number of errata in the minority report, e.g., in the first sentence of the last paragraph of section III, the word *book* should probably be *report*. In recommendation VI, B, it appears that the recommendations referred to in the majority report should be Recommendations B, 1, 3, and 5, not B, 1, 2, and 5. In Appendix A, in section I, B, 1, the quotation from the 1973 report should read, “supernatural speech in a known language,” rather than “supernatural speech in an unknown language.”)

II. Concerns about the committee’s responses to third wave teaching

We have concerns regarding the majority’s responses to several of the areas of third wave teaching evaluated by the majority report.

A. Prophecy

Regarding the gift of prophecy, the majority report says: “The spiritual gift of prophecy operates by receiving a word from the Lord as a special insight for a specific situation” (V, B, 2, a, 1). “Prophecy involves a believer’s response to a message from God that is not directly tied to the exposition of Scripture. It may convey a direct word from God for the entire church community, or it may be for specific situations and individuals” (V, B, 2, a, 3). Because of these

affirmations, the majority recommends that synod address the following counsel to the churches: "Acknowledge the gift of prophecy today, subject to the overriding authority of Scripture and discernment of the Christian body" (VI, B, 3).

The definition of prophecy given by the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism is much broader than the one given above. Because of that, the minority calls the majority's interpretation of the gift of prophecy "highly reductionistic." What neither report mentions is that a number of exegetical studies of New Testament prophecy have been written since the 1973 report (see the discussion in Donald Carson's book, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987], 91-100). If the majority wishes to have the church acknowledge the gift of prophecy today, it owes it to the church to provide a review and evaluation of the biblical study that has been done in this area during the last thirty years. If there is a difference between the kind of prophecy the church is supposed to acknowledge and the kind of "authoritative revelation that threatens the finality of the canon" (D.A. Carson's phrase), the majority needs very carefully to explain that. The majority report fails to provide such an explanation.

The majority counsels churches to "affirm that the apostolic office belongs to the foundational period of the church, giving rise to the canonical writings of the New Testament, and reject all claims of contemporary leaders to the apostolic office" (VI, B, 8). On the basis of Ephesians 2:20, however, one could argue that prophets were just as foundational in the church as apostles. Paul tells us that God's household is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." In Ephesians 4:11, prophets are listed immediately after apostles as gifts of the ascended Christ to his church. There is a similar association of apostles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12:28. Perhaps the majority can explain why the prophetic office is less authoritative and foundational than the apostolic office; perhaps the office of prophet no longer exists, but the gift of prophecy does. Our concern is that the majority report fails to deal with these matters in any significant way.

In summary, we believe that if the majority is asking the churches to "acknowledge the gift of prophecy today," then it is their responsibility to provide the exegetical and theological arguments necessary to support their position.

B. Prayer

Regarding prayer as dialogue, the majority report makes the following affirmation: "The renewed emphasis on prayer as two-way conversation is deeply embedded in traditional Christianity and is compatible with Reformed spirituality, especially the pietistic tradition. We can benefit from this renewed emphasis on listening to God in prayer" (V, B, 3, a, 1). In light of this affirmation, the majority recommends that synod address the following counsel to the churches: "Think of prayer as a dialogue, not a monologue, and be attentive to what God is saying as you pray" (VI, B, 5).

Here again, the majority makes an affirmation but provides us with no biblical study supporting it. There are instances in the book of Acts where apostles are praying, and then fall into a trance and receive revelation (Peter in Acts 10:9-16 and Paul in Acts 22:17-21; Cornelius may provide another example in Acts 10:3-6). These instances occurred at pivotal points in the history of redemption. Should the ordinary believer expect to have such

experiences today? Are there any biblical commands to “be attentive to what God is saying as you pray”?

By failing to provide any biblical discussion of such issues, the majority report does not serve the churches well.

C. *Healing*

Regarding healing, the majority report makes this affirmation: “Inner healing recognizes that we can be wounded emotionally while living in a fallen world and that wounds from the past can affect our lives in the present. Inner healing ministry provides pathways to follow for lies to be replaced with truth, for repentance to be walked out, and for forgiveness to be processed. All of these emphases are healthy dimensions of biblical discipleship that we are called to express in our lives” (V, B, 4, a, 3).

What the majority report fails to mention is that at least some models of ministry that claim to provide emotional healing, e.g., Theophostic Prayer Ministry, include the idea that after a person is born again his spirit is perfectly new, while his mind or soul is still corrupted and needs renewal. Theophostic Prayer Ministry and other forms of healing ministry (e.g., Charles Kraft in *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing: Discovering the Vital Link between Spiritual Warfare and Inner Healing* [Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1993]) also teach that demons can inhabit a believer, dwelling inside memories through the lies that they contain. What is the biblical basis for this teaching?

