transforming lives and communities worldwide

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2009

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

transforming lives and communities worldwide

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

June 13-20, 2009
Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel
Trinity Christian College
Palos Heights, Illinois

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PREFACE

Synod 2009 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 13, at 9:00 a.m. in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois. Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, will serve as the convening church. The pastor of the convening church, Reverend Bert De Jong, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Rev. De Jong will also deliver the message at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise that will be held Sunday, June 14, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. at Elmhurst CRC, 155 West Brush Hill Road, Elmhurst, Illinois.

All delegates are encouraged to take time to listen to the audio orientation for synod, accessed on the synod website at www.crcna.org/synod. There will be a reception for first-time delegates and advisers Friday, June 12, at 7:00 p.m. Opportunity will be given to be introduced to denominational staff, agency and ministry directors, college presidents, and seminary faculty advisers during the reception. The location of the reception will be announced at the registration desk.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 7 and 14. 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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2009. Whether you are a returning delegate or whether you are coming for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a pleasant and blessed experience. You 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. Synod is more than just a gathering of church leaders or a governing body. It is a reflection of the church and a time for reflection and celebration of what God is doing in and through the Christian Reformed Church in North America. God has richly blessed us and you have been given a unique privilege to serve him and his kingdom by your work at synod.

The synodical services staff, under the leadership of Ms. Dee Recker, is available to assist you in whatever way they are able. Please feel free to ask for anything you need, and if you need information before arriving, you may contact the synodical services office by writing drecker@crcna.org or calling 616-224-0827.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2009 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 2009:

Friday orientation	
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Orientation for ethnic advisers, faculty advisers, and youth observers
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Reception for first-time delegates, advisers, and observers
7:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Orientation for chairs and reporters of advisory committees and their alternates
Opening Saturday	
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Opening session of synod Election of officers Finalization of committee assignments
11:15 - 12:15 p.m.	Advisory Committees meet for introductions
12:15 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
12:15 p.m.	Orientation for Officers of Synod
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
3:00 - 3:20 p.m.	Break
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
Sunday	
3:00 p.m.	Synodical worship service
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 2009

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Martin T. Mobach	Ministers: Daniel Meinema
	Kornelis De Koning	Gerrit J. Bomhof
Elders	Ryan L. Wyngaarden	Elders: Co VanderLaan
	Allan P. Andersen	Peter G. Jonkman
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	Curtis D. Korver	Ministers: Kevin L. Jordan
	Dale Melenberg	Brian D. Kuyper
Elders	Ken De Wyn	Elders: Mike Lukkien
	Ian R. Parkinson	_____
Arizona		
Ministers	Derek Van Dalen	Ministers: Kenneth J. Vanderploeg
	Lawrence A. Lobdell, Jr.	Rodger J. Buining
Elders	Vorise L. Jacobs	Elders: Larry L. Edsall
	Jose Rayas	Rodney Hugen
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Carl W. Bergman	Ministers: Stanley J. Vander Klay
	Christopher P. Mitchell	Edward H. Gerber
Elders	Bruce M. Dykstra	Elders: Coenraad Bakker
	Tobias T. Lewis	_____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Joel Ringma	Ministers: Richard C. Koopmans
	Sidney Ypma	Harvey J. Roosma
Elders	John Vander Woude	Elders: Elsy Termaat
	Chris Hamming	_____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Bert Slofstra	Ministers: _____
	Colin Vander Ploeg	_____
Elders	Jack G. Vaandrager	Elders: _____
	Roger Hoekstra	_____
California South		
Ministers	John J. Gonzales	Ministers: Neville L. Koch
	Seong Soo Nam	Steven J. Wunderink
Elders	Dirk D. Jasperse	Elders: Phil Du Bois
	Henry C. DeJager	_____
Central California		
Ministers	Bruce A. Persenaire	Ministers: Nicholas Jon Van Beek
	Andrew C. S. Narm	_____
Elders	E. Corinne Meeks	Elders: James Schuller
	Floyd Burrus	Randy DeRuiter

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Central Plains		
Ministers	Jack M. Gray	Ministers: John Gorter
	Arthur J. Van Wolde	James T. Petersen
Elders	Lee Talma	Elders: Ken Rozeboom
	Lauren Vander Molen	Kenneth E. Slagter
Chatham		
Ministers	William T. Koopmans	Ministers: Willemina L. Zwart
	Richard J. deLange	Norman J. Visser
Elders	John Claus	Elders: Henry J. Mulder
	Sara J. Stelpstra	Eric P. Van Andel
Chicago South		
Ministers	L. Bryce Mensink	Ministers: Gerry G. Van Dam
	Mark D. Timmer	Timothy P. Hoekstra
Elders	Hilda M. Ragon	Elders: Marion J. Dykstra
	Nancy J. Kwasteniet	Tess Buikema
Columbia		
Ministers	Jelmer P. Groenewold	Ministers: Joseph M. Kamphuis
	Jin Namkoong	Virgil L. Michael
Elders	Albert M. Smeenk	Elders: Roger D. Kramer
	Jack J. Jansons	———
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Winston J. Visser	Ministers: Paul R. Vanderkooy
	Pieter A. Heerema	Jacob Boer
Elders	Sarah H. Cook	Elders: Walter Neutel
	Katherine M. Vandergrift	Richard J. Smit
Georgetown		
Ministers	Terry L. Genzink	Ministers: Robert Huisman
	Timothy L. Holwerda	Stephen M. Hasper
Elders	Harold Postma	Elders: Raymond D. Dennis
	Richard J. Geenen	———
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Beth Guikema-Bode	Ministers: Michael F. Abma
	David H. Kromminga	Christopher J. Schoon
Elders	Emily R. Brink	Elders: Edward L. Hoeksema
	Victoria Gibbs	Arthur E. Jongsma
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Neil P. Jasperse	Ministers: Coleman S. Moore
	Mwaya Wa Kitavi	Richard L. Pinckney
Elders	David A. Rodenhouse	Elders: William (Jack) Pettes
	David Brink	Harry J. Vriend
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Daniel R. Ackerman	Ministers: Henry John Schenkel, Jr.
	David A. Struyk	Robert L. Boersma
Elders	Kay Hoitenga	Elders: Amy Rachel Schenkel
	Randy J. LeFebre	———
Grandville		
Ministers	Kiwoong Kim	Ministers: Timothy A. Kuperus
	Roger B. Groenboom	Steven C. Elzinga
Elders	Scott N. Usadel	Elders: Fred W. Brunsting
	Robert J. Oom	———

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Erick D. Westra	Ministers: Matthew M. Le
	Melvin Jackson	Carlos Aranguiz
Elders	Mattie B. Young	Elders: William S. Postma
	Wallace Williams	Nhan Nguyen
Hackensack		
Ministers	John A. Algera	Ministers: Clair Vander Neut
	Sheila E. Holmes	Hernan Zapata-Thomack
Elders	Kathryn Ritsema-Roelofs	Elders: _____
	Karen Abbas	_____
Hamilton		
Ministers	Martin Dam	Ministers: Paul Vanden Brink
	William C. Veenstra	Kevin P. DeRaaf
Elders	Neil Paul	Elders: Mark Vandervliet
	Adrian T. VanderVaart	David A. Rumph
Heartland		
Ministers	Greg R. Dyk	Ministers: Paul A. Hansen
	Tom L. Van Engen	Timothy J. Ouwinga
Elders	Gary K. Hibma	Elders: Darrell L. Schuller
	Edward L. Starkenburg	Verlyn D. Westra
Holland		
Ministers	Frank T. Wevers	Ministers: Vern D. Swieringa
	Adam M. H. Barton	Mark Vande Zande
Elders	Duane Terpstra	Elders: Richard J. Mulder
	Mitchell Baker	Peter Sytsma
Hudson		
Ministers	Joel D. Vande Werken	Ministers: Paul M. Ingeneri
	Kenneth R. Bieber	Kook Sung Kim
Elders	Peter Hagedoorn	Elders: Sam Valkema
	Howard Jost	_____
Huron		
Ministers	Jacob M. Van de Hoef	Ministers: Harry J. Frielink
	H. John Vanderburgh	Darren C. Roorda
Elders	John Ridder	Elders: Paul D. Stadt
	Albert Hovingh	_____
Iakota		
Ministers	Jerry D. Buwalda	Ministers: Calvin Hoogendoorn
	John G. Keizer	Robert J. Timmer
Elders	Arthur L. Attema	Elders: Lloyd Bierma
	Wayne Kobes	Wilbur Vanden Bos
Illiana		
Ministers	Calvin J. Aardsma	Ministers: Richard T. Vanderwal
	Laryn G. Zoerhof	John Kostelyk
Elders	Donald Dykstra	Elders: Henry A. Van Proyen
	Richard VanderWoude	_____
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Simon A. Tuin	Ministers: Mark A. Minegar
	Dale L. Slings	Philip D. Kok
Elders	George Vander Wey	Elders: Rick Viel
	Bill Fernhout	Ken Fletcher

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Emmett A. Harrison	Ministers: Nathan D. Gritter
	Leonard T. Riemersma	Clayton Libolt
Elders	Paul Bouman	Elders: _____
	Theo Verbeek	_____
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Archie L. Vander Hart	Ministers: Calvin J. Friend
	Nathan De Vries	Henry Vander Beek
Elders	Bonnie B. Smith	Elders: _____
	Ray Postuma	_____
Minnkota		
Ministers	Roger W. Sparks	Ministers: Gerrit Besteman
	David A. Zylstra	LeRoy G. Christoffels
Elders	Greg J. Kuiper	Elders: Alvin Vis
	Rodney De Boer	_____
Muskegon		
Ministers	John Rop, Jr.	Ministers: Nathan Alan Visker
	Greg J. Stamm	Robert A. Pohler
Elders	Dan DeKam	Elders: Jeffrey Hough
	Gary Wybenga	_____
Niagara		
Ministers	Andre F. Basson	Ministers: Andrew E. Beunk
	Ryan W. Braam	L. Kevin Stieva
Elders	William J. Thies	Elders: Harry Van Tuyl
	Carl K. Maartense	_____
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Joel A. De Boer	Ministers: Thomas J. Vos
	Frank E. Pott	Steven L. Schulz
Elders	Paul T. Delger	Elders: _____
	Gary Nibbelink	_____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	John L. Hoekwater	Ministers: Pedro Aviles
	David J. Weemhoff	Wendell Davelaar
Elders	Allen J. Van Der Dyke	Elders: Frank E. De Boer
	Calvin Walstra	John R. Huizinga, Sr.
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Duane J. Timmermans	Ministers: Bryan D. Berghoef
	David G. Kroon	Carl J. Afman
Elders	_____	Elders: _____
	_____	_____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Roger Y. Ryu	Ministers: Jang Ho Park
	Munchul Kim	Dong il Kim
Elders	Peter NakYoung Ryu	Elders: Sung il Sohn
	SungJae Park	_____
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Thomas J. Kok	Ministers: Harry J. Weidenaar
	Richard J. De Ruiter	Gilbert Kim
Elders	Herman Fransen	Elders: John Rozeboom
	Earnest Phinisey	Doug Van Andel

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Jake Kuipers	Ministers: Peter Slofstra
	Kenneth R. Ritsema	Nathan Kuperus
Elders	John Struyk	Elders: Hank A. Nieuwstraten
	Marcia A. Strickland	Barry M. Van Zoeren
Red Mesa		
Ministers	William J. Kempkes	Ministers: John W. Dykhuis
	Raymond Slim	W. Keith Bulthuis
Elders	Norman Chee	Elders: Willie J. Bennally
	Ted Charles	Ron Donkersloot
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Donald R. Orange	Ministers: Thomas D. Draayer
	Thomas E. Dykman	Joel Schreurs
Elders	Daniel A. Spykstra	Elders: Walter Ackerman
	Richard N. Hartman, Jr.	_____
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Paul G. Hackett	Ministers: Manny S. Bersach
	Xavier L. Suarez	Juan Pablo Sanchez
Elders	Joseph Musoba	Elders: James L. Kelley, Jr.
	Joshua Jung	Javier Torres
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Paul R. De Vries	Ministers: Merlin N. Buwalda
	James A. Kralt	John C. VanderWall
Elders	John Versluis	Elders: David L. Schepers
	Nelson J. Grit	Chris L. Van Spronsen
Toronto		
Ministers	Gary Van Leeuwen	Ministers: C. Nick Overduin
	John Tenyenhuis	Barton (Bart) P. Velthuizen
Elders	Rika Vander Laan	Elders: Maria J. Bulthuis
	John Kassies	_____
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Peter T. Verhulst	Ministers: Jeffrey J. Brower
	Karl H. Bratt	David Katsma
Elders	Jeffrey G. Heinen	Elders: _____
	James C. Kirk	_____
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Maurice Vander Veen	Ministers: _____
	Daniel L. Mulder	_____
Elders	Carl L. Wierda	Elders: _____
	Randall D. VanOsdol	_____
Zeeland		
Ministers	John C. Klompien	Ministers: Steven J. Mulder
	Ronald J. Meyer	Aaron J. Vriesman
Elders	Harry J. Mulder	Elders: Paul De Vries
	Gerald Braun	Lester Langeland

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 2008 and Synod 2009.

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 elected and appointed governing body, whose members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, has met two times since Synod 2008 (September 2008 and February 2009) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2009. 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, 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.

Nearly all the matters addressed by the Board impact the full CRCNA as a binational church, but, in compliance with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities, the Canadian trustees review and approve all actions taken by the full Board and, as necessary, address any matters that

relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. 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), Rev. Sheila Holmes (Region 12), Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga (Region 9), Ms. Sari Mills (member-at-large), Rev. Daniel B. Mouw (Region 11), Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk (member-at-large), Rev. John Rop, Jr. (Region 10), Mr. Roy Stallworth (Region 11), Rev. John Terpstra (Region 7), Rev. Rodney Vander Ley (Region 5), Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven (Region 8), Ms. Suzanne Van Engen (Region 10), Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8), and Rev. Mark D. Vermaire (Region 6). Presently, one delegate position from Region 11 is vacant.

The members of the Board from Canada are Ms. Janette Bax (Lake Superior), Rev. Andrew Beunk (Niagara), Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (B.C. South-East), Mr. Wiebe Bylsma (Quinte), Mr. William Crofton (B.C. North-West), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Chatham), Mr. Marten Mol (Toronto), Ms. Gayle Monsma (member-at-large), Mr. Keith Oosthoek (member-at-large), Rev. John Pasma (Alberta North), Mrs. Patricia Storteboom (member-at-large), Mr. Gary VanArragon (Huron), Rev. Paul Vanderkooy (Eastern Canada), Rev. Arie G. Van Eek (Hamilton), and Rev. Kevin J. Vryhof (Alberta South/Saskatchewan).

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.D. Vermaire, vice president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Mrs. P. Storteboom, vice-all.

2. Corporation officers:
   Canadian Corporation: Mr. K. Oosthoek, president; Mr. G. VanArragon, vice president; Mrs. P. Storteboom, secretary.

   Michigan Corporation: Rev. M.D. Vermaire, president; Rev. R.A. Lyzenga, vice-president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Ms. S. Van Engen, vice-all.

3. Executive Committee: Rev. R.A. Lyzenga; Mr. K. Oosthoek, chair; Mrs. P. Storteboom; Mr. G. VanArragon; Ms. S. Van Engen; and Rev. M.D. 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	2	2nd and 3rd
18	2	2nd
17	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
2008-2009 Salary Grade and Range Structure

	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
Level	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	$115,291	$144,113	$172,936			
19	$103,936	$129,921	$155,905			
18	$92,638	$115,798	$138,957	$102,262	$127,828	$153,394
17	$83,144	$103,930	$124,716	$88,853	$111,066	$133,279
16	$74,835	$93,544	$112,253	$77,756	$97,195	$116,634
15	$67,840	$84,800	$101,760	$68,492	$85,616	$102,739
14	$59,271	$74,089	$88,906	$60,406	$75,507	$90,609
13	$52,105	$65,132	$78,158	$53,907	$67,384	$80,861

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. Frederick J. Walhof	
	Huron	Rev. Jacob M. Van de Hoef		2011(1)
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. Byung Duk Min	Rev. Seung Jai Kang	2011(1)
	Rocky Mountain		Rev. Robert L. Westenbroek	
	Toronto	Rev. C. Nick Overduin	Rev. Herman D. Praamsma	2012(1)
	Yellowstone	Rev. Maurice Vander Veen	Rev. Daniel Mulder	2011(1)
CRWRC	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. Dong Il Kim		2011(1)

2. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of those classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis:

Georgetown
Grandville
Heartland
Iakota
Minnkota
Northcentral Iowa
Wisconsin
Yellowstone

3. 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. Nominations are then prepared by the Board and are forwarded to synod for election. Generally, 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:

Region 11

Ms. Joan Flikkema is a member of Beckwith Hills CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is a retired middle school teacher with master's level degrees in pastoral studies, business management, counseling and personnel, and secondary education. She currently teaches as invited with emeritus status at Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary. Ms. Flikkema has also been a prayer group leader, a Bible study facilitator, and an administrator and representative for the Women in Ministry Scholarship Foundation. Ms. Flikkema has served on the boards of Wintony Woods Association and the North East Citizens Action Association and is a volunteer at the Frederick Meijer Gardens. She has served the church as a mentor for new members, a spiritual gifts coordinator, and an encourager with the Stephen Ministry. Her activities also include fundraising for Calvin Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary and consulting on the archival project for the Christian Reformed Church. Ms. Flikkema has served as a delegate to the Reformed Church in America and to the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches.

*Ms. Mary Kortman i*s the director of worship at South Grandville CRC in Grandville, Michigan, and is a practicing registered nurse. She is nearing completion of a master's degree at Calvin Theological Seminary. Ms. Kortman has served her church on the worship planning team, chaired the visioning team, and is currently in charge of the health ministry team. She presently serves on the established church development committee for Classis Grandville and has served as a member of the Grandville Christian School Board.

Classis Alberta North

Mr. Taede (Ted) Oostenbrug is a member of First CRC, Red Deer, Alberta, where he has served four terms on the church council, acting as council chair for two of those terms. He has been a self-employed caterer for twenty-five years. Mr. Oostenbrug has served on the Elk Haven Seniors Lodge—four years as the chair—and on the Cumberland Community Board as the treasurer.

Mr. Rick Struik, a member of West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, will soon retire from his insurance business (Cornerstone Insurance Brokers, LTD). He has served his community as the chair of the building committees at The King's University College and Summit Village Seniors Housing Complex. Mr. Struik has been a two-time deacon and elder on his church council and currently chairs both the council and the Staff Relations Committee at West End CRC. He has also served the church at the classical level as stated clerk of Classis Alberta North.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Rev. George Koopmans is the pastor of the Medicine Hat CRC in Medicine Hat, Alberta. He previously served as the sales manager of a dairy equipment company and the owner of a dairy equipment dealership. Rev. Koopmans has served on worship and evangelism committees, has been an elder, and has acted as chair of council for two churches. He has served the denomination at the classical level on the classical Home Missions committee for Classis Minnkota and as a church visitor and counselor.

Rev. Dale Melenberg is the pastor of Maranatha CRC in Calgary, Alberta, where he has been instrumental in bringing healing to the members of his church after they experienced a schism. In addition to his M.Div. degree, Rev. Melenberg has completed various sales and marketing courses and has received several awards in that area. He currently serves as the co-chair of Bowness Ministerial Committee and has previously served as the chair of the Bow West Community Resource Centre in Calgary.

Classis B.C. North-West

Rev. Fred Koning, a member of First CRC of Vancouver, British Columbia, is the Director of Ethics Services at Providence Health Care as well as teacher of clinical pastoral education at the facility. He is a member of the Committee for Contact with the Government. Rev. Koning has served two terms as elder in his church.

Rev. Trevor Vanderveen is a co-pastor of First CRC, Vancouver, British Columbia, where his focus has been on teaching, training, and vision setting for this diverse congregation. He received his M.Div. from Regent College and his EPMC from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Vanderveen has served as a delegate for B.C. North-West at the Canadian Forum, and he currently serves as chair of the classical safe church team and on the synodical Candidacy Committee. He states, "I realize how important it is to articulate the Reformed faith in a way that is both engaging as well as humble. . . ."

Classis Niagara

Mr. George De Roo, a member of Bethany CRC in Fenwick, Ontario, is a retired dairy farmer and part-time truck driver in the flower industry. He has served his community as chair of the local Christian Farmers of Ontario Committee. Mr. De Roo's involvement with the CRC denomination includes serving as a church visitor for Classis Niagara and acting as a delegate to synod. He has served as an elder several times, including service as chair of council.

Ms. Lisa Heuving is a member of Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ontario. She is the director of the Grimsby Life Center, where she oversees all aspects of operation, fundraising, community awareness, and partnerships with local churches. Ms. Heuving is also working on a degree in Christian studies at McMaster Seminary. She has served as the chairperson of the Pastoral Care Ministry board for fourteen years and for the search committee for four years. Ms. Heuving has been the director of Westbrook Floral Ltd.

The following nominees from various classes or geographic regions are coming to synod for election (ratification) to a second term:

Region 9
Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga

Region 10
Rev. John Rop, Jr.

Classis B.C. South-East
Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra

b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also appointed directly by synod. This year Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk is completing her first term as a U.S. at-large member and is eligible for a second three-year term. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

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

Mr. Bruce Dykstra is a member of Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, where he has served three terms as an elder. He is the development director of the Christian Economic Assistance Foundation. His previous experience includes academic, business, and professional training; 35 years as an employee of the Royal Bank; and teaching at the Hamilton District Christian High School. Mr. Dykstra has served three terms as a trustee of the CRC Ministers' Pension Plan.

Mr. Ben Langelaar is a member of Trinity CRC, Abbotsford, British Columbia, where he has served as a deacon and an elder and is currently acting as an administrative elder. Now retired, Mr. Langelaar has held several positions at the Royal Bank of Canada, most recently filling the role of Vice President of Commercial Banking. He has been very active in his community through involvements with Junior Achievement, United Way, and the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Langelaar has served the denomination on several finance committees and on the boards of Ebenezer Senior Home and Elim Housing Society.

4. Ethnic advisers to synod

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

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."

At this writing the number of ethnic minority delegates appointed to be at Synod 2009 by classes is twenty-four. To round out that number to reach twenty-five, the BOT appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to synod on an as-needed basis (* indicates service in 2008):

*Ms. Shashi DeHaan
Mr. Andrew Woja Henry
*Ms. Ladan Jennings
Mr. James Pewee
Ms. Paula Seales
*Ms. Anne Agosto Severa
*Mr. Hernan Zapata-Thomack

5. Youth observers at synod

The Board of Trustees engaged in a conversation about the increased awareness of engaging our youth (18-26 year olds) in the denomination. One important venue for bringing youth to the table and raising the awareness of the importance of these voices within our denomination is synod. Youth observers to synod will bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination. These individuals will take part by listening, observing, engaging delegates, and offering feedback to the process, agenda, and decisions upon the adjournment of synod. Appointments to the youth observer positions will be made by the Board of Trustees in May.

6. Convening churches of synod

The Board regularly receives invitations by churches wishing to convene future synods and forwards the invitations to synod for their approval. Presently no invitations have been received beyond Synod 2010.

7. Location of Synod 2010

Given the financial implications, the Board is recommending to Synod 2009 that, Synod 2010 be held in the West Michigan area rather than in Edmonton, Alberta.

Grounds:

1. A review of the cost implications revealed that a variance of more than $70,000 (additional cost in travel for delegates, staff, and advisers) would be required for air travel alone.
2. The King's University College did not build additional housing as anticipated when the decision by Synod 2006 was made, limiting delegates to share a room or be housed off campus, increasing cost.

8. Guidelines for Congregations and Former Pastors

Synod 2008, in response to Overture 4, adopted a recommendation that instructed "the Board of Trustees to instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to develop guidelines to assist congregations and ministers as they discern their future relationship upon a minister's retirement and/or ending of his/her formal ministerial role in a congregation" (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 521). The report of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations and the recommendations within, adopted by the Board of Trustees and being recommended to synod, are found in Appendix A.

9. Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force

Synod 2007 instructed that the Board of Trustees appoint a task force to consider the denomination's communal covenantal commitment, especially as it relates to financially providing for institutions, agencies, ministries, and churches of the CRC, and that the BOT bring any findings and recommendations to Synod 2009. The report of the task force and recommendations, adopted by the Board of Trustees and being recommended to synod for its adoption, is found in Appendix B.

10. Guide for Conducting Church Visiting Survey

The Office of Synodical Services conducted a survey of CRC churches, classical stated clerks, and church visitors about the use and value of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* booklet. The feedback from both churches and classes demonstrated a desire to enhance the practice of church visiting and the need for good tools to assist both church visitors and congregations. Thus, the BOT is recommending that synod encourage classes to emphasize the importance of church visiting, thereby acknowledging its value for maintaining spiritual health and vitality in the member-congregations of the classis, and to encourage the use of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* and/or other resources available from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations as effective tools to that end.

11. Leadership Exchange (formerly Leadership Institute)

The Leadership Exchange Governing Board presented an operational plan to the Board of Trustees at its September meeting, requesting that the establishment of a leadership institute be changed to a "leadership exchange"—a more relational environment that connects leaders worldwide. The Board endorsed the Operational Plan of the Leadership Exchange, included in Appendix C for your information.

12. Restructure of the Ministry Council

After careful study and review, Synod 2004 approved the merging of the executive director of ministries (EDM) and the general secretary (GS) responsibilities into the office of the executive director (ED). While this change has been helpful and well received, it has necessitated other changes within the denominational senior management structures. At the September meeting, the Board approved the restructure of the Ministry Council (MC) as outlined in the Structure Report found in Appendix D.

The Ministry Council (MC) has been reorganized to include the six agency directors, the director of ministry planning, the director of the newly formed center for congregations, and the director of denominational ministries, who serves as the convener and chair. The council has been renamed the Ministries Leadership Team (MLT) and handles administrative and leadership matters that involve the agencies and specialized ministries. It also serves as the primary strategic planning arm of the CRCNA in matters related to its ministries.

With this refocus of the new Ministries Leadership Team, an additional group of advisers to the ED has been established. This Executive Director Advisory Team (EDAT) includes the director of denominational ministries, the director of finance and administration, the director of

synodical services, the director of ministry planning, the director of denominational advancement, and the director of Canadian ministries. These senior leaders represent the ministries, administration, governance, planning, advancement, and Canadian voice of the church, giving a wide perspective on internal denominational matters.

13. Sea to Sea

    The Sea to Sea—Ending the Cycle of Poverty bicycle tour took place from June to August 2008 with more than 200 riders pedaling from Seattle, Washington, to Liberty Island, New Jersey, raising more than $1.5 million dollars for poverty relief around the world.

14. 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 both clergy and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

    Two members of the Judicial Code Committee are completing their second terms and are not eligible for reelection for another term: Mrs. Carol Ackerman and Rev. Andrew K. Chun. On behalf of the denomination, 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.

    The Board will present nominees for membership to the Judicial Code Committee by way of its supplementary report to synod.

15. Publications and services

    a. *Yearbook*

       The *Yearbook*, published annually, 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.

       Among some of the statistics printed in the *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation, number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and the total number of members received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

       Consideration is being given to the possibility of developing an online subscription-based *Yearbook* in addition to a print version. Among the advantages of an online version would be that information is constantly updated and current. Individuals and churches would have

the most up-to-date data available. In addition, such a web-based system would allow churches to provide additional valuable information that could then be shared by the churches.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was published, incorporating the changes adopted by Synod 2008. For the first time in several years, there were no proposed Church Order changes that will need consideration for adoption by Synod 2009. The Church Order is updated by the office of synodical services 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. *Resources available on the Christian Reformed Church website*

With the greater use of electronic media and a significant decline in requests for printed material, the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org) has become a valuable tool for congregations and their staff in accessing denominational resources. The website is regularly updated, and the information and forms provided are the most current available.

e. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual was revised in summer 2008 by the office of the executive director and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the synodical services.

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 is contained in the *Agenda for Synod 2009—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 denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries. He is assisted in this work by the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of denominational ministries (DDM), and the director of finance and administration (DFA). The Ministries Leadership Team (MLT), under the leadership of the DDM, is the interagency administrative team that has responsibility for implementation of the Denominational Ministries Plan, the collaboration of

the agencies, strategic planning for the ministries of the church, and reviews program matters. The MLT is composed of the six agency directors, the director of the center for congregations, and the director of denominational planning. It is convened and chaired by the DDM.

The Board is thankful to report that collaboration among the agencies and educational institutions continues to grow. The Ministries Plan Scorecard has served to focus the ministries 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. Such efforts have led to greater emphasis on our denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy local congregations so that we may become even more effective in our purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

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. Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG)

      The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) is one manifestation of the CRC's pursuit of justice and peace in every area of life. CCG's work is rooted in the Christ-inspired vision—seeking justice, speaking hope. CCG's efforts within this vision are shaped by partners in the ecumenical and social justice communities. We are particularly excited that the Reformed Church in America's (RCA) regional synod of Canada has appointed Ms. Debbie VanHoeve as a working member of the CCG—this is the next stage in a partnership that began with the RCA's observation of the CCG. Great partners and committed members allow CCG to pursue a quality research, advocacy, and popular communications program. Currently this work has two foci: peace as a priority in Canada's international policy (as discussed at Synod 2006), and walking in reconciliation with Aboriginal People. The CCG invites churches and CRC members to learn more about our work and engage in dialogue with us by subscribing to *Mobile Justice*—our monthly digital newsletter. See www.crcna.org/ccg for details.

   b. The Office of Abuse Prevention

      The Office of Abuse Prevention, directed by Ms. Beth Swagman, promotes safe churches by assisting congregations, church leaders, and classes with educational materials, advice, and support. By raising awareness, promoting justice, and providing the tools to reduce the risk of 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 E.

   c. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

      A search is underway for a new director of Chaplaincy Ministries, following the retirement of Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., in 2008. Rev. Keizer served part-time during this transition period to support and assist Christian Reformed chaplains. Alternative possibilities are being explored for managing this vital ministry and encouraging additional applicants for the director position. Chaplains are normally employed

by non-denominational religious and secular organizations; these chaplains represent the CRC in varied, specialized settings. Chaplains most often encounter people at their point of greatest need and vulnerability. Often these encounters and the work of the chaplains takes place in a secular or multi-faith 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 F.

d. The Office of Disability Concerns

The staff and volunteers of the Office of Disability Concerns help churches become more hospitable, inclusive, healthy communities that intentionally seek

- to end the isolation and disconnectedness of persons with disabilities and their families.
- to nurture the spiritual lives of people with disabilities so that they become professing and active members of their churches.
- to encourage the gifts of people with disabilities so that they can serve God fully in their churches.

In healthy churches and ministries *Everybody belongs. Everybody serves.* The full report from Disability Concerns is contained in Appendix G.

e. 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.

The current plan dates from 2006. It is a plan that focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry.

The plan's core values and their implications are as follows:

1) We value Scripture as interpreted in the Reformed tradition
This means the following:

- We treasure the gospel as God's good news for the world.
- Discipleship is at the heart of our life and faith.
- Theological clarity and consistency is integral to our ministries.
- Our family and church relationships spring from covenants of trust and accountability.
- In good times and bad we rest in the sovereignty and providence of God.

2) We value a kingdom perspective
This means the following:

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

3) We value the church as God's new community
This means the following:

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

4) We value Christian vocation
This means the following:

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

The plan's ten strategic objectives are as follows:

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

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

The following have been identified as characteristics of a healthy church. You are invited to read the 2005 report of the Ministries Priorities Committee that further explores these characteristics at www.crcna.org/pages/healthy_church.cfm.

- 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

In order to effectively implement the Denominational Ministries 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 ministries are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan's ten objectives. The MPS is operational at the agency and ministry level, and ministries 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.

f. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations

Helping churches through difficult transitions, increasing congregational capacity for addressing differences, and supporting pastors and staff are all key functions of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations. This year has been a year of transition with the retirement of director Rev. Duane Visser, the appointment of Rev. Norman Thomasma as the new director, and the hiring of Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis as pastor/congregation consultant. Additional personnel include Ms. Laura Palsrok, administrative assistant, who also manages the Ministerial Information Service, and Mrs. Jeanne Kallemeyn, staff ministry specialist, who facilitates the office's support of congregational staff. This ministry is more fully described in Appendix H.

g. The Office of Race Relations

Directed by Rev. Esteban Lugo with the assistance of a team of trained facilitators, the Office of Race Relations is providing avenues for helping the CRCNA embrace its identity as God's diverse and unified family through the ministry of racial reconciliation. During 2008, the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) and Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops were held in the United States, Canada, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. In addition, Race Relations is partnering with Home Missions to produce a DVD and study guide on racial reconciliation for our churches. The office is facilitating the Race Relations Team that is developing and implementing strategies for moving

toward a work environment that is free of racism. The Multiethnic Conference will meet June 12-14, 2009, on the campus of Trinity Christian College. The Office of Race Relations is once again planning for All Nations Heritage (ANH) Sunday, October 4, 2009. The report of the Office of Race Relations is contained in Appendix I.

h. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, under the coordination of Mr. Peter Vander Meulen and 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, and a number of partner organizations that share our concern for the poor and disenfranchised. A more complete report is contained in Appendix J.

i. ServiceLink

The 2007-2008 fiscal year marked ServiceLink's 13th year as the volunteer program of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. It was another productive year in which our denomination was blessed by the gifts, passion, and vision of almost 300 volunteers willing to serve in various capacities and in many countries around the world.

Opportunities that are designed for our volunteers are arranged with the intent of building partnerships and relationships between individuals and communities that will enhance mutual learning and collaboration of efforts toward a common goal. Positive relationships allow for richness in serving and for understanding how the body of Christ functions outside one's own experiences. Time and again volunteers return from assignments sharing how God provided them with meaningful moments when people from different races and backgrounds came together through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, through our work we have had the privilege of seeing God's people move beyond the norm of everyday living, transcending boundaries never before encountered as he brings them closer to the fullness of his kingdom.

j. Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE)

Approximately 40 percent of smaller CRC congregations (150 adult professing members or less) have participated in the Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) program this past year. Forty-three congregations have been awarded grants for health and renewal projects. Over ninety congregations have received grants for technology and equipment. And more than seventy congregations sent their pastor, a ministry leader, and their spouses to participate in one of six two-day learning events. The coaching program, introduced in Spring 2008, had a very strong start.

The purpose of the program is to promote healthy congregations through grants for renewal, coaching, technical support, and gatherings for mutual learning. The successful aspects of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (the Lilly-funded program for pastors)—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—have been adopted by SCE.

SCE is funded not by the Lilly Endowment but by synod itself through a $10 ministry share approved in 2005 and renewed again by Synods 2006-2008. The project both supports the denominational priority of healthy local congregations mentioned above and responds to synod's own concern that funds will "assist local churches, directed specifically toward smaller congregations." (The SCE Implementation Plan is printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 99-128, which can be accessed on the CRC website at http://www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm.)

k. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

Since the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) project began in 2003, 59 percent of CRC pastors, representing 52 percent of CRC congregations, have participated in an SPE peer learning group. The goal is for 75 percent participation by 2012. The funding for these groups is made possible by grants received from Lilly Endowment, Inc.—the first in 2003 for $2 million and the second in 2008 for $1 million.

In addition to grants for pastors' peer learning groups, SPE offers grants for spouses of pastors peer groups, biennial spouses of pastors conferences, and learning events for pastor couples. During this second grant period, the SPE project has a stronger focus on supporting pastors and pastors' spouses in their role as ministry leaders. Flourishing leaders are essential to fostering health in local congregations.

The project represents a collaborative approach involving Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, the Denominational Office, and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations.

Project information can be found, including contact information, vision, program elements, highlights, publications, and a list of grantees, by visiting www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence or by email: pastoralexcellence@crcna.org.

l. Urban Aboriginal Ministries

It is humbling to see how God has used the urban aboriginal ministries centers to bring about transformation in people's lives. The Edmonton Native Healing Centre, Indian Family Centre, and Indian Metis Christian Fellowship try to be different from the rest of the social needs agencies in Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Regina, respectively, by searching for the spiritual component of our humanness. Proverbs 4:23 puts it this way, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." So we must find the relationships that allow us to get at the heart matters in life, sharing and encouraging this relationship with the Creator and rediscovering the wellspring of life we are promised through Christ.

The first way we do this in our ministry is to understand people just as Jesus did in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Second, the Urban Aboriginal Ministries show respect and remove fear through

education and teaching. The story of Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) exemplifies respect, not fear. Third, the Urban Aboriginal Ministries demonstrate belief in people, not condemnation—we need to affirm each other as people who are made in the image of the Creator. The story of Peter's relationship with Jesus clearly shows that no matter how broken we are, Christ seeks us out so that we might have a restored relationship with him (Matt. 16:13-28; Matt. 26: 31-35; and John 21:15-19). Fourth, no amount of programming should be a substitute for a relationship. As frontline ministry, the urban aboriginal ministry centers become far more effective when a relationship of respect and trust is built. In John 3:1-21, we are told the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, where Jesus explains his relationship to all people here on earth.

These four basic principles allow us to minister with people who are at the fringes of society—dealing with addictions, loss of identity, homelessness, and being poor and hungry. Through the thousands of people we meet, seeds are planted, and we need the help of the church at-large to water and feed these seeds. Thank you for supporting our urban aboriginal brothers and sisters as we learn to dance the reconciliation dance together.

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 2009:

- Back to God Ministries International
- CRWRC
- Christian Reformed World Missions

3. Appointments to CRC ministries

a. Director of Faith Alive Christian Resources

The BOT, upon the recommendation of the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources, appointed Mr. Mark Rice to the position of director of Faith Alive Christian Resources and, on behalf of synod, ratified the appointment. Mr. Rice began work with Faith Alive on October 31, 2008.

b. Interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions

The Board of Trustees endorsed the appointment of Mr. Ben Vandezande as interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

c. Director of Chaplaincy Ministries

The search process for a director of chaplaincy to replace Rev. Herm Keizer, Jr., following his retirement continues. In the interim, Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of disability concerns is serving both chaplaincy and disability concerns.

4. Center for Congregations

In an effort to serve local congregations more effectively, the directors and/or board officers of each of the agencies, ministries, and institutions met in July 2008 and developed the concept of a "center" for

congregations. Throughout the past year, the BOT reviewed and approved both the establishment of the Center for Congregations (see Appendix D) and a conceptual framework for the center that reflected a proposed network of engagement with the churches—both reactive and proactive. In addition, the board approved both the job description for a director and ratified the appointment of Rev. Michael Bruinooge as the interim director. The conceptual framework document and director's position description can be found in Appendix K.

5. Back to God Ministries International – India

   The Board approved a request by the board of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) to initiate ministry within India in cooperation with CRWM and other agencies. The BTGMI board, on January 30, 2009, approved "formal partnership with Words of Hope and Good Books Educational Trust in the pursuit of ministry in India." The Board asks that synod approve India as a new ministry initiative of Back to God Ministries International in cooperation with CR World Missions and other CRC agencies and ministries.

6. Christian Reformed Church Foundation

   The CRC Foundation in the United States, a Michigan 501(C)(3) corporation, continues to provide support for the ministries and agencies of the denomination and for projects and initiatives that encourage new ministry in the CRCNA. The CRC Foundation-Canada was formed in 2003. Most of the funds that the foundation receives are distributed in the first few years after they are contributed. Beginning in 2008 the foundation will receive funds designated as endowed toward a purpose agreed upon by the donor and the CRC, its agencies, or specialized ministries. In addition to soliciting donations and providing grants, the foundation directors function as the investment committee for funds given to the foundation or denominational agencies. The CRC Foundation maintains close relationships with the Barnabas Foundation in the United States and Christian Stewardship Services in Canada, and encourages members to engage these organizations for estate planning services.

   Dr. Peter Harkema began service as the director of denominational advancement in August 2007. In addition to assisting the foundation in their work, he provides coordination and leadership to the advancement staff of the various agencies.

   The Board received and reviewed recommended changes to the By-Law No. 1 of the CRCNA-Canada Foundation and recommends these changes to synod for adoption. The proposed changes to the by-laws are found in Appendix L.

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 2009—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 2010 (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010), and recommended ministry share amounts for the

year 2010. 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 of Trustees; 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 in one motion all requests for privilege of the floor by the BOT, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2009.

C. That synod approve in one motion all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2009.

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

E. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 3).

F. 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, 3).

G. That synod, given the financial implications, approve holding Synod 2010 in the West Michigan area rather than in Edmonton, Alberta (II, A, 7).

Grounds:

1. A review of the cost implications revealed that a variance of more than $70,000 (additional cost in travel for delegates, staff, and advisers) would be required for air travel alone.
2. The King's University College did not build additional housing as anticipated when the decision by Synod 2006 was made, limiting delegates to share a room or be housed off campus, increasing cost.

H. That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the Guidelines for Congregations and Former Pastors report (II, A, 8 and Appendix A):

1. That synod, in light of the background and observations presented here, encourage use of the following guidelines:

Guidelines for Former Pastors and Church Councils

1. That pastors and councils of congregations recognize the significant implications of former pastors remaining in the congregation and become informed of the prevalence and types of problems that can arise when the former pastor does remain.

This is particularly important when there is a tendency in the former pastor or the church council to minimize the potential difficulties and accentuate the potential advantages of his/her remaining with the congregation.

2. That this decision not be viewed as entirely the prerogative of the former pastor. Pastors and councils are advised to view the decision as having weight similar to that of the decision to originally call the pastor to this church. Therefore, the discernment process and decision ought to include the pastor, the council, and possibly representatives of the congregation and classis.
3. That a "waiting period" approach not be seen in itself as a sufficient strategy for addressing the potential hazards inherent in the relationship. The waiting period may be part of a strategy, but other variables ought also to be considered.
4. That pastors and councils seek communal clarity in these matters through an intentional conversation resulting in a written agreement signed by the former pastor, the council, and, in some cases, representatives of the classis. (A sample of such an agreement appears in Appendix A-1 of this report.)
5. That, in situations where the former pastor does remain, the written and signed agreement convey a high level of clarity to ensure that appropriate boundaries are understood by the former pastor, the council, and the congregation and that the incoming pastor and future councils are not prevented from addressing potential difficulties that may arise.
6. That any written agreement between a former pastor and the congregation be reviewed at least on an annual basis and that adjustments to the agreement be considered if deemed necessary by the former pastor, the current pastor, or members of the church council.

2. That synod request the Board of Trustees to instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to collect and develop relevant resources and make them available to pastors and churches.
3. That synod request that the effectiveness of these guidelines be reviewed after three years and appropriate adjustments be recommended to Synod 2013.

I. That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force report (II, A, 9 and Appendix B):

1. That synod affirm the ministry-share system as an effective means of carrying out ministry together as members of the CRCNA.

   Grounds:
   a. Significant funds (over $26 million) are raised each year to carry out these ministries.
   b. The ministry-share system provides a means for all members of the CRC to participate in extended ministry.

2. That synod request the executive director of the CRCNA, through the Office of Denominational Advancement, to encourage and educate the churches regarding participation in the ministry-share system and resulting ministry. This would include but not be limited to development of appropriate promotional materials, facilitation of communications with churches, and coordinating promotion of the ministry-share system with advancement teams of all the agencies and institutions.

   Grounds:
   a. The executive director and the director of finance and administration are accountable to synod and the Board of Trustees for monitoring and accounting for the ministry-share system. However, no one has been assigned the responsibility to actively and regularly promote the system.
   b. Active promotion of the ministry-share system is necessary and desirable.
   c. Currently there is no formal coordinated communication regarding the ministry-share system.

3. That synod designate initial funding, up to 1 percent of ministry-share receipts, to carry out the responsibilities of Recommendation 2 above.

   Grounds:
   a. Appropriate levels of funding are needed to enable the communication envisioned in Recommendation 2.
   b. An initial commitment of up to 1 percent of the total funding will not significantly affect the funding available to the institutions, agencies, and ministries of the CRCNA.

4. That synod affirm the current system of request for ministry shares based on membership, but that the definition of *member* for this purpose be revised to include only those active, adult, professing members and exclude only those members considered inactive as adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 410):

   > *Inactive* members are those baptized or confessing members who are declared by the consistory to have a relationship to the congregation which has ceased for one year or who for one year have not made faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the Lord's Supper, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., military service, residence in a nursing home) that make such faithful use impossible.
   > (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 215)

   Grounds:
   a. This system would provide simplification of the calculation of recommended ministry-share amounts.
   b. This would empower local congregations.

5. That synod encourage local churches to use the recommended contribution amount as determined by the ministry-share system as a starting point as it evaluates its ability to participate. A church with extraordinary financial capacity may discern to contribute more than the recommended amount. Likewise, a church with undue financial circumstances or

hardship may discern the need to contribute less than the recommended amount.

Grounds:

a. This recognizes that God has financially blessed each church differently.
b. As is the current practice, the local church is best suited to determine their participation in the ministry-share system.
c. Membership as the sole base of determining the level of participation may not be the only consideration. Reliance on membership count has caused some issues among the churches.
d. A key ingredient in the health of the local church is participation in the ministry facilitated through the larger church body.

6. That synod request that churches complete a ministry-share participation form annually to assist in evaluation of the ministry-share system. Information derived from the form will be shared with the local classis.

Grounds:

a. This information will be useful in the future administration of the ministry-share system.
b. The form would ask for the reason(s) for a congregation's level of participation in the ministry-share system.

7. That synod request that the executive director develop a plan for new church plants and emerging churches to more actively participate in the ministry-share program.

Grounds:

a. Opportunity is created for formalized participation in global ministry.
b. We are all part of a covenantal commitment community.
c. Currently no formal request is made of emerging churches to participate in the ministry-share system.

8. That synod refer the pension funding issues included in the mandate to this task force to the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee. Pension issues for ministers of the Word are a communal covenantal commitment issue.

Grounds:

a. Synod has directed that the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee is responsible for all ministers' pension matters.
b. Defined benefit plans carry longer-term financial consequences than other ministry-share issues.

J. That synod encourage classes to emphasize the importance of church visiting, thereby acknowledging its value for maintaining spiritual health and vitality in the member-congregations of the classis, and encourage the use of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* and/or other resources available from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations as effective tools to that end (II, A, 10).

K. That synod endorse renaming the Office of Abuse Prevention to the Safe Church Ministry (II, B, 1, b and Appendix E).

Grounds:

1. The name change clearly identifies the office's ministry (create safe churches and thus prevent abuse).
2. The name change connects with the current naming of classical Safe Church Teams and local safe church committees.

L. That synod approve the *advocate* position to facilitate restorative justice and equitable remedies for victims (II, B, 1, b and Appendix E).

Grounds:

1. Restoration and remedy are important *next steps* for victims and offenders.
2. An advocate can assist those who might find the *next steps* overwhelming or intimidating.

M. That synod approve the development of *regional advisory panels.* The regions will be set up according to the regions established by the BOT (currently twelve regions in the United States and Canada) (II, B, 1, b and Appendix E).

Grounds:

1. Because some classes have not formed a Safe Church Team, a regional system allows any qualified person to access an advisory panel.
2. Because some classical teams are too small to offer an advisory panel, a regional system can form a fully trained panel when called upon.
3. Regional advisory panels create opportunities for training and networking which enhance the effectiveness of the advisory panel process and the Classical Safe Church Teams.
4. The regional advisory panel will still report to the church where the alleged offender resides so there is no disruption to the ecclesiastical structure.

N. That synod urge the CRC congregations to pay special attention to veterans, serving members of the military, and their families (II, B, 1, c and Appendix F).

Grounds:

1. Synod 2006 adopted the following:

> That synod acknowledge the pressing pastoral concern (see section IX, B, Committee to Study War and Peace, p. 414) and direct the Board of Trustees to encourage CRC Publications [Faith Alive Christian Resources] to partner with pastoral care experts to make available materials to assist churches in ministering to members and their families who are contemplating entering or serving in the military, as well as to veterans in their congregations.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 672)

2. Serving members of the Armed Forces both in the United States and Canada experience the wounds of battle. Many become permanently disabled, and a major concern is the number of those suffering from

the hidden wounds of war—traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of these wounds and the resultant pathology of these wounds increase over time and severely affect interpersonal functioning and social adjustment.

O. That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 12 through 18, 2009, using the theme, "Everybody Belongs. Everybody Serves" (II, B, 1, d and Appendix G).

Grounds:

1. The Bible calls us to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. We recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ requires the involvement of all his people in the ministry of his church. We have not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and have often isolated them and their families.
2. In 1985 we committed ourselves as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude "in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God's family." Although many CRC congregations, classes, and institutions have made significant progress in including people with disabilities in their work and ministry, much more can and should be done.
3. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God's people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Note: Some text in the grounds is from the "Resolution on Disabilities" adopted by Synod 1985.

P. That synod encourage churches, classes, and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 28 through October 4, 2009, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 4, 2009 (see Appendix I).

Grounds:

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism needs 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.

Q. That synod recognize Mr. Mark Rice's appointment to be the director of Faith Alive Christian Resources and that Mr. Rice be permitted to address synod to extend his personal greetings (II, B, 3, a).

R. That synod recognize Mr. Ben Vandezande's appointment to be the interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions and that Mr. Vandezande be permitted to address synod to extend his personal greetings (II, B, 3, b).

S. That synod approve India as a new ministry initiative of Back to God Ministries International in cooperation with CR World Missions and other CRC agencies and ministries.

T. That synod adopt the proposed changes to the By-Law No. 1 of the CRCNA-Canada Foundation as presented in Appendix L (II, B, 6).

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

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

Appendix A
Guidelines for Congregations and Former Pastors

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is affirming the priority of "Creating and Sustaining Healthy Congregations for the Purpose of Transforming Lives and Communities Worldwide." In various places and ways this priority is recognized as being a strategic foundational goal and as involving an array of factors that contribute to or challenge this initiative.

It is often noted that the relationship of the pastor with the congregation is a key dimension to a healthy context of ministry. One dynamic often overlooked in the development of healthy congregations is the relationship of former pastors to their congregations. It would be helpful for the denomination to provide guidance and clarity to this important relationship.

An overture from Classis Grand Rapids East to Synod 2008 provides helpful background information to this conversation. Those wanting to dig deeper into this issue are encouraged to read that overture (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 258).

II. Background

A. An overture from Classis Grand Rapids East

The overture from Grand Rapids East provides a great deal of helpful information for this discussion and provides a context for the narrative and guidelines that follow. This overture makes a solid case for guidelines, reviews the guidelines of several sister denominations, critiques those guidelines, offers commentary on the relationship of the broader assemblies to the local congregation, and presents specific protocols for the CRCNA with a reminder as to how this fits into the denominational priority of "creating and sustaining healthy congregations."

The observations of this report affirm, complement and, in some cases, supplement what was offered in the overture from Grand Rapids East. The guidelines recommended in this report honor the spirit of the overture but are less mandatory in application.

B. Observations by the Synod 2008 advisory committee and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations

1. Key players affected by this dynamic are unlikely to speak or have a place in which to speak.

   The continued presence of a former pastor in a congregation affects a number of people. It affects the former pastor (and spouse). It affects the incoming pastor (and spouse). It also affects the council and congregation as they must continue to process the potentially ambiguous role that the former pastor plays in the life of the church. Presently the incoming pastor has little opportunity to address this situation. The following factors are currently in play:

   – The arrangement precedes the new pastor's arrival; at that time he/she is not able to "undo" what has been decided.
   – It is difficult for the new pastor to ask that the former pastor leave at a time when he/she has not yet built significant pastoral capital within the congregation; these are difficult dynamics to address.

2. Stories of problems continue to arise.

   Although the situations of former pastors are unique, accounts of the former pastor's presence being disruptive are frequent. These accounts range from mildly frustrating to highly problematic with most situations falling somewhere along this continuum. The staff of Pastor-Church Relations hears a variety of stories relative to the place of former pastors in local churches. At the advisory committee of Synod 2008 dealing with the overture about former pastors, a number of the delegates expressed their personal experience with such accounts.

   A composite sampling of stories:

   – "The former pastor continues to welcome requests from congregants for pastoral care, crisis intervention, weddings, and funerals. This can prevent the new pastor from establishing a healthy pastor-congregation relationship."
   – "When key decisions need to be made in the congregation, a number of congregants check to see how the former pastor is responding. By a nod or noncomment he can affect the response of many to the issue."
   – A pastor has talked with us about a conversation with a vacant church and has indicated his unwillingness to consider that call while the former pastor remains an influential member of the congregation.

3. The risks of ignoring are greater than the risks of addressing.

   Some might question the need for these measures, especially if they have not experienced difficulties in this area. The requirements and

recommendations in this document do not significantly encumber either pastors or congregations but do offer critical protocols that could prevent heartache and difficulty in a number of congregations. As the denominational experience would suggest, some who minimize the hazards of this dynamic may, in fact, be insufficiently aware of what is being experienced in too many congregational environments.

And, as the overture from Classis Grand Rapids East indicates, other denominations have seen the need to address this issue and have done so with guidelines similar to the following.

4. The increasing numbers of retiring pastors is a trend worth noting.

   As "baby boomers" retire, many do so with considerable aspirations for finding meaningful relationships and ministries in their retirement years. And for various reasons, such as their place in community, spousal jobs, and important friendships, many retirees are choosing to remain in the community of the congregation formerly served.

III. Mandate

Synod 2008 adopted a resolution that instructed "the Board of Trustees to instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to develop guidelines to assist congregations and ministers as they discern their future relationship upon a minister's retirement and/or ending of his/her formal ministerial role in a congregation" (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 521).

In response to the instructions of synod and the Board of Trustees, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations has developed what follows. It bears noting that, over the course of the past year, we have taken opportunity to discuss these questions with several groups of pastors who were gathered for various reasons such as in pre-retirement seminars and in Lilly-funded peer groups. In every case we observed some polarization of response. Some pastors feel these guidelines to be unnecessary and intrusive. Others find these guidelines to be too advisory and would welcome mandated practices in this area. Thus we have tried to honor the tension within this question and seek the denomination's ongoing discernment about this matter.

IV. Additional observations

A. A matter of communal wisdom

One aspect of the discussion of former pastors and their congregations is its position in the life of the covenant community. Clearly, there are no direct biblical or creedal prescriptions that dictate protocols in this area. At best, the biblical and creedal guidelines provide a foundation from which principles for practice are derived. For example, synod has recognized the tension between the authority of the local council and the decisions of a synod relative to matters of church membership.

However, it is clear that, through the years, there is a development of communal wisdom that guides and blesses the church. When that communal wisdom gains considerable support and is seen as blessing the church, it can become codified such as is apparent in the Church Order and other written procedures. With this is mind it seems appropriate to recognize guidelines regarding former pastors as a wisdom that is developing, that is being recognized by many but as yet needs additional thought and observation before

it assumes the weight of a mandate codified within the Church Order. A periodic review of these guidelines to observe their effectiveness in assisting pastors and churches is recommended.

B. Synod and church membership

Within the context of communal wisdom, it can be helpful to consider the local council's autonomy relative to matters of membership and synod's prerogatives in terms of guidance. We offer this line of reasoning. The former pastor's church membership in the local congregation began in conjunction with a call to a specific leadership role in that community. Apart from this call, this pastor would not have become a member of that congregation. And this call was discerned through a process involving at least the pastor and the church council—and, likely, the congregation and classis—through the advice of a congregational vote and the affirmation of the classically appointed church counselor. With this in mind, an argument can be made that the former pastor's future membership in this congregation ought also to be communally discerned by at least the former pastor and church council with potential input from representatives of the congregation and the classis.

C. Variables to be acknowledged

There is little doubt that every situation of a "former pastor" is unique. The factors that inform each situation include but are not limited to the following dimensions of the congregation:

- demographics
- internal culture
- ethnicity
- size
- history, especially with respect to former pastors
- stage of life as a congregation

It is also true that former pastors bring different aptitudes and styles to the situation. The following characteristics of the former pastor bear consideration:

- ability to recognize and respect boundaries
- willingness to surrender leadership and pastoral role to the new pastor
- sense of personal identity that extends beyond pastoral identity
- capacity to both nurture new believers and to do that without creating excessive dependencies

(Although these characteristics are to be considered of the former pastor, they also apply to the spouses of married former pastors who, in some congregations, are given unique places of influence in the community.)

Having recognized the uniqueness of congregations and the varieties of pastors who become former pastors, it is also valid to recognize that some unhelpful patterns can be observed. Examples of these patterns have already been noted. In addition, many congregants and council members have not had much reason to ponder the implications of the dynamics between congregations and former pastors. But when observed over time and in a variety of situations, it can be said that these dynamics range from obvious to subtle, from immediate to long-term, from *seen by a few* to *being noticed by many*. There is value in lay leaders of the congregation looking more closely

into these dynamics and thinking strategically for the long-term health of the congregation and its pastors.

D. Some additional considerations

If former pastors remain on staff, it is important to monitor the effect of this situation on the congregation, the relationship with the incoming pastor, and the level of satisfaction in the pastor him/herself, for example. The important factor is that, by remaining on staff, this former pastor is also remaining in a clearly recognizable accountability structure. This reduces the risk of a problem arrangement.

When an associate pastor leaves, the situation should be addressed on an individual basis. How the pastor and council respond will be determined in large measure by the role and place the associate pastor has held in the life of the congregation and by the role he/she will hold during any anticipated pastoral vacancy.

For pastors who accept calls to churches not in the local area these guidelines are still valuable to consider. Former pastors can play a less than helpful role by counseling parishioners, offering opinions about current activities in the former church, or verbally criticizing the incoming pastor.

A "waiting period" approach, in which a former pastor leaves for a time and then returns, may be helpful, but such an approach does not anticipate important variables. There are some good reasons for this approach, and many denominations use it as their primary approach to the dynamic with former pastors. This approach still requires conversation and clarity for the pastor and the church council. One problem known to arise, however, is that a former pastor may return at just the wrong time, such as when the "honeymoon period" of the new pastor is dramatically fading.

E. When the former pastor remains

There may be cases when, for the good of the pastor and the congregation, the preferred decision is that a former pastor remain in the congregation. This should be seen as an exception requiring exceptional care, clarity, and ongoing conversation.

Both benefits and hazards must be recognized. When former pastors consider remaining in their congregations, the tendency is to emphasize and articulate the benefits while minimizing the hazards. The benefits could include

- continuation of important relationships, including those involving new converts.
- continuity of community for the pastor and family.
- ad hoc assistance in areas of pastoral care, preaching, funerals, and weddings.
- wisdom gained from the longer view of the congregation's history.
- a place where the pastor (and spouse) can retire, feeling a part of the community where he/she has been living and working. (Some pastors retire in areas where worshiping at another CRC is not possible or practical.)

Hazards such as the following can become apparent over time:

- Neither pastor nor congregation releases each other from the underlying assumptions of their relationship. In times of crisis, then, the instincts of pastor and parishioners revert to old practices.
- Neither pastor nor congregation takes the time to define who they are (identity) apart from their relationship. This becomes problematic as the congregation moves forward under new pastoral leadership.
- Lay leaders are less likely to assume appropriate leadership in the congregation and can easily defer to the opinion of the former pastor.
- Many pastor candidates are leery of accepting a call to a congregation in which the former pastor remains a part.
- When a new pastor does arrive, he/she can find it difficult to find his/her place when that "place" is still occupied by the former pastor. This can also be true for the spouse of a pastor whose "place" remains occupied by the spouse of the former pastor.
- When the inevitable criticism of the new pastor begins, it is tempting for the congregation and former pastor to idealize their relationship, and it is tempting for the former pastor, either overtly or subtly, to undermine the role of the new pastor.

As stated above, when the pastor remains in the congregation the relationship needs to be regularly reviewed and, where needed, appropriate measures taken. This discussion recognizes that the pastor, council, and classis are not always able to anticipate the potential benefits and hazards of the pastor remaining in the congregation.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod, in light of the background and observations presented here, encourage use of the following guidelines:

Guidelines for Former Pastors and Church Councils

1. That pastors and councils of congregations recognize the significant implications of former pastors remaining in the congregation and become informed of the prevalence and types of problems that can arise when the former pastor does remain. This is particularly important when there is a tendency in the former pastor or the church council to minimize the potential difficulties and accentuate the potential advantages of his/her remaining with the congregation.

2. That this decision not be viewed as entirely the prerogative of the former pastor. Pastors and councils are advised to view the decision as having weight similar to that of the decision to originally call the pastor to this church. Therefore, the discernment process and decision ought to include the pastor, the council, and possibly representatives of the congregation and classis.

3. That a "waiting period" approach not be seen in itself as a sufficient strategy for addressing the potential hazards inherent in the relationship. The waiting period may be part of a strategy, but other variables ought also to be considered.

4. That pastors and councils seek communal clarity in these matters through an intentional conversation resulting in a written agreement signed by the former pastor, the council and, in some cases, representatives of the classis. (A sample of such an agreement appears in Appendix A-1 of this report.)

5. That, in situations where the former pastor does remain, the written and signed agreement convey a high level of clarity to ensure that appropriate boundaries are understood by the former pastor, the council, and the congregation and that the incoming pastor and future councils are not prevented from addressing potential difficulties that may arise.

6. That any written agreement between a former pastor and the congregation be reviewed at least on an annual basis and that adjustments to the agreement be considered if deemed necessary by the former pastor, the current pastor, or members of the church council.

B. That synod request the Board of Trustees to instruct the Office of Pastor-Church Relations to collect and develop relevant resources and make them available to pastors and churches.

C. That synod request that the effectiveness of these guidelines be reviewed after three years and appropriate adjustments be recommended to Synod 2013.

Appendix A-1
Agreement for Future Relationships

This agreement will guide the future relationship between
Rev. _____
and the congregation of _____.

It is intended to honor the work of the former pastor and to strengthen the relationship(s) with the new pastor(s). It is undertaken by the pastor and the elders on behalf of the congregation, out of deep gratitude and respect for the special relationships that develop between pastor and people.

1. Effective _____ (date), Rev. _____ relinquishes all pastoral and administrative duties for the congregation. She/he will only officiate in formal acts of ministry with the express approval of the council.

2. Rev. _____ pledges to support the future pastor(s) and leadership of the church. She/he will encourage open and constructive communication with the new pastoral staff. She/he will not engage in any conversations or activities which might undermine any program or person of the church.

3. Any future contact that may occur between Rev. _____ and the members of the congregation will be as friends, and not in an official capacity, except as requested by the council. Calls of a pastoral nature and

conversations about congregational concerns will be referred to the new pastor.

We, the undersigned, make this agreement as stated above:

Council Representative: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Classis Representative: _____ Date: _____

Appendix A-2
Additional Resources

Oswald, Roy; James M. Heath, Ann W. Heath. *Beginning Ministry Together,* "When the Departing Pastor Stays in Town," The Alban Institute, 2003; pp. 88ff.

Closing Well—Continuing Strong: Walking with Pastors During Their Transition from Ministry to Retirement and Beyond, by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2006; p. 26.

Appendix B
Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force

I. Introduction

Imagine! If you were to paint a picture of what "the church" should be and what it should be doing—including of course the Christian Reformed Church—what would it look like? Our hope is that the painting would be something like this: a mural of grand proportion; dynamic—an active work in process with churches, individuals, and organizations interacting, adding to and dedicating their lives to their respective parts; bursting with color and vitality; including people of all ages from all different places, utilizing all gifts and resources, working together, supporting each other, touching all areas of life, so that all of God's people together, the church, are claiming and redeeming the whole of God's creation and helping to transform every person through the work of the Spirit and the love of Christ—all to the glory of God. Wow! And the mural is of course not yet completed—major work still is under way—a few "Caution: Wet Paint" signs—and some "This Area Under Construction" signs would be expected.

In contrast, some may want to stick with the equivalent of a wallet-size black-and-white snapshot of what the church is (or once was) and can do—admired, but lacking in significance.

Isn't the bigger beautiful plan the picture God calls us to? Doesn't it portray the scope of the command to spread the revelation and redemption story? Didn't God give us the gifts of community and church so we can live and work together as a body—not just a bunch of detached members? Didn't God give the church the calling, authority, and resources to become a vital part of accomplishing his purposes—not just our own? He has indeed.

With this in mind, we suggest that we need renewal in our thinking about ministry together. We need the guidance and the transforming power of the Spirit in all our efforts to meet the scope and challenge of the Great Commission. We need to be open to renewal in our relationship with God, who gives this call.

We can all use a fresh start sometimes—in this case, let's think about moving from what is sometimes a "ho hum, so what, can you spare it" attitude about the broader church and its ministry to an attitude more like this: God gave us each other to faithfully work and grow together "so that"—"so that" the nations (and our neighbors too) may know; "so that" we may be faithful (and stewardly) servants; "so that" God's kingdom, our churches, and our own spiritual lives may grow; "so that" the mural can be completed; and "so that" God may be praised and glorified. We want to keep that as our mindset "so that" we are all very clear on our real goals together as God's church! Our unity is a gift from God and is of great value.

The Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force seeks to answer the question, How do we logistically work together within the context of the current times, current ministry opportunities, and diverse gifts and congregations? Put another way—how should we, the CRCNA, as a strong and gifted part of the whole body of the church, offer up the gifts God gives us to accomplish, as individual congregations and as churches together, our part of the work of the church we are called by God to do?

We ask as you think about this to be challenged personally as well: How do I use all that God has given me in a worthy response to him? After all, isn't that what Christlike living is all about? It is important to consider personal commitment in the following discussion of how we work together.

II. Mandate of the task force

A. Synod's action and the mandate of the task force

Synod 2007 instructed the Board of Trustees (BOT) "to form a study committee or task force to consider the denomination's communal covenantal commitment to one another, especially as that relates to financially providing for our institutions, agencies, ministries, and churches, and that the BOT bring any findings and recommendations to Synod 2009." Synod's action evolved as its response to Overtures 18 and 20 to Synod 2007. Overture 18 requested synod to establish a group to study ways in which to allocate denominational ministry shares among local congregations, and Overture 20 requested synod to conduct a survey to measure the impact of the Ministers' Pension Fund funding policy, especially as it relates to smaller churches. Synod felt that the expanded mandate provides a broader focus in addition to the aspects of ministry share and pension previously considered, and it provides a cohesive approach to the concerns expressed in Overtures 18 and 20 (see *Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 592, 622-23; and Overtures 18 and 20 in the *Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 438-43, 446).

This task force was formed in response to the above directive, and the following report and recommendations result from the work of the task force.

B. Task force analysis: Understanding the mandate, context, background, and need for this work

It is good to celebrate, evaluate, question, and adjust how we share in ministry together as members and churches of the Christian Reformed Church. Denominational ministry structure and agency operational evaluation have been of particular interest in recent years. Some recent notable events and activities follow.

First, the Denominational Ministries Plan for Agencies and Institutions of the Christian Reformed Church was most recently updated in 2006. The original plan, formulated in 1997, resulted from a collaborative process that included many stakeholders of the CRC and focused on detailed goals and objectives for ministry. The plan was updated in 2002, giving special attention to theological identity and core values. The 2006 revision updated the vision and mission statements, and identified objectives and priorities. The one priority singled out in the new plan is "creating and sustaining healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide." The healthy congregations initiative is intended to strengthen the overall work of the denomination.

Second, a ministries review of the agencies of the CRC took place in 2002 at the request of the BOT. The reviews were intended to focus especially on such matters that could improve program effectiveness and show promise for achieving greater organizational efficiencies. Both organizational and programmatic observations and recommendations came from that process. The strength and effectiveness of all of the agencies was emphasized and celebrated.

The focus of this current task force is to evaluate particularly the relational and financial aspects of how and why we are doing ministry together. The scope of our work did not address so much *what* we are doing together. The work of this task force should not be considered in isolation from but, rather, within the context of the work cited above that has preceded this report. All of the above influences our analysis and conclusions, speaks in some way to the idea of understanding our communal covenantal commitment, and includes some commonality of direction.

The grounds presented as part of the 2007 overtures in support of this communal covenantal commitment financial study process are also important aspects of our analysis.

The grounds (in summary form) presented in Overture 18 include the following:

- Financial considerations of local churches are not taken into account in our current funding method.
- Tension exists within churches regarding how members are counted for pastoral vs. financial purposes.
- The current funding method has not been reviewed since 1992.
- There is a low collection rate of potential ministry-share amounts—we need to determine what the causes are.
- Tension exists among local congregations, classes, and the BOT regarding member counts.
- Alternative, biblically based funding models exist.

– An alternative method to determine the amount of ministry shares, considering both denominational needs and funding abilities of local congregations, should be explored.

The grounds (in summary form) presented in Overture 20 are as follows:

– The present funding rules for pension benefits discriminate against pastors who choose to serve small churches.
– The funding protocol flies in the face of our covenant relationship as churches.

The final form of the action and mandate from synod to the task force seems very broad and, as a result, discussions held by the task force were far reaching. Our task force has not concluded that synod was naive or presumptuous in setting such broad parameters for evaluation; rather, it seems to have been insightful. Evaluation of the financial aspects of funding the ministry we do together is integral with evaluation of, among other things, culture, society, economics, local church health, local church priorities, member demographics and statistics, understanding of stewardship, and even doctrinal understanding. These are all relevant factors when considering what we understand and desire our communal covenantal commitment to be. Given that significant changes have occurred in these areas since the last time funding of our ministries together was addressed in a comprehensive report (Report 32, *Acts of Synod 1992*), and in consideration of the other grounds stated, synod agreed with the request of Overture 18 that it is time to take another look. The ministry-share and pension issues presented in Overtures 18 and 20 in 2007 are thereby seen to be more complex than to suggest mere promulgation of a particular formula or formulating more exceptions and adjustments to our current plan. A more thorough level of analysis is an appropriate step at this time, along with evaluation of alternative methods of supporting our work together.

C. Goals of the task force

The goals of the task force are as follows:

– Work to develop an understanding of communal covenantal commitment, especially in light of a more diverse and rapidly changing membership body than the denomination has ever had before.
– Serve synod by exploring the financial implications of communal covenantal commitment to ministry and our current system along with evaluation of financial alternatives as described in the mandate to the task force.
– Serve the church by working to understand and to verbalize the perspective of the church in the covenant relationship and recommend how communal covenantal commitment should be understood and implemented to effectively help the Holy Spirt build the kingdom of God through local and denominational ministry.

III. Recognition of what is changing in the local church environment

Dr. Scott Hoezee observes our local CRC church situation in his book *Grace Through Every Generation (*Faith Alive, 2006). He states, "Today the CRC is a richly diverse and varied body of believers. As the denomination turns 150

years of age, Christian Reformed worshipers can still find congregations where the pastor is a white man with a Dutch name, where worship is led by stately organ music and songs are sung from the *Psalter Hymnal*, and where liturgies are printed in predictable form week after week. On the other hand, there are also congregations where the pastor is a woman who hails originally from Korea, where worship is led by praise teams with steel guitars, and where everyone sings songs that are projected onto a screen. And in between these poles of traditional and contemporary, it's also possible to find just about every conceivable variation and combination of liturgical elements" (p.13).

Dr. Richard J. Mouw, in his CRC anniversary presentation "Assessing the Past, Anticipating the Future," speaks of our denominational journey: "Let's face it; the CRC has been moving fast in recent years." Later, he suggests further change is coming and is needed: "But what is clear is that there is a widespread sense that the CRC has come to an important point in its history, and that it is time to think new thoughts and to take new steps for the next stage in the denominational journey."

A note about perspective as we think about change—the church has changed over the years in ways that would be unbelievable to some. And, no doubt, unexpected changes will continue in the future. Change is a natural process, but it is also a process that demands leadership. Of particular relevance when we consider our communal covenantal commitment to one another are characteristics that are emerging in the church. Some of these are described in the following paragraphs.

The tendency toward congregationalism has been named as a trend for quite some time, along with its assumed financial detriment to denominations as resource shifts align funding with more local priorities. This trend seems now to be further characterized by a retained desire to associate, but with lighter identification and obligation than in the past. Highly structured and detailed guidelines or control from another organization is seemingly not wanted. Rather, control by the individual is highly desired. For members and potential members, programming, relationship, and intimacy are much more highly valued characteristics of a church home than the name on the sign. Churches seem to be very willing to forfeit identity with a larger body, and in so doing seem to forget to educate and encourage one another in that regard.

We consider ourselves to be a family of believers. The family portrait is changing, however. We observe a move away from the church being a "natural family-type church"—or, more particularly, one with a common ethnic background—to a more diverse church family where it is sometimes a struggle for some to fit in. We like to celebrate our increasing diversity, but there is real work and challenge in actually living as a family of diversity.

We observe a heightened desire for direct experience and involvement in ministry. Faithful financial support alone seems to have low appeal as a model for carrying out broader ministry objectives. People want to financially support particular projects or targeted programs because of a sense of involvement and ownership. Relationship has become essential and is facilitated by our enhanced communication capabilities. Many churches have taken the initiative to develop the capacity to begin and manage ministry programs. In some situations this capability is seen to reduce the need to delegate outreach efforts to others such as the denominational agencies. Short-term mission trips to other countries, for example, are now common.

The multitude of ministries available for congregations to partner with, including the CRC agencies, have also recognized this donor need and have adjusted donor development techniques accordingly. Some ministries, such as Partners Worldwide and the Disaster Response Services division of CRWRC, have made participative ministry an integral objective of their approach to programming.

General operating costs for the local church have increased, as have the church's program costs. Technology is necessary and costly. People's increasing busyness has forced the church to move from primarily volunteer-managed programming to paid staff. The bar has been raised regarding what is acceptable and/or expected at the local church. Excellence in worship, staffing, and programming is expected. Looking forward, these capabilities and demands will expand to new and additional programming that again will add to cost. None of this is unreasonable. Much of it is new and still emerging. On a very positive note, we observe that although the cost of doing business for the local church has increased, many congregations have leveraged this into strategic investment and built the capacity to offer new and better ministry and programming, locally and internationally, which yields notable impact.

With thanks to God we are able to observe a continuing deep-rooted desire to do ministry. In many churches the desire to *do* ministry work has increased—not decreased. This has resulted in church growth in terms of membership and programs. David Olsen, in his book *The American Church in Crisis* (2008), points out that the category of non-Baptist, non-Pentecostal Evangelical churches, of which he indicates the CRC is a part, is very strong and very blessed in the amount of ministry it carries out compared to statistics presented by some of the mainline denominations. He states, "Since 1990, these 'other' evangelicals have experienced the strongest attendance growth of any of the eight families. There are many reasons for this; they have relatively healthy established churches and extensive church planting systems, and their colleges and seminaries are seeing robust growth in enrollment." So in this regard, the news is good.

We are thankful to observe that the agencies of the CRC have demonstrated a desire to grow too. All the agencies and educational institutions have ministry or activities that rely on funding well beyond the support derived from denominational ministry shares. The ministry-share system has been limited in its growth.

In fiscal 1994, budgeted ministry shares were $25.3 million, or 27 percent, of the overall budgeted income of $93.9 million. By fiscal 2009, budgeted ministry shares were $28.2 million, or only 14 percent, of the overall budgeted income of $208.9 million.

Excluding the budget of Calvin College, fiscal 1994 budgeted ministry shares were $22.4 million, or 40 percent, of the overall budgeted income of $55.4 million. By fiscal 2009, budgeted ministry shares were $25.3 million, or 30 percent, of the overall budgeted income of $85.3 million.

Growth has happened at the initiative of the agencies and institutions in response to their mandates, and they have on their own been able to obtain funding to do so. The agencies, however, have added significant staffing to do this incremental fundraising. Most of the additional funding raised is derived from CRC members and churches as above-ministry-share giving, while a small part is also received from outside the CRC.

There are volumes written about the church today and how it has changed and is changing at a rapid pace. A summary of what we found makes up the following list of trends in the church. Most of these are affirmed in an article by Gayla Postma titled "Trendspotting" in *The Banner* of March 2006.

- independence is increasing; movement from trust to "it's all about me"; rise of independent churches; congregationalism—connection to a particular pastor
- increased use of technology
- globalization
- decline in importance of the concept of membership
- diminishing perceived importance of the denomination; focus on unity
- churches are looking at the quality of their ministry—spending money on media
- megachurches; multi-campus churches; commuter churches
- new members drawn by relationship more than anything else
- local church capacity to partner with multiple outreach options for short-term mission trips
- biblical and confessional illiteracy; church attendance is optional

The Denominational Ministries Plan of the CRC identifies additional items under the heading "The Context for Ministry":

- pace and scope of change
- new forms of spirituality
- new groups in society

There are a few other denominational observations worthy of mention, since these too affect the changes that have been happening in the local church. As support for denominational ministry is evaluated, we suggest that one needs to be very careful when using often-heard terms like "lack of loyalty" in describing our membership. Loyalty to an old system, perceived by some to be too conformist oriented for today, has most likely declined, but not loyalty of desire to participate in meaningful and effective ministry. The implication of this very positive observation is that we need to take action to work on how we together can use resources to build all ministries—local ministries along side of denominationally funded ministries.

The CRC has endured a few trouble spots that have likely distracted us from our vision and work. We have lost members and struggled for years to overcome perceptions of who we once were but no longer are. We share with the rest of society the threat of individualism and suffer from effects of affluence that can lead to restrictive busyness. We sometimes isolate ourselves, resulting in loss of diversity opportunity and loss of potential exposure to situations that stimulate our need to be able to defend our faith.

We need to be aware of the role and contribution of ethnic minorities in our denomination. This benefit is realized through enabling local congregations that include or largely consist of ethnic minorities. If a congregational support system for these churches is not in place, the denomination also pays a cost through loss of such churches' participation in and strengthening of the denomination. Hence, the Denominational Ministries Plan priority of strengthening the local congregation is critical.

A number of churches are struggling just to survive. This is a very difficult and emotional process. We also have a propensity to plant new churches—this is a great blessing. Constant work is being done to improve methods of building core groups, effectively partnering with existing local churches, and building financial stability in congregations.

We have spoken much about change. However, it is important as well to recognize that a significant part of our denominational membership has been around for a long time—they have been builders and faithful supporters of the church for many years. They have been a very stable core group. The average age of our membership is just over 50 years. Although perhaps not as influenced by societal change as some, the over 50 age group is no doubt influenced by change and especially the pace of change. We certainly do not wish to in any way diminish the importance of this segment of our membership; the element of stability they offer is an essential gift too.

There sadly is an element of our membership that is slipping away. Our youth are not demonstrating a high ratio of remaining with the CRC—or for that matter, in the church in which they were raised. We sense that we will serve this group well by creating an atmosphere of openness as opposed to tradition or exclusivity—we need to figure out how to make room.

An additional challenge faced in particular by the CRC relates to support for Christian day school education. Christian school education is of great value and is highly valued by the CRC. Costs for primary and secondary education are climbing at rates faster than personal incomes. Some of the same reasons for cost increases listed above for the local church also apply to the Christian schools. Many individuals and churches struggle with prioritizing between supporting the Christian education needs of its youth and paying to support the various other ministries of the church.

Christian education is also valued at the collegiate level. Calvin College continues to thrive as an educational institution owned by the CRC. Today there are at least five other colleges related to the Reformed community that CRC students attend and that are recommended for financial support.

IV. Spirituality and stewardship

The CRC already knows a lot about stewardship. We suggest that it also knows a lot about spirituality. We do not feel it necessary to explain or establish a case for either of these within this report. However, we want to point out that sometimes emphasis on the link between the two is either weak or altogether missing.

It should be easy for Reformed Christians to make this connection. Giving out of what God, the owner of everything, has given to us is both a calling and an act of gratitude. Our problem is that we tend to forget that good stewardship follows a good relationship with God. We need to emphasize our relationship with God (our spirituality if you will) both in front of and along with stewardship.

Dr. Robert Heerspink writes in his book *Firstfruits* that "to grow generous stewards, church leaders must understand what it means to lead disciples into rich, full-orbed spiritual maturity. We grow not only from what we learn. We grow also from what we do" (Barnabas Foundation, Faith Alive, 2008; p. 69).

In a survey of the CRCNA, Dr. Rodger Rice draws this conclusion: "Yes, with increasing age, generous giving gradually increases. But we also saw in our study of patterns that generosity does not increase with income. Rather, it will increase only with increased spiritual nourishment, training in stewardship as a lifestyle, and encouraging people to use more faithfully the spiritual disciplines."

The implications for the church working together are clear. If we are weak in building spirituality, we will be weak in stewardship as well—and the ability to accomplish our calling as the church will be questionable. It does not matter much what our level of wealth is. Conversely, with strong spirituality, strong stewardship will follow, enabling not only the local church to flourish but the churches together as well.

V. What makes a church CRC?

What is the glue that holds us together? Essentially we believe we have a communal covenantal commitment to each other flowing from calling, need, desire, history, and organizational and confessional unity. It must boil down to our mutual understanding and calling to be the church of God. The church is God's way of bringing the good news to the nations. It is his model. That is what holds us together.

We identified some of these basics to help us in our work. First, there is common *biblical and confessional unity*. We value Scripture as the infallible Word of God, revealing salvation through Jesus Christ accomplished by the covenant keeping Lord, who rules with love over all things forever. We continue with a high level of biblical preaching. We have a good sense of transcendent but also embodiment aspects of worship. Second, there is a *vision for ministry*. We value the church as God's new community and affirm the church's key role in God's mission to redeem the world. Third, there is a *kingdom perspective*. We are stewards of God's resources, called to redeem his world. Finally, we retain a strong *covenantal fiber*. There is participation in the denominational organization and the realization of benefits accruing from its infrastructure of providing leaders, identity, and accountability.

Working together, the churches have joined as a denomination with covenantal commitments to each other. It is important to understand that the denomination, the CRCNA, is the assembly of local churches—without the local churches coming together, there is no denomination. The authority given to the CRCNA is delegated authority—it has authority because the local church covenants to give some of its authority to the broader group. Certain aspects of the local church are not delegated to the CRCNA, such as administration of sacraments or discipline of members, because the CRCNA has the authority to deal only with those matters which concern its churches in common. Certain activities that most likely lend themselves to be done better together are, either in whole or in part, delegated to the denomination.

The CRCNA agencies, educational institutions, ministries, denominational leadership, and Board of Trustees, along with various boards in governance roles, carry out the tasks defined by and assigned to the denomination by the collective body of local churches. Some of these tasks are administrative in nature, but many relate to the missional vision of the church. The local church covenants to participate in this broader assembly and to participate and support the work of the denomination. It also covenants to be bound by

the decisions of the broader group. The covenant does not make room for a church to pick and choose what it wants to support or abide by and ignore what it does not want to support or abide by. Therefore, upon acceptance of the covenant, each congregation as a participant in the covenant is assumed to make a conscious, serious decision to "walk the walk and talk the talk." To be successful, each local church must trust the covenantal arrangement—without trust, or if the covenantal commitment is not maintained, the expected and desired beneficial outcome will fail.

From this background, it is an easy transition to better understand the Vision Statement of the CRCNA: "The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide." In addition to covenanting to do ministry together, the "diverse family" comes together to encourage one another around confession, basic beliefs, shared values, growth, and inspiration. It celebrates diversity—it is a beautiful gathering of "same hearts, different faces." It recognizes that not every church or local gathering has all the gifts to carry out the diversity of work we are called to do. It provides a vehicle for professional and confessional accountability and a place for the local church to gain capacity—each church can become bigger than itself.

VI. History of ministry shares and the work of the agencies

A. Ministry shares

The ministry-share system provides a way for each individual member and each local church to participate in the transformational ministry of the CRCNA on a worldwide basis by providing the financial base that facilitates this ministry. All the agencies of the CRCNA, except CRWRC, participate in funds received through this system. While part of the ministry-share funds provide for necessary denominational administration and governance activities such as synod, nearly 90 percent of the funds are used for ministry carried out by the agencies, educational institutions, and specialized ministries.

Ministry share is based on a covenantal understanding by members, churches, and ministries of the role of the whole church in performing ministry activities. There is also the need to provide for ecclesiastical aspects of the CRCNA. Accordingly, once the complex process of developing the ministries plan is completed, the members and churches participate by providing funds to carry out the plan. Because of the understanding of mutual goals for ministry and mutual relationships of all stakeholders, ministry shares have not incurred the large costs normally associated with raising funds for ministry.