The majority report’s blanket endorsement of healing ministries without reflecting on these issues biblically and theologically is not helpful.

D. *Spiritual warfare*

Regarding spiritual warfare, the majority report makes this affirmation: “Demons can attack, oppress, and possess human beings. Christians cannot be demon-possessed because they belong to God. However, Christians can be attacked, oppressed, or even inhabited by demons, often called demonization, and demons can be present and can control the thoughts and behavior of Christians” (V, B, 5, a, 2). In line with this affirmation, the majority recommends that synod address the following counsel to the churches: “Acknowledge the present reality of the demonic impact on human life and the authority of Jesus Christ to liberate humans from its enslaving and oppressive impact on every area of life. With discernment and caution, engage in a deliverance ministry in the authority and name of Jesus Christ against demonic powers” (VI, B, 7).

The statements that “Christians can be attacked, oppressed, or even inhabited by demons,” and that “demons can be present and can control the thoughts and behavior of Christians,” are controversial among evangelical and Reformed Christians. They should not be accepted without extensive exegetical and theological justification. It seems to us to be significant that even C. Fred Dickason, who believes that Christians can be demonized, admits that he cannot provide conclusive biblical or theological evidence for his position (*Demon Possession and the Christian: A New Perspective* [Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1989], 127, 147-48). Certainly the committee’s majority report does not provide such evidence.

A larger issue is the fact that third wave teachers (and others) commonly connect what they call demonization with enslavement to sins such as anger, lust, pride, and unbelief. In the book, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual*

Warfare (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), David Powlison reaches a quite different conclusion about demonization in the New Testament: "Demonization is in fact recognized and identified by its expression through miserable conditions, such as blindness, deafness, paralysis, dementia, and seizures. Sins, such as unbelief, fear, anger, lust, and other addictions, point to Satan's moral lordship, but *never* to demonization calling for EMM [an "ekballistic mode of ministry," Powlison's term for casting out demons]. People are victims of demonic sufferings, just as they are victims of lameness, blindness, or purely physiological seizures" (p. 66). Again, Powlison writes: "In the gospels, a person 'has' an unclean spirit the same way he or she 'has' a fever, convulsions, or a paralyzed limb. Contrary to EMM teaching, unclean spirits are never implicated as holding people in bondage to unbelief and sin. They are never portrayed as inhabiting and enslaving sinful parts of the human personality. Instead, they are part of the curse that the loving Savior came to reverse" (pp. 67-68).

Third wave teachers also frequently teach that demons can enter a person because of sin or occult involvement or because of the sins of one's ancestors. Fred Dickason writes: "I have found this avenue of ancestral involvement to be the *chief cause of demonization*. Well over 95 percent of more than 400 persons I have contacted in my counseling ministry have been demonized because of their ancestors' involvement in occult and demonic activities" (*Demon Possession and the Christian*, p. 221; emphasis his). Powlison contends that the Bible does not tell us how or why those who are demonized came to be in that condition. He calls the notion of "generational transference of demonic agents" "a piece of occult theology that has infiltrated the EMM worldview" (p. 127). If Powlison is right, then the third wave misunderstands demonization, and third wave teaching regarding deliverance is unreliable.

We believe that the committee should have carefully investigated third wave assumptions and teachings regarding spiritual warfare. By providing no biblical study and little theological reflection on these matters, the guidance they give to the churches is inadequate.

E. Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that the committee has not fulfilled its mandate "to examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications, and pastoral dimensions related to 'third wave' Pentecostalism (spiritual warfare, deliverance ministries, and so forth), with a view to providing advice to the churches." The majority report's affirmations and recommendations of counsel to the churches are not adequately supported biblically and theologically. The minority report provides some theological reflection, especially in its appendices, but, apart from Appendix B on spiritual warfare in Ephesians, the minority provides little biblical study of areas of concern in the third wave movement.

We believe that further study of new wave teaching is warranted and that either the present committee should be augmented or a new study committee should be appointed. The members of this committee should be willing and able to do the biblical study and theological reflection necessary to evaluate this movement and provide reliable guidance for the churches.

III. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2007 to

A. Withhold action on the recommendations of both the majority and minority reports of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism.