Each year the CRC collaboratively establishes and approves a plan for denominational ministry and requests ministry-share funds to provide a funding base for that ministry. The amount requested of each church is based on the number of active adult professing members in the church. A healthy collaborative process ensures the members and churches that funds will be used in the best way that can be determined to address current needs and opportunities.

Appendix B-1 illustrates ministry-share dollars received from 1992 through 2007 (the last full year for which data is available) as well as the per-member ministry-share rate for the particular year. It is evident by the graph

that, during this sixteen-year period, the total dollars collected through the system has remained fairly steady while the per-member rate has increased at approximately the rate of inflation.

Appendix B-2 illustrates the same 1992 through 2007 time period; however, inflation adjusts the dollars to 1992 levels. On an inflation-adjusted basis, the dollars collected have decreased over the years while the per-member rate has remained fairly constant.

It is important to note that these funds provide only part of the resources needed to carry out these ministries. There is a high dependency on above-ministry-share contributions for full funding of ministry programs. The additional funds come primarily from CRC members and churches, but other sources such as foundations and non-CRC members also contribute to the ministries.

B. The past results of ministry together: A journey of gratitude

A biblically based view of the church demands that it be missional. As we as a denomination have matured, God has vested within the CRC a stewardship responsibility to address amazing opportunity, ministry, growth, and blessing.

God has worked to unfold amazing things for the CRC accent of the whole body of Christ, and we believe he will continue to do so. But it can be easy for us to lose perspective. However, we need not be fearful of change or paralyzed by it, and we need not anticipate limits to what God will do. We need to view ministry opportunity from an attitude of abundance rather than an attitude of fear or scarcity.

Members of the CRC have been busy organization builders. The agencies, as their ministries have matured, have allowed each member to participate at home and on a worldwide scale in response to our calling as believers to bring the gospel and the love of Jesus to all nations. Many churches have been planted and built. Educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and other related colleges have provided excellence in educational opportunity and solid theological training. Members of the CRC have been caring in many selfless ways; they have been a very giving body both financially and of themselves. The impact of our relatively small denomination has been significant. We have contributed to the greater evangelical community and have developed strong ecumenical relationships through willingness to work collaboratively. We have begun to enjoy the beauty of diversity while retaining a valuable identity and denominational cohesion. The integrity of the pastorate and church remains solid as does our commitment to being Reformed Christians called to serve God in every area of life.

The communal covenantal commitment of prayer, use of gifts, and financial support have been part of creating an essential infrastructure of education, leadership development, confessional unity and discipline, mission outreach, and diaconal love that has built both the local and corporate ministries of the CRC. The CRC community, by the grace of God, has been very privileged to have become a steward of these things. The Christian Reformed Church has a lot to offer. We have opportunity to build on this rich past, and we owe it to our God, our predecessors, the body of believers, and future generations to do it well.

To quote Dr. Richard Mouw once more, "Be willing to follow the Lamb into the future with all of its unknowns, and with all the changes that need to be made, but do so with the awareness of what the Lamb has taught us in the past."

VII. Clarifying the vision

We have observed God's blessing on the work of the CRC in the past, and expect to be able to do so in the future. The clear calling and need to do this transforming ministry work must be the focus of our discussion when we speak of ministry shares. The resources provided by ministry shares, accompanied by the prayers and participation of the members of the CRC, are important elements that in God's strength enable this work to be done.

The plans being laid by the denomination and the agencies are bold and well defined. The vision of healthy congregations and ministries expressing the good news that transforms lives around the world is truly being implemented.

The denomination is working hard to be a catalyst for effective community ministry by local congregations through relationship building and growth of missional health. The denomination is encouraging a renewed culture of diverse leadership in order that the church may be more fruitful in discipleship, faith formation, and focus on mission.

Our missional work together is clearly a part of the worldwide church building God's kingdom. Church planting, development of new worshiping communities, and bringing the Word to diverse groups of people are all things we must and can do. Collaborative relief, community development, and justice work results in community empowerment and transformation. Strategic use of technology and media results in literally millions of contacts and responses to the gospel each year.

The call to ministry and implementation of the CRC ministries plan must be the discussion we have regarding our communal covenantal commitment to each other—and this includes ministry shares. If this is not how ministry shares are understood or if this is not the discussion, a great disservice will be done to the kingdom building role of the CRC and its membership.

VIII. Final observations and conclusions

A. Our work as churches and the work of churches coming together as the CRCNA flows out of our response to God's call in the Great Commission. Christ-centered spirituality results in stewardship of all of our gifts and in providing resources to enable the continued building of the kingdom of God.

B. With gratitude to God, we believe that the CRC in God's strength has contributed substantially to building the kingdom. With the gifts and resources we know are present, the work of the CRC is able to continue to be very strong both at the congregational level and at the denominational level.

C. The local church is the heart of ministry. The denomination recognizes this and makes a priority of strengthening the local church. The local church is struggling to define appropriate allocation and prioritization of resources between its local ministry, care and feeding of its members, Christian education, and its covenantal responsibilities to the denomination.

D. The process of all the churches together providing a financial base for ministry as we are led by the Spirit is consistent with carrying out our task as part of the church of God. The process provides an opportunity for each member to participate in these ministry activities, no matter how great or small one's resources might be. The blessings on ministry activities enabled by this general process indicate that the process is too important and effective to set aside, in the absence of an equally effective alternative plan to contribute to the task of the Great Commission.

E. The amount of ministry shares requested per member is reasonable in relation to the average giving amount per member. Ministry shares requested in 2007 was about $300—less than a dollar per day. On an inflation-adjusted basis, the per-member request is no higher today than it was 15 years ago.

F. Members of the CRC realize the calling we have and therefore demonstrate a deep desire to participate in effective ministry. Many of the churches, along with the agencies, have been growing the capacity to provide ministry and ministry opportunities. Both the churches and the agencies are worthy of resources to fulfill their calling. Both the churches and the agencies have been forming extensive partnerships within and outside of the CRC to accomplish ministry.

G. There is substantial diversity of financial and ministry capacity among the churches. It is not reasonable to expect churches to participate in doing ministry together in equal proportion. Nevertheless, it seems that some participation by all churches should be encouraged.

H. Capacity to participate to a greater or lesser extent in ministry shares may not necessarily be a function of traditional member count. However, membership data is the only information the denomination has that is somewhat reliable, and that data is the only base used to determine ministry-share participation requests (other than geographic enrollment differences in determining support for Calvin College). Currently there is no structure in place for the denomination to know and evaluate the financial wherewithal of its member churches.

I. There is limited understanding by CRC members of the work, scope, and impact of their denominational ministries. Therefore, engagement of the membership as a whole to participate and champion this work is not fully realized. This situation limits the integration of the goals, opportunity, and work of the agencies into the work and ministry plan of the local church.

J. Except for some limited classis oversight, adequate responsibility is not given to any one position or office to champion the ministry-share program. No system of follow up or support for those churches not fully participating in the system is provided. Although one of the hallmarks of the system has been an avoidance of significant costs to raise significant funds, lack of investment in engaging the members and congregations in the system may now be resulting in a rapid decline in support.

K. Adjustments to the ministry-share system are in place to allow for church size (Synod 1987), inactive members (Synod 1998), and special circumstances (Synods 1986 and 2006).

L. The church and society are constantly changing. The concept of communal commitment through individual sacrifice does not coincide with the prevailing attitudes of society today. Self gratification, however, is highly valued. The church has not totally avoided these societal norms. Proposing contrary concepts to these, even if the concepts are biblically based, is very difficult. These changes have not changed the calling of the church, however.

M. If congregations shift financial priorities away from denominational ministries as programming and costs grow, the agencies and educational institutions that benefit from ministry shares will either have to reduce programs or increase their funding from alternate sources. Denominational leadership will need to provide direction if resources need to be reallocated among ministry-share recipients and the priority of strengthening local congregations. This may be especially difficult given the long-term nature of certain ministry programs.

N. As emphasized by the Denominational Ministries Plan, the heart of the local church must be to maintain strong local ministry. This is what the local church does best and is called to do. However, each church also has a calling that supersedes its local geography. Local churches working together through a denomination are in a much better position to have the level of time, resources, and expertise required for healthy, effective, sustainable international development and ministry work as well as large-scale, strategic, home missions church planting efforts. It is possible but not likely for an adequate amount of this capacity to be found at the local church level in the CRC. Further, to leverage international mission activity, most work today is done in partnership with an existing denomination or organization. It is more appropriate for these relationships to be fostered at a denomination-to-denomination or denomination-to-organization level rather than a local-church-to-localized-mission arrangement. This is not stated to discourage involvement and does not cover all circumstances. In general, though, there is a better way to bring the Word to the nations than for each local church to take on this mission by itself.

O. The task force evaluated alternatives. We considered setting ministry-share amounts for the church as a percent of budget—a tithe, if you will. We also considered going back to the prior system of breaking out assessments and a ministry amount. We dismissed these and other options as either confusing rather than helping the issue, or creating an artificial priority for one type of contribution over another.

IX. Recommendations

A. That synod affirm the ministry-share system as an effective means of carrying out ministry together as members of the CRCNA.

Grounds:

1. Significant funds (over $26 million) are raised each year to carry out these ministries.
2. The ministry-share system provides a means for all members of the CRC to participate in extended ministry.

B. That synod request the executive director of the CRCNA, through the Office of Denominational Advancement, to encourage and educate the churches regarding participation in the ministry-share system and resulting ministry. This would include but not be limited to development of appropriate promotional materials, facilitation of communications with churches, and coordinating promotion of the ministry-share system with advancement teams of all the agencies and institutions.

Grounds:

1. The executive director and the director of finance and administration are accountable to synod and the Board of Trustees for monitoring and accounting for the ministry-share system. However, no one has been assigned the responsibility to actively and regularly promote the system.
2. Active promotion of the ministry-share system is necessary and desirable.
3. Currently there is no formal coordinated communication regarding the ministry-share system.

C. That synod designate initial funding, up to 1 percent of ministry-share receipts, to carry out the responsibilities of Recommendation B above.

Grounds:

1. Appropriate levels of funding are needed to enable the communication envisioned in Recommendation B.
2. An initial commitment of up to 1 percent of the total funding will not significantly affect the funding available to the institutions, agencies, and ministries of the CRCNA.

D. That synod affirm the current system of request for ministry shares based on membership, but that the definition of member for this purpose be revised to include only those active, adult, professing members and exclude only those members considered inactive as adopted by Synod 1998 (see A*cts of Synod 1998,* p. 410):

> *Inactive* members are those baptized or confessing members who are declared by the consistory to have a relationship to the congregation which has ceased for one year or who for one year have not made faithful use of the means of grace, especially the hearing of the Word and the Lord's Supper, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g., military service, residence in a nursing home) that make such faithful use impossible.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 1998*, p. 215)

Grounds:

1. This system would provide simplification of the calculation of recommended ministry-share amounts.
2. This would empower local congregations.

E. That synod encourage local churches to use the recommended contribution amount as determined by the ministry-share system as a starting point as it evaluates its ability to participate. A church with extraordinary financial capacity may discern to contribute more than the recommended amount. Likewise, a church with undue financial circumstances or hardship may discern the need to contribute less than the recommended amount.

Grounds:
1. This recognizes that God has financially blessed each church differently.
2. As is the current practice, the local church is best suited to determine their participation in the ministry-share system.
3. Membership as the sole base of determining the level of participation may not be the only consideration. Reliance on membership count has caused some issues among the churches.
4. A key ingredient in the health of the local church is participation in the ministry facilitated through the larger church body.

F. That synod request that churches complete a ministry share participation form annually to assist in evaluation of the ministry-share system. Information derived from the form will be shared with the local classis.

Grounds:
1. This information will be useful in the future administration of the ministry-share system.
2. The form would ask for the reason(s) for a congregation's level of participation in the ministry-share system.

G. That synod request that the executive director develop a plan for new church plants and emerging churches to more actively participate in the ministry-share program.

Grounds:
1. Opportunity is created for formalized participation in global ministry.
2. We are all part of a covenantal commitment community.
3. Currently no formal request is made of emerging churches to participate in the ministry-share system.

H. That synod refer the pension funding issues included in the mandate to this task force to the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee. Pension issues for ministers of the Word are a communal covenantal commitment issue.

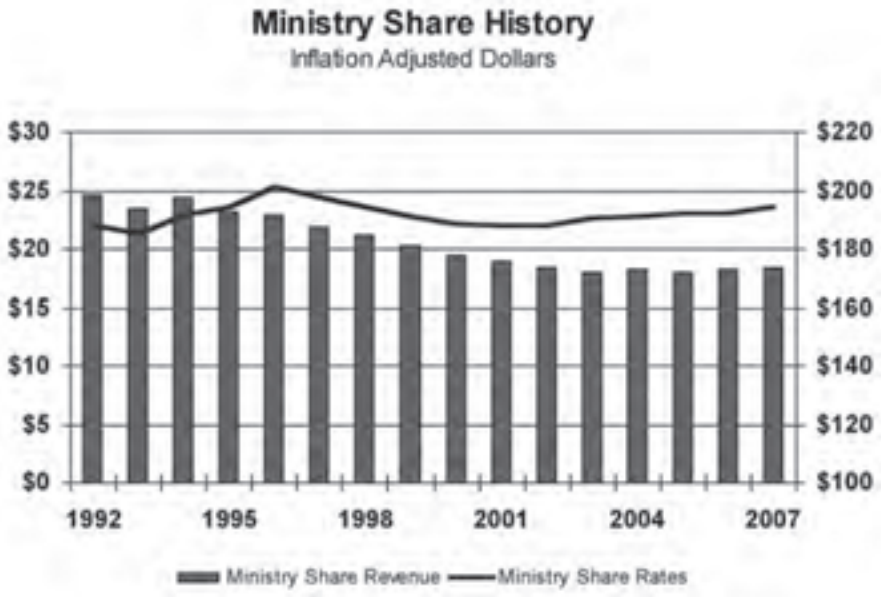
Grounds:
1. Synod has directed that the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee is responsible for all ministers' pension matters.

2. Defined benefit plans carry longer-term financial consequences than other ministry-share issues.

Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force
Rhonda Berg
Lloyd Bierma
John H. Bolt, ex officio
Hessel Kielstra
Patricia Storteboom
Paul Wassink, reporter
Stanley Workman, chair

Appendix B-1
Ministry Share History: Actual Dollars Received

Appendix B-2
Ministry Share History: Inflation Adjusted Dollars



Appendix C
The Leadership Exchange—An Operational Plan: A Catalyst for Leadership Exellence

I. Introduction

The Leadership Institute founding document of 2007 (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, pp. 78-96) provides context, justification, and principles for the organization. This operational plan is intended to sharpen the organization's focus and clarify its direction.

II. Review

The mission of the new institute—which we now intend to call The Leadership Exchange—as stated in the founding document is "to promote healthy leadership formation that embodies and deepens Christian values and practices in church and society."

A review of the 2007 founding document indicates a desire to make an impact on the *culture of leadership* within the CRC, as evident in the following analysis of the components of the mission statement:

- 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.

As the Leadership Exchange governing board has met and reflected upon this mission, it has become evident that in order to be faithful to this mission, we must find an initial focus and strategy to implement this effort. Thus, our first step is to review this effort's intended audience as well as the rationale that both clarifies and focuses its work.

III. Audience

We must be clear whom this effort intends to assist, drawing attention to the denomination, the organizations, and the individuals we hope to serve.

First, we note that the 2007 founding document provides a wonderful balance of intending this effort to enrich the CRC while not limiting its work to the CRC. Take particular note of the following excerpt:

> 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.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 83)

Thus, as we seek to implement what others have envisioned and endorsed, we take note both of the special relationship and influence this effort will have on the CRC and the desire to make an impact beyond the CRC. As such, much of what we propose begins with the CRC as the immediate focus, but our fervent hope is that the reach will go well beyond this denomination.

Second, we believe, in our implementation we should influence both churches (congregations) and other organizations. As indicated in the 2007 report, this effort "is designed to be a catalyst for . . . developing and nurturing vital communal practices in congregations, organizations, and other entities" (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 85).

Third, given these assumptions, we believe this effort should be open to those who serve in the church as leaders, whether clergy or laity, paid or volunteer. Moreover, as indicated above, this effort extends to other

organizations and, thus, to those occupying various leadership roles found in those entities. For "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" (p. 85). Most important, within this inclusive model, we believe the synergies we hope to attain are significant, captured by the following statement from the 2007 founding document:

> 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.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 83)

IV. Rationale

The following paragraph from the 2007 report provides a quick overview of the need, particularly as it relates to ministries:

> 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.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 81)

It is important to understand that the focus of the 2007 report is on the *culture of leadership*, whether focusing on churches, organizations, or other entities:

> 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.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 81)

We recognize that there are many leadership centers for church and society—some connected to institutions of higher learning; others that are free-standing or expressions of other organizational structures. We also recognize that various methodologies are employed to provide leaders and organizations direction and advice. Sometimes methodology is based on empirical findings, taking into account factors seemingly present in those who exhibit skillful leadership. Other times, approaches are derived from the perspectives of a leader, sharing his or her insight and analysis with others. But whatever the basis or methodology, there is no shortage of information about leadership.

In discussing available resources within the Christian Reformed Church and beyond, the 2007 report makes two statements:

> The new Institute is not primarily designed to develop a permanent leadership development program alongside each of these [existing CRC efforts]. 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. . . .

> 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.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 84)

The 2007 report makes clear the need, focus, and collaborative nature of this effort. However, the challenge is to appropriately connect the effort to those it intends to serve. To address this challenge, we offer these assumptions.

V. Assumptions

A. Think locally

Gone are the days when individuals and churches think hierarchically, seeking all answers by calling Grand Rapids. While there are years of experience and hundreds of reports and documents at denominational headquarters and at Calvin Theological Seminary, it is more typical for churches across the continent to think about internal and nearby resources. A subtheme is that in this era, individuals—particularly those in their 20s and 30s—don't want someone else to do their thinking for them. The challenge, of course, is to make sure the wisdom of the ages is not ignored. Of course, this is not true just for churches; it applies to organizations of all types.

B. Engage relationally

In this age of narratives and story, the book club is just as important as the book. In other words, ideas—whether conveyed at a seminar, via a webpage, or in print—come to be owned, modified, or rejected by means of discussion with others, not by the endorsement of some outside authority. The challenge is to make sure this process, which can slide into narcissism, involves rigor and critical analysis.

C. Address diversity

We have benefited from understanding the various ways individuals think and come to know information. While we do not debate the source of all truth, we who seek truth know that intelligence is not a single factor but represents a range of styles, that there are ways of knowing that differ by gender, and that culture fundamentally and significantly shapes how we look at the world. As a result, when an individual, church, or other organization faces a challenge or addresses a problem, a number of diverse solutions should be considered. For some, the process of resolution or change requires consultation with others who have traveled the same road. For others, written manuals and procedures suffice. For still others, experts are desired. The challenge we face in this world of diverse peoples and approaches is to appropriately honor and understand diversity without reducing the solution to "do your own thing."

VI. Guiding paradigm: Exchange

Given these assumptions, we believe a certain dynamic ought to characterize our initial efforts of implementation. We envision a cycle of activity, intentionally beginning with *conversation* at certain times for specific reasons and ultimately reflecting a cycle reflecting the *exchange* of understanding and practice.

Whether focused at the national level or local level, intentional conversation should take the form of bringing leaders from various churches, organizations, and professions together in focused exchange concerning a topic of leadership and organization function. Importantly, a key guest speaker or speakers would both lead and participate. During these focused and subsequent conversations, everyone would explore theological foundations, best-practices and paradigms, and specific initiatives and resources—all for the purpose of promoting learning, discerning strategic leadership challenges and opportunities, and developing (already available/newly created) resources.

Further, we believe that key features will be necessary for success, whether these conversations occur in a retreat-like experience or virtually via technology. First, dedicated time is needed for such conversations to occur. Sometimes, a retreat-like experience will be needed in order for participants to become vulnerable and open to change; yet, for others, the opportunity to sit undistracted before one's computer will allow exchanges to occur across the continent and beyond. The goal, via either method, will be for the conversation and exchange to penetrate to the inner life of those engaged in leadership.

Second, the initiatives and resources step must be highlighted. It is not enough to reflect and dig deep; participants must be able to turn from the conversation toward their local settings with the tools and resources that will begin to renew and continue to form their culture of leadership.

Third, specific opportunities should be wedded to context. For example, when considering churches and the culture of leadership, the exchange should focus on the context of congregational practice, asking questions such as how, exactly, work gets done in the congregation (or, depending on the context, in an organization or profession). As such, these opportunities should include more than one leader from a given church, organization, or profession. This could mean, for example, paired participants enrolling in a specific event: a younger and older leader together; a pastor and a council member; a non-profit director and board chairperson, and the like.

Finally, to successfully launch this paradigm or dynamic, we will need an able leader. While the actual job description is found in the Addendum, it is important to describe the qualities needed for the leader of this effort.

- The leader should be well acquainted with the world of reflection and the world of action. In other words, the leader should be, at minimum, acquainted with the theories and writings that focus on leadership and ideally a contributor to this world of thought and reflection as a scholar-practitioner. Yet the leader should be oriented to the day-to-day practice of leadership by means of extensive personal leadership experiences. In these ways, the leader will readily access the tools and resources needed to guide the exchange.
- The leader should be skillful in gathering people together, arranging experiences and activities that promote the kind of exchange envisioned here. As such, needed characteristics include descriptors such as one who can encourage and create a safe and encouraging place for conversation; is intellectually nimble, sifting among ideas, helping to propel valid and worthy ideas forward; and is relationally oriented, seeing and leading fellow leaders as peers and colleagues.

– The leader should utilize existing resources and connections. Individuals within various CRC agencies, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and CRC-related colleges should be of great assistance to this effort, serving as resources as well as foci for activities of this effort. When regional activities can connect to regional agencies or institutions, the leader's efforts will be better contextualized and provide greater probability of continuity.
– The leader should value his or her faith in a way that connects him or her to others leaders of faith, to the Word, and to Christ the Lord and Savior. Rather than viewing this position as a CRC agency director, this leader should embrace a Reformed world and life view in a way that allows creation of a theological platform—a platform that welcomes a range of believers from various cultures and ecclesiastical communions, allowing for thorough examination of contemporary leadership challenges and approaches nested in extensive biblical and theological exploration.

VII. Strategies and examples

The 2007 founding document provides a review of strategies for accomplishing the goals of this effort. While omitting the grant-making strategy (it had envisioned a different model for initial funding that would have made grant-making possible), the governing board takes special note of these emphases: providing educational programs and training on a healthy culture of leadership, identifying and disseminating leadership resources, and formation of leadership through peer-learning, mentoring, coaching, and networking. And, of course, the governing board suggests these strategies can all be included in our notion of exchange.

Examples are often both helpful and limiting. Therefore, it is important to note that the following examples simply seek to illustrate the kinds of activity we are proposing.

– Imagine a gathering of 30 leaders from a given region of North America. The participants represent 15 churches or organizations, and each pair typically includes a staff leader (e.g., pastor) and another leader drawn from the church or organization (chair of council and/or board). Perhaps the gathering has been arranged as a follow-up day after a major leadership conference led by Patrick Lencioni, and he has agreed to speak to the group for this follow-up. Already having been heard as part of the formal conference, Mr. Lencioni (author of such books as *The Five Temptations of a CEO*, 1998; *Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive*, 2000; *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 2002) agrees to spend the morning with the group, answering their questions and exploring their challenges. After Mr. Lencioni departs at lunch, the group is led by the Leadership Exchange director, who helps the group derive principles and lessons learned from the conference and the time spent directly with Mr. Lencioni, comparing and contrasting his ideas with those of other theorists and practitioners, while exploring them biblically and theologically. Then, as the retreat wraps up the following morning, the director shuttles among the pairs, and each pair commits to their own leadership implementation plan. In the ensuing three months, the director remains in communication (via email, phone, and personal visits) with each pair, coaching and

encouraging them in their plan. Then, six months after the gathering, the group re-assembles, either virtually (e.g., via video conferencing) or in person. From the lessons learned together, the Leadership Exchange director takes the best learning, evolving it into material for dissemination (web presentation, case study, best practices newsletter, publication, DVD production, and so forth) via Faith Alive Christian Resources or other means—all methods that allow access both to those involved in a specific exchange as well as a host of others.

– Imagine leaders linked virtually across North America and beyond—via something like a "faithful leaders facebook." In this way, leaders from churches and other organizations can network together, learning from each other—whether as a result of a gathering as described above, or because of the wonderful ways social networking vehicles such as Facebook bring people together. So while this example does not impose the carefully structured and sequenced type of *exchange* as described above, it is valuable in a different way—it provides exchange "on the fly" without limiting the number of participants or artificially putting start and stop times to the effort. But the web dimension need not be limited to the social networking function. For instance, both this example and the one above demand a more traditional web function that provides information, links, and materials for purchase. Whether as a result of a *real* or a *virtual* exchange, the web provides resources needed to keep the culture of leadership moving in a positive direction for those participating. Also, the web provides additional opportunities for connecting via webinars and the like.

VIII. Initial objectives and outcomes

Based on the preceding mission, rationale, assumptions, and modeling, the governing board believes the following first-year (Jan. to Dec. 2009) objectives are appropriate:

Spring 2009—complete a search for a director, so that he/she would begin by Summer 2009.

January to March 2009

– Identify three regions and agendas for late Summer and Fall 2009 exchange activities.
– Become familiar with the various leadership efforts within the denomination's agencies, educational institutions, and related colleges and organizations.
– Search for and hire a web manager/moderator.

March to June 2009

– Registration for each exchange, utilizing both public and networking means.
– Initial web networking pilots unveiled.

July to October 2009

– Each regional activity occurs (as well as planning for the subsequent year).
– Resources via web access launched.

October to December 2009
- Individual follow-up from exchanges.
- Web network effort fully and formally launched.

2010 and later
- New implementation and possible reassembly for each exchange group in Spring 2010; evaluation, dissemination by the end of 2010 (and continue next round).
- Initial evaluation of both web resource and web networking functions; improve and continue.

In addition, our goal would be to secure financial commitments for the three-year budget during October 2008 to June 2009.

IX. Outcomes and impact

Using this cycle of activities, we believe the following could be achieved in the first three years:

- Fifteen gatherings (three in year one; six each subsequent year), resulting in a direct impact on 450 leaders and an ongoing impact on 225 churches, organizations, and professions.
- 225 plans, resulting in 5 best-practice reports or articles, 15 published case studies, and one curricular product (workshop guidelines, DVD, and so forth).
- A web presence, with hits coming from around the world and from all types of leaders. By the last quarter of the first year, we would anticipate a minimum of 5,000 hits per month.
- A web networking site pulling hundreds of leaders of all types and from all places into its exchanges. By the last quarter of the first year, we anticipate 1,000 virtual members.

X. Resources

We project the following expenses for the first three years:

Category	First year	Three-year total
Director salary and benefits	126,000	390,000
Assist. director: Communication (marketing and web) salary and benefits	69,000	210,000
Office assistance	30,000	93,000
Start-up supplies/equipment	10,000	10,000
Resource library	5,000	15,000
Exchange event		
Participant travel (n = 30 @ 200)	18,000	90,000
Director travel (400 x 30)	12,000	36,000
Guest travel/stipend (4,000 each)	12,000	36,000
Lodging, food (6,300 each event)	18,900	94,500
Supplies (900 each event)	2,700	13,500
Miscellaneous	4,000	12,000
Total	$307,600	$1,000,000

We also project revenue, particularly with fees associated with the exchanges that occur in a retreat-like setting. We suggest these fees would relate to the resource level of each sending church, organization, or professions. Moreover, while believing that a personal contribution/commitment

strengthens the value of an event/exchange, it will have minimal impact on the overall cost of the Leadership Exchange.

Addendum
Leadership Exchange Director Job Description

Title: Director of the Leadership Exchange

Reports to: Executive Director of the CRCNA

Position summary: The director is responsible to the Leadership Exchange governing board for implementing the vision and mission of the Leadership Exchange.

Responsibilities:

1. Assume administrative responsibility for all aspects of the unit, including any staff.
2. Develop an annual work plan and budget in consultation with those familiar with leadership needs and opportunities across North America and for recommendation to the governing board.
3. Implement efforts and activities, providing appropriate follow-up, dissemination, and evaluation, making annual review reports to the governing board.
4. Assist appropriate denominational officers with fundraising needs for this effort.

Qualifications:

1. Commitment to Christ, ordinarily demonstrated by church membership in a Reformed body of believers.
2. Commitment to the mission and values of this effort.
3. Evidence of successful leadership in an organization and/or congregation.
4. Evidence of a knowledge base and skill set appropriate for leadership development, including integration of leadership theory with biblical-theological perspectives.
5. Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with leadership theoreticians and practitioners, to lead and teach others, and to develop teaching/curricular materials for instruction and dissemination.
6. Possession of a related master's-level degree (minimum qualification); additional graduate education is desirable.

Appendix D
Structure Report to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

I. Background

Synod 2004 affirmed the BOT decision to adopt as its priority for the next five to ten years the creating and sustaining of healthy local congregations in North America. The BOT identified five grounds for adopting the priority:

> 1. Many local congregations are struggling to build and maintain strong local ministries within their own ministry communities.
> 2. The local congregations form the foundation that supports joint denominational ministries. If the health of these local churches is not maintained, the ability to continue joint ministries could be greatly impaired.
> 3. Strong healthy local congregations are necessary to fulfill the great commission in the present North American context.
> 4. The future viability of the CRCNA depends on maintaining a collaborative relationship between local congregations and the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA.
> 5. This priority is strongly consistent with the strategic priorities of the Denominational Ministries Plan.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 49)

Since the 2004 decision the senior leadership of the denomination has undergone significant change in both personnel and structure. The previous model of two senior leaders (the general secretary and the executive director of ministries) has been replaced with a single leader model, the executive director (ED). While the denomination was hopeful that this transition would happen smoothly and quickly, such was not the case. The arrival of the newly appointed director of denominational ministries (DDM) in September 2007 completed the delayed transition to the new leadership structure. While this delay did not lessen the passion and focus on the priority, it did impede the ability of the organization to fully evaluate the internal structures necessary to bring the priority into sharp focus.

Two years after adopting the healthy church priority, Synod 2006 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.
>
> *Grounds:*
> a. This would communicate strongly the BOT's desire to see that our structure enhances rather than impedes effective ministry.
> b. The administration is in the best position to determine how to design such a plan.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 721)

Since that time, the administration has been reviewing the present structure to determine what adjustments may be necessary to sharpen the focus on creating and sustaining healthy congregations. In addition to internal reviews, Dr. Craig Van Gelder was engaged as a consultant to lead a process of evaluation and to develop recommendations. Dr. Van Gelder's work included (1) conducting extensive interviews with key stakeholders, (2) working with a planning team to develop possible scenarios for structuring the implementation of the denominational priority, and (3) facilitating a two-day process with agency board officers and senior staff to review the possible

scenarios and (4) to offer the ED counsel and advice regarding the consultant's findings.

The above-mentioned reviews and processes form the background for the following observations and recommendations.

II. Observations—structure vs. culture

The Christian Reformed Church has always placed high value on good order and effective structures. In the Church Order of the CRCNA, there is biblical/theological reference to the importance of order in the ministry of the church and of matching that order with the cultural context in which we live and operate as a church. When considering what kind of order of ministry fits well, both structure and culture are important factors.

Structure is easily identifiable and can be altered with relative ease, however organizational culture is much more difficult to identify and define. It often takes significant time and energy to bring about deep cultural change. The challenge that faces the CRCNA today is that the broader culture is undergoing significant changes and the church is struggling to maintain the centrality of the gospel message while delivering the good news in ways that are relevant and meaningful to both the North American culture and the rapidly changing world culture.

While this report focuses on specific structural issues, as mandated by synod, it is not primarily about organizational structure. The changes being recommended are intended to bring about cultural shifts that will lead the church well into the next decade. As outlined in the BOT Priorities Report of February 2005 (on the CRCNA website: www.crcna.org), the agencies of the church were originally established to "do" ministry on behalf of the churches. While such a model served the church very well in the second half of the 20th century, church culture today is one of engagement and participation in ministry.

No longer will churches accept agencies and institutions that simply receive donations and produce ministries—regardless of how effective those ministries may be. The churches and their individual members are longing to actively engage in personal and meaningful ways. Where the leadership of the CRCNA has failed to create such a culture of engagement, it has found that its churches and membership have sought such engagement elsewhere. This pattern of seeking engagement in ministry beyond the denomination can be expected to increase unless cultural shifts take place . . . soon.

Historically, the CRC has been blessed with high levels of loyalty and commitment among its members. However, the most recent denominational survey confirms that even as the church membership continues to age, the level of loyalty continues to decline. Today's church members are looking for authentic church leaders who are more interested in engaging them in questions than providing them with answers. This can effectively happen only when ministry changes are driven from the grassroots. No longer can denominational leadership provide programs, solutions, and expertise alone. It must now mix its expertise with that of those engaged in local ministry on a daily basis. Such changes will be difficult to achieve, but such engagement will energize and empower local ministries across the denomination.

Therefore, it is imperative that organizational adjustments be made that will allow for better and more direct engagement with and among churches.

Such engagement is necessary to create and sustain both healthy congregations and a healthy denomination.

III. The Center for Congregations

The key piece in adjusting the structure of the CRC will be the establishment of a Center for Congregations. This center will serve as the primary collaboration point between the local congregations and the denominational structures and agencies. This office will be aggressively proactive in engaging and connecting congregations and in using their input, direction, and partnership.

The center will intentionally be nimble and responsive. It will need freedom to respond quickly and effectively to genuine needs of local churches. At times churches are frustrated by the inability of the denominational structures to respond quickly and decisively. The traditional, careful, deliberative processes that normally serve the church well can also create frustration among churches looking for immediate engagement. The center will strike a balance between these two in order to serve both the short- and long-term needs of local churches as well as the broader denomination.

Critical to the success of this office will be its relationship to Christian Reformed Home Missions. In 2005 the BOT approved a pilot program of congregational advocates. For a number of logistical reasons, this program has not yet been implemented. In part, the delay resulted from a heightened awareness of the role of the Home Missions regional teams (HMRTs). Establishing a new team of congregational advocates without significant interaction with the HMRTs would likely have created, at a minimum, the appearance of redundancy and denominational inefficiency.

With the recent appointment of an interim director of Home Missions, who has provided exemplary leadership in an HMRT, we have an opportunity to find ways in which we can integrate the Center for Congregations with already established and well-connected regional teams. Such integration can only build and enhance the connection to local congregations and regions. It is important for these regional teams to function on behalf of the denomination as a whole. Preliminary conversations with regional team leaders have confirmed a desire to work collaboratively in our efforts to engage congregations across North America. In addition, the officers of the board of Home Missions have indicated a willingness to increase collaboration to achieve our shared priority of creating and sustaining healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

In order to effectively serve as a networking and information resource for local congregations, the center will also encourage engagement between local congregations and the specialized ministries of the denomination by giving supervision and support to the directors and/or leaders of

- Abuse Prevention
- Classical Renewal Ministry Team
- Disability Concerns
- Pastor-Church Relations
- Race Relations
- Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action
- Sustaining Congregational Excellence
- Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

In addition, the center will also serve as the connection point for discipleship, prayer, spiritual formation, youth engagement, small group ministries, and similar resources presently scattered throughout denominational offices, ministries, and agencies.

Staffing needs for such a center will include a director along with the necessary support staff that may be needed. This director will report to the DDM and serve alongside of agency directors as part of the senior denominational leadership.

IV. The Ministry Council (MC)

After careful study and review, Synod 2004 approved the merging of the executive director of ministries and the general secretary responsibilities into the office of the executive director. While this change has generally been helpful, it has also presented cultural challenges within the system. A good example is the role of the Ministry Council (MC). The MC historically served to assist the executive director of ministries in his work. It consisted primarily of staff members who reported directly to the executive director of ministries and who served as senior advisers. With the establishment of the director of denominational ministries (DDM) position, these same staff members now report to the DDM but continue to serve as direct advisers to the executive director.

Under the revised structure, persons serving on the MC will serve as the primary advisers to the DDM. The DDM will serve as convener and chair of MC. MC itself will be downsized and will include the six agency directors, the director of the Center for Congregations, and the director of ministry planning. Others may be appointed at the discretion of the DDM to serve as advisers to MC. MC will take responsibility for all matters related to agencies and specialized ministries and will serve as the primary strategic planning arm of the CRCNA in matters related to its ministries.

With the refocus of MC, an additional group of advisers to the ED will be established. This Executive Director Advisory Team will include the director of denominational ministries, the director of finance and administration, the director of synodical services, the director of ministry planning, the director of denominational advancement, and the director of Canadian ministries. These senior leaders represent the ministries, administration, governance, planning, advancement, and Canadian voices of the church, giving a wide perspective on internal denominational matters.

Interaction with and involvement of representatives of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary will be addressed in the future.

V. Related matters for future discernment

A. Revised position descriptions of key denominational leadership

1. The director of denominational ministries (DDM)

   It is anticipated that the role and job description of the DDM will need some revision as we implement this structural realignment. A revised position description will be worked out as the process proceeds and involved participants have an opportunity to offer counsel and advice for Board approval.

2. The director of Canadian ministries (DCM)

The present title of the position of director of Canadian ministries (DCM) has unfortunately created misunderstanding and lack of clarity among our membership on both sides of the Canadian and U.S. border. Over the past three years, it has become increasingly clear that the DCM actually functions as a deputy to the executive director, with particular focus on Canadian issues within the Canadian context. He represents the CRC church in ecumenical matters, is the contact with the Canadian government, and interacts with Christian Reformed classes and churches located within Canada. He has also served as the ED's designee on certain committees and task forces. His job description is presently being reviewed, and changes will be presented at a later date for Board approval.

B. Board structures

There has been some pressure during this process to consider significant changes in our overall board and governance structures. While it may be true that certain changes might enhance the work and ministries of the church, there has not yet been adequate study or engagement around these issues to provide helpful recommendations.

However, the need for greater communication and collaboration among the existing boards and advisory committees is important to the process of identifying ways in which integrated ministries can create and sustain healthy congregations to assure full engagement in transforming lives and communities. Historically, agency and institutional denominational boards have functioned quite independently in focusing on agency-specific mandates and directives with little or no direct communication or interaction between them.

At the present time, both the office of the ED and the executive committee of the BOT have been at work identifying and implementing certain changes to enhance communication and collaboration among the boards. Thus far these efforts have been well received, and further exchanges will be taking place.

VI. Conclusion

It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. This report does not attempt to map the entire journey. There is much to learn as we begin down the path together. The map cannot be created by only a few leaders, so we must include the broader church community in determining many of the details of the implementation process. Creating a new culture of congregational and denominational health will not be easy. It will require dialogue, interaction, and responsive leadership. It will be marked by triumphs and disappointments. Through it God will likely lead us into some surprising places. Pray for the Spirit's wisdom and direction as we begin.

VII. Recommendations

A. That the BOT approve the establishment of the Center for Congregations as outlined in this report.

B. That the BOT approve the restructure of the present Ministry Council (MC) as outlined in this report.

Grounds to Recommendations A and B:

1. These recommendations bring internal alignment to what were internal disconnects from the previous layering of a new ED/DDM structure on top of an internal executive director of ministries organizational design in the 2004 restructuring.
2. These recommendations address the issues identified in the consultant's initial summary report based on interviews with senior leadership and board presidents.
3. These recommendations draw on the counsel and advice offered by both the planning team and the two-day discernment meeting of the key stakeholders.
4. These recommendations increase the internal capacity of the denominational offices and agencies to strategically support the denominational priority in relation to the denomination's vision—creating and sustaining healthy local congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

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

I. Introduction

The mandate of the Office of Abuse Prevention is to provide resources, conduct training, develop policies and procedures, train Safe Church Teams, and consult when allegations of abuse arise. These activities revolve around two core goals: reduce the risk of abuse in the church setting and assist the church to respond justly and effectively when abuse has occurred.

II. Ministries of the Office of Abuse Prevention

A. Ministry that transforms lives and communities worldwide

In the life of a church member, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse can transform that life—for the worst. Combined with secrecy and resistance to civil intervention, abuse avoids detection, and a person becomes a shadow of what God intended for that child, teen, or adult. The Office of Abuse Prevention, together with the churches, has a big and important task of preventing abuse and restoring the wounded among us.

Through December 2008, Abuse Prevention helped 558 churches implement a child safety policy. With the fourth edition of *Preventing Child Abuse* (see below), churches and non-profit organizations can expand an existing policy or design one for the protection of youth.

Abuse Prevention has trained twenty Safe Church Teams. These teams conducted twenty-one advisory panels that gave victims a voice in their struggle with the aftermath of church-leader misconduct. Many teams have an advocate position to help victims. Teams with a support-person position and an educational ministry provide more local resources to victims, offenders, their families, and congregations.

The Office of Abuse Prevention creates and promotes abuse prevention resources for awareness and training. Examples of these resources are: *Preventing Child Abuse*, *Responding to Domestic Violence*, *Emotional Abuse:*

Everything You Say Makes a Difference, Safe Church Team and Advisory Panel brochures, and small-fee booklets on the topics of dating violence, internet safety, shaken baby syndrome, elderly abuse, and bullying.

The office provides Child Safety Policy training and other training opportunities for church members to grow in their understanding of the dynamics of abuse. In addition, Abuse Prevention consults daily with individuals on matters related to abuse prevention and responding to abuse.

B. Ministry with the local church

In addition to the services mentioned above, the Office of Abuse Prevention sponsored Abuse Awareness in September 2008. About thirty churches in the United States and Canada independently responded to the invitation to learn more about abuse. Through Faith Alive Christian Resources, free worship resources and small-fee booklets were available to churches to increase awareness of abuse. Ten of the twenty Safe Church Teams invited to participate in the event distributed over 56,000 bulletin inserts on child abuse and domestic violence.

This past year, several churches received training, and many churches received resources to design a child safety policy. At Bozeman CRC (Montana), sixty people from several faith communities filled the church's basement to learn more about abuse dynamics and prevention. In addition, based on the requests of several churches struggling to minister to convicted sexual offenders, Abuse Prevention developed the *Covenant of Conduct* that promotes ministry to the ex-offender while keeping the congregation safe. The eastern Michigan region of a small evangelical denomination requested this *Covenant of Conduct* for its use as well.

C. Collaborative efforts

In partnership with the Office of Abuse Prevention, Faith Alive Christian Resources published a new resource for teenagers. The book, *Questions from the Pickle Jar*, by Ron De Boer, explores healthy teen sexuality in a culture that is laden with mixed messages about sexuality. At year's end, Faith Alive Christian Resources was publishing the fourth edition of *Preventing Child Abuse*. This book, first offered in 1995, helps churches design an effective child safety policy to reduce the risk of abuse in church programs. The fourth edition contains many new features and resources and addresses the needs of non-profit organizations and churches.

Abuse Prevention sends out resources to many non-CRC congregations and church leaders. At Child Safety Training sessions, many attendees are non-CRC. The message from non-CRC communities is that we are fortunate to have services and resources that other denominations do not offer.

In the fall, Abuse Prevention spends a class period with seminarians in Pastoral Care at Calvin Theological Seminary. Informing seminarians of the dynamics of abuse prepares them for the likelihood that they will encounter these dynamics in ministry.

In October 2008, Abuse Prevention invited all the Safe Church Team chairpersons to the first gathering of its kind. Fourteen of the twenty teams sent a representative, offering the opportunity to meet and exchange stories. There was enthusiastic agreement to meet annually and look for "electronic" opportunities to do more collaboration. Participants committed to meet annually to share best practices and encourage one another.

Previously Abuse Prevention spent time with prospective missionaries to increase their awareness of abuse dynamics. After several years' hiatus, it is hoped that implementation of a similar training can again take place in 2009.

D. Stories to share

Stories are difficult to tell when the theme is abuse. The CRC has literally thousands of victims and perpetrators of abuse.

Some victims are elderly who struggle now or have struggled over a lifetime to make sense of the cruel impact of abusive behavior. Some victims are middle-aged who work toward a goal of healing and restoration—though many are not sure what that looks like. Still other victims are young and barely able to comprehend how people who profess to love them or care about them could betray them with hands, words, and sexual acts.

Most perpetrators, however, believe they are innocent and rationalize the harm they commit. A few admit struggling with shame and guilt; they would seek help but for the fear of consequences.

A tragic summary of many of their stories is that victims and perpetrators cannot accept the good news of God's redemptive grace in their life despite this being one of the underpinnings of Reformed theology.

The most successful stories are of victims who risked disclosing their story and then insisted that the church play a role in healing and restoration. They discovered a church that provided counseling funds; another that offered restitution; a church that made an apology and accepted blame for ignoring the wrong and neglecting a plea for pastoral care; a church that held a healing service and recorded the timeline of harm done and the personal cost to a leader's victims. In summary, the most successful stories come out of the church's willingness to step into the victim's pain and be part of the healing.

E. Development of future ministry

Diversification of resources is a priority. Safe Church Teams will be encouraged to develop the support-person position, the advocate position, and the educational ministry to create liberal access to local resources. Future ministry should address attitudes within the North American CRC culture that perpetuate the cycle of abuse within families and within ministry relationships.

III. Recruitment and training

Abuse Prevention will recruit active Safe Church Team members to become educators for churches in their respective classes. Local resources are cost effective, respond quickly to shifting needs, and create a useful liaison between the churches and the classical Safe Church Team.

Because many churches have developed a safe church committee for their local congregation, the Office of Abuse Prevention will develop a model to train committee members to carry out their tasks effectively.

The role of the advocate, designed to assist victims through the advisory panel process, will expand to assist victims who seek restitution from the offender or church, or who desire to enter a restorative justice process.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod endorse renaming the Office of Abuse Prevention to the Safe Church Ministry.

Grounds:
1. The name change clearly identifies the office's ministry (create safe churches and thus prevent abuse).
2. The name change connects with the current naming of classical Safe Church Teams and local safe church committees.

B. That synod approve the *advocate* position to facilitate restorative justice and equitable remedies for victims.

Grounds:
1. Restoration and remedy are important *next steps* for victims and offenders.
2. An advocate can assist those who might find the *next steps* overwhelming or intimidating.

C. That synod approve the development of *regional advisory panels*. The regions will be set up according to the regions established by the BOT (currently twelve regions in the United States and Canada).

Grounds:
1. Because some classes have not formed a Safe Church Team, a regional system allows any qualified person to access an advisory panel.
2. Because some classical teams are too small to offer an advisory panel, a regional system can form a fully trained panel when called upon.
3. Regional advisory panels create opportunities for training and networking which enhance the effectiveness of the advisory panel process and the Classical Safe Church Teams.
4. The regional advisory panel will still report to the church where the alleged offender resides so there is no disruption to the ecclesiastical structure.

Appendix F
Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., interim director)

I. Introduction

The mandate given by synod to the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is "Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional or specialized settings."

The mission of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries is "The office is maintained by the Board of Trustees to implement and regulate the denomination's commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual care givers, hospice care, and others called to minister in places where the institutional church is not present. The office supports and promotes the development of chaplaincy and related ministries for the denomination."

Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., retired on July 1, 2008, but remained as the acting director on a part-time basis. In mid-January the hire of a full-time director was delayed while budget constraints were evaluated.

II. Ministries of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

A. Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide

1. Our chaplains work at transforming the institutions in which they serve by calling the organization to ethical standards of care and concern.

2. Our military chaplains have worked with villages in Afghanistan and Iraq to build the infrastructure and facilitate winning the hearts and minds of the people. Chaplain Gordon Terpstra, Army reserve, ministered in the Green Zone during some of the heaviest shelling of the 2008 Easter period; Chaplain Peter Hofman (U.S. Army) worked with the villages in his area and distributed flip-flops to the village children; Chaplain Richard Hartwell (U.S. Air Force) ministered to all the service personnel in Balad; Chaplain Tom Walcott (U.S. Navy) worked on the senior staff in Iraq facilitating dialogue among the religious communities in Iraq; and Chaplain David Sutherland (Canadian Armed Forces) ministered to the families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

3. Our civilian chaplains also worked to bring change: Chaplain Bob Geelhood uses his suffering with cancer as a witness to God's grace in services of healing; Chaplain Ardean Brock serves communion on a dementia ward; Chaplain Ron Cok ministers to veterans from many wars; Chaplain John DeVries, Jr., works to promote restorative justice in Canada; Chaplain Carol Flietstra won praise from the families of those she ministered to in hospice care; Chaplain Cindy Holtrop helps Hope Network make churches more aware of assisting those with disabilities; and Chaplain Bill Van Dyken brought wheelchairs to South America.

B. Ministry to and with the local churches

1. All chaplains have a calling church. Many have worked with their calling churches by serving on council, at classis, and as a delegate to synod.

2. Chaplain Phil Apol was given more responsibility to work with churches and communities to foster relationships for Hospice care; Chaplain George Cooper helped local churches become involved with a ministry in Desert Hot Springs; Chaplain (retired) Dirk Evans is writing a manual to help elders and deacons with pastoral care; Chaplains Will Hensen and Bob Bierenga spoke to congregations and classes on their ministry in Iraq; and Chaplain Herm Keizer presents many adult education classes and classes at Calvin College on chaplaincy, the just war tradition, and the role of the Neo-Cons in the Iraq War.

3. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries sent letters to the churches about soldiers returning from current wars and experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Over one-half of the U.S. soldiers who fought in Iraq were from Reserve and National Guard units.

C. Collaborative efforts

The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries collaborated with a number of agencies and organizations over the past year:

- Calvin Institute of Christian Worship—to create online worship aids for persons with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder available at: http://calvin.edu/worship/resources/ptsd/index.php. In addition the institute published a paper, "Becoming a Veteran Friendly Church: Pacifists can do this too," available at: http://calvin.edu/worship/stories/veterans.php.
- The Office of Social Justice—implemented some of the decisions of synod in response to the Committee to Study Restorative Justice and wrote to several just war ethicists encouraging them to discuss the new definition of preventive and preemptive war as they are defined by the Department of Defense.
- CR Home Missions—worked with several congregations and the Michigan Office of Corrections (MOC) to plant a church in a prison in Michigan, and to help the MOC to draft guiding principals for prisoner reentry.
- Calvin Theological Seminary, and other institutions of higher education—recruited and advised prospective chaplains.
- Religious Endorsing Bodies and the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces—advised the Department of Defense on Selective Conscientious Objection and chaplaincy issues in the military and civilian certifying agencies.
- *The Banner* and other publishers—worked to get the stories of chaplains out to the denomination and wider church bodies.
- Coordinated Center on Conscience and War—coordinated to draft legislation to support selective conscientious objection and briefed Congressman Ehlers on the draft legislation.

D. Stories to share

1. Chaplain Gordon Terpstra wrote and disseminated a chaplain meditation every day to the command and personnel assigned to the Green Zone. He received many responses to these short meditations—even from Iraqi Muslims and Christians. Rev. Terpstra was approached by a doctor to help get a Christian translator to the United States. With the assistance of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries, he worked with the State Department and the Department of Defense and was able to fly the translator to the United States, away from the danger in Iraq.

2. Chaplain Fred Koning, director of clinical pastoral education and the director of ethics at the hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia, has contact with many medical ethicists in the health industry and in academia. He has been invited to speak in the United States, Canada, and overseas.

E. Development of future ministries

The aging population in the United States and Canada provides an opportunity for increased professionalization of chaplaincy ministry in retirement homes and centers.

In addition, the changing attitude toward death and dying provides an opportunity to increase the number of hospice chaplains. The growing shortage of clinical pastoral supervisors creates added pressure on those in residency programs to apply for supervisory training and certification. Students in supervisory training ought to be ordained in order for them to examine the full range of pastoral/sacramental issues in health care chaplaincy.

F. Statistics

1. Total chaplains: full-time, 97; part-time, 20; National Guard and Reserves, 7
2. Chaplains in the United States: full-time, 80; part-time, 17
3. Chaplains in Canada: full-time, 17; part-time, 3
4. Active military chaplains: 15 in the United States; 2 in Canada; 7 in the National Guard and Reserves
5. New chaplains, 11; Civilian: Darren G. Colyn, Timothy D. De Jonge, Clifford Hoekstra, Cindy K. Holtrop, William H. Jensen, Sam Keyzer, Peter L. VanderBeek; Army: Richard Hill, Antonio Illas; Canadian Forces: Gerald P. VanSmeerdyk; Navy: Shawn L. Bootsma
6. Retirees, 5: Ronald W. De Young; Allen J. Hoogewind; Herman Keizer, Jr.; Fred D. Rietema; and Raymond C. Swierenga
7. Chaplains who served overseas this year: Robert L. Bierenga; Shawn L. Bootsma; Charles R. Cornelisse; Richard M. Hartwell, Jr.; Peter Hofman; Timothy L. Rietkerk; and Thomas J. Walcott

III. Recruitment and training

The war in Iraq has caused a shortage of four hundred chaplains in the Army Reserves and the Army National Guard. This has created a recruiting and training opportunity for the CRCNA.

The Canadian Armed Forces has a program in which the military finances the student's seminary training and two years of internship training. Since the seminary training must take place in Canada, the Director of Chaplaincy Ministries is working with Calvin Theological Seminary, the director of Candidacy, and prospective applicants to ensure a coordinated path to ordination.

Together with the church, we need to introduce the opportunity for chaplaincy ministry to high school and college students so that they can test their calling to ministry in specialized settings. Chaplains are encouraged to tell the story of specialized ministries in their communities. We currently are working with ten students and assisting them in their education both financially and through mentoring.

We maintain a list of prospective persons interested in chaplaincy ministry (currently eighty-eight people). Every other month the office sends job postings to these persons.

IV. Recommendation

That synod urge the CRC congregations to pay special attention to veterans, serving members of the military, and their families.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2006 adopted the following:

> That synod acknowledge the pressing pastoral concern (see section IX, B, Committee to Study War and Peace, p. 414) and direct the Board of Trustees to encourage CRC Publications [Faith Alive Christian Resources] to partner with pastoral care experts to make available materials to assist churches in ministering to members and their families who are contemplating entering or serving in the military, as well as to veterans in their congregations.
> (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 672)

2. Serving members of the Armed Forces both in the United States and Canada experience the wounds of battle. Many become permanently disabled and a major concern is the number of those suffering from the hidden wounds of war—traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. The symptoms of these wounds and the resultant pathology of these wounds increase over time and severely affect interpersonal functioning and social adjustment.

Appendix G
Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

Disability Concerns helps Christian Reformed churches fulfill the biblical call for the full participation of people with disabilities in the life of the church and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities. In healthy churches and ministries, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.

II. Ministries of Disability Concerns

A team of people from Disability Concerns assists churches in fulfilling this call. This team is composed of approximately 550 church advocates; 41 regional advocates serving 33 out of the 47 classes; 7 agency advocates working within the CRC agencies; 2 part-time administrative assistants located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario; as well as our director, Rev. Mark Stephenson. Regional Disability Concerns committees are active in Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario. Over the past year, this team has

- sponsored conferences and led workshops that trained nearly 300 people from churches eager to include people with disabilities in their life and ministry.
- offered training on inclusion at several Days of Encouragement and classis meetings.
- distributed *Breaking Barriers*, our quarterly newsletter to the 70,000 individuals, families, churches, and agencies that subscribe to it.
- translated *Breaking Barriers* into Spanish and made it available on our website.
- consulted directly with many CRCs and individuals.
- continued selling a booklet (now in its second printing) co-published by the Office of Disability Concerns and Faith Alive Christian Resources that is used for training council and care team members—*A Compassion-*

ate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses by John Cook.
- trained some 150 people in the model for long-term caring described in *A Compassionate Journey*. This training was funded in part by a grant from the CRC Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Following are a few stories of the results of our work:
- When a pastor from Ontario contacted us about making a pulpit area accessible, we sent his request to our regional advocates in Canada. We were able to send this pastor two pages of ideas and several pictures of churches with accessible pulpit areas. Much of this information is available to anyone now on the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship website: www.calvin.edu/worship.
- The Office of Disability Concerns helped a CRC in western Michigan find interpreters when a guest who is deaf began to attend their worship services.
- We were able to provide guidance and resources to the Christian Reformed missionaries serving in Central America as well as training for people preparing to work in various areas across the globe.
- The Office of Disability Concerns reached a wide audience through the publication of a series of devotions in the August 2008 *Today* and feature articles in *The Banner* and *Reformed Worship* by the director, Rev. Mark Stephenson. Among the many responses to these articles was a request for a Bible and help with studying the Bible from a legless man on death row at a prison in Zambia. Now volunteers from Crossroad Bible Institute are discipling this man via correspondence.
- Our annual survey of churches shows that about one-half of Christian Reformed Churches offer one or more of the following: aids for people who are hard of hearing or deaf, aids for people with visual impairments, and/or transportation for people with disabilities. Also, more than 4 percent of the professions of faith made last year in the CRCNA were made by people with disabilities.
- For a second year, Disability Concerns is participating with several other organizations in a grant that allows us to provide assistance and specific expertise to a number of churches. This year, we are participating in this grant with Friendship Ministries, CLC Network, and Hope Network.

We praise God for many specific actions taken by CRC congregations to remove barriers to participation by people with disabilities and to ensure that they use their gifts for ministry. In the ongoing process of including all of God's people in the life of his family, we are eager to be of assistance to Christian Reformed churches and ministries. We are deeply grateful for the prayers of God's people for our ministry; for financial support through ministry shares, offerings, and other gifts; and for the completion of an annual *Yearbook* survey. This survey is a critical tool that helps us to assess the effectiveness of our work and to determine where we should focus our efforts.

III. Recruitment and training

Disability Concerns continues to recruit committed and passionate people who work for the inclusion of people with disabilities in churches, classes, and institutions. Once each year we gather regional and agency advocates for training and encouragement in their work.

IV. Recommendation

That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 12 through 18, 2009, using the theme, "Everybody Belongs. Everybody Serves."

Grounds:

1. The Bible calls us to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. We recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ requires the involvement of all his people in the ministry of his church. We have not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and have often isolated them and their families.
2. In 1985 we committed ourselves as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude "in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God's family." Although many CRC congregations, classes, and institutions have made significant progress in including people with disabilities in their work and ministry, much more can and should be done.
3. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God's people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Note: Some text in the grounds is from the "Resolution on Disabilities" adopted by Synod 1985.

Appendix H

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Norman J. Thomasma, director; Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, pastor/congregation consultant)

I. Introduction

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains a focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the twenty-seven years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that while these functions remain basic, there are nuances required because of changing culture and programs. We continue to work and plan in response to dynamic directions of the churches and leadership.

Significant changes in the office this year have taken place with the retirement of Rev. Duane Visser as director, the appointment of Rev. Norman J. Thomasma as director, and the addition of Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis as pastor/congregation consultant.

The ministry of PCR involves both *direct* involvement with pastors, staff, councils, and congregations, and *extension* or cooperative activities whereby the staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations train and support others who, in turn, provide direct support to pastors, staff, councils, and congregations.

II. Ministries of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations

A. Probably the most familiar activity of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is its *direct* involvement in cultivating healthier relationships within the life of congregations. This may involve interventions when there are conflicts, consultations in which we can assist in ways that work toward healing and growth, and educational activities in which the members and leaders of congregations learn creative ways of responding.

B. PCR *extends* its work through sixty regional pastors who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses who are challenged by the demands of life and ministry. These pastors also assist in setting up mentor relationships for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff persons within a congregation.

C. Another *extension* initiative has been the organization of training events by PCR staff to assist classes in church visiting. Many in the CRCNA agree that the work of church visitors has not received sufficient attention in recent years and, done well, could provide a vital resource for the classis and congregation. PCR will continue offering these training events in the coming year.

D. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations continues to advance the work of mentoring new pastors. Mentoring, beginning in the seminary and continuing throughout a pastor's ministry, is seen as a crucial area of pastoral growth and accountability. Through peer groups supported by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program and assigned mentoring relationships, this aspect of encouragement and learning continues to be a key part of many pastors' experience.

E. Educational and retreat activities for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to be a focus of PCR activity. In many ways the educational and intervention activities are closely linked.

F. Transitional Ministry Specialists are trained to help congregations deal with challenges during the transition between pastors. For a number of years the denomination has employed several transitional pastors. In March, Rev. Robert Walter retired from this full-time work. Currently there are two transitional ministers still working directly from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations: Rev. Larry Slings (Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois) and Rev. Leonard Troast (Fellowship CRC, Traverse City, Michigan). There are also a growing number of trained pastors who are serving in this capacity by contracting with congregations themselves. The current challenge has been to provide endorsement and support for these ministers as direct employment by the denomination is phased out.

With a growing number of recently retired pastors, congregations are also using other pastors as stated supply. These pastors are not working directly with PCR.

G. Through a subcommittee of PCR, the Staff Ministry Committee (SMC), and the leadership of PCR staff ministry specialist Ms. Jeanne Kallemeyn, over 1,200 church staff are being supported in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered, and churches are increasingly requesting our services regarding staffing issues. SMC also continues its work on the credentialing process for non-ordained church staff. In addition, we are exploring ways to support the growing number of ministry associates in the CRC.

H. On behalf of synod, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations administers a continuing education fund for pastors and professional church staff. Grants of up to $750 per year are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event and/or opportunity they are pursuing. The number of applications for these funds continues to grow. It is gratifying to experience this growing interest in continuing education. It is also a challenge as the committee makes decisions regarding how the funds will be distributed.

I. The Ministerial Information Service (MIS) maintains a database of more than eight hundred pastor profiles as well as several hundred congregation profiles. These profiles are used by search committees of congregations looking for pastors and by pastors seeking new positions. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations, with the assistance of a volunteer committee, will recommend pastoral candidates for search committees. At the beginning of 2009, we received an upgraded computer software program to facilitate the storage and distribution of materials for congregations and pastors. Ms. Laura Palsrok continues to ably manage communications and data for the Ministerial Information Service.

III. Considerations for the future

A. One of the challenges affecting PCR will be the adjustments related to new office personnel, such as developing relationships with pastors, congregations, regional pastors, and mentors, many of whom have had a long working relationship with Rev. Visser.

B. PCR is beginning to establish a means for appropriate measurements of its work. In consultation with like agencies and information technologies staff, new possibilities are emerging regarding helpful measures to better gauge what is being done and who PCR is serving.

C. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. Given the synodical decisions about ministry associates, we are attempting to find ways to better serve this expanding group among the churches. We are also meeting with Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) students currently enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary and are familiarizing them with the work of our office. As part of the broader network of denominational entities who work with candidates, PCR also attempts to maintain a working

relationship with the Candidacy Committee (formerly Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee).

D. There are two identified challenges with the present name *Office of Pastor-Church Relations*. One problem has been articulated by a number of pastors on the occasion of our working with the church in which they serve. The sense is that, even if the conflict is not directly with the pastor, the fact that a staff person from the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is working with the church suggests the problem is significantly about the pastor and is seen as raising this perception within the congregation.

Second, the mandate of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations has always included ministry with and to congregational staff. Historically this was a relatively small dimension of our ministry. But in recent years with an increase in the number of congregational staff and our office's increased attention to them, the current name perpetuates a marginalization of staff; this observation resonates with the experience of many staff in the congregations they serve. Various naming possibilities have been considered, but a fitting new name with potential longevity has not yet been identified.

E. As one of the denominational ministries, PCR continues to explore ways to work with other denominational ministries in addition to responding to congregations, staff, and pastors. It is our goal to encourage healthy ways of doing ministry in the CRCNA.

Appendix I
Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The Office of Race Relations is engaged in a plan to bring about biblical reconciliation within the church. With the assistance of a team of trained facilitators, the Office of Race Relations is providing avenues for helping the CRCNA embrace its identity as God's diverse and unified family through the ministry of racial reconciliation. The year 2008 has been a time in which the need for the ministry of reconciliation has been highlighted not only in the denomination but also in our society and throughout the world. During 2008, the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) and Widening the Circle (WTC) workshops were presented in various venues: Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Los Angeles; Humboldt Community Christian School, Holland Christian Schools, and Calvin College; Grand Rapids and Burlington offices for CRCNA employees; Crosswinds Community Church in Holland, Michigan; agency board meetings; and the Board of Trustees.

The Office of Race Relations provides training for people who are interested in becoming facilitators for the ministries of DORR and WTC. Thirty-nine people from all walks of life in the United States and Canada have felt God's call to become facilitators. In addition to these, we now have indigenous facilitators in both Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. All of our facilitators are leaders who have developed a value for biblical diversity, have gained an understanding of systemic racism in their context, and have embraced the ministry of racial reconciliation.

The Office of Race Relations successfully planned and implemented the All Nations Heritage (ANH) campaign in 2008. Please watch for mate-

rial regarding ANH Sunday, October 4, 2009, which will be sent to all the churches in May 2009.

The Race Relations Scholarship Program continues to encourage students who have a desire to engage in the ministry of racial reconciliation in their churches, schools, and communities. For the 2008-2009 school year, the Office of Race Relations awarded $15,200 to sixteen students who are attending Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin College, Dordt College, Kuyper College, and Trinity Christian College. This scholarship money comes directly from the CRCNA churches as offerings in response to All Nations Heritage Sunday. We praise God for the generosity that the churches have shown in this area of our ministry.

A new Race Relations Team made up of the Office of Race Relations and the antiracism teams of the agencies began in 2008. This new team encompasses the denominational buildings in Grand Rapids and Burlington as well as Back to God Ministries International in Palos Heights. The team exists to develop and implement strategies for moving toward a work environment that is free of racism.

In conjunction with Faith Alive and Home Missions, the Office of Race Relations is working to develop a DVD and study guide on racial reconciliation to be distributed to our churches throughout North America. This project should be completed in 2009.

In December 2008, Rev. Esteban Lugo and Rev. David Koll traveled to Dearborn, Michigan, to meet with Dr. Basem Qusous at the Arab-American Friendship Center. In January 2009, Rev. Lugo led a group of eight, which visited the center, toured a mosque, and otherwise took in the culture of the area. The center ministers mainly to women and their children and provides quality educational services—ESL, citizenship classes, GED certification, Arabic language classes, and computer skills—to encourage understanding among cultures and friendship among people. Dr. Qusous and his wife will also be ministering at the Multiethnic Conference in June 2009.

Plans for the 2009 Multiethnic Conference to be held at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, are under way. This Multiethnic Conference should prove to be an exciting time because it is scheduled for June 12–14, coinciding with Synod 2009. Rev. Pedro Aviles will be the keynote speaker. Information can be accessed by calling toll free (877-864-3977) or by visiting the Race Relations web page on the CRCNA website: www.crcna.org.

The Office of Race Relations invites and encourages people of color to become involved in their churches and to make themselves available to serve on committees, denominational boards, and at synod. As members of these groups, they not only gain valuable experience and leadership qualities but also bring their voices to influence decisions and directions that are crucial to the life of the CRCNA.

The denomination continues to face the challenge of placing a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in our life together as a church and the integrity of its identity. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. Race Relations is committed to its statement of vision and its mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God. Once again, we attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. We covet your prayers.

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

I. Introduction

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

Today, the OSJHA works to develop a deeper understanding of and response to God's call to "let justice flow like a river" in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty. The OSJHA works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues and 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 we witness and work to remove those barriers.

III. Our work

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

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 campus visits and organizing. We look forward to collaborating on service-learning opportunities, concerts, college courses, and more.

2. The OSJHA has also partnered with CRWRC to start a new movement of justice seeking in our churches. The Congregation Justice Mobilization

(CJM) project is well into its first year with a shared full-time coordinator. Some of the many initiatives coming out of CJM include "lunch and learn" informational sessions for pastors, a new fair trade coffee fundraiser for the CRC, and growing relationships with over twenty congregations.

3. *The Advocate* is our monthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered electronically 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. Another exciting online resource is http://justiceseekers.ning.com, a social networking website for CRC advocates to learn, speak, and act as agents of social 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 select issues important to the CRC.

1. We have added two part-time staff members to start restorative justice projects in the United States and Canada and to further develop those already in place. This increased focus on restorative justice stems from the recommendations of Synod 2005.

2. In Canada, we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and we work with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace as well as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

3. We facilitate advocacy to Washington, D.C., or Ottawa (in partnership with the Committee for Contact with the Government) when appropriate for our areas of focus. This year such ad hoc advocacy included PEPFAR and the Save Act.

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 K
The Center for Congregations

I. Conceptual framework

A. Mission

The mission of the Center for Congregations is to strengthen CRC congregations as they transform lives and communities worldwide.

The center does this primarily by mobilizing and strengthening regional and other networks to meet the needs and opportunities of congregations and their leaders, with the goal that each congregation becomes a vibrant witness to the transforming gospel of Jesus Christ in lives and communities worldwide.

The center is intended to address the following challenges:

- how to help congregations attain greater health and vitality
- how to mobilize local and regional resources for ministry
- how to ensure that resources of the denomination's ministries and their partners truly meet the needs of congregations
- how to apply denominational and other resources in locally and regionally appropriate ways

B. Operational values

The center will

- listen for how congregations themselves define their needs and interests, not assume it already knows them.
- help congregations find, develop, and use all appropriate resources.
- be a community—a network—of shared learning.
- have an administrative center but operate through local and regional teams and networks so that congregations relate to it locally and regionally.
- facilitate the contextualization of regional ministry teams, so that each is tailored to its environment while sharing a similar structure and common values.
- assist regions to function like resource centers, where network leaders are available to help congregations discern appropriate pathways for health and renewal.
- come alongside congregational leaders to help them identify and address ministry opportunities.

C. Start-up, structure, strategies

The executive director will form the center by assigning an existing staff person to develop its structure and strategies in a way that is consistent with the framework described here. This person will serve as the center's initial director during a development phase lasting one to three years. Thereafter, the normal hiring process will be used to recruit and appoint a long-term director.

The director will immediately form a diverse team of experienced congregational and other leaders to develop an operational plan for the center. Some of the members of this team, supplemented by others, will later be invited to serve on an advisory board to the center and its director.

It is expected that initially the center's director will function primarily as a convener and facilitator, bringing congregational, classical, regional, and denominational leaders and ministry staff together to mobilize and coordinate resources for ministry.

Two important early tasks will be to (1) develop together with CRCNA ministry staff and teams a common set of desired outputs and outcomes, and (2) develop Internet-based resources for networking and mobilizing ideas and resources.

Attention will be given to eliminating overlapping and redundant resources as well as to identifying new resources for congregational ministry and streamlining existing ones.

In the beginning, the center will test pilot the mobilization and coordination of resources and ideas in several regions and among certain congregations.

The existing Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and Sustaining Congregational Excellence programs, as well as the regional ministry teams currently administered by Christian Reformed Home Missions, will form the nucleus of both the resources and the delivery system of the Center for Congregations.

As the development of the center proceeds and the impact of the center is assessed, a decision will be made whether to assign supervisory responsibility to the director for other denominational ministries that offer resources to congregations.

The center will immediately serve as the organizational home for initiatives related to youth ministry, classical renewal, and prayer and discipleship.

D. Anticipated timeline

January 2009—This conceptual framework is finalized and approved.
February 2009—This conceptual framework is approved by the Board of Trustees.
March 2009—The center's interim director is assigned and begins work part-time.
March–April 2009—The planning team is formed, and an operational plan is developed.
May 2009—The plan is presented to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
June 2009—The interim director begins serving full-time.

E. Position Description for Director of the Center for Congregations (see Appendix K-1)

F. Operating budget – 2009-2010 (see Appendix K-2)

Note: The name *Center for Congregations* is provisional. It is already used by the Indianapolis Center for Congregations (affiliated with the Alban Institute), and to avoid confusion, to respect the identity of the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, or to better reflect the conceptual framework above, the operational planning team and director may propose an alternative name.

Appendix K-1
Position Description for the Director of the Center for Congregations

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Job title: Director, Center for Congregations
Department: Center for Congregations
Reports to: Director of Denominational Ministries
Status: Full-time

PURPOSE: The director is responsible for implementing the mission of the Center for Congregations.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Assume responsibility for development and management of the Center for Congregations.
2. Facilitate exchanges and partnerships with congregations for the multiplication of resources.
3. Coordinate delivery of programs and resources available to congregations from CRC ministries and their partners.
4. Convene CRCNA personnel to plan and work collaboratively with key leaders involved in congregational, classical, and regional ministries.
5. Develop technology delivery methods for engaging members of the CRCNA in congregational and denominational ministry.
6. Develop an annual work plan, including budget, and manage resources within it.
7. Develop and maintain a scorecard of expected outcomes that is in alignment with the Denominational Ministries Plan.
8. Provide an annual report of activities, initiatives, results, and impacts.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Administrative assistant
2. Additional personnel consistent with the mission of the center as it develops

QUALIFICATIONS:
The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required:

1. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a passion for the ministry of the local church.
2. A member of the Christian Reformed Church.
3. Demonstrated commitment to the mission and values of the Center for Congregations.
4. Demonstrated successful leadership in the local church, or in an organization or network that engages in ministry with or on behalf of the local church.
5. A biblically Reformed theological perspective.
6. An appropriate knowledge base and skill set for understanding and meeting the needs of the local church.

7. Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with denominational, classical, and congregational leaders, whether lay or ordained, for the education and mobilization of members and churches for ministry.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

1. A master's degree in a related field (minimum qualification); additional graduate education desirable; ordination as a minister of the Word in the CRCNA preferred.
2. At least ten years experience of leadership in the local church.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job.

Appendix K-2
Operating Budget 2009-2010

Income	
Ministry share request	75,000
Transferred from Sustaining Congregational Excellence	100,000
Above-ministry share	15,000
Staff reallocation (to begin the center)	126,000
Total	$316,000
Expenses	
Salary and benefits	
Director	126,000
Administrative assistant	50,000
Program	
Technology/software	40,000
Training—targeted classes and churches	40,000
Pilot mobilization of regions	40,000
Support services	
General allocation	15,000
Supplies and equipment	3,000
Miscellaneous	2,000
Total	$316,000

Appendix L
By-Law No. 1 of the CRCNA-Canada Foundation

BY-LAW NO. 1 OF
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in NORTH AMERICA-CANADA FOUNDATION

ARTICLE I
NAME & PURPOSE

1. **NAME:**
The Foundation shall be known as THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in NORTH AMERICA–CANADA FOUNDATION and the seal, an impression whereof is stamped in the margin hereof shall be the seal of the Foundation.

PURPOSE:
The Foundation is formed for the Religious charitable purposes, or objects, as follows:

(a) To assist in the financial support of the Ministries, programs and activities of THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in NORTH AMERICA-CANADA CORPORATION through ~~the creation and development of an endowment fund.~~ establishing long and short term designated funds and endowment funds.

(b) To promote, solicit, accept and manage gifts of property, securities, life insurance, bequests, cash and other forms of contribution for the sole benefit of THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in NORTH AMERICA-CANADA CORPORATION and its ministries and agencies.

ARTICLE II
MEMBERSHIP

2.1 **QUALIFICATION:**
The membership of the Foundation shall consist of and be limited to THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH in NORTH AMERICA-CANADA CORPORATION [CRCNA(Ca)] which the Corporation shall remain the sole member of the Foundation ("The Member").

2.2 **NO RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**
The Member shall not withdraw from the Foundation but shall remain The Member of the Foundation until the dissolution thereof.

ARTICLE III
HEAD OFFICE

3.1 **HEAD OFFICE:**
Until changed, in accordance with the Act the head office of the Foundation shall be in the City of Burlington, in the County of Halton, Province of Ontario.

ARTICLE IV
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

4.1 **POWER AND DUTIES:**
The property, business and affairs of the Foundation shall be under the direction and control of a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall have the power to take all action consistent with the purposes and objects of the Foundation, subject to the provisions of the Act and this by-law.

4.2 **FIRST DIRECTORS:**
The applicants for incorporation of the Foundation shall be the first directors of the Foundation whose term on the Board of Directors shall continue until their successors are elected in accordance with the provisions hereof.

4.3 **NUMBER OF DIRECTORS & QUORUM:**
The number of directors shall not be fewer than four (4) ~~six (6)~~, nor greater than six (6) ~~nine (9)~~ and at any meeting of the Directors, a majority of the entire number of Directors, including Ex-Officio directors as described in 4.5 hereof, shall constitute a quorum.

4.4 **DIRECTORS APPOINTED:**
Not less than ~~three (3) nor more than six (6) Directors shall be appointed by the Board of Directors of the Member from names selected by the board of the Foundation.~~ two (2) of the Canadian Foundation board members shall also be members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Ca) Board of Trustees. One (1) member shall be appointed at large and the Director of Canadian Ministries shall be a voting Canadian Foundation board member. All directors must be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The directors shall serve a term of office as determined by the CRCNA(Ca) Board of Directors but in any event not to exceed three (3) years. The CRCNA(Ca) Board of Directors may appoint directors to consecutive terms of office.

4.5 **EX-OFFICIO:**
In addition to the Directors appointed pursuant to the provisions of 4.4 hereof, ~~those individuals~~ the individual who holds the office of Canadian Ministries Director ~~Executive Director of Ministries, and the Director of Finance and Administration~~ for the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be a voting member~~s~~ of the Board of Directors serving no fixed term of office (the Continuing Director). Successor~~s~~ to ~~those~~ the individual~~s~~ who holds the office of Canadian Ministries Director ~~Executive Director of Ministries and Director of Finance and Administration~~ for the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall automatically replace their predecessor~~s~~ as a member~~s~~ of the Board of Directors of the Foundation.

4.6 **REMOVAL:**
Any Director may be removed from office by The Member.

4.7 **RESIGNATION:**
Any Director may resign at any time by giving written notice of the resignation to the Secretary of the Foundation. The resignation shall become effective upon the date specified in the notice, or, if no date is specified, upon receipt of the notice by the Secretary.

4.8 **VACANCY AND ADDITIONAL DIRECTORS:**
The Member may fill any vacancy in the Board of Directors of this Foundation at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose.

4.9 **ADVISORY REPRESENTATIVES:**
The Board of Directors may, in its discretion, request that advisory representatives be appointed to sit with, and advise the Board of Directors on matters within their expertise or experience. These representatives shall sit in an advisory capacity only, and shall not be eligible to hold office in the Foundation. Advisory Representatives shall not be authorized to vote.

4.10 **PROCEDURE AT MEETINGS:**
Meetings of the Board of Directors may be held at any time and place to be determined by the Directors provided that 48 hours written notice of such meeting shall be given, other than by mail, to each Director. Notice by mail shall be sent at least 14 days prior to the meeting. There shall be at least one (1) meeting per year of the Board of Directors. No error or omission in giving notice of any meeting of the Board of Directors or any adjourned meeting of the Board of Directors of the Corporation shall invalidate such meeting or make void any proceedings taken thereat and any director may at any time waive notice of any such meeting and may ratify, approve and confirm any or all proceedings taken or had thereat. Each director, including each Ex-Officio Director, is authorized to exercise one (1) vote. Special meetings of directors may be convened upon the written request of any five (5) of its members, or by the Chairperson.

Telephone Participation. The Directors of the Corporation may meet by teleconference provided that either a majority of the Directors consents to meeting by teleconference or meetings by teleconference have been approved by resolution passed by the Board of Directors at a meeting of the Directors of the Corporation.

Meetings by Other Electronic Means. The Directors of the Corporation may meet by other electronic means that permits each director to communicate adequately with each other, provided that:

(1) the Board of Directors of the Corporation has passed a Resolution addressing the mechanics of holding such a meeting and dealing specifically with how security issues should be handled, the procedures for establishing quorum and recording votes;
(2) each director has equal access to the specific means of communication to be used;

(3) each director has consented in advance to meeting by electronic means using the specific means of communication proposed for the meeting.

4.11 **DIRECTORS SERVE WITHOUT REMUNERATION:**
The Directors shall serve as such without remuneration and no director shall directly or indirectly receive any profit from the position as such; provided that a director may be paid reasonable expenses incurred by him in the performance of his duties. Nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any director from serving the Foundation as an officer or in any other capacity and receiving compensation therefore.

4.12 **RETIRING DIRECTOR:**
A retiring director shall remain in office until the dissolution or adjournment of the meeting at which the retirement is accepted and a successor is elected.

4.13 **AUTHORITY TO APPOINT OR ENGAGE:**
The Board of Directors may appoint such agents and engage such employees as it shall deem necessary from time to time and such persons shall have such authority and shall perform such duties as shall be prescribed by the Board of Directors at the time of such appointment.

4.14 **OFFICERS-REMUNERATION:**
A reasonable remuneration for all officers who are not directors, agents and employees and committee members shall be fixed by the Board of Directors by resolution. Such resolution shall have force and effect only until the next meeting of The Member when such resolution shall be confirmed by resolution of The Member, or in the absence of such confirmation by The Member, then the remuneration to such officer, agent, or employee and committee member shall cease to be payable from the date of such meeting of The Member.

ARTICLE V
OFFICERS & DUTIES

5.1 **PRINCIPAL OFFICERS:**
The principal officers of the Corporation shall consist of a Chairperson of the Board, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected by the Board of Directors from among its members at the annual meeting. From time to time the Board of Directors may elect other officers as it shall determine in its discretion. Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the officers shall be elected by the Directors annually and shall serve for a one (1) year term.

5.2 **CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD:**
The Chairperson of the Board shall be selected from the membership of the Board of Directors and shall preside over all meetings of the Directors. The Chairperson of the Board shall perform other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Directors.

5.3 **VICE-CHAIRPERSON:**
If a Vice Chairperson is selected, the Vice Chairperson shall be selected from the membership of the Board of Directors and shall perform the duties of the Chairperson during any absence or disability of the Chairperson and shall succeed the Chairperson in the event that the office of Chairperson becomes vacant for any reason.

5.4 **SECRETARY:**
The Secretary shall give notice of each meeting of the Directors or committees of the Corporation as to which notice if required; shall record minutes of the meeting in books kept for that purpose; shall have custody of the corporate seal and records of the Corporation; and shall perform such other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Directors.

5.5 **THE TREASURER:**
The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds and other property of the Corporation; shall keep accurate records of all property, receipts and disbursements of the Corporation in financial books to be maintained for that purpose; shall deposit all assets in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depository or depositories as shall be designated by the Directors; shall disburse the funds of the Corporation; and render to the Directors such reports as they shall prescribe.

All books, records and vouchers of the Corporation shall be open to the inspection of any Director. The Treasurer shall, at least once a year, and whenever requested by the Directors, render a full and detailed account of all receipts and expenditures and submit a schedule showing the financial status of the Corporation and the changes, if any, since the last report of the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall perform other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Directors.

5.6 **REMOVAL:**
Any officer of the Corporation may be removed at any time, with or without cause, by a vote of two thirds (2/3) of the Directors then holding office.

5.7 **VACANCIES:**
Any vacancy in any office of the Corporation may be filled for the un-expired portion of the term by majority vote of the Directors present at a meeting of the Directors called for that purpose except that the Vice Chairperson shall become the Chairperson in the event that office becomes vacant for any reason. If any officer is absent or unable to perform the duties assigned to that office, the Directors may delegate the powers and duties of that office, during the period of the absence or disability, to another person.

5.8 **RESIGNATION:**
Any officer may resign from office at any time by giving written notice of the resignation to the Secretary of the corporation. The resignation shall become effective upon the date specified in the notice or, if no

date is specified, upon receipt of the notice by the Secretary. Acceptance by the Board shall not be necessary to render the resignation effective.

ARTICLE VI
COMMITTEES

6.1 **DIRECTORS MAY APPOINT COMMITTEES**:

The Board of Directors may appoint committees whose members will hold their office at the will of the Board of Directors. The Directors shall determine the duties of such committees and may fix any remuneration to be paid.

6.2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:**
At such times as may be deemed necessary or desirable, the Board of Directors may appoint an Executive Director, responsible to the Board of Directors, who shall be in active charge of the day-to-day affairs of the Corporation. The Executive Director, or a designated representative, may sit with the Board of Directors in the capacity of advisor with right of discussion, but without vote.