Grounds:

1. By not providing sufficient biblical study and theological reflection on key aspects of the third wave movement, both reports fail to fulfill the synodical mandate "to examine the biblical teaching, Reformed confessions, theological implications, and pastoral dimensions related to 'third wave' Pentecostalism (spiritual warfare, deliverance ministries, as so forth), with a view to providing advice to the churches."
2. The recommendations of both the majority and the minority flow from their respective reports. Because they are not adequately supported by careful biblical and theological study and reflection, they should not be adopted.

B. Appoint a study committee to fulfill the committee's original mandate.

Grounds:

1. The majority report, and especially its survey results, demonstrate that third wave thinking has made considerable inroads into the CRC.
2. Careful biblical and theological study and reflection on the teachings and practices of the third wave is urgently needed by the churches but has not been provided by the present committee.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Grand Rapids North

This communication is sent as a response to Articles 51 and 54 of the *Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 670-75, supplemental-related material, and concerns expressed by members of Classis Grand Rapids North:

Although some members of the committee expressed deep reservations and others were very supportive of the study report, we felt it incumbent upon us, the church at this critical juncture in history, to speak a word of peace to the nations. We refer the report to the churches for study, debate, discussion, and prayerful reflection.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 670)

That synod refer the study report, adopted recommendations, and supplemental materials to the churches for study, debate, discussion, and prayerful reflection and that synod dismiss the committee with thanks. Adopted.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 675)

On August 23, 2006, an ad hoc study committee was appointed to review the *Acts of Synod 2006* and related materials. This committee met eight times and made its report on November 29, 2006. As a result, on November 29, 2006, the committee's report was adopted.

I. Findings

A. The subject of war and peace is very complex. It has been studied for centuries by theologians, politicians, military officers, and others. Volumes have been written on the subject. Several previous CRC synods also have addressed this complex and controversial subject.

B. Synod 2005 (*Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 784-85) requested all classes to set aside time at a meeting to review and discuss the synodical report of the Committee to Study War and Peace (*Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 620-21). No evidence was found that Classis Grand Rapids North did this.

C. Many biblical references have been cited in defense of various war and peace positions.

D. Synod 2003 appointed a special committee to study the issues raised by a previous war and peace report. Synod 2006 received this committee's report and appointed an advisory committee of delegates at synod to make recommendations for synod's action. After considerable debate, all thirteen recommendations with sub-recommendations were adopted by Synod 2006.

Apparently, the recommendation re honorable discharge (*Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 674-75) originated with the advisory committee because it does not appear

in the study committee's recommendations. There were five overtures and three communications expressing various oppositions or amendments to the original committee's report.

E. Professor John Bolt's essay on war and peace in the CRC provides convincing arguments and grounds for criticism of the original war and peace study committee's report. He also points out that the origin and method by which this report went to synod did not follow the standard protocol of originating with the churches.

F. Current military personnel volunteered for duty and swore an oath. Recruits swear, or affirm, that they will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies . . . obey orders of the President of the United States and of superior officers . . . according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice . . . "So help me God."

There are five types of military discharges: honorable, general, other than honorable, bad conduct, and dishonorable. Discharges are considered on an individual basis.

G. Conscientious objection to military service has been a policy with a long history. It is understood to be available to individuals who can demonstrate a religious and/or church policy against war that is recognized by the federal government. Quaker's are an example. All members of such faiths would be objectors and would not volunteer for military service or be drafted. However, they might provide war-related humanitarian service.

H. Key issues in the war and peace committee report to synod and in the *Acts of Synod 2006* as identified by this ad hoc committee are:

- Distinction between peace and shalom
- Just-war criteria
- Peace with justice
- Preventive and preemptive military actions
- Reduction of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction
- Provision of an honorable discharge to military personnel who object to a particular military conflict based on adopted just-war criteria
- Role of CRC assemblies, churches, members, and pastors
- Pastoral counseling to church members who are contemplating enlisting and to those who are in the armed forces
- Role and responsibility of governments
- Guidance from the Bible
- Churches invited and encouraged to recall other study reports on this topic as background for the current discussion. Synod referred the study report, adopted recommendations, and supplemental material to the churches for study, debate, discussion, and prayerful reflection. (On July 11, 2006, Peter Borgdorff sent a memo to the churches summarizing the decisions of synod. This memo, however, did not convey what is stated in the Acts of Synod 2006, Article 54, Recommendation 6.)
- Iraq had oppression. It now has lawlessness.

II. Conclusions

- A. The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- B. The pursuit of a just peace should be a goal of the church and its members.
- C. Much of the study committee's report revolves around the philosophical issue of peace, which is difficult to apply to specific actions.
- D. Preventative *and* preemptive military action may be justified under certain circumstances (preemptive – imminent threats in the future; preventive – no immediate threat in the future).
- E. The current situation or the outcome of a particular conflict or war should not determine whether it was just or unjust.
- F. Acts of previous synods regarding war and peace should not be ignored.
- G. The role of government is to protect its citizens.
- H. Disarmament is unrealistic when other nations do not participate and do not play by the same rules.
- I. We live in a new era of high technology and evil (i.e., international terrorism that requires a new paradigm for preventive and preemptive military action and weapons).
- J. The U.S. and Canadian governments and their military forces are peace minded. Extensive efforts are made to promote and achieve peace and to prevent war.
- K. The uniform interpretation and application of adopted principles, criteria, and guidelines is often difficult and can be unrealistic. This also applies to several recommendations of synod regarding war and peace. Who decides? When?
- L. Concerns have been expressed about the process by which the Committee to Study War and Peace originated and was processed by synod.
- M. Granting an honorable discharge to those who object to a particular military conflict violates the oath taken at the time of enlistment, degrades the value of an honorable discharge, and is inconsistent with the essence of a military force. It is highly improbable that any military force would grant such a request.
- N. Professor John Bolt's position has validity and is supportable.
- O. Churches should accept the invitation of synod referred to in Section III, H, 11 above and the *Acts of Synod 2006*, Article 54, Recommendation 6, p. 675.
- P. Synod adopted all of the recommendations of their advisory committee (see *Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 671-75).
- 1. The ad hoc committee concurs with the following recommendations of Synod 2006: Article 51, C, 1 (procedural); 2, a-f; 3; 4; 5, a-f; 6; and Article 54, I, B, 2, b; 5; 6; 7 (procedural).

2. The ad hoc committee has reservations re the following recommendations of Synod 2006: Article 51, C, 2, g; and Article 54, I, B, 1, a-c.
3. The ad hoc committee disagrees with the following recommendations of Synod 2006: Article 54, I, B, 2, a; 3; 4.

III. Reasons for reservations

A. Article 51, C, 2, g

That synod urge our church members 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 opposing increasing militarization and other tendencies when they threaten peace and justice.

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 672)

Most of this statement is commendable and should be implemented. However, we have reservations about the last clause. Who will make the decision about “increasing militarization and other tendencies when they threaten peace and justice?” The individual, the church, synod, a council of churches? Will we have sufficient strategic and classified information for making rational and informed decisions? Or, will the decision be based on news-media reports and political agendas? Will the decisions be uniform within churches? If not, this could create factions or division within the church. Should not these decisions be made by representative governments (see, for example, Rom. 13:1-7; Belgic Confession Article 36, *The Civil Government* [4.12.785-786] by John Calvin)?

B. Article 54, I, B

1. Section 1

That synod approve the following moral statements and direct the executive director to communicate these moral concerns to the U.S. and Canadian governments:

- a. Moral clarity requires a careful distinction between preemptive and preventive military actions.
- b. Preventive military actions, actions initiated by a government against an adversary who *may* pose a serious threat at some future date, is inconsistent with the moral standards expressed in the just-war criteria of just cause and last resort.
- c. Preemptive military actions, actions initiated by a government against an adversary who *will* pose a serious threat at some future date, need to be justified under the moral standards expressed in the just-war criterion of the right to resort to force.

(Acts of Synod 2006, pp. 674-75)

This recommendation to communicate moral statements to the U.S. and Canadian governments, in our opinion, was premature and counterproductive in light of the fact that the advisory committee did not consider the study report the definitive word and also recommended:

That synod refer the study report, adopted recommendations, and supplemental material to the churches for study, debate, and prayerful reflection. . . .”

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 675)

Although it is true that “significant long term issues that require further study” are indeed raised by this report, the committee does not consider the study report the definitive word but, rather, a helpful point of departure in an ongoing discussion regarding the posture of the church toward the pressing issues of war and peace. We would fully expect there to be “further study” as well as further action on these issues in the congregations and assemblies of the church.

(Acts of Synod 2006, pp. 675-76)

2. Section 1, a

Moral clarity requires a careful distinction between preemptive and preventive military actions. This is a laudable statement. However, who makes the decision? Based on what reliable information? Will history verify that the right decision was made? What can we learn from history about former wars and military actions? Which ones were unjust?

3. Section 1, b and c

The identification and distinctions between *preventive* and *preemptive* military action and *may* and *will* is helpful. However, the reference to “some future date” and the decisions can be very arbitrary. Again, who makes the decision based on what reliable information? Is an individual or a church qualified to make these decisions? We do not believe they have sufficient reliable strategic information and may become biased by political agenda or news media reporting.