ARTICLE VII
EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS

7.1 Contracts, documents, or any instruments in writing requiring the signature of the Corporation, shall be signed by any two officers and all contracts, documents and instruments in writing so signed shall be binding upon the Corporation without any further authorization or formality. The Directors shall have power from time to time by resolution to appoint an officer or officers on behalf of the Corporation to sign specific contracts, documents, and instruments in writing. The Directors may give the Corporation's power of attorney to any registered dealer in securities for the purposes of the transferring of and dealing with any stocks, bonds, and other securities of the Corporation. The seal of the Corporation when required may be affixed to contracts, documents and instruments in writing signed as aforesaid or by any officer or officers appointed by resolution of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VIII
MEETINGS

8.1 **PLACE OF ANNUAL MEETING:**
The annual or any general meeting of The Member shall be held at the head office of the Corporation or at any place in Canada as the Board of Directors may determine and on such day as the said Directors shall appoint. The Member may resolve that a particular meeting of The Member be held outside Canada.

8.2 **TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS AT ANNUAL MEETING:**
At every annual meeting, in addition to any other business that may be transacted, the report of the Directors, the financial statement and

the report of the auditors shall be presented and auditors appointed for the ensuing year. The Member may consider and transact any business either special or general at any meeting of The Member. The Board of Directors or the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson shall have power to call, at any time, a general meeting of The Member on written request of The Member. There being only one Member of the Foundation, the presence of The Member is required to constitute a quorum at any of The Member's meeting.

8.3 **NOTICE OF MEETINGS:**
Fourteen (14) days' written notice shall be given to The Member of any annual or special general membership meeting. Notice of any meeting where special business shall be transacted shall contain sufficient information to permit The Member to form a reasoned judgment on the decision to be taken.

Only The Member shall be entitled to vote at a Member's meeting and no proxy vote shall be allowed. At all meetings of The Member of the Foundation every question shall be determined by the vote of The Member unless otherwise specifically provided by statute or these by-laws.

A resolution, in writing, signed by The Member is as valid as if it had been passed at a meeting of The Member.

8.4 **OMISSIONS AND ERRORS:**
No error or omission in giving notice of any annual or general meeting or any adjourned meeting, whether annual or general, of The Member of the Foundation, shall invalidate such meeting or make void any proceedings taken thereat and The Member may at any time waive notice of any such meeting and may ratify, approve and confirm any or all proceeding taken or had thereat. For purposes of sending notice to The Member, director or officer for any meeting or otherwise, the address of The Member, director or officer shall be the last address recorded on the books of the corporation.

ARTICLE IX
INDEMNIFICATION

9.1 **PROTECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OTHERS:**
Except as otherwise provided in the Act, no Director or Officer of the Foundation shall be liable for the act, receipts, neglects or defaults of any other Director or employee or for any loss, damage or expense happening to the Foundation through the insufficiency or deficiency of title to any property acquired by the Foundation or for or on behalf of the Foundation or for the insufficiency or deficiency of any security in or upon which any of the moneys of or belonging to the Foundation shall be placed out or invested or for any loss or damage arising from the bankruptcy insolvency or tortuous act of any person including any person with whom or which any moneys, securities, or effects shall be lodged or deposited for any loss, conversion, misapplication or misappropriation of or any damage resulting from any dealings with

any moneys, securities or other assets, belonging to the Foundation or for any other loss, damage or misfortune whatever which may happen in the execution of the duties of the Director or Officer's respective office or trust, or in relation thereto unless the same shall happen by or through such person's willful neglect or default. The Director and officers of the Foundation shall not be under any duty or responsibility in respect of any contract, act or transaction whether or not made, done or entered into in the name or on behalf of the Foundation, except such as shall have been submitted to and authorized or approved by the Board of Directors.

9.2 **INDEMNITY TO DIRECTORS, OFFICERS AND OTHERS:**
Every director, officer or member who has undertaken or is about to undertake any liability on behalf of the Foundation, its heirs and assigns, will respectively be indemnified and saved harmless out of the funds of the Foundation from and against:

(a) all costs, charges and expenses which such Director, Officer or Member sustains or incurs in or about any action, suit or proceeding which is brought, commenced, or prosecuted against him or her in respect of any act, deed, matter or thing whatsoever, made, done or permitted by him, or her, in or about the execution of his or her office or in respect of any such liability, except such costs, charges or expenses as are occasioned by their own willful neglect or default;

(b) all other costs, charges and expenses which he or she sustains or incurs in or about or in relation to the affairs thereof, except such costs, charges or expenses as are occasioned by his or her own negligence, neglect or default.

The Foundation shall also indemnify any such persons as described above in such other circumstances as the Act or law permits or requires. Nothing in this By-law shall limit the right of any person entitled to indemnity to choose indemnity apart from the provisions of this By-law to the extent permitted by the Act or law.

ARTICLE X
AMENDMENT OF BY-LAW

10. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America ("Synod") may repeal or amend these By-laws (not embodied in the Letters Patent) upon the approval of The Member, or an overture presented to Synod; provided that the repeal or amendment of such by-laws shall not be enforced or acted upon until the approval of the Minister of Industry has been obtained.

ARTICLE XI
AUDITORS

11. The Member shall, at each annual meeting, appoint an auditor to audit the accounts of the Foundation for the report to The Member at the next annual meeting. The auditor shall hold office until the next annual

meeting provided that the Directors may fill any casual vacancy in the office of the auditor. The remuneration of the auditor shall be fixed by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE XII
BOOKS AND RECORDS

12. The Directors shall see that all necessary books and records of the Corporation required by the by-laws of the Corporation or by any applicable statute or law are regularly and properly kept.

ARTICLE XIII
RULES AND REGULATIONS

13. The Board of Directors may prescribe such rules and regulations not inconsistent with these by-laws relating to the management and operation of the Corporation as they deem expedient, provided that such rules and regulations shall have force and effect only until the next annual meeting of The Member of the Corporation when they shall be confirmed, and failing such confirmation at such annual meeting of The Member, shall at and from that time cease to have any force and effect.

ENACTED this day of ~~2003~~2009.

WITNESS the Corporate Seal of THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA – CANADA FOUNDATION.

_____ _____

President Secretary

Appendix M
Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,939		383		2,322
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	5,113	-	592	100	5,805
Receivables & Advances	130	-	-	-	130
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-		-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-		-	-	-
PP & E	534	-	-	-	534
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	7,716	-	975	100	8,791
Accounts Payable	554	-	-	-	554
Notes/Loans Payable	670	-	-	-	670
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,079	-	-	-	1,079
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,303	-	-	-	2,303
Net Assets	$ 5,413	-	975	100	6,488

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not in use.

Note 2: List details of designations. Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. Income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.

Note 3: List details of restrictions. Isaac Jen endowment fund.

Note 4: List details of restrictions. Permanently restricted endowment funds.

Back to God Ministries International
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	4,258	$	4,009
% of Total Income		41.3%		35.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	4,014	$	5,072
Estate Gifts	$	1,414	$	2,194
Total Gift Income		5,428		7,266
% of Total Income		52.7%		63.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-
Grants-Animation	$	62	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	554	$	188
Total Other Income		616		188
% of Total Income		6.0%		1.6%
TOTAL INCOME		10,302		11,463
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	$	2,028	$	2,508
FTEs		10		10
International	$	4,749	$	5,927
FTEs		13		13
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	6,777	$	8,435
Total Program Service FTEs		23		23
% of Total $		72.2%		73.9%
% of Total FTEs		67.6%		67.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	894	$	1,051
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	1,712	$	1,933
FTEs		7		7
Total Support Service $		2,606		2,984
Total Support Service FTEs		11		11
% of Total $		27.8%		26.1%
% of Total FTEs		32.4%		32.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	9,383	$	11,419
TOTAL FTEs		34		34
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	919	$	44

Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 883	-	-	-	883
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	31,067	-	4,117	10,007	45,191
Inventory	584	-	-	-	584
Prepaids & Advances	1,503	-	-	-	1,503
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	50,172	-	-	406	50,578
Equities	84,681	-	9,094	81,609	175,384
Partnerships	5,152	-	-	12,045	17,197
Property (nonoperating)	90	-	-	7,194	7,284
PP & E	190,734	-	-	-	190,734
Other	-	-	-	1,720	1,720
Total Assets	364,866	-	13,211	112,981	491,058
Accounts Payable	15,851	-	-		15,851
Notes/Loans Payable	136,237	-	-	285	136,522
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	8,101	-	-	-	8,101
Deferred Income	1,062	-	11	-	1,073
Other	38,393	-	145	141	38,679
Total Liabilities	199,644	-	156	426	200,226
Net Assets	$ 165,222	-	13,055	112,555	290,832

Footnotes:

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

Note 2: List details of designations.

Note 3: List details of restrictions. Over 1,975 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 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	2,769	$	2,731
% of Total Income		2.5%		2.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	2,788	$	2,701
Estate Gifts	$	23	$	27
Total Gift Income		2,811		2,728
% of Total Income		2.5%		2.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	102,157	$	108,531
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	3,687	$	2,918
Total Other Income		105,844		111,449
% of Total Income		95.0%		95.3%
TOTAL INCOME		111,424		116,908
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Education	$	94,540	$	97,960
FTEs		592		611
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	94,540	$	97,960
Total Program Service FTEs		592		611
% of Total $		86.8%		86.1%
% of Total FTEs		78.7%		77.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	5,789	$	6,556
FTEs		64		71
Plant Operations	$	6,314	$	6,736
FTEs		66		71
Fund-raising	$	2,258	$	2,580
FTEs		30		36
Total Support Service $		14,361		15,872
Total Support Service FTEs		160		178
% of Total $		13.2%		13.9%
% of Total FTEs		21.3%		22.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	108,901	$	113,832
TOTAL FTEs		752		789
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	2,523	$	3,076

Calvin Theological Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 2,194	-	-	-	2,194
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	340	-	1,700	-	2,040
Receivables & Advances	88	899	172	-	1,159
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	376	-	5	-	381
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,722	-	-	-	10,722
Other		-	474	-	474
Total Assets	13,720	899	2,351	-	16,970
Accounts Payable	365	1,925	-	-	2,290
Notes/Loans Payable	146	294	-	-	440
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	268	-	-	-	268
Other	738	-	1,194	-	1,932
Total Liabilities	1,517	2,219	1,194	-	4,930
Net Assets	$ 12,203	(1,320)	1,157	-	12,040

Footnotes:

Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds $34,430M , Annuity payable $246M 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 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	2,898	$	3,178
% of Total Income		46.1%		47.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	801	$	668
Estate Gifts	$	13	$	13
Total Gift Income		814		681
% of Total Income		12.9%		10.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	2,026	$	2,106
Grants	$	442	$	635
Miscellaneous	$	108	$	98
Total Other Income		2,576		2,839
% of Total Income		41.0%		42.4%
TOTAL INCOME		6,288		6,698
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	$	2,715	$	2,688
FTEs		28		29
Public Service	$	51	$	44
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	$	932	$	1,100
FTEs		4		4
Student Services	$	524	$	505
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	$	226	$	662
FTEs		2		2
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	4,448	$	4,999
Total Program Service FTEs		39		40
% of Total $		72.1%		73.5%
% of Total FTEs		75.0%		76.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	913	$	905
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations	$	435	$	497
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising	$	377	$	396
FTEs		5		4
Total Support Service $		1,725		1,798
Total Support Service FTEs		13		12
% of Total $		27.9%		26.5%
% of Total FTEs		25.0%		23.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	6,173	$	6,797
TOTAL FTEs		52		52
		(429) *		
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(314)	$	(99)

* $-428,933 Cumulative effect of change in retirement accounting principle

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

	December 31, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 970	-	-	-	970
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	705	-	-	-	705
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	308	-	-	-	308
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	3,418		-	-	3,418
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,401	-	-	-	5,401
Accounts Payable	35	-	-	-	35
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	921	-	-	-	921
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	956	-	-	-	956
Net Assets	$ 4,445	-	-	-	4,445

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)

		2007 Actual		2008 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	$	9,955	$	10,578
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	276	$	203
Total Other Income		10,231		10,781
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		10,231		10,781
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Claims Expense	$	8,685	$	9,609
FTEs		-		-
Insurance Premiums	$	464	$	698
FTEs		-		-
TPA & PPO Fees	$	644	$	623
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	9,793	$	10,930
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		98.0%		98.2%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	202	$	199
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		202		199
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total $		4.3%		4.3%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	9,995	$	11,129
TOTAL FTEs		3		3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	236	$	(348)

Denominational Services
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 3,004	-	2,282	-	5,286
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,005	-	-	-	2,005
Inventory	253	-	-	-	253
Prepaids & Advances	158	-	-	-	158
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	413	-	-	-	413
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,945	-	-	-	5,945
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	11,778	-	2,282	-	14,060
Accounts Payable	2,004	-	-	-	2,004
Notes/Loans Payable	486	-	-	-	486
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,490	-	-	-	2,490
Net Assets	$ 9,288	-	2,282	-	11,570

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: $878,000 of Lilly SPE2 grant, $61,000 of AOYC, $1,318,000 Sea to Sea, and $25,000 other.

Note 4: List details of restrictions.

Denominational Services

Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	2,896	$	3,215
% of Total Income		82.2%		68.3%
			incls $1,374 Sea to Sea	
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	91	$	1,391
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		91		1,391
% of Total Income		2.6%		29.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-
Grants	$	-	$	-
Services & Misc	$	536	$	98
Total Other Income		536		98
% of Total Income		15.2%		2.1%
TOTAL INCOME		3,523		4,704
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	$	2,119	$	1,788
FTEs		5		5
Communications	$	245	$	327
FTEs		3		3
CRCPlan	$	136	$	126
FTEs		1		1
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	2,500	$	2,241
Total Program Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total $		73.1%		60.0%
% of Total FTEs		64.3%		60.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	871	$	1,000
FTEs		4		4
D.D.M.	$	-	$	142
FTEs		-		1
Fund-raising (Foundation)	$	50	$	355
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service $		921		1,497
Total Support Service FTEs		5		6
% of Total $		26.9%		40.0%
% of Total FTEs		35.7%		40.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	3,421	$	3,738
TOTAL FTEs		14		15
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	102	$	966

Denominational Services (Agency Services)

Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 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	$	4,704	$	4,953
Grants	$	-	$	-
Services & Misc	$	5,216	$	6,093
Total Other Income		9,920		11,046
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,920		11,046
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
CS/SL/PS Cost of Goods Sold	$	5,075	$	5,514
FTEs		27		26
Finance/Payroll/Advancement	$	2,337	$	2,551
FTEs		31		31
Information Technology	$	1,107	$	1,405
FTEs		7		9
Human Resources	$	447	$	536
FTEs		3		3
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	8,966	$	10,006
Total Program Service FTEs		68		69
% of Total $		90.4%		90.6%
% of Total FTEs		95.8%		94.5%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	$	954	$	1,040
FTEs		3		4
Fund-raising (Foundation)	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		954		1,040
Total Support Service FTEs		3		4
% of Total $		9.6%		9.4%
% of Total FTEs		4.2%		5.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	9,920	$	11,046
TOTAL FTEs		71		73
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	-	$	-

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

	December 31, 2008			
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.
Cash	$ 185	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	324		-	-
Equities	1,765		-	-
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	158		-	-
Property (nonoperating)			-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,432	-	-	-
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	$ 2,432	-	-	-

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)

		2007 Actual		2008 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	$	299	$	324
Participant Contributions	$	22	$	26
Miscellaneous	$	51	$	(355)
Total Other Income		372		(5)
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		372		(5)
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$	214	$	759
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	214	$	759
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs				
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	214	$	759
TOTAL FTEs		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	158	$	(764)

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

	December 31, 2008			
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.
Cash	$ -	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	3,360		-	-
Equities	9,145		-	-
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	3,203		-	-
Property (nonoperating)			-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	15,708	-	-	-
Accounts Payable	7	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	7	-	-	-
Net Assets	$ 15,701	-	-	-

Footnotes:

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

Note 2: List details of designations.

Note 3: List details of restrictions.

Note 4: List details of restrictions.

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

		2007 Actual		2008 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	$	1,117	$	1,656
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	1,635	$	(5,965)
Total Other Income		2,752		(4,309)
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		2,752		(4,309)
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$	943	$	1,601
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	943	$	1,601
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total $		93.6%		89.9%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	65	$	180
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		65		180
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total $		6.4%		10.1%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$	1,008	$	1,781
TOTAL FTEs		1		1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$	1,744	$	(6,090)

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 557	-	130	-	687
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	603	-	-	-	603
Inventory	2,283	-	-	-	2,283
Prepaids & Advances	18	-	-	-	18
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	1,241	1,500	-	-	2,741
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	24	-	-	-	24
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,726	1,500	130	-	6,356
Accounts Payable	881	-	-	-	881
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	79	-	-	-	79
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	960	-	-	-	960
Net Assets	$ 3,766	1,500	130	-	5,396

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.

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	1,051	$	1,234
% of Total Income		15.8%		19.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	295	$	393
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	-
Total Gift Income		295		393
% of Total Income		4.4%		6.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	4,536	$	4,410
Grants	$	418	$	238
Miscellaneous	$	371	$	73
Total Other Income		5,325		4,721
% of Total Income		79.8%		74.4%
TOTAL INCOME		6,671		6,348
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	$	1,234	$	1,270
FTEs		4		4
Education	$	3,487	$	3,422
FTEs		18		17
World Literature	$	371	$	282
FTEs		2		1
Teacher Training	$	-	$	140
FTEs		-		1
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	5,092	$	5,114
Total Program Service FTEs		24		23
% of Total $		84.9%		85.1%
% of Total FTEs		92.3%		92.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	904	$	897
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		904		897
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total $		15.1%		14.9%
% of Total FTEs		7.7%		8.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	5,996	$	6,011
TOTAL FTEs		26		25
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	675	$	337

Home Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 738	-	-	-	738
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	476	-	-	506	982
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds		364	-	-	364
Equities	1	7,763	82	197	8,043
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	43	-	-	-	43
PP & E	13	-	-	-	13
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,271	8,127	82	703	10,183
Accounts Payable	407	-	-	-	407
Notes/Loans Payable	24	-	-	-	24
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	281	-	-	-	281
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	712	-	-	-	712
Net Assets	$ 559	8,127	82	703	9,471

Footnotes:

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

Note 2: List details of designations. Other: $6,498 Hawaii: $1,427

Note 3: List details of restrictions. NA trng & real life church: $82

Note 4: List details of restrictions. Short term loan: $507 NA trn: $32 Trust: $165

Home Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	4,986	$	4,216
% of Total Income		60.0%		60.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	1,531	$	1,782
Estate Gifts	$	211	$	543
Total Gift Income		1,742		2,325
% of Total Income		21.0%		33.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-
Grants	$	70	$	178
Miscellaneous	$	1,508	$	300
Total Other Income		1,578		478
% of Total Income		19.0%		6.8%
TOTAL INCOME		8,306		7,019
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
New-Church Development	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Established & Small Churches	$	367	$	-
FTEs		2		-
Campus/schools	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Ministry Teams	$	5,322	$	6,170
FTEs		35		26
Ministry Devel & Planning	$	1,321	$	1,023
FTEs		8		6
	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	7,010	$	7,193
Total Program Service FTEs		45		32
% of Total $		79.9%		78.3%
% of Total FTEs		83.3%		74.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	920	$	965
FTEs		2		3
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	839	$	1,023
FTEs		7		8
Total Support Service $		1,759		1,988
Total Support Service FTEs		9		11
% of Total $		20.1%		21.7%
% of Total FTEs		16.7%		25.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	8,769	$	9,181
TOTAL FTEs		54		43
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(463)	$	(2,162)

Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 4,911	-	-	-	4,911
CDs, Time Deposits	3,000	-	-	-	3,000
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	28,057	-	-	-	28,057
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-		-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	35,968	-	-	-	35,968
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	30,255	-	-	-	30,255
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	30,255	-	-	-	30,255
Net Assets	$ 5,713	-	-	-	5,713

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 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 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	$	1,584	$	1,896
Total Other Income		1,584		1,896
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,584		1,896
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Loan Interest	$	1,030	$	1,279
FTEs		1		1
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	1,030	$	1,279
Total Program Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total $		83.3%		86.1%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	207	$	207
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service $		207		207
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total $		16.7%		13.9%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%		50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	1,237	$	1,486
TOTAL FTEs		2		2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	347	$	410

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

	December 31, 2008				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	$ 1,448	237	-	-	1,685
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	173	4	-	-	177
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	7,546	-	-	-	7,546
Equities	17,626	-	-	-	17,626
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	26,793	241	-	-	27,034
Accounts Payable	291	-	-	-	291
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	291	-	-	-	291
Net Assets	$ 26,502	241	-	-	26,743

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 2007 Actual	MPF 2008 Actual	SAF 2007 Actual	SAF 2008 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	$ -	$ -	$ 39	$ 42
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	84.8%	89.4%
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	$ 1,911	$ 1,982	$ -	$ -
Grants	$ 250	$ -	$ -	$ -
Miscellaneous	$ 1,670	$ (6,033)	$ 7	$ 5
Total Other Income	3,831	(4,051)	7	5
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	15.2%	10.6%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	3,831	(4,051)	46	47
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$ 2,061	$ 2,128	$ 17	$ 13
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service $	$ 2,061	$ 2,128	$ 17	$ 13
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total $	82.5%	83.2%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	$ 436	$ 429	$ -	$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $	436	429	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total $	17.5%	16.8%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$ 2,497	$ 2,557	$ 17	$ 13
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$ 1,334	$ (6,608)	$ 29	$ 34

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

	December 31, 2008				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	$ 2,258	212	-	-	2,470
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	413	-	-	-	413
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	17,259	-	-	-	17,259
Equities	53,142	-	-	-	53,142
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	69	-	-	-	69
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	73,141	212	-	-	73,353
Accounts Payable	229	2	-	-	231
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	229	2	-	-	231
Net Assets	$ 72,912	210	-	-	73,122

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 2007 Actual	MPF 2008 Actual	SAF 2007 Actual	SAF 2008 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	$ -	$ -	$ 91	$ 85
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	91.0%	93.4%
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	$ 4,559	$ 4,692	$ -	$ -
Grants	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Miscellaneous	$ 5,933	$ (33,546)	$ 9	$ 6
Total Other Income	10,492	(28,854)	9	6
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	9.0%	6.6%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	10,492	(28,854)	100	91
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	$ 6,897	$ 7,242	$ 81	$ 84
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service $	$ 6,897	$ 7,242	$ 81	$ 84
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total $	88.4%	88.2%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	$ 909	$ 971	$ -	$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service $	909	971	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total $	11.6%	11.8%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	$ 7,806	$ 8,213	$ 81	$ 84
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	$ 2,686	$ (37,067)	$ 19	$ 7

Specialized Ministries
Balance Sheet (000s)

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

Specialized Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	2,744	$	3,348
% of Total Income		86.9%		66.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	336	$	414
Estate Gifts	$	-	$	26
Total Gift Income		336		440
% of Total Income		10.6%		8.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	204
Grants	$	-	$	1,000
Miscellaneous	$	79	$	38
Total Other Income		79		1,242
% of Total Income		2.5%		24.7%
TOTAL INCOME		3,159		5,030
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	$	192	$	185
FTEs		1		1
Race Relations	$	338	$	433
FTEs		3		3
Pastor-Church Relations	$	525	$	552
FTEs		3		3
Abuse Prevention	$	167	$	172
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	$	236	$	271
FTEs		1		2
Social & Restorative Justice		319		396
FTEs		4		4
Sust. Pastoral & Church Excellence		497		957
FTEs		2		2
Ministries in Canada	$	672	$	1,033
FTEs		4		4
Total Program Service $	$	2,946	$	3,999
Total Program Service FTEs		19		20
% of Total $		95.2%		99.0%
% of Total FTEs		95.0%		95.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	52	$	7
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	95	$	32
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service $		147		39
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total $		4.8%		1.0%
% of Total FTEs		5.0%		4.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	3,093	$	4,038
TOTAL FTEs		20		21
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	66	$	992

Lilly SPE2 Grant

World Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ 1,691	715	334	-	2,740
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	647	9	1	3	660
Inventory	38	-	-	-	38
Prepaids & Advances	95	-	-	-	95
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	99	1,080	94	566	1,839
Equities	100	1,081	94	566	1,840
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	556	-	-	-	556
Other	8	-	-	-	8
Total Assets	3,234	2,885	523	1,135	7,776
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	$ 3,234	2,885	523	1,135	7,776

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 $165 - Japan note $475

Note 3: List details of restrictions. Restricted Gifts, missionary support and program support.

Note 4: List details of restrictions. Endowments.

World Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	4,997	$	5,024
% of Total Income		38.3%		37.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	6,793	$	6,980
Estate Gifts	$	374	$	1,253
Total Gift Income		7,167		8,233
% of Total Income		55.0%		60.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-
Grants	$	-	$	-
Miscellaneous	$	873	$	281
Total Other Income		873		281
% of Total Income		6.7%		2.1%
TOTAL INCOME		13,037		13,538
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	$	3,483	$	4,088
FTEs		33		31
Eurasia	$	2,056	$	2,975
FTEs		21		24
Latin America	$	4,016	$	4,036
FTEs		28		27
Europe	$	812	$	-
FTEs		8		-
Education	$	681	$	640
FTEs		7		8
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	11,048	$	11,739
Total Program Service FTEs		97		90
% of Total $		83.5%		84.0%
% of Total FTEs		88.2%		85.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	1,035	$	1,066
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	1,146	$	1,175
FTEs		8		10
Total Support Service $		2,181		2,241
Total Support Service FTEs		13		15
% of Total $		16.5%		16.0%
% of Total FTEs		11.8%		14.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	13,229	$	13,980
TOTAL FTEs		110		105
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(192)	$	(442)

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2008				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	$ -	3,998	5,919	-	9,917
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,950	400	883	-	3,233
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepaids & Advances	94	-	-	-	94
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	22	-	22
Equities	-	1,296	1,986	23	3,305
Partnerships	-	376	-	-	376
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	528	-	119	-	647
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,572	6,070	8,929	23	17,594
Accounts Payable	1,291	-	-	-	1,291
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	330	-	-	-	330
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,621	-	-	-	1,621
Net Assets	$ 951	6,070	8,929	23	15,973

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 = $4,064
Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = $2,005 9/11 funds = $1

Note 3: List details of restrictions.
Mission home = $119 Purpose-restricted gifts = $8,461
7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = $349

Note 4: List details of restrictions.
Pure endowments = $23

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

		Fiscal 06-07 Actual		Fiscal 07-08 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$	-	$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$	14,276	$	16,952
Estate Gifts	$	1,077	$	2,487
Total Gift Income		15,353		19,439
% of Total Income		58.8%		51.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	$	-	$	-
Grants	$	8,781	$	16,721
Miscellaneous	$	1,996	$	1,820
Total Other Income		10,777		18,541
% of Total Income		41.2%		48.8%
TOTAL INCOME		26,130		37,980
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	$	11,217	$	12,101
FTEs		53		56
North America programs	$	1,625	$	1,579
FTEs		6		5
Disaster relief programs	$	12,846	$	18,048
FTEs		13		14
Above-budget relief costs	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Education	$	652	$	1,034
FTEs		5		5
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
	$	-	$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service $	$	26,340	$	32,762
Total Program Service FTEs		77		80
% of Total $		88.0%		89.4%
% of Total FTEs		74.8%		75.5%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$	2,051	$	2,115
FTEs		7		8
Plant Operations	$	-	$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	$	1,529	$	1,775
FTEs		19		18
Total Support Service $		3,580		3,890
Total Support Service FTEs		26		26
% of Total $		12.0%		10.6%
% of Total FTEs		25.2%		24.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$	29,920	$	36,652
TOTAL FTEs		103		106
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	$	(3,790)	$	1,328

REPORT 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 name of the agency or educational institution. 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 are the story of how God is blessing our ministry through the agencies of the Christian Reformed 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

Back to God Ministries International is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Formerly known as The Back to God Hour, the name of the agency was changed at Synod 2008 to better reflect the wide scope of its work, both in terms of ministry programming and geographical reach.

Back to God Ministries International operates with the following 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 the need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction. In addition, Back to God Ministries International gives leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communications media.

Back to God Ministries International employs appropriate media tools that effectively communicate the message of God's redemptive work within specific cultural contexts, building strong ministry partnerships that nurture the transformation of lives, communities, and societies.

II. Ministries of Back to God Ministries International

Through the use of media, Back to God Ministries International proclaims the story of God's unfailing love worldwide in order that lives and communities might be transformed by God's grace. Ministry leaders who are native speakers of their ministry languages provide leadership in the production of culturally relevant programs and related ministry to present Jesus Christ and help people grow in faith. Back to God Ministries International seeks to be "fluent within the cultures where its voice is heard" and is committed to be an agent of personal and cultural transformation as the message of Christ's reign is proclaimed.

In the past year, Back to God Ministries International has brought the good news of Christ to both the great cities of the world and to rural, isolated areas where the gospel is heard only through media witness. The gospel has been proclaimed via radio, television, print, the Internet, and telephone messaging. Response has flowed to Back to God Ministries International through phone, mail, and email, by visits to follow-up centers, or by contact to local churches identified with Back to God Ministries International. Back to God staff and trained volunteers have offered spiritual guidance and prayer, referred people to Christian counselors, and helped seekers find church homes. Prayer requests are sent to a network of partners who covenant to pray regularly.

During the past year, difficult economic conditions have seriously affected the income of the agency. As of January 2009, program cuts were implemented in order to reduce the rate at which the agency will need to dip into reserves. Back to God Ministries International is taking needed steps to bring expenditures into line with projected revenue for the coming fiscal year. These steps include a strategic review of program. This process is under way at the time of the preparation of this report.

A. Arabic-language ministry

Back to God Ministries International maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope (the 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. During the past year, the ministry partnership significantly increased the number of hours broadcast each week to Arabic listeners throughout the Middle East. A text-messaging system is experiencing a growing number of responses from areas of the Muslim world, in which open conversation about the Christian faith would invite persecution. Our partnership with MERF allows Back to God Ministries International to pursue broadcasting in the context of holistic mission. In addition to broadcasting, MERF also trains church leaders, supports church plants, and provides relief support. Rev. Victor Atallah provides leadership for the Arabic broadcast ministry.

B. English-language ministry

Back to God Ministries International English-language team, led by Rev. Steven Koster, continues to explore and develop ways to reach broad audiences for Christ—both in North America and around the world. The English ministry team is working to harness the use of social networking systems to communicate more effectively with people who are seeking to understand the gospel. The English-language ministry has many facets:

1. A weekly half-hour radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, proclaims the historic Christian faith throughout the globe. This program is heard on more than one hundred North American stations, on nineteen major stations in metropolitan areas of Nigeria, and on short-wave radio worldwide. It is also podcast on *The Back to God Hour* website. A follow-up center in Nigeria operates in concert with World Missions personnel and indigenous church leadership.

2. *Walk the Way* is the ministry's daily one-minute radio program. *Walk the Way* offers a brief story or point to consider, and it directs listeners to the *Walk the Way* website, where additional Christian resources are available. This radio program is meant to engage younger adults in thinking through the implications and claims of the gospel of Christ. *Walk the Way* is now carried on more than 500 stations throughout North America.

3. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication *TODAY* (daily devotions in a bimonthly format). Budget constraints have forced the ministry to reduce the number of devotional booklets distributed to 330,000 bi-monthly. *TODAY* is still distributed worldwide, including a significant distribution in Nigeria. At the same time, Back to God Ministries International is promoting distribution of *TODAY* through podcast, email, and RSS feed. *TODAY* is also available for automatic placement on websites of local churches.

4. *Kids Corner* radio program is now heard on more than 400 stations in North America, including the Moody Radio Network. *Kids Corner* has a new look and a new website, meant to be more engaging to children. At www.KidsCorner.net children can listen to the programs and

request music CDs, bookmarks, and other fun disciple-making activities. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children. *Kids Corner* is a partner with HisKids.net, an alliance of Christian children's radio programs. HisKids.net webcasts *Kids Corner* and is helping to raise awareness of the program among our potential audience.

5. *Think Christian* is a web-based ministry now directed by Back to God Ministries International (obtained from Gospel.com). *Think Christian* (www.thinkchristian.net) is a collaborative blog read by almost one thousand people each day who seek to converse about the intersection of Christianity and culture. Articles posted by Back to God Ministries International help to guide conversations that help visitors "think Christian" in their daily lives. The site receives worldwide traffic, with a large number of visitors coming from Great Britain and Australia.

6. This past year, Back to God Ministries International launched *Under the Radar.* This radio program combines less familiar Christian music and testimonies by Christian musicians to share the gospel. The new program is already airing on 40 broadcast outlets.

7. Back to God Ministries International 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 slowed delivery rate to target an international audience of those who speak English as a second language. In addition to radio broadcasting, listeners increasingly are connecting to the program through the *Spotlight* website. Several areas of significant traffic are in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Efforts are now under way to form "listener groups" where *Spotlight* listeners gather to practice English and interact with Christians from their local communities.

8. Back to God Ministries International is exploring ways to assist churches in using media to reach out to their communities. We are launching a web-based ministry to connect with media volunteers, many of them younger members of the churches, who assist the media ministries of their congregations. The goal of this new ministry is to empower local churches to use media effectively to minister within their congregation and to reach out to their communities.

C. Chinese-language ministry

The Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 brought a new openness on the part of China to the outside world. Chinese-language ministry, led by Rev. Jimmy Lin and his team, are seeking to take advantage of that openness to move forward in witness to a land that is home to over 1.3 billion people. Seven super-power stations located outside the country beam the gospel to China in Cantonese or Mandarin. Back to God Ministries International staff in Hong Kong provide follow-up and listener contact for the twelve programs produced each week.

Millions of Chinese-speakers are immigrants to other countries. Chinese programs produced by Back to God Ministries International target these immigrant populations through broadcasting heard in major metropolitan areas in Australia, Canada, Central America, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, and the United States. In some of these areas, the programming is bilingual.

The Internet will become an increasingly important delivery system for Chinese programming. China is on the verge of having more Internet users than any country on earth. The Chinese-language ministry now sponsors four Chinese websites, including a children's website with programming specifically targeted to Chinese-speaking children and their parents. New in 2008 is a website that attracts people interested in learning English—and introduces them to biblical truth. Additional avenues of media distribution for the Chinese ministry include print, CDs, and DVDs.

D. French-language ministry

The main focus of the French-language ministry is in Africa, Haiti, and parts of Europe where the population includes French-speaking immigrants from Africa. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, gives leadership to this ministry. The response to the French-language ministry continues to demonstrate amazing results—for example, more than 50,000 students enrolled in Bible study courses in 2008. Joining Rev. Paul Mpindi in radio programming is his wife, Ms. Charlotte Mpindi, who hosts a popular program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's issues pertinent to the African context. In March 2009 a major stadium event will be held in Bangui, Central African Republic. Hundreds of local pastors have been trained for this event, which will help to build strong connections to local churches in providing ministry to those who respond to Back to God Ministries programming. In addition, several follow-up centers operate in Congo; Central African Republic; Benin; and Brussels, Belgium. This past year a ministry center opened in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions. Initial response to programming in Haiti suggests this ministry center will provide significant ministry once it is fully operative.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and Christians there have experienced significant pressure because of their faith in Christ. In spite of these obstacles, the Indonesian ministry of Back to God Ministries International is witnessing with boldness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Indonesia, Back to God Ministries International works in partnership with the Indonesian Christian Church, an established denomination of 300,000 committed to the Reformed faith. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya leads a team that produces six radio programs, publishes four devotional booklets bimonthly (targeting different age groups), and maintains an active Internet ministry. *Evergreen House,* a children's television program, has been well received.

In partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions, the Indonesian-language ministry has been successful in establishing more than one hundred "Listening Communities" in rural areas where radio broadcasting is the main source of spiritual nurture. These "Listening Communities" gather monthly for fellowship and Bible study. At present, more than 11,500 listeners participate in this program from across Indonesia.

F. Japanese-language ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic media ministry in the Japanese language. The ministry has shifted away from short-wave to medium-wave broadcasting in order to be in step with changes in radio delivery within Japan. In addition, the Internet allows for web delivery of seven audio programs. Highly advanced cell phone technology allows for effective text messaging of devotions to over 21,000 subscribers. The Japanese ministry also hosts an active website that offers the opportunity for Internet users to engage staff in online social networking conversations. In 2008 we expanded broadcast into rural areas of Japan in partnership with local churches. Nearly five hundred Bible study students have completed the correspondence course offered by our Japanese ministry. Regular events are also held to allow listeners to meet for face-to-face encouragement and Bible instruction.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, telephone, print, and the Internet are important components of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The office in Campinas is responsible not only for production and distribution of all the Portuguese-language programs but also for production of Back to God Ministries International Spanish-language media programs. A new media center, now in the process of construction, will significantly increase the impact of Latin American ministry and allow for work in other languages as well. In addition, the Portuguese ministry continues to explore outreach to Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil is a significant partner in this ministry, helping to fund television programs and providing support for a telephone ministry that reaches more than 300,000 people each month.

H. Russian-language ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin gives leadership to the Russian media ministry. While stationed in North America, Rev. Sosedkin also spends significant time in Russia, engaging in live radio broadcasting as well as in personal contact with listeners who respond to this ministry.

The Russian staff of Back to God Ministries International is located in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, with most follow-up work carried out in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions. The Russian-language ministry has three primary delivery sources: radio broadcasting, Internet, and collaborative work with Russian Christian periodicals. Short-wave broadcasting of Rev. Sosedkin's program covers all of Russia and Russian-speaking countries in Eastern Europe, with live call-in programs occurring weekly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Rev. Sosedkin and his Russian staff have also established an excellent working relationship with St. Petersburg Christian University, often conducting classes there in the effective use of media in church settings. The Internet site not only ministers to people within the country but increasingly is becoming a point of contact with Russian speakers around the world.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly 400 radio stations and 100 television stations carry Back to God Ministries International Spanish-language programming, including a TV series for children aired in three countries. Our broadcast ministry reaches Central

and South America, as well as Spain. In addition, broadcasts within North America reach Spanish-speaking populations north of the Mexican border. Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to the Spanish ministry.

Rev. Serrano and his staff continue to conduct workshops in homiletics and in the use of media, training 135 pastors and church leaders in 2008, bringing to almost 900 the number of pastors and church leaders who have received this training. These workshops build strong working relationships for Spanish-language ministry by building partnerships with local pastors as well as those who staff radio and television stations throughout Latin America.

Like Portuguese ministry, Spanish ministry will be strengthened through the construction of the new ministry center in Campinas, Brazil, scheduled for dedication in spring 2010.

J. Korean-language ministry

Back to God Ministries International continues to partner with the Korean Council of the Christian Reformed Church to produce a bilingual *TODAY* in both the Korean and English languages. Begun in 2008, production has grown from 7,000 to 10,000. The Korean-English *TODAY* will not only nurture Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church but will be an effective evangelism tool both in North America and beyond.

K. New ministry opportunity

In a world of rapidly changing technology and ministry opportunity, we continue to evaluate new opportunities and delivery systems for the gospel. Back to God Ministries International is exploring partnerships that would move our media witness into northern India through broadcasting in the Hindi language. In addition, the ministry is in conversation with the Timothy Institute of Calvin Theological Seminary to explore ways in which Timothy materials could be employed for effective training and follow-up. These discussions unfold in a climate of economic uncertainty that calls for fiscal restraint. Back to God Ministries International, however, is convinced that the present financial challenges call for careful strategic thought regarding the opportunities God is giving us. God continues to open doors before us. Back to God Ministries International will continue to carefully assess those opportunities and move strategically to maximize our media witness to Christ.

L. Cooperative organizations

Back to God Ministries International cannot carry out its mission unilaterally. Strong partnerships create synergy for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. Among the organizations with which Back to God Ministries International cooperates are the following:

- CRC World Missions—joint ministry in Japan, Russia, Mexico, Haiti, and Nigeria.
- Korean Council of the Christian Reformed Church—publication of Korean-English *TODAY* devotionals.
- CRC Proservices—publication of selected materials.
- Selected developing Christian Reformed congregations—increased visibility of new church plants through the use of electronic media.
- Crossroad Bible Institute—follow-up ministry through a Bible study correspondence program.

- Words of Hope (media ministry of the Reformed Church of America) and MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship)—media outreach to the Arabic-speaking world.
- Words of Hope and FEBA (a Christian radio ministry headquartered in the United Kingdom)—production of *Spotlight*, a simplified English ministry targeting an international audience.
- HisKids.net—Christian children's radio programming.
- Reformed denominations in Japan (Reformed Church of Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church)—major joint-ministry partnerships.

III. The BTGMI board

A. Function

Back to God Ministries International 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; Mrs. Ellen Hamilton, vice president; Mrs. Carol Woltjer, secretary; and Mr. Harry Boessenkool, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

Mr. Harry Boessenkool (at-large), Rev. Bruce Persenaire (Region 6), Mr. Lorin Bossenbroek (Region 11), and Mr. Jim Putt (Region 12) are completing their first term on the board. The Back to God Ministries International board recommends that synod reappoint these members to a second three-year term.

The following slate of nominees will be presented to the classes in Region 3 for vote and the results presented to synod for ratification:

Region 3

Rev. Jake Kuipers pursued a career in banking and management training before being called to the ministry of the Word. Rev Kuipers has served four congregations during the past 31 years, and is presently pastor of Ebenezer CRC in Trenton, Ontario. Rev. Kuipers has served as a delegate on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and on the board of Christian Reformed Home Missions. He has served as Trustee on the Ministers' Pension Committee, and has also served on various classical committees.

Rev. Ed Visser pursued a career as an electronics technician before being called to the ministry of the Word. Rev. Visser served with Christian Reformed World Missions in the Philippines before serving three congregations in the past 28 years. He is presently pastor of Westside Fellowship CRC in Kingston, Ontario. Rev. Visser has served on the board of Christian Reformed World Missions and on a Board of Trustees appointed subcommittee to revise Church Order Article 13-a. He and his wife are active in Reformed Marriage Encounter.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

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

IV. Recommendations

A. That Mr. Sybren Vander Zwaag, president; and Rev. Robert C. Heerspink, director of Back to God Ministries International, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Ministries International matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the results of the election of a board member.

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.

Back to God Ministries International
Robert C. Heerspink, director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the September 2008 and the February 2009 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

The September 2008 meeting of the thirty-one-member Calvin College Board of Trustees was held in a retreat setting off-campus on Mackinaw Island, Michigan. The February meeting was held at the Prince Conference Center.

Board officers elected for 2008-2009 are: Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, chair; Mr. Ronald Baylor, vice-chair; Ms. Thelma Venema, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary; and Dr. Henry DeVries, vice president for administration, finance, and information services, treasurer.

II. General college matters

During the September 2008 meeting, the board appointed trustees to board committees for each division of the college, membership of the executive committee, and membership of trustees on six college standing committees. Since retreats also include a learning segment, the board had two morning-long seminars: one on the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) training, led by trustees Rev. Harry Lew and Rev. Norberto Wolf (both certified DORR trainers); and the other on Calvin's global outreach led by Dr. Joel Carpenter, director of the Nagel Institute on Global Christianity and director of the Calvin Summer Seminars, which brings Christian scholars and their families from campuses around the world for a summer of collaborative study. The February 2009 meeting was spent conducting sixteen faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure and in hearing committee reports. The board also participated in the dedication events for the new Spoelhof Fieldhouse Complex and attended a dinner with faculty for presentation of the President's Award for Exemplary Teaching. Mr. Roy Stallworth, member of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, attended the meeting as an observer.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty interviews

Sixteen faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2009 meeting. Eight were for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations), and eight were for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Dr. David Warners, professor of biology, was presented the seventeenth 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.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

Board members from the following regions are completing their second three-year terms. Nominees will be presented to the classes in these regions for vote and the results presented to synod for ratification. We are grateful for the service of retiring members: Mr. Martin Mudde (Region 3), Mr. Ronald Leistra (Region 5), Rev. Gerald Hoek (Region 9), Rev. Joseph Brinks (Region 10), and Mr. James Haagsma (Region 11).

Region 3

Dr. Laurens (Larry) Vandergrift, B.Ed., French, Calvin College; M.Ed., Universté d'Ottawa; Ph.D., University of Alberta.

Dr. Vandergrift, a member of Calvin Christian Reformed Church, Ottawa, Ontario, has spent his entire career as an educator and a churchman. As a graduate of Calvin College, he continued his education and served as a national researcher in the study and teaching of listening comprehension in second-language learning. He taught and served as a counselor for twenty-two years at the secondary level at Edmonton Christian School, and is currently a full professor in the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute at the University of Ottawa. Mr. Vandergrift served his church and community as a deacon, elder, chair of worship committee, and catechism teacher at Third CRC in Edmonton. In Ontario, he has served on the Chaplaincy Committee, chair of the Intensive French Committee at Ottawa Christian School, and as elder for discipline and chair of the Education Committee (Calvin CRC). He served on the board of Ottawa Christian School and on the education committees of both Calvin Christian School and Calvin Christian High School. His two children also studied at Calvin College.

Rev. Ronald Smeding, B.S., Kinesiology, University of Waterloo; B.Ed., University of Western Ontario; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Smeding served as a science and physical education teacher, coach, athletic director, and, eventually, vice-principal for fifteen years at Quinte Christian High School in Belleville, Ontario, where he and his wife were also active in the Maranatha CRC and Christian school communities. Mr. Smeding served at Maranatha as elder for youth, marriage mentor, and education committee chair. In 2001, after identifying a call to ministry, he moved with his wife and family so that he could attend Calvin Theological Seminary. During his five years in seminary he served as pastor to youth at Trinity CRC in Grandville, and a summer assignment in Bowmanville. He then was called to serve as pastor of Rehoboth CRC. Rev. Smeding has one daughter that graduated from Calvin and has two children currently attending Calvin.

Region 5

Dr. Karen L. Westra, B.A., Calvin College; M.S., Social Service Administration, Case Western Reserve University; Ph.D. Social Welfare, Case Western Reserve University.

Dr. Westra, a member of Faith Community Fellowship CRC in Washington, graduated from Calvin College and fully partnered with her husband through his years at Calvin Theological Seminary and in his twenty years of ministry. Together they worked through racial transition (Cleveland, Ohio), church planting (Phoenix, Arizona), and currently serve an established

missional church (Mt. Vernon, Washington). In each church, she served as worship director, developed praise teams, directed choirs, taught Friendship classes, and hosted newcomers. She also uses her education and gifts in the public sector to serve persons with disabilities, those on public assistance, food stamps, child care support, and health care. For the past six years she has been owner and operator of Leadership Incorporated: Riverside Health Club. Ms. Westra has also served her community on the Skagit Valley College Resource Center board, the Skagit Valley Healthy Aging Committee, as chair of the Chamber of Commerce, and on the board of Mount Vernon Christian School, to name a few.

Mr. Dale H. Venhuizen, B.S., Agricultural Business, Montana State University.

Mr. Venhuizen is an active member of Bethel CRC in Manhatttan, Montana. He has served his church as a deacon and elder; has been chair of the Manhattan Christian School board and also was a member of the long-range planning committee at Manhattan Christian. He is the president and CEO of Churchill Cattle Company, and serves his community as president of the Montana Hereford Association, president of the American Hereford Association, and a member of the Manhattan Christian School Foundation. He and his wife Nancy have three daughters and one son-in-law that have graduated from Calvin College, and their fourth daughter will graduate from Calvin in 2009. Mr. Venhuizen has a love for Christian education, both on the local and national scale, and a visionary love and passion for the future of Calvin College.

Region 9

Mr. William J. Katt, B.A., Calvin College; J.D., Marquette University.

Mr. Katt is known for his skills of leadership, spiritual maturity, Reformed worldview, and his commitment to Christian education. After graduating from Calvin, he earned a degree in law and worked as a shareholder and on the management team of a Milwaukee law firm for eighteen years. In 1998 he started his own firm and is the president of Leib & Katt, LLC. He and his wife are members of Brookfield CRC where he has served as an elder and as council president. He has been a delegate to Classis Wisconsin and is active as the president of the Board of Brookfield Christian School. Mr Katt has served as leader of the men's ministry, small group ministry, evangelism team and was on the expansion team for the new addition of Brookfield Church. The Katt's have four sons, one a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and one that is presently a student at Calvin College. He also has two daughters-in-law who graduated from Calvin.

Rev. Joel W. Zuidema, B.A., Calvin College; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Zuidema graduated with a degree in philosophy from Calvin College and went on to Calvin Theological Seminary. He graduated in 1991 with an M.Div. and has pastored churches in Austin, Texas; Round Rock, Texas; McBain, Michigan; and is currently pastor of Roselawn CRC in DeMotte, Indiana. He has been a member of the classis Home Missions committee in Classis Northern Michigan and Classis Illiana. He also served the denomination for four years as secretary of the CRC Youth Ministries Committee. His daughter graduated from Calvin.

Region 10

Rev. Timothy Howerzyl, B.A., Calvin College; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary; Ph.D. candidate in Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Rev. Howerzyl currently serves as pastor of the First CRC of Allendale, Michigan. He received degrees from Calvin College in philosophy and English, and is completing a Ph.D. in theology. He has a love for the Reformed commitment to Christian education at all levels, and was the pastor of the Evergreen Park CRC in Illinois for four years. Rev. Howerzyl has served the CRC as an alternate to the Board of Trustees. He was a member of the finance committee for Classis Chicago South, with two years as chair; and he served as a delegate to synod. He has served Classis Zeeland as a member of the ministerial leadership team, and as a synodical deputy alternate. He is deeply committed to the mission of Calvin College as a Reformed institution of higher learning.

Mr. David VanRandwyk, B.S., Calvin College; M.E., University of Michigan.

Mr. VanRandwyk is a member of Trinity CRC in Grandville, Michigan. He is currently semi-retired after thirty-two years with Buursma Electronics, a multi-state electronics equipment distributor headquartered in Grand Rapids. For the last twenty-two years he was CEO of the company. Mr. VanRandwyk has served the denomination, church, and school on the Jenison Christian School Board as vice president and treasurer; on church council as elder (clerk, vice president, and vicar); on the Intermediate School Advisory Board; and he was a member of the Calvin College Parent Council for two years. He has also been a member of the Back to God Ministries International Advancement Board. His three children are Calvin graduates, and he has a heart for Calvin College and its mission.

Region 11

Rev. Randall D. Engle, B.A., Calvin College; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary; M.Th., Sacred Music, Luther Seminary; Ph.D., University of Wales.

Rev. Engle graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and served as pastor and music director at Calvary CRC in Bloomington, Minnesota, for eight years. He is currently the pastor of North Hills CRC in Troy, Michigan. He has had numerous articles published in theological and worship journals including *Reformed Worship*, and *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, and regularly writes reviews for the "Tuned In" column of *The Banner*. His board service includes president-elect of the Choristers Guild of America; chaplain, Southeast Michigan Chapter of the American Guild of Organists; the Calvin College Alumni Regional Chapter Board; and as an alternate on the Calvin Board of Trustees. He has served Classis Lake Erie as a synodical deputy, and is a sought after conference speaker in the area of Calvinism studies as well as on liturgy and church music.

Mr. John Miedema, B.A., Calvin College; MBA, University of Michigan.

Mr. Miedema lived in the Detroit area following graduate school, and John worked in the business field while there. His family joined the Cherry Hill CRC where he served as an elder. After moving to Grand Rapids, they joined Brookside CRC. Mr. Miedema worked at Modern Litho until he purchased Vacationland Sales, an RV business, at which he currently serves as president. As a professional he is a member of the Recreational Park Trailer

Industry Association and of the Michigan Association of Recreational Motor Vehicles. Mr. Miedema has served as an administrative elder and a shepherding elder (twice for each). He served on the church personnel committee, the evangelism committee, and one term as council chair. He has taught eighth grade catechism for a number of years. Mr. Miedema has a deep commitment for Christian education and knowledge of the community. Four of his children graduated from Calvin College, in addition to one daughter-in-law.

Mr. Roger N. Brummel (Region 10) is completing his first term on the board. The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends that synod reappoint Mr. Brummel to a second three-year term.

B. Alumni trustee

Alumni Trustee Mrs. Ruth J. Vis resigned in December 2008, due to new employment at Calvin College. She would have completed her second term in 2009. We are grateful for her years of service to the board. The Calvin Alumni Association Board will present a candidate at the May 2009 meeting to be forwarded to Synod 2009 for election.

C. At-large trustees

The third term for Rev. Norberto Wolf expires in 2009. The Trusteeship Committee will recommend his replacement at the May 2009 meeting and submit the names for election at Synod 2009.

Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers and Rev. Harry Lew are completing their second terms in 2009. The Trusteeship Committee recommends that synod appoint them for a third term of three years.

Mr. Scott A. Spoelhof will be completing his first term as an at-large trustee. The board recommends that synod appoint him for a second three-year term.

V. Finance

The board approved the 2009-2010 tuition and room and board rates. Tuition and fees will increase by 3.8 percent to $24,035; the room and board rate will increase by 3.8 percent to $8,275. Financial aid is proposed to increase by at least 6.8 percent. The final 2009-2010 budget will be adopted at the May board meeting when fall enrollment numbers are more certain.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, and to 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. Michael D. Bolt, Ph.D., associate professor of mathematics
2. Debra J. Buursma, Ph.D., *associate* professor of education
3. Mark T. Mulder, Ph.D., *associate* professor of sociology
4. Christopher R. Smit, Ph.D., *associate* professor of communication arts and sciences
5. Douglas Vander Griend, Ph.D., *associate* professor of chemistry

6. Gerald K. Van Kooten, Ph.D., professor of geology
7. Julie A. Voskuil, Ph.D., *associate* professor of business and accounting

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot reelect members for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the results of the elections for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Thelma Venema, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents their report to Synod 2009 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

I. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary sessions in October 2008 and February 2009.

The board officers are Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; Dr. Henk Van Andel, vice-chair; and Rev. Kevin J. Adams, secretary.

The board recommends that synod reappoint the following seminary trustees who have completed one term of service and are eligible for a second three-year term: Dr. John Ratmeyer (Region 7), Rev. Greg Dyk (Region 8), Dr. Byron Noordewier (Region 8) and Mrs. Doris Rikkers (Region 11).

The board recommends that synod reappoint Mr. Douglas L. Kool as a trustee at-large for a third term. Mr. Kool is completing his second term and is eligible for a third three-year term.

The following slates of nominees were submitted to classes in their respective regions for voting at the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be ratified by Synod 2009.

Region 4

Mr. Hank Vander Laan is a member of the First CRC in London, Ontario, where he has served as an elder and deacon. Currently he is serving as a corporate board adviser to the Ontario Ministry of Trade and Economic Development.

Mrs. Petronella (Nell) Vanturennout is a member of the Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, where she has served as an elder. She is a former junior high school teacher who worked with children with special needs in primary and junior divisions.

Region 5

Rev. Ladan A. Jennings is pastor of the Mill Creek Community CRC, Mill Creek, Washington. She earned her M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary and has served on the Home Missions board of the CRC.

Rev. William S. Wilton is pastor of the Sunrise CRC of McMinnville, Oregon. He earned his M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1999 and has pastored the Sunrise congregation in McMinnville since 2001.

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., as president; Rev. Duane K. Kelderman as vice president for administration; and Dr. Henry De Moor as vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Dr. Donald E. 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 adviser.

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.

The board dealt with the reappointment of two faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2009:

John M. Rottman, associate professor of preaching for two years
John D. Witvliet, associate professor of worship (half-time) for two years

The board declared a vacancy for the faculty position of professor of missions and evangelism to be filled as soon as possible

The board granted a one year sabbatical (September 1, 2009, to August 31, 2010) to vice president Dr. Henry De Moor. The board expressed gratitude to Dr. De Moor for his service to the seminary and the CRC as vice president for academic affairs for the past eight years.

IV. Program highlights

Calvin Theological Seminary adopted a new three-year M.Div. curriculum that will begin in the fall of 2009. The curriculum retains the strengths of a classical theological education with renewed emphases upon preaching, spiritual formation, contextualized ministry, and congregational leadership. The seminary received invaluable input from pastors and other church members throughout the development of the new curriculum.

The seminary will move in the fall of 2009 from a quarter system to a semester system (two semesters with a January term and a May term). The semester system will offer teaching and learning advantages, better coordination with many other colleges and seminaries, and increased flexibility for students who wish to build additional off-campus ministry experiences into their education.

The Calvin Theological Seminary *Forum* magazine continues to be highly appreciated. The Fall 2008 issue on baptism brought requests from churches for extra copies for council and adult education discussions, and increased requests for free subscriptions from individuals. The issue on renewing teaching and learning offered assistance to churches on this topic and presented the new curriculum that the seminary is implementing in the fall. The *Forum* is available online at www.calvinseminary.edu/pubs/forum.

In order to prepare future CRC pastors and other ministry leaders, the seminary desires to know the names of people who are considering vocational ministry or who, in the estimation of local pastors and other church leaders, have gifts for ministry and should be considering vocational ministry. Please send an email to the director of admissions, Rev. Greg Janke (gjanke0@calvinseminary.edu), with such names. Seminary staff is very sensitive in how they communicate with such persons. The more information you provide, the more sensitively the seminary is able to build bridges to potential seminarians.

The Calvin Theological Seminary and the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) websites continue to offer pastors and other church leaders with excellent online resources. The number of visitors to these sites who listen to lectures and sermons continues to increase. These and many other ministry resources are available at www.calvinseminary.edu.

V. Students

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

Christian Reformed students: 165
Non-Christian Reformed students: 113
International (does not include Canadian students): 60

Programs:
M.Div.: 128
M.A.: 40
M.T.S.: 8
Th.M.: 42
Ph.D.: 37
*EPMC: 15
Unclassified: 8
Male students: 217
Female students: 61

* Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, chair; and Rev. Kevin J. Adams, secretary, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the election and reelection of trustees from the slates of nominees presented.

C. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments:

John M. Rottman, associate professor of preaching for two years
John D. Witvliet, associate professor of worship (half-time) for two years

D. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the Facing Your Future program and the Ministry Incentive 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
Kevin J. Adams, secretary

I. Introduction

A. Our mandate

Synod has mandated Christian Reformed Home Missions "to lead the church in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church." The mandate is expressed in these three 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)

B. Following Christ. In Mission Together. Home Missions' mission, vision, goals, and ministries

Home Missions pursues its mandate under the leading CRC ministry objective: "transforming lives and communities worldwide" by "creating and sustaining healthy churches" (see section IV, G, 2008-2009 Home Missions Ministries Plan Scorecard Budget).

Mission – Christian Reformed Home Missions serves the churches, ministries, and members of the Christian Reformed Church through partnerships that work to fulfill Christ's mission.

Vision – Every Christian Reformed church, ministry, and member follows Christ in reconciling the world to God.

Goals – Home Missions creates and supports regional teams and partnerships that pray for, equip, and multiply believers, new churches, mission-focused churches, and educational ministries. Home Missions 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.

These ministries flow from Home Missions' core values:

– *God's Mission*. God's redeeming love for his world and his people inspires us to participate in his mission.
– *Prayer*. Persistent prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission.
– *Community*. Congregations and other mission-focused communities are the primary agents of God's harvest in North America.

– *Leadership.* Raising up missionary leaders from each generation is crucial for equipping God's people for God's work.
– *Disciple-making*. The call of the Word and Spirit to make disciples demands our eager response.
– *Reconciliation*. Working for diversity, justice, and unity in Christ is critical to our witness in North America.
– *Stewardship.* God provides abundant resources for his work as his people step out in faith and witness.
– *Team*. God gives gifts to each of us for the good of all.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed Home Missions

A. Transforming Lives and Communities in North America

Jesus' command in Matthew 28, The Great Commission, leaves us no doubt about what our mission is: to bring the gospel to the world. Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) is hard at work to pursue that mission in North America. This is a critical mission field, and we have to live and share Jesus here so that millions will have a chance to be saved.

Home Missions is meeting this challenge by creating and sustaining healthy Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States. All of the Christ-centered ministries we support share common traits—they are missional, disciple-making, intercultural, and community transforming.

Above all, God is at work through Home Missions. More than 200 ministries supported by Home Missions are changing lives with the power of the gospel.

1. Church planting and development

New churches that grow the fastest and continue to thrive year after year are those that are born out of a partnership between local, regional, and international partners. Experience has taught us that a local cluster of churches—hosted by an existing congregation or congregations, supported by other churches in the classis or region, and coached, trained, or mentored by Home Missions—is the right context and environment in which to start new churches. Currently, seventy-five new CRCs receive financial assistance from Home Missions through these partnerships, with many more in the planning stages. Two-thirds of these new congregations are multicultural churches like *Open Door Fellowship of East Harlem*, which started this year in the heart of New York City's gritty East Harlem neighborhood.

Home Missions' Church Planting and Development Leadership Team, which includes Rev. Jul Medenblik, Rev. Randy Rowland, Mr. Kevin Schutte, Mr. Javier Torres, Ms. Laura Posthumus, and Ms. Julee Holcomb, works to help foster church planting and development throughout North America. Home Missions assists church planting through the following strategies:

a. Prayer mobilizing and communication

1) 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.

2) 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

1) 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

– assessment
– 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 a site in Grand Rapids)

2) 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

3) 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 2008-2009 as of February 13, 2009:

Church Planting/Development	
Churches reporting	57
Main worship attendance	4,061
Total confessing members	2,137
Growth by evangelism	222

4) Cultural diversity of church planting ministry is shown below:

Home Missions grant-funded ministry leaders – 1988 through 2008

	European-American	Ethnic minority	Total	% Ethnic minority
1988-2001 (13 years)	95	115	210	55%
2002-2003 (2 years)	27	26	53	49%
2004-2005 (2 years)	16	19	35	54%
2006-2007 (2 years)	20	18	38	47%
2008 (1 year)	91	63	154	41%
Total	249	241	490	49%

New churches – 1988 through 2008

	European-American	Ethnic minority	Total	% Ethnic minority
1988-2001 (13 years)	99	134	233	58%
2002-2003 (2 years)	16	16	32	50%
2004-2005 (2 years)	18	17	35	49%
2006-2007 (2 years)	18	23	41	56%
2008 (1 year)	10	21	31	68%
Total	161	211	372	56%

c. Financial partnering for church planting

1) 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.

New work: Ministry year 2008

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Allegan, MI/The River Staff	A	John Hutt	2007	2009
Allendale, MI/Friendship Chapel	A	Ron Hassell	2007	2009
Brookfield, WI/Connection Point	M	Eneyas Frietas	2007	2010
Brooklyn Park, WI/North Center Lao	L	Chanthala Sithavongsa	2007	2010
Dehli, CA/Church of the Cross	M	Zeke Nelson	2007	2009
Des Moines, IA/Des Moines CPD	A	Frank Ede	2007	2009
Edmonton, AB/Edmonton Resid.	A	Victor Ko	2007	2009
Grimsby, ON/Niagara CPD	A	Mike Collins	2007	2010
Grand Rapids, MI/Madison Sq. Satellite	M	Alton Hardy	2007	2009
Hialeah, FL/ICR Vida Nueva	H	Lourdes Granada	2007	2009
New York, NY/City Fellowship	A	Steve Wolma	2007	2010
New York, NY/New York City Resid.	A	Ben Spalink	2007	2008
Newport, ME/Pathway Community	A	Jeff Schmidt	2007	2009
Seattle, WA/Seattle Dream Church	K	Bomsu Kim	2007	2009
Seattle, WA/Seattle Urban Resid.	M	Ben Katt	2007	2010
St. John, IN/Pathway	A	Rob Knol	2007	2010
Winter Garden, FL/ Kissimmee Resid./CPD	H	Carlos Palacios	2007	2010

*KEY: A = Anglo, H = Hispanic, K = Korean, L = Laotian, M = Multiethnic

Funding conclusions: Ministry year 2008

Ajax, ON	Crossroads
Ancaster, ON	Meadowlands Fellowship
Bellingham, WA	Mosaic
Brighton, ON	Fellowship
Calgary, AB	Lantern
Calgary, AB	Hillside
Chicago, IL	GAP
Cochrane, AB	The Annex
Danvers, MA	North Shore Chapel
Doral, FL	Comunidad de Cristo
Edison, NJ	Global Vision
Edmonton, AB	The River
Fontana, CA	New Joy
Fox Lake, WI	Living Hope
Grand Rapids, MI	Iglesia Cristiana/Gold Avenue
Highlands Ranch, CO	Horizon (Staff)

Hudsonville, MI	Immanuel
Long Beach, CA	New City
New York, NY	New York Initiative
Oakville, ON	Clearview
North Haledon, NJ	North Jersey LDN
Parker, CO	Crucible
Pasadena, CA	Regional Hispanic Ministry Development
Passaic, NJ	Nuevo Horizonte
Philadelphia, PA	Germantown Hope
Rowland Heights, CA	Arcadia Korean
Queens, NY	El Shaddai
Santa Clarita, CA	SCV Community
Simi Valley, CA	Remanente
Skagit Valley, CA	Skagit Valley LDN
Thousand Oaks, CA	Thousand Oaks
Westminster, CO	Family in Christ
Winnipeg, MB	Prairie LDN
Worthington, MN	Friendship Lao

2. 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.

a. Campus ministries

On campuses across North America, students, staff, and faculty are gathering together to grow in faith, build community, and engage God's world. Christian Reformed Campus Ministry seeks to bear witness to the renewing grace of Jesus Christ in a beautifully diverse but complicated 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 website of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association at www.crcma.com.

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on campuses in Canada and the United States. As of January 2009, twenty-three campus ministries are supported by Home Missions' partnership-assistance grants. They are

Chicago State University (Black)	University of Calgary
Dalhousie University	University of Guelph
Fanshawe College	University of Iowa
Ferris State University	University of Northern British Columbia
Iowa State University (Anglo)	University of Toronto
Iowa State University (Korean)	University of Waterloo
Kennedy-King Community College	University of Western Ontario
McMaster University	Western Michigan University
Michigan State University	Wilfred Laurier University
Passaic County Community College	William Paterson University
Queen's University	York University
University of Alberta	

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.

b. Educational mission leadership

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, 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.

c. 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.

B. Ministering to and with local CRCs

Home Missions helps revitalize existing Christian Reformed churches through mission-focused ministries and grants. Working through mission-focused partnerships, we provide seminars, festivals, leadership coaching, assessment centers, support networks, and consulting to local churches. We also provide grants for programs, staffing, and technology. A great example of a mission-focused church is Maranatha CRC in Farmington, New Mexico. This established congregation was recently given a boost by a Home Missions mission-focused church, which has helped the church attract new members and add new ministry.

The twelve regional ministry teams are widely involved in mission-focused church and leader support through partnerships in which Home Missions provides

- encouragement to pastors through workshops and consultation.
- leadership to congregations as they discern God's leading for the future.
- support for classical leadership groups.
- grants to churches for program assistance and outreach.
- grants to two heritage churches.
- partnership staffing grants.

Working through Home Missions' twelve ministry teams, Home Missions' regional staff members collaborate with local and classis leaders to cast mission vision and set goals; and to support and encourage church planting, local church mission, and campus outreach. Regional leaders and

teams utilize partnership grants to provide funds to resource church plants and mission opportunities through established churches. Ethnic diversity is a core value for Home Missions. Four regional teams represent Black and Urban, Korean, Hispanic, and Native American mission development. All of the twelve Home Missions ministry teams are committed to diversity.

The current ministry teams and team leaders are

- Black and Urban, Rev. Bob Price
- Chicagoland, Rev. Peter Kelder
- Eastern Canada, Rev. Adrian Van Giessen
- Eastern U.S., Mr. Drew Angus
- Great Lakes, Rev. Ben Becksvoort
- Hispanic and Southeast U.S., Mr. Javier Torres and Rev. Stan Workman
- Korean and California South, Rev. Tong Park
- Native American, Rev. Stanley Jim
- North Central U.S., Rev. Larry Meyer
- West Central U.S., Rev. Jerry Holleman
- West Coast, Rev. Peter Holwerda
- Western Canada, Rev. Martin Contant

More than one hundred committed and gifted Christian Reformed Home Missions' staff serve the churches and classes on the ministry teams, inclusive of CRHM regional leaders. Sixty percent are paid staff (generally part-time) and forty percent serve as volunteers. In addition to the regional ministry team staff, several of the teams have classis 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 give leadership to small group development, spiritual formation and prayer, and leadership development. Capacity to serve the churches and classes of the regions has increased significantly as regional leaders and teams experience the synergy of teamwork.

Specialized goal leaders who focus on the three main goal areas of CRHM—church planting, mission focused churches, and campus ministry—bring expertise, passion, and leadership to the work of Home Missions. We are blessed and well served by these leaders as through their commitment and ownership for Christ's mission the CRCNA in North America is mobilized for mission and there are many added workers for the harvest.

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. As part of their role on regional teams, these developers interact with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and other leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism. Home Missions' small groups ministry sponsored In Community, a small group and evangelism conference that attracted more than 500 people to Lombard, Illinois, in July 2008.

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 also serve 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."

One goal of each CRHM regional team is a more robust communication system within their region. 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.

There are significant challenges for the teams. Several teams (Korean and Hispanic regional teams along with the Eastern U.S., North Central U.S., 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 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 serve as a "multiplier" for the ongoing CRHM partnership grants allocated to ministries in Canada. For each proposal submitted to CRHM, a parallel request is made to the Canada CRC Foundation (where the funds are held). The funds are 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 Ministry Year (MY) 2009:

Church planting	
Residency	236,300
New churches	2,013,400
Parent churches	16,000
Fundraising	2,000
Subtotal	$2,267,700
Mission-focused churches	
Churches	534,000
Mission-focused Coaching Center	17,100
Mission-focused smaller churches	109,900
Subtotal	$661,000

Heritage churches	
Heritage	12,110
Subtotal	$12,110
Leadership	
Internships	266,494
Leadership Development Networks	93,500
Subtotal	$359,994
Educational Mission	
New Mexico schools	312,000
Campus ministry grants	404,000
Emerging leadership initiative	26,500
Subtotal	$742,500
Total grant budget amount	$4,043,304

C. Home Missions' collaborative efforts

Home Missions supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and 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.

Home Missions also 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. Home Missions also 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.

In addition, 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.

D. CRC evangelizing growth

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,252 persons through evangelism in 2008, compared to 3,293 persons in 2007, 3,287 persons in 2006, and 3,373 persons in 2005.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 264,330 (*Yearbook 2009*, p. 149), compared to 268,052 last year, despite the fact that member additions (10,996 persons) were 1,131 more persons than reported member decline (9,865 persons). Factors other than members added or lost also impact the total membership number. For example, not all congregations report their membership numbers.

E. Stories of lives changed through Home Missions' ministries

Home Missions' dynamic ministries are changing lives by introducing Christ to people across North America. Here are a few examples from the past year:

– Aqua Vida, a new Hispanic church in DeMotte, Indiana, is bringing the gospel to immigrant farm workers in a small, rural community.
– Maranatha CRC, an old, struggling New Mexico mission church, is now alive, thanks in part to a mission-focused church grant. A dynamic worship team integrates contemporary songs, hymns, and Navajo language into the worship experience. An influx of new families continues to revitalize the aging congregation.
– Lawndale CRC in Lawndale, Illinois, used a Home Missions grant to reach local youth, resulting in the baptism of twenty young people.
– Dozens were baptized during a special outdoor baptism Sunday service at The Tapestry, a growing multicultural church in Vancouver, British Columbia.
– Thirteen North American university students received new Home Missions Emerging Leaders grants at the start of the fall semester, and twenty-two people started Home Missions-funded internships.
– The campus ministry at New Jersey's Fairleigh Dickinson University held a special rally during which four students gave their lives to Christ. On average, the ministry's weekly student group meetings now attract sixty students.

In all of these examples, as well as in the other two-hundred-plus ministries we support, we saw Christ transform lives and communities as people came to know him in 2008.

F. New ministry development

The CRC goal of increasing our capacity to plant twenty-five 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 the more than 200 million unchurched and under-churched people in Canada and the United States.

Home Missions is establishing new and continuing partnerships for ministry years 2008 through 2009. 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 2008

Location/ministry	Key*	Ministry leader	Grant start	Funding end
Artesia, CA/Artesia City Church	I	Wallace Williams	2009	2011
Bellingham, WA/Envision Ministries	A	Mitchell Senti	2009	2011
Boston, MA/Brazilian Church of Boston	H	Weberton Figueirido	2009	2010
Chicago, IL/Fresh Word Ministries	B	Ed Rockett	2009	2010
Chicago, IL/Living Hope	M	Sam Hamstra	2009	2010
Dearborn, MI/Bridge of Life	M	Basem Qusous	2009	2010
DeMotte, IN/Communidad Agua Vida	H	Arturo Olguin	2009	2010
Edmonds, WA/Edmonds Residency	A	John Westfall	2009	2011
Farmington, ME/Summit Faith Comm.	A	Ryan Goding	2009	2009
Fond du Lac, WI/The Garden	A	Kevin Edelfson	2009	2012

Grand Rapids, MI/Gaines Residency	A	Randy Ledeboer	2009	2010
Holland, MI/Imagine Fellowship Res.	B	Wayne Coleman	2009	2010
Ionia MI/Celebration Fellowship Prison	M	Richard Rienstra	2009	2010
Lincoln, NE/N. Lighthouse/Waverly CPD	M	David Best	2009	2010
Bozeman, MT/Bozeman CPD	A	Randy VanOsdol	2009	2010
Montclair, CA/Immanuel	I	Zacharias Pattimukay	2009	2011
Moreno Valley, CA/Sovereign Grace	B	Moore/Sarkissian	2009	2011
New York, NY/Open Door Fellowship	M	Johnny Acevedo	2009	2010
Paw Paw, MI/Red Arrow Ministries	A	Ben Bowater	2009	2010
Philadelphia, PA/8th Street Community	M	Andy H. Kim	2009	2010
Philadelphia, PA/By Grace Alone	M	Gabriel Wang-Herrera	2009	2009
Mt. Airy, PA/Philadelphia CPD	M	Allen Drew	2009	2009
Sacramento, CA/All Nations Church	K	Jong S. Han	2009	2010
Sacramento, CA/CPD	A	Eric Dirksen	2009	2010
San Gabriel, CA/Holy City	CH	Yi-Ming Kao	2009	2011
Vancouver, WA/N. Vancouver CPD	A	Brad Vos	2009	2011
Whatcom Co., WA/N. Whatcom County CPD	A	Aaron Walters	2009	2011
Whatcom Co., WA/ NW Hispanic	H	Joe Strong	2009	2010
West Palm Beach, FL/Nuevo Pacto	H	Xavier Suarez	2009	2010
Winter Springs, FL/Suncoast Comm.	B	Randall Harris	2009	2011

*Key: A = Anglo, B = Black, CH = Chinese, H = Hispanic, I = Indonesian, K = Korean, M = Multiethnic

III. Recruitment and training

A. Leadership development networks

Home Missions is working hard to train and raise up the next generation of missionaries and ministry leaders. In classis-based partnerships, Home Missions supplies to sixteen leadership development networks (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	Kevin Adams
California	Al Breems
Colorado	Peter VanElderen
Florida	Luis Pellecer
Illinois	Pedro Aviles
Maine	Bill Johnson
Manitoba	Robert Visser
Massachussetts	Hill Jonson
Michigan	Dave Beelen
New Hampshire	Brent Averill
Ontario	Norm Sennema
South Dakota	Jim Hoogeveen
Texas	Mike Johnson
Washington	Betsy Turnbull

B. 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.

C. Assessment center

Once a mission-focused leader has been identified and trained, Home Missions helps determine where this person can best fulfill a missionary calling. Assessment Center: Helping to Identify Your Calling 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.

IV. Board matters

A. Board membership

The Board of Home Missions is mandated by synod to guide and carry out the denominational Home Missions program. The board includes twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions), with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Five at-large board members balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy or nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

The following slates of nominees from the respective regions were submitted to the classes for vote and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term:

Region 1

Rev. Harvey Roosma is pastor of Christ Community Church in Victoria, British Columbia. He brings the gift of a passion for outreach.

Rev. Richard C. Koopmans is the pastor of Prince George CRC in Prince George, British Columbia. He brings a steady, reliable, and caring personality. He was instrumental in getting chaplaincy ministry started at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George.

Region 2

Rev. John Van Sloten is the founding pastor at New Hope CRC in Calgary, Alberta. A former real estate developer, Rev. Van Sloten brings strong organizational and speaking skills and has mentored many church planters and missional leaders. He is currently chair of the classical Home Missions committee.

Rev. Bruce Gritter is pastor of The River Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta. He is a visionary and successful church planter. Rev. Gritter is committed to reaching people with the gospel and church planting is an essential part of that outreach. He has served as a delegate to synod and on the Home Missions board, and currently serves on the classical Home Missions committee.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Phil Reinders, president; Rev. Paul Vander Klay, vice president; Ms. Beth Fylstra, secretary; Mr. Rodney Hugen, treasurer; and Ms. Mary Buteyn, vice all.

The officers of the Canada board for 2008-2009 are Rev. Phil Reinders, president; Mr. Victor Chen, secretary; and Mr. Michael Talsma, 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

D. Financial gifts

Home Missions' ministry share receipts dropped 11.3 percent ($515,000), totaling $4,048,000. Above-ministry-share gifts (non-estate) decreased 2.8 percent to $1,622,000, and estate gifts experienced a decrease of 20.9 percent ($99,000). Unrealized gain/loss on assets dropped $1,457,000, going from positive $737,000 to a negative $720,000. Other revenue slipped 9.5 percent ($28,000). Overall, total revenue was down 27.7 percent ($2,145,000). Home Missions is grateful for the support of our ministry partners this year and thanks God for them and their faithfulness to Home Missions. We covet your prayers for our ministries.

E. Personnel

Mr. Ben Vandezande, the new interim director of Home Missions, leads the agency and reports to the CRC director of denominational ministries, Ms. Sandy Johnson, as well as to the Home Missions board. The Advancement Team, led by Mr. Tom Bratt, leads Home Missions' fundraising and communications efforts. 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 of Home Missions' grants.

The six-person ministry advancement team underwent staff changes during the past year. Mrs. Afton DeVos, development officer, left Home Missions to pursue other opportunities. In October 2008, Home Missions hired Mr. Marc Zumhagen, who joins Mr. Rick VanTil as a development officer. Mr. Ben Van Houten continues as senior writer of Home Missions, and Mrs. Kristie Schrotenboer serves the advancement team as administrative assistant. Rev. Jack Stulp, in his 51st 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. Home Missions is currently recruiting development officers to work in both Canada and the United States.

F. 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. Home Missions' website (www.crhm.org) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications. Several publications are sent to churches, individuals, and staff by way of email. The website is also used to convey news, prayer needs, and other information. The site was recently redesigned to align itself with the newly designed denominational website.

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. Four *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. In addition, weekly ministry stories were posted to www.crcna.org. Material for the Prayer Guide and for bulletin announcements was also provided. All of Home Missions' material is available at www.crhm.org, which is now being updated more frequently.

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.

G. 2009-2010 Home Missions ministries plan scorecard budget

	% of Total	2009	2010
1. Community			
A. Transform lives and communities worldwide			
Educational mission grants and department	80%	420,931	430,880
B. Create and sustain healthy congregations			
Church planting and development grants	100%	2,094,700	1,871,000
Mission focused churches grants	50%	300,000	108,200
Church planting and development department	80%	452,880	276,000
Regional ministry teams (mission focused churches/church planting and development)	68%	1,727,261	1,790,304
Ministry teams team	25%	13,912	14,000
Management and general	30%	288,575	279,180
		4,866,853	4,769,564
2. Process			
A. Transcend boundaries			
Educational mission grants and department	20%	105,232	108,720
Regional ministry teams	12%	304,811	315,936
Ministry teams team	25%	13,412	14,000
Management and general	20%	185,400	186,120
		608,855	624,776
B. Disciple believers			
Small group ministry developers – prayer/spiritual formation training	100%	146,300	106,000
Mission focused churches grants – relates to mobilizing grants for staff, etc.	50%	300,000	108,200
		446,300	214,200
C. Develop leaders			
Church planting and development leadership	20%	113,200	69,000
Interns	100%	250,000	256,000
Regional ministry teams	20%	508,018	526,560
		871,238	851,560
D. Nurture children and youth			
Red Mesa schools	100%	305,760	289,418
E. Become ministries of choice			
Ministry advancement department	10%	111,400	107,500
3. Learning and growth			
A. Develop staff capacity			
Ministry teams team – recruiting, nurturing, training regional leaders and teams	50%	27,825	28,000
Management and general	30%	278,100	279,180
		305,925	307,180

4. Resources			
A. Ignite generosity			
Ministry advancement department	90%	1,002,600	967,500
Management and general	20%	185,400	186,120
		1,227,517	1,188,000
Totals		$9,027,049	$8,317,818

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Phil Reinders, board president; and Mr. Ben Vandezande, Home Missions interim director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the election of board members 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
Ben Vandezande, interim director

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) supports and unites the diverse family of Christian Reformed congregations in their response to our Lord's commission to witness to the good news of God's kingdom and make disciples of all nations. The purpose is to encourage vigorous Christian Reformed participation in Spirit-led mission with churches and other Christian organizations throughout the world, so that together we are proclaiming the gospel to more and more people who have not heard it, healthy churches are emerging, and the kingdom of God is advancing. CRWM has three key areas of action, or strategies:

1. Mobilizing CRC churches and their members for greater missions involvement.
2. Strengthening the CRC and international partners in our mutual capacity for Christian life and missions.
3. Participating in global networks and movements to advance the reign of Christ.

By God's grace, CRWM seeks to act in accord with the following:

We Value:

Faith in God and passion for God's mission in the world;
A confessionally Reformed understanding of God's Word;
The Body of Christ;
Proclaiming the gospel to people who have not heard it;
The Image of God in all people and the humility that opens us up to respect, learn from, and grow with them;
Being a caring community;
Sustainability;
Contextualization;
High standards of stewardship; and
Lifelong learning and growth.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions

A. Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide

All CRCNA agencies have focused their efforts on creating and sustaining healthy local congregations in North America toward the goal of transforming lives and communities worldwide. One characteristic of such congregations is that they commit to evangelistic growth and church planting both locally and globally. World Missions' contribution to this focus can be seen in its ministry to and with local congregations as well as in the global ministries in which CRWM enables those local congregations to engage.

B. Ministry to and with local congregations

The Christian Reformed Church sends missionaries through World Missions in several categories, each with a specific organizational connection and with a different means of financial support. The section below titled "Sharing Stories" communicates all too little the ways in which God has

used these choice servants of his over the past year. Additional glimpses of how God is using his servants will be presented in the World Missions presentation to synod.

1. 16:15 Church Missions Coaching

   Part of our vision in the Christian Reformed Church is to walk alongside local congregations to see them actively engaged in global ministry, and to assist local church leaders in stimulating a deeper vision for and involvement in missions. To accomplish this vision, World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee have joined the 16:15 Church Missions Coaching alliance. This innovative alliance based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, trains coaches in the Christian Reformed Church who in turn engage with local CRC congregations to enhance their vision for missions.

   Church Missions Coaching provides a way for a church to evaluate its global outreach ministry and to work toward greater impact. It also concentrates on facilitating a process rather than promoting a program or leading a wider congregational strategic planning process; it acknowledges and respects the unique characteristics and calling of the local church while focusing in on missions—global, cross-cultural, and local. As such, the work can be seen as complementing the work of other organizations that do coaching such as Christian Reformed Home Missions.

   A coach walks alongside church leadership through the "3-D Process" (Discover, Design, Deploy), unfolded through three-hour workshops over a period of six to nine months. While the same basic format is used, the process is customizable for the unique circumstances of each church. The goal of the coaching process is to help a church design and use its unique gifts in partnership with others to make Christ and his kingdom known among the nations.

   Christian Reformed World Missions currently has three coaches available in their respective regions (Southwest and the Great Lakes in the U.S., and Southern Ontario in Canada) to assist churches in unleashing their potential to reach the nations.