IV. Reasons for disagreement

A. Article 54, I, B

1. Section 2

That synod instruct the executive director to communicate to the U.S. and Canadian governments:

- a. Our moral opposition to the development or deployment of new weapons of mass destruction.
- b. Our continued support for conducting negotiations with other nations to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to further reduce nuclear arsenals, with the ultimate goal of multilateral nuclear disarmament as called for under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (and the recommendations of synod’s report of 1982).

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 674)

We believe that this recommendation, its adoption, and implementation were premature (see section III, Art. 54, I, B, 1, a above).

2. Section 2, a and b

Moral opposition to the development and deployment of weapons of mass destruction is a laudable statement and goal. However, its application is much more difficult and controversial. With proper surveillance and controls, this is a worthy goal for the world community of nations. The reality is that not all nations are in this community and play by its rules. Should the United States implement this statement if other countries develop such weapons? Superior weapons can be and have been a deterrent to conflicts and wars and an incentive for peace. The issue is, will every nation adopt this moral standard and who is likely to use such weapons? Professor Bolt in his essay points out that friendly nations do not fear being

the object of mass destruction from other friendly nations. The sad and disturbing fact is that wars are the result of living in a sinful world.

We agree and support Recommendation 2, b regarding nonproliferation treaties. Synod was correct in advocating for nongovernmental agencies and programs that share the gospel and love of Jesus Christ and promote peace and the spiritual and physical healing of individuals in all nations (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 674).

3. Section 3

That synod instruct the executive director to petition the President of the United States as well as the Department of Defense to provide a process and establish procedures wherein those who object to selective conflicts on the basis of just-war criteria are honorably discharged.

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 674)

We believe that communicating with the U.S. government was premature and disagree for the same reason cited above. We also strongly disagree with the recommendation of granting honorable discharges (HD) and any unearned benefits to objectors who volunteered for military service and pledged an oath to obey orders. HDs are earned and have value. If not, objectors would not seek such a discharge. Other avenues are available to objectors, including other than honorable discharges that are judged on an individual basis. If some members of the CRC in the military are discharged based on objection to an unjust war, are other CRC members who remain in the military in contempt, disdained, or subject to church discipline? Does each individual have the right to judge if a war is unjust? This is suggested by the war and peace committee report. What about withholding taxes because of military spending? Should an objector be required to pay back any unearned benefits (i.e., a college education)?

We believe this recommendation is loaded with social and political overtones, ramifications, and consequences that could be disruptive and divisive in the church and community and detracts from the other recommendations adopted by synod. Also, it should be noted again that this recommendation was not in the study committee's recommendations to synod nor did the study committee give any indication as to the magnitude of this problem with CRC servicemen. Mr. Matt Kooyer, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate with terms of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq as a Marine officer noted that he never heard, saw, or experienced any objectors while in combat zones.

4. Premature action before review by the churches is unacceptable.

V. Recommendation

It is recommended that synod request the classes to:

A. Comply with the recommendation of synod that the churches will prayerfully reflect on, study, debate, and discuss the report and the adopted recommendations (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 675).

B. Take the necessary steps to communicate to Synod 2007 or 2008 the concerns expressed in this report and the outcome of implementing Recommendation A above and to seek appropriate action.

C. Give high priority to praying and working for peace throughout the year and for the peaceful coexistence of all nations.

VI. Summary

In response to our communication and those received from others, we urge Synod 2007 to take note of our concerns regarding the decisions of Synod 2006 with respect to war and peace.

Grounds:

1. Churches did not have adequate time to review and respond to the study committee report published in the *Agenda for Synod 2006*.
2. The request for the study on war and peace did not originate with the churches.
3. The subject is complex and controversial. Strong differences of opinion were expressed within the synodical advisory committee and on the floor of synod.
4. The issue of granting honorable discharges to objectors is controversial in the church, community, and military. Additionally, this recommendation was not included in the recommendations of the war and peace study committee.
5. The importance of the subject of war and peace requires a strong and unified CRC position based on biblical teaching, history, and contemporary circumstances.
6. Classis Grand Rapids North did not address nor respond to the recommendation of Synod 2005 to set aside time at a classis meeting to review and discuss the report of the Committee to Study War and Peace (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 784).
7. Synod 2006 referred the study report, adopted recommendations, and supplemental materials to the churches for study, debate, discussion, and prayerful reflection (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 675). Consequently, synod in its deliberations should seriously and prayerfully consider this response and others received from the churches and assemblies.

Respectfully transmitted as co-workers in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and the Prince of Peace.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Personal Appeals

1. Rev. R.J. Meyer
2. Mr. J.A. Lopez