2. Field missionaries

   Missionaries employed by World Missions and the CRCNA form the long-term core of Christian Reformed missions efforts. Approximately 40 percent of the money needed to support each long-term missionary employee comes from ministry shares. An average of fifteen sending and supporting churches support each long-term missionary. Their contributions plus support from individual people supply the remaining 60 percent.

   Partner missionaries are employed by other organizations in cooperation with World Missions. Their financial support comes from their employers, from money they raise from churches and individual donors, from personal resources, or from a combination of these means.

   Many Christian Reformed members volunteer their services to the Lord, usually on a short-term basis, through World Missions. Probably the best known and longest standing program is the Summer Mission Program (SMP).

The names and addresses of employed missionaries and regional 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" section of the 2009 *Yearbook*, as are the names of World Missions' administrators.

3. Recognition of service

Each year, World Missions recognizes missionary employees and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In December 2008, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the Lord through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	Jeffrey and Missy Bos	Bangladesh
	Steven and Kim Holtrop	Nicaragua
	Ben and Amy Meyer	Mexico
	Ellen and Paul Van Tongeren	Honduras
10 years	George and Sarah de Vuyst	Ukraine
	Henry and Ardell Persenaire-Hogeterp	Niger
	Wayne and Lynn Ten Harmsel	China
15 years	Bill and Diana Steele	Guinea
	Albert and Carolyn Strydhorst	Nigeria
	Howard and Ruth Van Dam	Haiti
20 years	Janice Dykgraaf	Nigeria
	Jeong and MiSook Gho	Japan
	Tim and Wilma Palmer	Nigeria
	Kathy Vanderkloet	Nigeria
25 years	Larry and Rose Van Zee	Nigeria
30 years	Allan and Jaclynn Persenaire	Nigeria
	Tom and Cheryl Soerens	Costa Rica
35 years	Marcea Holtrop	Grand Rapids office

C. Collaborative efforts

In the international outreach effort, World Missions collaborates with Back to God Ministries International, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 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.

D. Sharing stories

1. East and South Africa

In Uganda, the Dairy Farm Project is generating a lot of interest. So far five dairy cows have been pledged. In addition $1,972 has been received for this project, and some dairy farmers are interested in visiting the project. Our projection is to implement phase one, including perimeter fencing, planting crops, preparing the cattle dip alley, hooking up water and electricity, purchasing materials for five milk stall stations, and purchasing twenty more dairy cows.

In Kenya, we are exploring a partnership with Word Provision Church (WPC), an independent young church in Kenya that has a vision to plant churches among the Unreached People Group (UPG), especially in Maasai. They have a vision to plant fifty churches in the next five years and to bring 500 people each year into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. In partnership with the Bible League Kenya, CRWM supports WPC church planting efforts. The need for effective leadership and capacity development for those new churches will be met through our partnership with Timothy Leadership Training.

2. Eurasia

In China, during the course of teaching in Beijing at two churches, at least four people accepted Jesus as their Savior. This was a moving experience for the volunteers who came to build relationships with the Chinese believers and to learn about the church in China.

In Bangladesh, Manoj, a pastor in one of the churches and a TEE volunteer tutor for Christian College of Theology, spends much time visiting people in the hospital and ministers to Muslims, Christians, and Hindus to provide pastoral care. When asked what the greatest need for the church in their area is, he responded immediately by saying, "That people would know God's Word." Through leaders like this, the vision and opportunity for knowing God's Word is spreading throughout the church in Bangladesh, a church in a harvest field of more than 140 million unbelievers. Pray that more leaders like Manoj will grow theologically and begin teaching God's Word throughout Bangladesh.

3. West Africa

In Nigeria, the Summer Mission Program (SMP) was a huge success and exceeded many expectations. The SMP creates an atmosphere in which people are challenged to grow spiritually, emotionally, and mentally.

In Guinea, small beginnings of income earning are happening that will help the future of the church among the Fulbe in Dalaba. This is needed because several new believers must now make a living after their families have abandoned them for making a commitment to Christ.

4. Latin America

In Costa Rica, there is considerable satisfaction in knowing that a group of students from Mazatenango will soon graduate. There are two items of impact that go with this fact. First, in the southern and western zone of Guatemala there is a well-qualified group of our graduates serving as professors in their own local Bible Institute. Second, this same group is spearheading an initiative to have the Evangelical University of Latin America (UNELA) offer a Master's of Family Counseling in the capital city of Guatemala. They hope to be able to assemble a group of about twenty-five new students to take this program, run by UNELA, through a series of online courses and visits by a professor from Costa Rica to Guatemala, as an intensive course. We pray that this will become a reality.

In Mexico, two students from the Tijuana Bible Institute have made a decision to move to Mexico City and start taking classes at the Presbyterian Reformed Seminary. One desires to become a pastor, and the other

wants to be a missionary either in Mexico or abroad. Both have become close to a missionary family who are blessed to have had the opportunity to help disciple them and encourage them to pursue this ministry career.

III. Recruitment, placement, and training

CRWM continues to connect members of the CRC with missions opportunities around the world. Currently these opportunities include short-term volunteer positions as well as positions with our partner schools and organizations that are typically one to three years in duration.

Our partnership with Wycliffe Bible Translators now allows CRC members who serve with Wycliffe to be designated as partner missionaries with CRWM. A number of them have taken advantage of this opportunity for increased collaboration and partnership.

We continue to work with the denomination toward the establishment of a binational denominational volunteer management office. We anticipate that this new office will assist CRWM in better serving members of our denomination who want to volunteer with us and other agencies, particularly in the areas of orientation and debriefing. This will also allow us to better meet the needs of our missionaries who have volunteer opportunities available.

Our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary continues, and we provide cross-cultural internships for some of their students each summer. These internships place seminarians alongside our long-term missionaries and their national ministry partners and provide a valuable learning experience to students with an interest in missions.

We work with Youth Unlimited to engage the youth of the CRCNA in missions. We participate in Youth Unlimited's Convention for high school students, and we work together to provide opportunities for young people who would like to be involved in missions.

CRWM anticipates two training programs in the summer of 2009. On June 2-8 our Summer Mission Program (SMP) volunteers will receive pre-field orientation, and on July 14-21 all new career, associate, and partner missionaries will receive CRWM's regular orientation. In addition, World Missions has a long history of supporting the continuing education of its employees.

The purpose of the Summer Mission Program is to disciple and engage the youth of the CRC in global missions. We celebrate the twentieth anniversary of our Summer Mission Program in 2009 and continue to recruit new SMP participants from CRC colleges and universities. Next summer, God willing, approximately twenty-two young people will serve alongside CRWM missionaries and their ministry partners in Asia, Guatemala, Niger, the Philippines, and West Africa. In these respective locations they will be attempting to build relationships with local Christians and seekers through teaching English; ministering on the streets, in prison, and in orphanages; participating in local HIV-AIDS ministries; and trekking to villages to present the gospel. The pre-field orientation provides training related to missions and ministry—team dynamics, cross-cultural communication tools and verbal witnessing, poverty and wealth as they relate to one's spiritual and material orientation, personal security, what it means to engage in missions from a Reformed perspective, and so forth. Time is also spent learning key historical, religious, and cultural information from persons connected to the countries where they will be serving. New this year to the SMP support

structure is a mentoring program. The program will link each volunteer with a mentor in their home church who, through a combination of in-person visits, phone calls, and email exchanges, will serve to both prepare the volunteer for cross-cultural service and help to integrate the summer experiences into life in North America upon return.

CRWM's program for career, associate, and partner missionaries focuses on the mission, vision, and values of CRWM, becoming familiar with office staff and their support roles, as well as exploration of topics that impact intercultural ministry. There are several general sessions planned on building a dynamic team with prayer and financial supporters, personal security, including a hostage simulation exercise, and spending time with regional leaders for an overview of the larger plans and ministry. Others will also address each orientee's unique situation—a session to help missionaries manage their personal investments, another on issues affecting parents and their Missionary Kids/Third Culture Kids, a discussion of concerns and opportunities faced by singles in missions, what it means to serve as associate or partner missionary, and circumstances specifically related to Canadian missionaries.

IV. Board matters

A. CRWM board nominations

Board members from the following regions are completing their second terms. Nominees from these regions will be presented to the respective classes for a vote and the results presented to synod for ratification.

Region 3

Rev. Bernard Bakker, pastor of Hebron CRC, Whitby, Ontario, brings gifts of leadership and administration. He has had experience on the board, having served in the 1980s, and has a heart for worldwide missions and outreach. Rev. Bakker has witnessed the benefits to his congregation of reaching out to the lost. Service on the board will help promote healthy church leaders and congregations.

Rev. Jacob Boer, a lifelong member of the CRC, graduated from Redeemer College in 1999 and Calvin Theological Seminary in 2003. He was ordained in First CRC of Montreal in March 2004 and has served on the West Island Mission Board since February 2008. Serving in Quebec brings unique situations in terms of ministry and outreach because of Quebec's unique culture and dominant French language. Quebec is presently the largest mission field in North America—less than 3 percent of the population are practicing believers. Rev. Boer feels called to this culture because his heart's calling has always been to reach out to those who either do not know Jesus or who have not yet received Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Living and working within this culture helps him understand the long-term commitment that missionaries and their families experience on the mission field.

Region 5

Rev. Randall D. Van Osdol is serving as a church planter at Bozeman CRC, Bozeman, Montana, and previously served at Hope CRC in Rapid City, South Dakota. He has administrative skills, an understanding of mission and vision within the denomination, and ecumenical skills as a former minister in the Presbyterian church. Rev. Van Osdol has served on the Interchurch

Correspondence Committee (RPCNA) and Love, Inc. (Rapid City, South Dakota). Currently he is serving on the classical Home Missions committee. Rev. Van Osdol's field experiences will offer the board a hands-on dimension that will help the board in understanding the missionary in the field as well as the person receiving the gospel.

Rev. Joseph Kamphuis is pastor at Faith Community CRC, Zillah, Washington. He has his BA in economics/business from Calvin College and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Kamphuis is currently serving on the classical Home Missions committee and Zillah Ministerial Association and has served as a delegate to synod. He is interested in the work of missions because he believes it is the whole church's calling, not just that of a few missionaries. Rev. Kamphuis has been a spearhead for missions in Zillah both in foreign mission support and classical Home Missions support. He served two summers in the Philippines, which has given him a healthy insight on world mission issues and needs. Rev. Kamphuis is a clear thinker in resolving problems and setting goals and a great team player. His quality of leadership is appreciated and held in high esteem.

The following nominees are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Mr. Ken Van Zee, Region 8; Ms. Jan Stravers, Region 10; and Mr. Colin Watson, U.S. at-large.

B. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	2	2nd
16	1	3rd

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Mrs. Jacoba (Ko) Spyksma; the president of World Missions-USA, Mr. Colin Watson; 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 or for ratification 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

Today is a day that the Lord has made. It is filled with wonderful sights, sounds, and blessings that God has put here for us to enjoy. It is also filled with opportunities to which God calls us to respond. As Christians, our challenge is to be renewed by God's presence and power day by day, while we also foster renewal and transformation in communities.

The mission of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is to "engage God's people in redeeming resources and developing gifts in collaborative acts of love, mercy, justice, and compassion."

As we at CRWRC look back at the past ministry year, we are struck by how blessed we have been as we fulfilled this mission. In one short year, we've embraced community leaders, sung in multiple languages, and shared bread with our brothers and sisters across the globe. We have also been able to reach families and individuals in 3,656 communities with support that equipped them to fight poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, environmental degradation, injustice, and more. And in the face of hurricanes, flooding, typhoons, and civil unrest, we have been able to provide food, shelter, and emergency supplies to more than 888,000 people. Yes, we certainly have a lot to rejoice and be glad about.

The Christian Reformed Church has played a key role in this success through its prayers, time, and financial support. As you read through this ministry report, please accept our gratitude for all you have done. Please also join CRWRC in praising God for the faithfulness he has shown time and time again.

Today is also a day that urges us to continue in ministry. There continue to be children who are hungry, adults who are illiterate, families who need shelter, and neighborhoods that need hope. In addition, our world is struggling with a global food crisis, an AIDS pandemic, a consumerism mindset that diminishes God, and an alarming number of natural disasters.

CRWRC is gearing up to respond to the needs of today and all the other days that the Lord will give us. Thank you for continuing to join us in this ministry.

II. Ministries of CRWRC

A. International community transformation

CRWRC works with churches and organizations around the world to transform communities. Programs aim to improve health, increase agricultural production, increase literacy rates, improve access to clean water, and develop micro-enterprises to increase family incomes. However, individually these programs are not enough. Instead, CRWRC emphasizes holistic development that builds up local leadership, fosters community ownership, and helps communities to address systemic issues that keep people in poverty. The result is physical, spiritual, and social transformation based on biblical principles.

Last year, CRWRC carried out this transformational ministry in 3,656 communities in 26 countries. To do this, they worked alongside 105 partner organizations. As a result, these communities took steps toward the

transformation we desire and 680,020 people improved their lives in meaningful ways.

B. HIV and AIDS programming

CRWRC has been carrying out its transformational community ministry for more than forty-six years. For the past number of years, however, community programs have been set back by the brutality of AIDS. Worldwide, there are an estimated 33 million people living with the disease, and most of them live in places of poverty. In many areas of Africa, for example, entire generations have been wiped out by the disease. This has forced children to abandon school in order to care for themselves and their siblings. It has left grandparents, aunts, and uncles with the responsibility of feeding extra children. And it has left numerous families in the difficult situation of having to pay increased medical fees while also losing one or more breadwinners.

CRWRC has been responding to this global AIDS crisis by helping our partners to understand the disease, overcome the stigma associated with it, and meet the needs of people in their communities. Only a few years ago, churches shunned people who were HIV-positive. Today, many churches have solid programs that care for orphans and vulnerable children in their community, minister to the sick and dying, and educate people on abstinence and faithfulness.

CRWRC is currently working to mitigate the spread of AIDS and care for those affected by it in fifteen countries. In addition, CRWRC launched its Embrace AIDS campaign in December 2007 to raise funds to expand existing AIDS programs and introduce new programs in other regions. In its first year, the program raised $2.4 million. More information about the campaign can be found at www.embraceaids.com.

A special initiative that was launched on December 1, 2008, is a new website at www.iEmbraceAIDS.com. Tied to CRWRC's larger Embrace AIDS campaign, this site is specifically targeted toward young people (18 to 25 year olds) in order to provide them with a place where they can learn about AIDS, network with their friends, and tap into their youthful energy to make a difference in the face of AIDS.

C. U.S. church-based community transformation

CRWRC's North American ministry follows a philosophy similar to that of our international programs. CRWRC staff work alongside churches and community leaders to foster complete community transformation.

Socorro, Texas, is one example. Rev. Jose Rayas is guiding the residents of Socorro into life-transforming contributions for the common good. Rev. Rayas was called by Sunshine Community Church, El Paso, to plant a new church. Before he began to focus on anything related to worship, he walked through his community. He went door to door with a short survey tool and began mapping assets (discovering gifts) and discovering what people cared about. Rev. Rayas discovered that people wanted to learn English. Thus, he started ESL classes. He discovered a host of families with disabilities, so he began supportive activities with families who cared for a disabled member. He formed a community organization called Socorro Community United for Progress (SCUP). SCUP convened residents, and they began to work together for the community's benefit. Since its humble beginnings a few short years ago, Rev. Rayas, with neighbors and church members, still walks, still

convenes residents, and still listens to the community. Together they decide what they can do using what they have to make life better for all.

Socorro is a better place because

- There are now sidewalks for children to walk on to get to school.
- There are now traffic lights at strategic intersections.
- A whole neighborhood now has a city sewer.
- Natural gas is coming to a neighborhood for the first time.
- Residents have formed a host of support groups and mentoring opportunities.

The city council credits SCUP as a major force for positive change in the city.

The neighbors are working together to make their city stronger. SCUP has divided the city into three sections and has plans to develop resident leaders in each one to make the city better for all. A healthy new church plant that rejoices in the well-being of its city has been birthed. They are doing pre-organizing and church planting in neighboring Montana Vista too.

CRWRC, with our network of intermediary partners, is coaching a growing network of more than 150 Christian leaders, like Rayas, and training them in principles and practices of community transformation. These leaders minister in more than 120 neighborhoods to help churches become major contributors to the transformation of their neighborhoods and cities.

In the year ahead, the U.S. CRWRC team is also going to focus some time and resources on immigration policy. This is a persistent systemic/justice issue affecting people in almost all communities where CRWRC has partners.

D. Justice education and advocacy

Justice education continues to be an important and integral part of CRWRC's work. This year CRWRC focused its attention on education about justice and HIV/AIDS and the interrelation of the two, as part of the efforts of the Embrace AIDS campaign.

In addition, CRWRC increased and expanded its focus on mobilizing congregations for justice. This was done in collaboration with the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action. CRWRC staff visited with churches and church members in order to educate and motivate congregations to live out their call to justice. CRWRC also provided support to congregational justice groups in their justice and advocacy initiatives. Some issues that CRC churches have dealt with in the past year include the environment, peace building, food justice, and immigration.

Internationally, CRWRC works for justice alongside its other community programs. This past year, CRWRC evaluated its international justice program. This evaluation looked at the past ten years of CRWRC justice programming and considered ways to move forward. The results of this process were encouraging. Staff, partners, and community members noted numerous changes at the partner and community level as a result of CRWRC's justice programming, including changes related to gender, peace building, and civic education (rights education).

During the evaluation one staff person reported, "There is more peace in the communities, better relationships between and in families,

neighborhoods, advocacy at the local level, people respecting each other, and kingdom values being practiced in communities."

CRWRC also continues to be involved in a number of justice coalitions. We are part of the Micah Challenge in Canada and in the United States. Internationally we are part of the Micah Network, which works to establish policies that promote good development at national and international levels. In Canada, CRWRC continues to work with KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives on their climate change campaign. We are also working in partnership with Diaconal Ministries Canada, the Committee for Contact with the Government, and many other networks and coalitions dedicated to engaging Christians in the call to justice. In the United States we partner with The Alliance to End Hunger, the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations, and the Evangelical Climate Initiative.

E. Service Learning-U.S. and ServiceLink Canada

Service Learning-U.S. (formerly *ServiceLink-U.S.*) helps to create collaborative learning opportunities between North Americans and local communities in the countries where CRWRC works. It is amazing to see God use these opportunities to build relationships and offer encouragement to everyone involved. During a recent evaluation of the Service Learning-U.S. program, participants offered CRWRC a glimpse into the impact that their participation had on their lives:

- "It allowed the church to come alongside a member of their congregation, to see someone in the church step out in faith and to walk with her, develop a 'mission mind' as a congregation."
- "To experience a sense of excitement of how God is at work in the world and to begin to understand that God and his work are so much bigger than we are."
- "His overall impression is that these trips are great and give people a cross-cultural experience they could not get where they live. He talked about the access to diversity and poverty that students who have gone on trips have received."
- "The impact on the youth spiritually is amazing. I think it does a lot to help form their faith and for some becomes life transforming to the point where they go on to do mission work upon graduation from high school and/or college."

In total, Service Learning-U.S. placed 260 volunteers in opportunities of learning this past year. These volunteers served in 20 countries and donated 41,691 hours of their time. Service Learning-U.S. sent tours and work teams to Haiti, Kenya, Honduras, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, and Nigeria.

Through ServiceLink Canada, CRWRC was also able to place 52 volunteers who served 10,737 hours in about 15 countries. This included a work group to Zambia and a group of students from The King's University College for a water project in Honduras. Additional information about ServiceLink Canada can be found in the Canadian ministries section of the Board of Trustees report.

There continues to be an increase in the number of young adults ages 18 to 35 who are seeking six- to twelve-month international opportunities with CRWRC. With the increase in the number of requests from members of a

more mature and professional generation, we have begun exploring avenues that will provide meaningful opportunities for service and learning. For example, CRWRC has expanded its International Staff Internship program to also include a limited number of one-year internships. These one-year opportunities allow CRWRC to provide field experience for a greater number of applicants. CRWRC currently has interns in Nigeria, Honduras, and the Philippines with plans to expand to Mozambique and Uganda in the coming year.

CRWRC has also begun implementing new initiatives to assist CRWRC field staff in hosting and supporting the growing number of volunteers and visitors that they receive. For example, new staff positions, called Bridgers, were introduced in a variety of countries. The role of Bridger is to create effective collaboration between local communities and North Americans by facilitating volunteer and tour visits to the field. Realizing the added capacity and resource of the Bridger program, CRWRC added Bridgers in the Philippines, Haiti, Uganda, and Zambia during 2008. Plans are in place to add a Bridger in Nicaragua during 2009.

Another new initiative that was started in order to support CRWRC field staff in hosting volunteers was a training program for CRWRC partner staff in the area of volunteer management. The training is divided into four phases: Learning Needs and Resource Assessment, Strategic Planning and Skills Training, Implementation and Evaluation, and Advanced Strategies and Best Practices. The training has been an exciting venture with partners committing twenty-four months and with staff strengthening their ability to receive international volunteers and to mobilize their local communities in volunteering. To date, CRWRC has completed phase one training with twelve partners and is planning to offer training in four countries in 2009.

F. International disaster response

CRWRC is well known for its capacity to respond quickly and effectively to disasters and crisis situations around the world. This past year, there were numerous such situations to deal with. In the midst of devastation, CRWRC was blessed to be able to bring God's comfort and healing to the most vulnerable. Working in collaboration with other Christian organizations, through coalitions such as the Association for Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations (AERDO), Canadian Churches in Action (CCA), and the Geneva-based Action of Churches Together (ACT), CRWRC responded with 76 international relief interventions in 29 countries and brought help to more than 750,000 people.

As in previous years, much of CRWRC disaster response programming was made possible because of our membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). In a year that saw increasing food costs, which created not only greater needs but strained resources, the response was generous from our constituents and the Canadian government. CFGB benefited from increased funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and, in turn, CRWRC programming increased. In total, CRWRC was able to leverage $923,000 from CRC church offerings to implement over $10 million in food programming, representing nearly one-third of all of CFGB's programming.

Following are a few programs that CRWRC was involved in last year:

1. Uganda

   Working together with other Canadian Foodgrains Bank members, the Mennonite Central Committee, and Emergency Relief and Development (Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada), CRWRC responded to the needs of flood survivors in the Teso regions of Uganda by providing food and seeds. Two weeks after the first food distribution, seed and farming equipment were delivered. Many people commented on the wisdom of this decision. By the time they received their seed, they felt strong enough to begin planting. Most families had their gardens planted within twenty-four hours of receiving the seed. Before the project began, families were eating about one and one-half meals per day. Now each family enjoys three full meals a day. The project assisted 11,000 households—and since the average home houses six family members, a total of 66,000 people were fed.

2. Sudan

   Cooperation extends beyond CFGB members, even when CFGB funding is being used; and in Darfur where the humanitarian crisis continues, so does the humanitarian assistance provided by CRWRC and its partner agencies. CRWRC continues to respond as part of the Global Relief Alliance, a consortium of Christian organizations, to provide emergency assistance to those living in refugee camps and those attempting to rebuild their lives after returning to their homes.

   After troubling results in surveys completed in 2007, which indicated falling nutrition levels, an in-depth study was completed in 2008. This assessment resulted in a better understanding of the underlying issues impacting nutrition levels. As a result, changes were made, and CRWRC expanded and enhanced nutrition coverage and activities to better care for children and pregnant or lactating mothers. Women and children are especially vulnerable in Darfur; and according to UNICEF, their health is key to addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition. While the civil war continues unabated, putting thousands of families at risk, CRWRC, with the support of generous donors, continues to assist and is currently assessing needs in southern Sudan.

3. Myanmar/Burma

   Our work as part of the Global Relief Alliance (GRA) made it possible to respond quickly to the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar/Burma. CRWRC's GRA partner, World Concern, already had an established presence in Myanmar/Burma. Thanks to this partnership and the outpouring of financial support of more than $700,000, CRWRC began meeting the needs of survivors within days of the cyclone. Now, as work moves from the emergency phase to rehabilitation, CRWRC is working to restore the livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to future disasters in the low-lying delta region of Myanmar/Burma.

4. Sri Lanka

   CRWRC's work in Sri Lanka came to a conclusion this year. In the past three years CRWRC established a variety of programs, each offering relief to those who needed it most after the devastating tsunami of December 2004. After emergency needs were met, temporary shelters were built,

educational programs established, and health concerns met. While this happened, CRWRC worked to find permanent shelters for displaced families. In total, 864 homes were built with the help of community owners and government funding. As a result, over 4,000 people now have a safe home. Occurring at the same time were livelihood programs that helped 2,000 people find work, establish small businesses, or renew farming opportunities. By enabling tsunami survivors to become financially independent, CRWRC helped restore security to their lives.

CRWRC is grateful for the dedication of Mr. George and Mrs. Toni Fernhout who served, on a voluntary basis, as International Relief Managers for two and one-half years in Sri Lanka.

5. Kenya

At the time of writing last year's synodical report, the first signs of tension were emerging in Kenya after the disputed elections. Those tensions emerged into full-scale civil unrest in early 2008, which resulted in thousands of people leaving their homes and seeking shelter in makeshift camps. CRWRC responded to meet not only the food needs of these people but also their needs for shelter and proper hygiene. CRWRC continues to work in the Turkana region of Northern Kenya to provide food to those still unable to return home. At the time of this writing, political tension is again increasing, and the Kenyan government has declared a major food emergency.

In addition to the projects mentioned above, CRWRC also assisted Iraqi refugees in Jordon and Syria; people displaced in Chad and Liberia; earthquake survivors in Peru; communities devastated by storms in Bangladesh, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Nicaragua, and the Philippines; flood survivors in Cambodia, Ecuador, Haiti, India, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, and Pakistan; and people suffering food shortages in Burundi, Laos, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.

To make all of this ministry possible, CRWRC relied on the assistance of International Relief Managers (IRMs). CRWRC's roster of IRMs continues to grow as God blesses us with people with willing hearts and capable hands. In the past year, seventeen IRMs were deployed to work in various relief interventions. Working alongside local partners, IRMs distributed food, rebuilt homes and livelihoods, and restored hope to thousands of disaster survivors.

While IRMs respond to international disasters, their work has much in common with domestic disaster response. Recognizing the overlap in skills, joint training was held for the volunteer leadership of both International Disaster Response and Disaster Response Services. The event, titled "Growing Together," served to explore issues of interest to both domestic and international disaster responders. In addition to covering topical issues such as trauma and needs assessment, the conference allowed for fellowship and renewal.

G. Disaster Response Services (DRS)

Every year, thousands of families in North America lose their homes and possessions to natural disasters. CRWRC's Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers respond in love. These volunteers wear their distinctive, green CRWRC tee-shirts as they head to disaster sites to provide hope and help to

survivors most in need. While there, they work with local groups to assess needs and resources, clear debris, repair and rebuild homes, and help communities reduce their vulnerability to future disasters.

This past year, DRS continued to focus on regional recovery from Hurricane Katrina. CRWRC also responded to Midwest flooding and tornado damage. Overall, 3,122 volunteers spent more than 298,000 hours serving in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. Fifty-five percent of these volunteers were part of church or school workgroups serving one-week terms.

III. Human resources management

CRWRC's human resources (HR) management function continues to provide global HR support to the ministry and functional teams of CRWRC, including recruiting, hiring, performance management, coaching, team building, and employee relations. Recently the HR function underwent restructuring. CRWRC now has a dedicated training and development position within the program (DELTA) team and a dedicated HR/recruitment specialist. The training post will now focus solely on building an organizational capacity program with a focus on staff development, HR planning, and HR-related grant compliance. The HR team also continues to focus on achieving gender and racial diversity. More than one-half of CRWRC's staff are female. Almost one-half of our leadership positions are filled by women and one-third by staff of ethnically diverse backgrounds. The HR and agency's team continues to focus on valuing staff and encouraging their development. Along with annual individual performance reviews and team assessments, we conduct personnel surveys (e.g., on burnout and stress) and invest in staff training. During 2008, trainings on crucial confrontation and restorative practice were conducted in an effort to build staff skills in this area. Ultimately it is the agency's desire that each person may grow in his or her gifts and continue to serve our Lord and the many communities in need throughout the world.

IV. Board matters

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is its 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 Board of Directors for both the United States and Canada. The two Board of Directors together form the fourteen-member Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for CRWRC as a whole.

A. Board of Directors of CRWRC-Canada

- Mr. John Richey, president
- Ms. Mary Both, vice president
- Ms. Gerda Kitts, secretary

– Mr. Bany Castellanos, treasurer
– Mr. George Lubberts
– Mr. Dennis Jurjens
– Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, pastoral adviser

B. Board of Directors of CRWRC-U.S.

– Mr. Chris Van Spronsen, president
– Mr. Stan Cole, vice president
– Mr. Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr., secretary
– Ms. Dawn Menning, treasurer
– Dr. Mariano Avila, pastoral adviser
– Mr. William Haverkamp
– Ms. Nancy Visser

C. Canadian Board of Delegates

CRWRC respectfully requests Synod 2009 to elect the following nominee as member-at-large to the CRWRC Canada Board of Delegates:

Ms. Danielle Kooy grew up on a family-run dairy farm just outside Nobleford, Alberta, and is a member of Nobleford CRC. Ms. Kooy moved to Langley, British Columbia, to attend Trinity Western University (TWU), where she graduated with a bachelor of arts in political studies and history. She is currently enrolled in the master of arts in interdisciplinary humanities program at TWU with a focus in history. Ms. Kooy has interest in social justice issues, particularly in terms of gender. Although her focus and research have been primarily within Canada, she is concerned generally with how gender plays a role in political legislation, legal rights, economics, and wealth distribution. Ms. Kooy currently holds two jobs as a teacher's assistant and a research assistant at TWU. Upon completion of her studies, she intends to pursue further studies at a doctoral level with the objective of teaching at the post-secondary level, and/or working with government or a non-governmental organization as a public policy analyst. She looks forward to the opportunity to work with CRWRC. In her words: "I admire the work being done [by CRWRC] and am excited to be part of future endeavors with this program."

D. U.S. Board of Delegates

CRWRC recommends that synod reappoint Ms. Martha Carey to a second three-year term as member-at-large on the U.S. Board of Delegates.

E. Finance

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	4	1st

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2009—Financial and Business Supplement.*

V. Resource development

CRWRC staff and volunteers are able to collaborate for the betterment of communities around the world because of the support CRWRC receives from churches and individuals in North America. Much of this support comes from Christian Reformed churches. The CRC synod asks churches to take four offerings per year for CRWRC. One of these scheduled offerings is for the World Hunger Campaign, a program that offers materials to include every member of the family in learning about those in need around the world and how to help. These offerings make up a core part of CRWRC's financial support in a given year. CRWRC does not receive any ministry shares (quotas) from the denomination.

Churches are also reaching out through CRWRC in other ways. More and more churches are connecting with individual CRWRC field staff around the world—receiving their newsletters, praying for their specific needs, and supporting them with financial gifts. Additionally, churches are partnering with churches, communities, and programs, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America through CRWRC's Church Relations office.

CRWRC also receives generous contributions from individuals, both in the CRC and beyond. Gifts are given to support general ministry needs, for specific countries or programs, for gift catalog items, for disasters, for the Free A Family® program, and more. Donations come to CRWRC via the web, (www.crwrc.org), memorial gifts, school classrooms, foundation grants, offerings, and more.

In total, CRWRC received $20,477,216 in support from churches and individuals last year. CRWRC also received $2,489,765 from the Canadian and U.S. governments and $14,231,164 in other grants. Interest from CRWRC's Joseph Fund and other investments provided an additional $782,295 to CRWRC for a total revenue base of $37,980,440. For additional financial information, please see CRWRC's Annual Report (available at www.crwrc.org).

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Chris Van Spronsen, president of CRWRC-U.S.; Mr. John Richey, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.; and Ms. Ida Kaastra-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.

C. That synod by way of a ballot elect or reelect members for the CRWRC Boards of Delegates.

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.
Ida Kaastra-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 has its own, similar fund. The Board of Directors oversees the loan approval process, the determination of interest rates, and setting of Loan Fund policies. 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 Mr. Ronald Baylor and Mr. Donald Koopman expire on June 30, 2009. Mr. Baylor has served for two terms. Mr. Koopman has served for one term but has elected not to seek reappointment to a second term. The board requests synod to appoint two board members from the following slates of nominees for a three-year term:

Position 1

Mr. Ronald Veltman is a member of Hope International CRC, Arcadia, California, where he has served as an elder. He is a graduate of Kettering University and Wayne State University Law School and currently is employed as assistant general counsel for 21st Century Insurance and Financial Services.

Mr. James Zoetewey is a member of Bethany CRC, Bellflower, California, where he has served as an elder and deacon. He has served as a board member for Valley Christian School, Salem Christian School, Endowment Foundation of Southern California, Christian Schools International, and Partners for Christian Development. Mr. Zoeteway presently serves as a CRWRC area manager and is on the Finance Committee for Classis Greater Los Angeles. Mr. Zoetewey is a certified public accountant presently serving as senior partner with Zoetewey and Dykstra, CPAs.

Position 2

Mr. Allan Reitberg is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as an elder, trustee of the Benefactors Trust Fund, and member of several committees. Mr. Reitberg is the founder and president of Reitberg Companies, a commercial/industrial real estate firm. He is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan and is a commercial/industrial real estate broker and certified real estate appraiser.

Mr. Jon Swets is a member of Ivanrest CRC, Grandville, Michigan, where he has served as an instructor for the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace Curriculum and presently serves as a Sunday school teacher. He serves on the boards of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services and Grandville Christian Schools, and is a member of AICPA and MACPA. Mr. Swets is a chief financial officer of Macatawa Bank. He is a graduate of Calvin College and also received his Certified Public Accountant designation.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Ms. Christina Bouwer (2010), Rev. Chad Steenwyk (2010), Mr. Ronald Haan (2011), and Mr. Calvin Jen (2011).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-seven states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the 2008 fiscal year (June 30, 2008), a total of $30,148,584 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 170 loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 2008, a total of $28,202,589 was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2008, there were no delinquent loans. The Loan Fund maintains a loan loss reserve to cover potential losses.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2006	2007	2008
Cash and equivalent	5,995,722	3,088,218	4,910,851
Investments	2,000,000	2,000,000	3,000,000
Loans and accounts receivable	17,361,345	25,976,308	28,040,214
Equipment and software, less depreciation	33,650	25,238	16,825
Total	$25,390,717	$31,089,764	$35,967,890
Notes and accounts payable	20,436,606	25,787,850	30,255,361
Net assets	4,954,111	5,301,614	5,712,529
Total liabilities and net assets	$25,390,717	$31,089,764	$35,846,675

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 2008, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2009—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 which permits borrowings of 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 Alice Damsteegt (88% of full-time) and Carl Gronsman (75% of full-time), who also provides support to Christian Reformed Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's director or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod elect two board members from the slates of nominees provided to serve on the Board of Directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl A. Gronsman, director

I. Introduction

The mission of Faith Alive Christian Resources (Faith Alive) is "to provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide."

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 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

- decreasing loyalty to denominations and all institutions.
- increasing expectations of choices in all areas of life.
- an increasingly diverse denomination.
- the explosion of new technology.

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

II. Faith Alive 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."

The every-household *Banner* continues to be well received by a vast majority and wide variety of CRC members. As reported to Synod 2007, a survey of a sample of CRC members in fall 2006 showed that 86 percent of respondents indicated that they read substantial portions of *The Banner* compared to 58 percent in a 2002 survey of CRC members. Annual fundraising efforts in 2008 generated a higher than anticipated response. Fiscal 2009 remains a challenge with the U.S. economy having a directly adverse effect on short-term financial health. Investment income and advertising revenues are below expectations. Plans are in place for a new approach to the spring 2009 fundraising campaign designed to exceed 2008 donation levels.

The editor of *The Banner,* Rev. Robert De Moor, continues to provide the overall leadership for the magazine on a 60 percent FTE basis. He also serves as pastor of preaching and administration at West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. This arrangement works well. In January 2008, De Moor started "Bob's Blog" on *The Banner* website as part of the staff's attempt to increase readership and accessibility. In addition, the audio version of The Banner can now be downloaded in MP3 format.

Managing editor Joyce Kane officially retired from her position with *The Banner* at the end of June. However, she continues to fulfill many of her managerial duties on a part-time basis and hopes to continue to do so for the near future. The rest of her responsibilities have been taken over by Faith Alive Editorial Department editors and administrative assistants. To date, that arrangement is working without a hitch. The present editorial staff consists of the following persons:

- Gayla Postma, news editor (.64 FTE)
- Joyce Kane, managing editor (.3 FTE)
- Jena Vander Ploeg, features editor (.75 FTE)
- Sandy Swartzentruber, line editor
- Robert De Moor, editor (.6 FTE)

The Banner staff keeps looking for ways to improve the magazine so that its readership will continue to expand. Examples of future changes being considered:

- Enhance "Dear Reader" column (add other writers)
- Offer more biblical interpretation articles
- Redesign Church@Work section to be less formulaic

A representative sample of articles that received the most response during the past year includes the following:

- ". . . Also Many Animals" by Leonard Vander Zee (April 2008), with a follow-up article, "A Farmer's Perspective," by Malcolm DeKryger (July 2008)
- "Of Death and Grace," the final Cabbages and Kings column by the late Jacob D. Eppinga (September 2008)
- "Meeting God at the Shack," a review by Syd Hielema (September 2008) of the surprising bestseller *The Shack.*
- "Is Prosperity a Blessing?" by Daniel Boerman (November 2008)

As of January 2009, we anticipate quite a bit of reader response to the following articles:

- "Speaking of Evolution" by Deborah B. Haarsma and Loren D. Haarsma, authors of *Origins,* published by Faith Alive
- Robert De Moor's March 2009 editorial "What's to Discuss?" regarding the CRC's failure to implement well Synod 2003's policy statement regarding homosexuality (to "show full acceptance to all our brothers and sisters who have a homosexual orientation, lovingly enfold them in the fellowship of believers, and support them with pastoral care in living out God's will for their lives")

– "Where Is My Son Welcome?" by a pastor whose son is homosexual (IMHO, March 2009)

During the past year, *The Banner* marked the celebration of John Calvin's 500th birthday with a five-page biographical feature on the man ("John Calvin, We Hardly Knew Ye" by Chris Meehan, January 2009; Meehan is now writing a book on John Calvin for Faith Alive). The staff also asked Rev. Dale Cooper, chaplain emeritus of Calvin College, to write a yearlong series on John Calvin's teachings that will appear in each issue under "Reformed Matters." Finally, a dialogue is planned for August 2009 between representatives of the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church on the Reformation and the churches' relationship today.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For a number of years, synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed,* a monthly periodical published by the CRC Korean Council through a ministry-share allocation to Faith Alive. 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.*

B. Editorial Department

The goal of this department is to be the first-stop resource provider for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

1. Curriculum

a. For children

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, adult small groups, and so on) 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 and the *Kid Connection* curriculum (intended for smaller churches) are the flagship curricula we currently publish for children. A total of about 2,000 churches, 660 of them CRC, use at least one of our core curricula for children. *Walk With Me,* in its fifth year, is currently performing above expectations with *Kid Connection,* now in its second year, lagging just slightly behind.

The number of new customers added each year (over 500) is slightly above the number of drops. Research shows churches drop our curriculum for a variety of reasons, but primarily state a "desire for something new and different" as the main reason for change. Other denominational publishers are experiencing similar trends. This, combined with an increasingly competitive market, will prove challenging in the coming years. Growth will come through an expansion of distribution channels (attracting and retaining new customers) and through innovation. It is not enough to create a "new and improved" curriculum. Faith Alive must reinvent curriculum by establishing a new vision of faith formation in the local church.

b. For youth

Several years ago we had a series of meetings with youth leaders and teens/young adults to brainstorm curriculum directions and to critique our offerings. After we revamped most of our curriculum, we disbanded the group. However, our curriculum is aging again, so we have invited a new team to meet with us. We had our first meeting in January 2009 to set direction for the group and discuss materials currently offered in the Faith Alive catalog.

The most important curriculum that we offer for youth, in our view, is curriculum that teaches the doctrines of our church to youth. We publish two resources to support this ministry: *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course on the Heidelberg Catechism with a cutting edge pedagogy, and *HC and Me*, a two-year course that incorporates more traditional pedagogy.

Other significant resources for youth published recently or on the drawing board include the following:

- *Questions from the Pickle Jar*
- *The Seven Deadly Sins*
- *Believe It*—a course on CD and on the web about the Belgic Confession
- *Living Your Faith in a Messed-Up World*—a DVD/web-based course on the Contemporary Testimony

c. For adults

The most significant new series of products for adults published by Faith Alive is the *Disciples* program. This multiyear program, which came out in summer 2007, offers an integrated approach that helps adults at all stages of their spiritual journey grow in their faith walk. The second year of this program will focus on some of the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship.

Three of Faith Alive's more traditional Bible study series for adults are *Discover Your Bible*, designed to support the Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions as well as many other types of small groups; *Discover Life*, designed to support men's Bible study as well as groups for women, couples, and singles; and a more intensive Bible study series called *Word Alive* for various groups. *Discover the Parables of Jesus* and *Discover Mark* were just released in the Discover Your Bible series. *Paul: To Live Is Christ* will soon be new in the *Discover Life* series. And, *Abraham: Trusting the God Who Calls* will soon be available in the Word Alive series.

Other planned resources for adults include additions to the *A Reformed Look At . . .* series:

- *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and Evolution*
- *Bioethics: A Reformed Look at Life and Death Choices*
- *Signs and Wonders: A Reformed Look at the Spirit's Ongoing Work*
- *Mature Content: A Reformed Look at Sexuality*

Other products for adults include

- *Sixty at Sixty*—a collection of meditations for boomers by Jim Schaap
- *It's All Grace*—a collection of Rev. Jacob Eppinga's best-loved *Banner* articles
- *Nurture*—a parent newsletter for churches to purchase and distribute to families
- *God Wins: A Study of Revelation*—eight sessions with a DVD and study guides aimed at exploring the mysteries of the book of Revelation
- *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama*—abbreviated version of a bestseller that Baker publishes for a more academic audience
- *The Reformed Handbook*—a tongue-in-cheek look at the Reformed faith

In the past year, we also revised a number of current titles that sell well including *Earth-Wise*, *The Kingdom Equation*, *Discover Your Gifts*, and *Firstfruits*.

d. For people with cognitive 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 cognitive impairments. The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*. In the past year with Friendship, we also completed a revision of the course on the Ten Commandments titled *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 amount is designated for this work.

f. Training and consulting

Synod 2006 provided for some ministry-share dollars to support the establishment of a training and consulting office. Ms. Jolanda Malburg was hired to fill this office in fall 2006. She is focusing her work on providing training, support, and networking opportunities for church educators, including organizing training conferences, developing online and print training and support resources (such as newsletters), and developing a system of regional networks.

Training plans are taking shape for 2009, with online training becoming the major focus of our efforts. In January we began introducing new webinars on a range of topics that address the needs of both church educators/Sunday school coordinators and volunteer leaders. We also hope to post short training videos on each of the curriculum websites and offer three new downloadable workshops for coordinators to use in training teachers.

Another key focus for this year will be encouraging local educators to network with one another to share ideas and offer mutual support.

The Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE) now offers a membership process, and Faith Alive will continue to partner with ACRE to offer grants to help educators form networks in their areas. Two network grants were awarded in 2008 to groups that formed in Langley, British Columbia, and Edmonton, Alberta.

2. Resources for church leaders

Considerable planning has been done this past year to develop a more comprehensive plan for providing resources for church leaders. The following resources are in various stages of development or release:

- *Welcome brochure*—several longer and shorter CRC welcome brochures are being replaced with one longer (30 pages) and one shorter (tri-fold) product for church literature racks for visitors and/or inquirers.
- *Deacon Handbook*—We are replacing our two current deacons' books with this basic handbook in the style of the newly revised *Elder Handbook*.

3. Worship resources

The quarterly magazine *Reformed Worship* continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are approximately 4,200 subscribers, many from denominations other than the CRC. Because of a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, we have been able to place all prior issues of the magazine on the web.

In 2007 synod approved the development of a bi-denominational hymnbook developed in cooperation with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Work continues on this project as we gather the suggestions of the editorial committee, process song lists from various churches, respond to various inquiries from composers and text writers, and begin to receive submissions of newly written music. In addition, a committee made up of RCA and CRC representatives has been formed to develop common texts for our various creeds and confessions. Whether or not this committee is successful, the Heidelberg Catechism will be available in hymnals for the CRC in an approved CRC form.

Faith Alive is working with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to produce some precursor hymnals to the bi-denominational hymnal. *Contemporary Songs for Worship* is now available. Progress is being made on the next two collections. *Hymns for Worship* will include about 250 songs in chronological order according to their text. This collection is in the process of being typeset and edited. Work on the final small collection, *Mosaic Songs for Worship*, from North American communities, will begin this summer.

We continue to work with the Reformed Church in America staff to coordinate support for the Children and Worship program used by many of our churches.

C. World Literature Ministries

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries (WLM) publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish

line of products is published under the imprint Libros Desafío. 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.

Two significant changes have greatly improved the future of WLM. Mr. Jan Dijkman was hired as director, and Rev. Alejandro Pimentel was hired as associate editor. Going forward, Mr. Dijkman will focus his efforts on developing new publishing opportunities and opening new markets for WLM products while Rev. Pimentel will provide critical editorial support. With these two additions WLM is well positioned for ministry growth.

The World Literature Ministries Department collaborates with other agencies, especially the mission agencies, through our board's World Literature Council, which includes representatives from all the CRC mission agencies.

2. Korean literature

Several years ago, Faith Alive transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. The Korean Council has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the *Discover Your Bible* series, into Korean. The council works closely with a Korean publisher, called *CRC Publications*, in distributing these materials in Korea. It has also formed relations 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 and the Heidelberg Catechism.

D. Marketing and Customer Service Departments

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. Since 2004 web visits have increased 33 percent, and web orders have increased 147 percent. Revenue from web orders has increased 160 percent during that same time span. Through December 2009, 35 percent of all Faith Alive orders come through the Faith Alive website. Nearly 10,000 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.

Several months ago Faith Alive learned it was going to need to switch e-commerce systems due to the Gospel Communications announcement that they would cease operations effective January 31, 2009. Implementation of the new system has gone very well. Features of the new site include

- special promotion codes offering discounts on specific products for certain groups of customers or targeted prospects
- e-newsletter and e-communications features
- much better and faster searches and improved navigation
- real-time shipping rates for UPS
- analytics features and reports showing visits to the sites, purchases, and more

We promote our curricula to churches from a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Our spring mailings promoting our curricula normally are distributed to nearly 40,000 churches. As indicated in the chart below, the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; more than one-half of Faith Alive's 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	% of total	Sales	% of total
CRC	849	20%	1,237,000	41%
RCA	619	14%	463,000	15%
PCUSA	941	22%	508,000	17%
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	442	10%	296,000	10%
Other	1502	34%	496,000	17%
Total	4353	100%	$3,000,000	100%

Our Customer Service Department continues to provide excellent service to our customers. In a recent survey, respondents gave this department a 4.76 rating on a 5-point scale for their service.

E. Personnel

The Faith Alive staff team is made up of just over thirty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

Staff Council is a management group made up of the director, Mark Rice, and representatives from the following departments: Jena Vander Ploeg, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Leonard Vander Zee and Ruth Vander Hart, Editorial; Chad Kruizenga, Marketing; Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; Alina Pellecer, Customer Service; and Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

F. Finances

The Faith Alive Christian Resources board remains firmly committed to the goal that Faith Alive's ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that projects may be 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. We also receive ministry-share dollars for the every-household *Banner*. Given the trend in recent years of churches changing curriculum frequently and its impact on our financial base, the long-term finances of our ministry will be strained.

Faith Alive submits (for synod's information) reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, and the budget for fiscal year 2010. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2009—Financial and Business Supplement*.

III. 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 Reformed Church in America) elected by synod governs Faith Alive. The board ordinarily meets three times annually in 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 Faith Alive board through June 2009 are Rev. Kenneth Baker, president; Mr. Jim Lipscomb, vice-president; Ms. Irene Bakker, secretary; and Mr. Tom Prince, treasurer.

C. Nominations of board members

1. Regional delegates

The following slates of nominees are being presented for vote at the spring classis meetings. The results of the vote will be presented to synod for ratification.

Region 6

Ms. Fran Mulder is a member of The River CRC in Redlands, California. She has been a teacher for eight years at Redlands Christian School and head of Children's Ministry for sixteen years. She has been on staff at The River CRC for ten years and a member of the Creative Art Team for seven. Fran brings experience and a passion for Reformed curriculum and a strong commitment to the growth of children's ministry leaders.

Ms. Ruth Peña is a member of the Christian Reformed Church of Camarillo, California. She holds a B.A. in business and communications with a minor in Third World Development from Calvin College. Ms. Peña currently serves as admissions counselor for Community Christian College and assistant campus director. Past board and committee experience includes serving as secretary of the Camarillo Church Board for ten years, as a member of the Calvin College International Student Committee, and as president of the Student Committee for the Recognition of Latino Culture at Calvin College.

Region 8

Ms. Sherry Kooiker is a member of Hope CRC in Hull, Iowa. She has a B.S. in elementary education. Ms. Kooiker has been involved in Coffee Break ministry for over seventeen years, and has served on her church's evangelism committee in addition to being a GEMS leader. She has also been a correspondent for *The Banner*.

Rev. Gideon Wamala was born in Kenya and is pastors of Calvin CRC in Rock Valley, Iowa. He received his education in Africa and from Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Wamala has been involved in all aspects of ministry in the local church and classis.

2. Delegates eligible for a second term

The following delegates are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term: Rev. Pieter Pereboom, Ms. Beverly Vander Beek, Ms. Wilma Wiersma, and Mr. Tom Prince.

D. Relationship with the denominational structure and denominational plan

As Faith Alive 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 (DMP).

Faith Alive staff has also been heavily involved in the development of the balanced scorecard, which is designed to help implement the DMP. Faith Alive is committed to working with other denominational agencies and institutions to help ensure the success of this initiative.

In addition to this work directly associated with the DMP, Faith Alive works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministry. Examples of this include the following:

- The Editorial Department helps provide various CRC-developed English-language resources needed by Christian Reformed Home Missions to carry out its ministry. We also work with a number of other agencies in this way.
- World Literature Ministries works with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs. Most of this work is focused on Spanish-language resources.
- We partner with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in a number of ways, including co-publishing resources. For example, we are currently working with the Institute in publishing a number of songbooks as part of the strategy for publishing a new bi-denominational hymnal with the Reformed Church in America.
- *The Banner* regularly publishes information about the ministries of the various CRC agencies and institutions. In fact, each issue of the every-household *Banner* includes eight pages of information about denominational agencies and ministries in the Church@Work section, as well as regular coverage in the news section.
- We provide order fulfillment services for several of the CRC agencies.

E. Relationships with other organizations

During the past few years, Faith Alive 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. These are some of the more significant relationships:

- 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 Resources is the resource provider 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 3,000 evangelical congregations, is a co-publisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. More

recently we have begun discussions with the publishing arm of the PCUSA to explore a possible publishing partnership. The PCUSA has decided to carry our *Friendship* curriculum and may also carry our *Kid Connection* curriculum.

- We work closely with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) 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 general secretary of the EPC, and numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination.
- Christian Schools International—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—We also meet twice annually with the staff of DYM to discuss plans and opportunities for collaboration.
- Baker Book House—We periodically copublish books with this publisher.

F. Use of Faith Alive Resources by CRC churches

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by Faith Alive. In fact, about 85 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. Approximately 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our curricula for children. While that is high compared to many denominations, decreasing loyalty to denominational resources and an increasingly competitive curriculum marketplace will place pressure on Faith Alive to create innovative, new approaches to curriculum publishing, find ways to retain and expand its customer base, and expand its distribution channels. CRC churches place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written with a Reformed perspective, but they are finding other methods to accomplish this by not necessarily using the Reformed curricula Faith Alive offers—*Walk With Me* and *Kid Connection*. At the same time we are encouraged that Faith Alive curricula are being positively received by churches from many denominations as high quality, easy-to-use curricula. The number of churches that use our doctrinal courses for youth is considerably lower than 70 percent.

G. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting, the Faith Alive board adopted a report of the task force on Faith Alive and the environment. At its April 2007 meeting, the board adopted an enhanced policy suggested by the Green Press Initiative and became a signatory of the Book Industry Treatise on Responsible Paper Use. The 1990 report contained several goals regarding Faith Alive's use of recycled paper. Until recently, approximately 98 percent of Faith Alive materials were printed on recycled paper. Recycled paper continues to increase in cost, making it more difficult to print using recycled paper. Some materials (e.g., *The Banner*, children's curriculum papers) are no longer printed on recycled paper stock.

The CRC Proservices Department, in its negotiations with printers, also tries to use recycled paper for its work.

H. Antiracism

Faith Alive continues to be an active participant in the effort of the Ministry Leadership Team to respond to synod's directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC via a staff antiracism team.

The Faith Alive board also has an active antiracism team committed to achieving the following vision approved by the board: "The Faith Alive board covenants to become an antiracist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as a God-given asset of the human family."

I. Salary disclosure

Faith Alive, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
17	1	2nd
17	1	1st
15	1	3rd

IV. Recommendations

A. The Faith Alive Christian Resources board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of Faith Alive are discussed:

For the board
Rev. Kenneth Baker, president
Mr. Mark Rice, director

For *The Banner*
Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Editorial Department
Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, director

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the elections of and reappoint members to the Faith Alive Christian Resources board from the nominees presented.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the finance advisory committee.

Faith Alive Christian Resources
Mark Rice, director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination including its ministries, 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.

Concluding service on the U.S. Board of Pensions in 2009 are Mr. Ray Vander Weele and Mr. Alan Van Noord. The board recommends the following single nominee for election to a three-year term:

Mr. Jack Byeman has had 28 years experience with the Boeing Company as the CFO of a major commercial airplane segment and has since been an independent business consultant. He has also served on the board of directors of a $9 billion financial institution for over 20 years and has extensive audit, asset/liability, investment, and governance committee experience. Mr. Byeman is a graduate of Calvin College and Washington State University and currently serves as an elder and president of the church council at Bellevue CRC in Bellevue, Washington.

The U.S. Board of Pensions requests that synod elect a member to the board from the following slate of nominees:

Mr. Kurt Knoll is the director of finance and administration for Barnabas Foundation. Prior to joining Barnabas, he worked with several Chicago area companies serving in positions of chief financial officer, vice president of finance and administration, and corporate controller. He graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. in accounting from Northeastern Illinois University. He is a member of First CRC, Crown Point, Indiana. Mr. Knoll has previously served as a deacon and treasurer of council.

Mr. Howard Van Mersbergen is the vice president of employee benefits at Christian Schools International. He holds the Certified Investment Management Analyst and Certified Employee Benefit Specialist designations. Mr. Van Mersbergen is a member of EverGreen Ministries in Hudsonville, Michigan, and has served on the boards of Hudsonville Christian School and the Hudsonville Christian School Foundation.

Mr. Greg Kist is completing his first term on the Canadian Pension Trustees and is eligible for a second three-year term. Completing service on the Canadian Pension Trustees is Rev. Jake Kuipers. The following slate of nominees is presented for election for a three-year term:

Rev. Kevin te Brake of Wainfleet, Ontario, has been serving as pastor of First CRC, Kingston, Ontario, since his ordination in December 2006. He graduated with an M.Div. from McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, and was part of the EPMC/SPMC program at Calvin Theological Seminary.

He received his B.Comm (Hons) degree from McMaster University in 1993 and received a Certified Management Accountant of Ontario designation in 1995. Beginning in 1991 until ordination, he was a partner in his family's accounting practice, located in Wainfleet, Ontario (Niagara Peninsula).

Rev. Vic Vandermolen has been serving as pastor of First CRC, St. Thomas, Ontario, since March 2007. He obtained a license to exhort in 1993 and became ordained in September 1999. Prior to his service in the CRC, he was a licensed realtor and was appointed to the staff of the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA), leaving there as the assistant executive director. While at OREA, he acted as liaison and information officer with Canadian and American real estate industry leadership, and served as a speaker and seminar leader both nationally and internationally. In 1991 he started his own association management and consulting firm with private clients, as well as those at municipal, provincial, and federal government levels (both Canadian and U.S.).

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 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, 2008, 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	832	247	1,079
Retired ministers	446	128	574
Spouses and dependents	148	28	176
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	101	23	124
Total	1,527	426	1,953

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 it furnished the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts for 2007, 2008, and 2009. Because the Canadian Plan was less than 80 percent funded as of December 31, 2006, it is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Accordingly, information regarding church and participant assessment amounts for 2010 is not available for inclusion in this report. However, it is anticipated that it will be included in the supplemental report to Synod 2009 and released to the churches and others following Synod 2009.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 2005, the actuarial liability totaled approximately $108.4 million for the U.S. plan and $33.1 million for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the plans' obligations to over 1,900 active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2008	December 31, 2007
United States (U.S. $)	$72,401,000	$109,296,000
Canada (Can. $)	26,120,000	32,435,000

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.

2. 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:

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 s 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.

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined at an amount per active 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 2009 is $32.64 per member in Canada and $28.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at $8,148 and $6,372, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational 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 2010 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 2009.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering employees not ordained as ministers of the Word of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. In the United States contributions are paid to the plan by participating employers in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. In Canada contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. 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.

As of December 31, 2008, the balances in these plans totaled approximately $15,693,000 in the United States and $2,432,000 in Canada, and, as of that date, there were 421 participants in the U.S. plan and 83 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	286	69
Inactive	135	14

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Oversight of the denomination's Consolidated Group Insurance, which includes health, dental, and life insurance benefits, is provided by the Board of Trustees.

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 1,381 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 670 pastors and employees of local churches, 394 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 317 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 2009, premiums in the United States increased 12 percent.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer 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 2010 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 by way of the printed ballot elect members to the U.S. Board of Pensions for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2009.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot both elect to a first term and reappoint to a second term members to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2009.

Pensions and Insurance
John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

I. Introduction

A. Committee membership

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee meets three times per year. As in each denominational committee, members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Peter Choi (2011/1), Rev. Henry Jonker (2011/2), Rev. Jack Vos (2010/1), Mr. Roy Heerema (2010/1), Rev. Thea N. Leunk (2010/2), Dr. Jay J. Shim (2010/2), Dr. Albert Wolters (2009/1), Dr. Annalee Ward (2009/2), Mr. Rudy Gonzalez (2009/2), Dr. Duane K. Kelderman (ex officio as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra (ex officio as the ED), Rev. David R. Koll (non-voting staff). Dr. Albert Wolters is completing his first term, and is eligible to serve a second three-year term. Completing service on the Candidacy Committee in 2009 are Mr. Rudy Gonzalez and Dr. Annalee Ward. The committee is grateful for their years of service in this capacity.

The Candidacy Committee recommends *Rev. Melvin Jackson* as a single nominee for committee membership. Rev. Jackson is an African-American pastor serving at Grace Unlimited CRC in Los Angeles, California. He was ordained in the CRC via Article 8 in 2002.

The committee presents the following slate of nominees for election to a three-year term:

Ms. Kristin Pikaart is ordained as a ministry associate, serving as chaplain and director of pastoral care at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital and Hospice in New Mexico.

Ms. Amy Schenkel is ordained as a ministry associate, serving with her husband as co-pastor at Monroe Community Church, a new church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She also serves as a new leader's specialist for the Great Lakes regional Home Missions office.

B. Review of the past year

Over the past year the work of the Candidacy Committee has been enhanced by the presence of a full-time director. The committee is encouraged that a number of tasks and initiatives previously hoped for are now being accomplished.

By the meeting of Synod 2009, orientation sessions with members of Classical Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLTs) from each of the forty-seven classes will have been completed. In addition, conversations regarding ministerial credentialing will have taken place with each of the stated clerks, synodical deputies, and alternates. These meetings were planned for February and March of 2009, using Internet technology.

The committee has also approved an update of the "Toward Ordination in the CRC" document that guides the processes for ministerial credentialing through Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8. This new draft will be easier for members of CMLTs to use.

Other tasks accomplished this past year include the distribution of a report on Student Funding and Financial Aid, the development of

individualized learning plans for those who need an alternative to the modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy, the continued development of the Korean-language pastor orientation program known as KIM, and discussion with the homiletics staff at Calvin Theological Seminary. The prayers, support, encouragement, and inquiry of the church regarding the work of the Candidacy Committee are most welcome.

II. Action regarding requirement for physical examinations

For many years in the history of the Christian Reformed Church one of the requirements for persons entering ministry was that they undergo a physical examination. During the past year it was called to the attention of the Candidacy Committee that the Americans with Disabilities Act in the United States, passed a decade ago, forbids the requirement of such an examination as a condition of employment. After consulting with the denominational attorney, the Candidacy Committee decided that it was prudent to remove this requirement from the list of items required for those entering ministry through Articles 6, 7, or 8. Appropriate changes in the related documents (including Church Order statements) will be made to reflect this decision upon the endorsement of this action by Synod 2009.

III. Chaplains and Church Order Article 23

Synod 2007 adopted the following statement regarding chaplains and Church Order Article 23:

> That synod instruct the SMCC [now Candidacy Committee] to address questions regarding the professional status of ministry associate in certain chaplaincy settings (i.e., ministerial privileges in prison or hospital settings) with a view to facilitating their ministry in such settings.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 665)

In response to this directive the Candidacy Committee has consulted with Rev. Herman Keizer, director of Chaplaincy Ministries in the CRC. He indicated a concern about Article 23 when the position was titled *evangelist*. There was a fear in some secular institutions that those ordained as evangelist would be focused on proselytizing rather than on a ministry of compassion. Since the change in the name of the office to *ministry associate* in 2003, such problems have not been experienced. Rev. Keizer is not aware of recent instances in which access to facilities has been hampered by the title or ordination represented by Article 23.

Presently four chaplains are ordained under Church Order Article 23. One works with the Urban Aboriginal Ministries in Canada; one works in a hospital setting in Gallup, New Mexico; one works in a VA hospital; and one works in a marketplace chaplaincy. The flexibility of Article 23 has served the CRC well in the recruitment of military chaplains. Currently there are two aspiring military chaplains working through the Article 23 process who will at a later time work through the process for ordination as ministers of the Word. The office of ministry associate provides for an accelerated means to ordination for those whose assignment to the military does not provide "up front time" to go through Article 6 or Article 8 procedures. The Canadian Armed Forces and the U.S. Department of Defense cannot require a certain type of ordination because many religious groups do not have an ordained clergy (e.g., Mormons, Muslims, Christian Science).

Thus, the Candidacy Committee feels that the concerns relative to chaplains and Article 23 and access to chaplaincy settings are being sufficiently addressed. Article 23 is proving to serve the needs of CRC pastoral ministry in chaplaincy settings.

IV. Church Order Article 23 issues relative to status and support

In 2007 the Candidacy Committee reported that it wanted to find ways to give the office of ministry associate "more use, more status, and more support." This goal was offered in the context of the decision to return to a more historical use of Article 7 entry into ordination of minister of the Word and to utilize Article 23 as the route to ministry for those who do not have the academic training required for ordination as minister of the Word.

Over the past two years the Candidacy Committee has engaged in conversations with a number of persons ordained as ministry associates and a number of leaders of Leadership Development Networks that have trained various people ordained as ministry associates. In addition, the Candidacy Committee has taken careful note of the comments made at synod during the past two years and the proposals offered on behalf of ministry associates.

A variety of issues regarding the position of ministry associate have been identified and follow as a summary for synod's attention. Issues and suggestions are grouped into three categories: (1) Issues for clarification, (2) Non-polity initiatives, and (3) A proposed polity change.

A. Issues for clarification

1. Title of the office of ministry associate

   Numerous concerns have been raised over the very title of the office that is being used. *Ministry associate* feels to some to be a second-class designation. The former title *evangelist* has been described by some as more biblical and more authenticating.

   The Candidacy Committee reminds the churches that all offices, according to our Church Order, "differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor" (Church Order Article 2). This is a matter of biblical and polity principle for the Christian Reformed Church, and thus misperceptions to the contrary must be identified and challenged.

   The Candidacy Committee also would like to observe that the titles *ministry associate* and *minister of the Word* are only Church Order terms. In practice the churches use a variety of other terms to designate those serving in pastoral and staff roles (for example, pastor, reverend, evangelist, chaplain, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life). The reality is that local classes, congregations, and communities develop their own language to describe both ministers of the Word and ministry associates. This is in keeping with the intent of Synod 2001:

   > The office of evangelist [term used in 2001] may be understood to have the character of pastoral extension. Evangelists extend the work of pastoral leadership by founding and working in new congregations and by extending the ministry of organized congregations into specialized areas, including, but not limited to, youth ministry, education, pastoral care, worship, and evangelism (cf. Church Order Article 24). By the broader application of the office of evangelist, with its existing regulations, to a variety of ministry positions, the church avoids the multiplication of offices and provides a way of recognizing and regulating a variety of pastoral positions in our

> churches. These ministry positions may be identified by titles that indicate their ministry distinctiveness such as chaplain, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life, and so forth.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506)

2. Moving from classis to classis

Concerns have been raised regarding the need for a new form of classical examination for ministry associates who move from classis to classis. Persons ordained in the office of minister of the Word may move throughout the denomination without being re-examined; however, ministry associates require a new examination each time they take a new position.

It is important to observe that a new congregation, ministry, or classis calling a ministry associate from another congregation, ministry, or classis is entitled to such a re-examination as a matter not only of Church Order regulation but also of principle. By definition, a ministry associate is ordained to, and judged to be qualified for, a particular ministry. A different church and classis must thoroughly discern whether a ministry associate is qualified to serve in a different congregation, and, as is often the case, a different role. A new congregation and classis contemplating the call of a ministry associate is only being responsible in making a fresh assessment of a ministry associate's qualifications *for this new congregation and position*.

However, the committee also wishes to point out that the wording of the Church Order allows for classis discretion in this area, especially in situations where the ministry position in the new classis is similar to the one for which the ministry associate was previously examined. Note the following statement in Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (emphasis ours):

> Before examining a person for the office of ministry associate <u>or granting permission to install a previously ordained ministry associate in a new position</u>, the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, will determine whether or not the position to which the person is being called fits the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001. In addition, the candidates for the office of ministry associate must have proven ability to function in the ministry to which they are being called.

In practice, many classes have accepted the examination of a previously ordained ministry associate as sufficient. In these cases the reputation of the ministry associate, the similarity of the ministry positions, and/or the recommendation of the previous ministry and classis have been judged by the classis as strong enough to merit no further local examination.

The Candidacy Committee judges that the reexamination requirement, when balanced with the freedom to forgo the examination under certain circumstances, gives congregations and classes the proper balance of due diligence and flexibility as they contemplate calling a ministry associate from another ministry setting.

3. Insurance and pension plan

A common misperception is that ministers of the Word have a denominational pension and insurance plan, while ministry associates have neither of these. In reality, existing denominational programs for pension and insurance are available for those serving as ministry associates. The pension plan for ministry associates—a defined contribution plan—is

actually preferred by many over the pension plan for ministers of the Word, known as a defined benefit plan.

In current practice, ministers of the Word as well as ministry associates need to negotiate insurance and pension plans with their congregations and sponsoring ministries. Thus, equity in our policies and regulations in this area between persons ordained as ministry associates and ministers of the Word already exists.

4. Tax benefits

   Concerns have been raised that ministers of the Word have benefits with the IRS and Revenue Canada that ministry associates do not have, or are not aware of. As a matter of fact, in the policies of the IRS and Revenue Canada, ordination is the key factor, not the ordination called *minister of the Word*. Our denominational office, through the director of finance and administration, Mr. John Bolt, is available to consult with and give guidance to ministry associates who desire to know the best use of tax benefits.

5. Salary scale

   Concerns have been raised that ministry associates are underpaid and undervalued. The same concerns have been raised for ministers of the Word. Synod has repeatedly exhorted the churches to adequately pay their pastors. The official letter of call for minister of the Word speaks of churches offering salary to pastors, "knowing that laborers are worthy of their hire, to encourage you in the discharge of your duties and to free you from material needs while you are ministering God's Word to us. . . ." Synod spoke to this issue as recently as 2004 when it defined proper support in the following way:

   > Proper support of a church's minister is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, a housing provision, payment to the denomination's minister's pension plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.
   >
   > (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 611)

   Although these particular exhortations apply to those serving as minister of the Word, the principle behind these exhortations also applies to those serving as ministry associate, especially those in full-time service. Since educational requirements for minister of the Word exceed those of a ministry associate, it is likely and defensible that the pay scales will vary somewhat between the two. However, this does not justify underpaying ministry associates. The church is called to provide a living wage for ministers of the Word and ministry associates alike.

6. Summary

   A considerable amount of confusion concerning the office of ministry associate can be addressed simply by clarifying and publicizing current policies and practices. The Candidacy Committee is preparing a "Ministry Associate Handbook" to help CMLTs, classes, congregations, and other individuals who desire greater knowledge of our policies and practices. This handbook will be available in printed form and on the Candidacy Committee website. The issues described above will be included in the handbook.

B. Non-polity initiatives

1. Adopting recommended plans of study

Suggestions have been made for more clearly defined and more rigid training requirements for ministry associates, especially those given the responsibility of preaching on a regular basis.

It is important to remember that a critical, defining feature of the office of ministry associate is its *local* focus. The ordination is focused, by design, on a specialized *local* task. Because the ordination of the ministry associate is to a local congregation, not to the denomination as a whole, synod has resisted imposing denomination-wide training requirements on this office. Such denomination-wide training requirements have been judged not only inappropriate given the local focus of the ordination, but also a threat to the flexibility of the office. The committee is hesitant, therefore, to design and propose standards that would be enforced on a denominational level.

Rather, the Candidacy Committee desires to serve synod by being a resource for classes by offering a list of specific training programs that are being used, and by offering an online forum by which classes can discover which materials and programs are helpful. The committee has taken initial steps toward such a resource list and forum. (See the Candidacy Committee website: www.crcna.org/candidacy.) We invite CMLTs and those involved in training ministry associates to contribute to this discussion, as well as to consider the resources presented in this forum. We believe that the local nature of the office of ministry associate will be best served by allowing each classis the option of requiring the recommended plan *as adapted to a particular candidate and ministry situation.*

2. Distinguishing among ministry associates

It has been requested that the Candidacy Committee propose a new category or new categories of ministry associates, categories that acknowledge, for example, more formal education or training. As the committee discussed this option, it saw a variety of problems and potential negative consequences. Such thinking quickly plays into the very perceptions of one office being superior to another office, as discussed in section IV, A, 1 above. It also goes against the wisdom offered by Synod 2001, as quoted earlier in this report, namely, the avoidance of "the multiplication of offices" (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506). We have concluded that the better way at present is to offer classes and potential ministry associates recommended plans of study and other educational resources, and to allow classes to wrestle with this issue. Classes can respond by adopting training standards for specific types of ministries and by requiring study plans such as the ones mentioned above.

3. Acknowledging retirement

Article 18 of the Church Order deals with giving honor to those who retire as minister of the Word and regulates their care and service. Although it is likely not necessary to make a similar set of denominational rules and regulations in this area for ministry associates, the Candidacy Committee believes it would be fitting to honor retiring ministry associates in some way. Thus, the Candidacy Committee encourages classes to

acknowledge and honor those completing service as ministry associates when they reach retirement age or if, because of physical or mental disability, they become incapable of performing the duties of the office. Appropriate announcements can also be made to the denomination through our denominational publications.

4. Advocating for more denominational exposure

   Those serving as ministry associates and the ministry they represent are often anonymous and unnoticed. Certainly this is a characteristic of any "servant calling," yet there are worthy and proper ways to encourage and support ministry associates and their ministries. Well-written articles in *The Banner*, a celebration at the classical or congregational level, or a prayer moment on the floor of synod are all simple yet meaningful ways in which ministry associates can be supported. *The Banner* is likely to allow classes to announce the ordination of ministry associates into ministry in the same way they announce the ordination of a minister of the Word.

   The Candidacy Committee, therefore, encourages synodical ministries, classes, and local churches to make a concerted effort to highlight the work being done by ministry associates who serve among us, through use of publications and corporate moments of celebration.

5. Creation of a denominational Ministry Associate Profile Information Service

   Those serving as ministry associates, as well as those who wish to serve, lack a formal "networking" mechanism within our denomination. Such a network would be helpful to potential and existing ministry associates—and to ministries that are seeking such persons. The Candidacy Committee feels this could be a project administered by the Office of Pastor-Church Relations, which handles the current Ministerial Information Service. The director of Candidacy is in discussion with the director of Pastor-Church Relations regarding the feasibility and implementation of this profile and information database.

6. Summary report to synod

   Finally, ministry associates could be shown more recognition at synod. Synod's practice of recognizing the candidates for minister of the Word each year is a highlight for candidates as well as for many synodical delegates. Similar recognition could be given to those ordained to the office of ministry associate. With the conscientious help of the clerks of each classis, a list could be created each year indicating those who have been ordained to the office of ministry associate since the previous year, along with the position title. This same report could note those who have retired in the past year, as discussed in section IV, B, 3 above. Such a report could be received as information, accompanied with a moment of celebration and prayer for any new or retiring ministry associates who are present. By doing so, we would be celebrating the work God is doing through ministry associates. The director of Candidacy will work with the director of Synodical Services to consider the feasibility of presenting such a report to synod.

C. A proposed polity change: Protections for ministry associates

Under our current Church Order rules, ministry associates function in the status of "at-will employees." Concerns have been raised that ministry associates are unfairly vulnerable to the whims of a local congregation, as their position can be terminated at the will of the local church, with no classis or denominational involvement.

The Candidacy Committee judges that a polity change is warranted in this regard. As the classis is involved in the appointment of a person, classis ought also to be involved in the termination of the person's position. This is a matter of justice and fairness, and it can be rectified by requiring that any ministry that terminates the service of a ministry associate in an approved position must seek the concurrence of the classis in which approval was given.

The Candidacy Committee considered and decided not to recommend involvement of synodical deputies in this proposed change. The current function of the synodical deputies in regard to ministry associates is to approve a proposed job description so as to guard against a classis or ministry going beyond the intended scope and nature of the office. Synodical deputy involvement is not necessary in the examination, hiring, or termination of service of a ministry associate.

Thus, the Candidacy Committee recommends the following paragraph be added to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (at the conclusion of the section *General Regulations*):

> Any ministry that terminates the service of a person in an approved ministry associate position must seek the concurrence of the classis in which approval was given.

V. Administering Church Order Article 8

Given the changes in the candidacy process for Church Order Article 8 candidates instituted by Synod 2006, the Candidacy Committee acquired responsibilities that had previously been given to synodical deputies. Specifically, the "determination of need" now requires synodical concurrence through the Candidacy Committee rather than through the synodical deputies (see Church Order Supplement, Article 8, F, 2). The Candidacy Committee, through the director of Candidacy, reviews the documents provided by local classes, often through CMLTs or the equivalent committee. A decision is made by the committee to concur with need, as appropriate, and a record of such decisions is then submitted to synod for approval. Synod 2009 is receiving the first of such reports under the new process.

With regard to Article 8, the Candidacy Committee has occasionally faced the question of how to proceed when a minister from another denomination initiates contact with the CRC. Although Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 2 directs these individuals to "make application" to the Candidacy Committee, the context of Article 8 presumes a relationship with a local church (similar to the process of Article 7, as stated in Church Order Supplement, Article 7, A, 1). Thus, the Candidacy Committee has been encouraging potential Article 8 applicants to contact local and regional leaders wherever possible to determine if there may be a ministry need that could result in an Article 8 affiliation.

VI. Recommendations

A. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. David R. Koll when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot reappoint Dr. Albert Wolters to the Candidacy Committee for a second three-year term, and appoint two members to the committee from the nominees presented.

C. That synod take note of the action of the Candidacy Committee to remove the requirement for a physical examination from the list of items required for those entering ministry through Articles 6, 7, or 8, and request the Office of Synodical Services to make necessary changes in the Church Order Supplement and related documents to reflect this action.

D. That synod endorse the direction that the Candidacy Committee has taken in addressing the issues of enhancing and supporting the office of ministry associate (see section IV).

E. That synod add the following paragraph to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (at the conclusion of the section *General Regulations*):

> Any ministry that terminates the service of a person in an approved ministry associate position must seek the concurrence of the classis in which approval was given.

Ground: This provision is consistent with the frequent practice in our polity of the ecclesiastical body's involvement in the beginning and ending of a ministry position or a person's service in that position.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes publication of denominationally related historical studies. The Committee's members are: Rev. Lugene Schemper, chair (2011, second term), Dr. James A. De Jong (2009, first term), Ms. Angie Ploegstra (2010, first term), Mr. William Sytsma (2010, first term), Dr. Richard H. Harms (ex officio), secretary.

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. As archivist, he serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College. Other staff include Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Ms. Melanie Vander Wal, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; student assistants Ms. Dana Verhulst and Ms. Cyndi Feenstra; and volunteers Dr. Henry Ippel, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mr. Ralph Haan, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, Mrs. Willene De Groot, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

We take this opportunity to note the death of the Rev. Henry De Mots, at the time the denomination's oldest minister and also a long-time volunteer translator for the Archives. His ability in English and in Dutch as well as in moving between the two languages led to fine translations, and his dedication to this cause saw him work almost to the last. When age no longer made writing possible, he made arrangements to dictate his translations. We are grateful for his gifts to the Archives and the entire church.

III. Archival work during 2008

During the year we processed 234 cubic feet of records (approximately 700,000 individual sheets of paper). Through careful sorting and evaluation of the significance and research potential of individual record types, this represents less than 20 percent of the material originally sent to us in the accessions of these materials.

Among the processed materials were the records of First CRC, Richmond, British Columbia; Sherman Street CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Mountain Lake, Minnesota, CRC; Classes Northern Michigan, Rocky Mountain, Georgetown, and Lake Superior; and denominational agencies and offices including that of the General Secretary, World Missions, Home Missions, Chaplaincy Ministries, Interchurch Relations Committee, Eastern European Ministry, and Faith Alive Christian Resources. In addition, we received records from the synodical study committees on War and Peace and on Liturgy. Among the larger manuscript collections opened were the research files of Dr. George M. Marsden, noted scholar of American religious history; the papers of Enno Van Halsema, Robert Recker, Paul Zylstra, and Tymen Hofman, ministers in the Christian Reformed Church. (The Hofman files detail his lifelong research into the history of the Dutch in Canada and the United States.) We currently have no backlog of unprocessed Calvin

Theological Seminary records and are working on the backlog of Calvin College records, having added a significant amount to the files of the Calvin College Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Dance and Sports; the Department of Music; the Calvin College Seminars in Christian Scholarship; and Media Relations. In addition, we processed numerous sets of minutes from college and seminary committee and department meetings.

We completed a major cataloging and binding project of the *Yearbooks* of the Christian Reformed Church, 1875 to the present. This required acquiring missing material, particularly agendas as well as copies of some years that were published in both Dutch and English for which we had only one of the copies. Also completely cataloged, for the first time, are all the editions of the Church Order. The cataloging of denominational periodicals is ongoing.

Volunteers completed translation of the minutes of Classis Holland, 1882-1899, and the minutes of the Polkton congregation, one of the original four congregations that established the denomination in 1857. Due to the death of the parishioner who was translating the minutes from Pillar CRC (formerly Ninth Street CRC) in Holland, Michigan, we have begun work on the last section of those. Indexing of vital records of *The Banner* continues by volunteers with the 2008 data sort and is now available in hard copy or via the internet at http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/2006-2008.pdf. Finally, one volunteer completed the collating and keying of information on post World War II Dutch immigrants in Canada. These data were proofread and now are being augmented by the extraction of similar information from *Calvinist Contact*.

One noteworthy accession was the papers of Dr. H. Evan Runner, noted Christian philosopher and member of the Calvin College faculty, 1950-1981. Dr. Runner studied with Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, whose ideas relating to the construction of a new way of doing philosophy from a biblical basis Runner subsequently brought to North America. Runner was also influential in establishing what is now the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. His papers form a large and diverse but important collection that will require more processing time than we typically use.

IV. Publications

The Archives published its twenty-seventh 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. *Origins* currently has two manuscripts in process: the history of the CRC mission effort in China from 1920-1950 and the extensively annotated and translated minutes of the CRC synodical meetings (then called classical or general assembly meetings) from 1857-1880. The mission project manuscript is being edited by the author based on comments from readers. Readers' comments on the minutes manuscript are now complete and on hand. As a token of our gratitude for their work, the committee is giving each of our classical representatives a complimentary subscription to *Origins*.

We compiled the membership records of the South Holland, Michigan, Presbyterian Church, 1852-1867; this group was the first to leave the Reformed Church in America after the Dutch immigrants joined in 1850. Volunteers also compiled the membership records of the Maxwell, New Mexico, congregation that existed from 1893-1908. As with previous such efforts,

these data are now available via the internet at http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/soholland_church.htm and http://www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources /Maxwell_church.htm, respectively.

V. Recognition

A. The Committee acknowledges the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry during 2009:

70 years	John Blankespoor
69 years	Lambert Doezema (our oldest minister) Repko W. Popma
68 years	Eugene Bradford Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom
67 years	John A. Botting
66 years	Bastiaan Nederlof
65 years	Paul Han John H. Olthoff
64 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
63 years	David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
62 years	John A. De Kruyter Jacob Hasper Herman Minnema Bernard E. Pekelder Clarence Van Ens
61 years	Peter Ipema Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Peter M. Macaskill Howard B. Spaan
60 years	John A. Petersen Albert J. Vanden Pol
55 years	Alan A. Arkema Louis F. Baker Paul E. Bakker Marvin Beelen Ralph W. Bronkema Floyd R. De Boer W. Thomas De Vries Earl D. Dykema John B. Hulst

	John L. Meppelink Neal Punt Sidney H. Rooy Hubert J. Sprik Martin Stegink Anthonie Vanden Ende Maas Vander Bilt
50 years	Henry Bouma Allen J. Bultman John G. Groen John J. Hoogland Melvin D. Hugen Harry J. Kwantes Jelle Nutma Walter Swets John Timmer Douglas Vander Wall

B. We report the following anniversaries of ministries during 2009:

125 years, 1884-2009	Grundy Center, IA – Lincoln Center Harrison, SD New Era, MI
100 years, 1909-2009	Ada, MI Conrad, MT
75 years, 1934-2009	Goshen, NY Hollandale, MN Sarnia, ON – First
50 years, 1859-2009	Anchorage, AK – Trinity Gary, IN – Beacon Light Grand Rapids, MI – Brookside Hamilton, ON – Immanuel Hammond, IN Holland, MI – Calvary Jackson, MI – Cascades Fellowship Madison, WI – Crossroads South Bend, IN Spokane, WA – New Hope Thunder Bay, ON – Bethlehem Wyoming, MI – Calvary
25 years, 1984-2009	Aurora, CO – Eastern Hills Community Burlington, ON – Faith Kingston, ON – Westside Fellowship Ottawa, ON – Kanata Community Prinsburg, MN – Unity Richmond Hill, ON – Community Richmond, BC – Immanuel Wyoming, MI – Community

VI. Reminders

We again ask congregations that have observed or will observe anniversaries during 2009 to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video recordings, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives.

Official minutes of 82 Christian Reformed churches and two Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed, and the copies were stored in our vault. One church, organized in 1978, had its minutes microfilmed for the first time. Three churches that were organized in the 1980s had their minutes microfilmed for the first time. Minutes were received from 47 classes and filed. Anniversary materials were received from 24 Christian Reformed churches.

Of the 836 organized congregations, 665 (just under 80%) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. This total represents an increase of 20 congregations from last year. Due to the persistent and frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee again strongly urges the remaining 171 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records that will be stored in a secure location. We gratefully report that all churches at least ten years old in the following classes have sent their minutes to be duplicated and placed in the Archives: Arizona, B.C. North-West, Grand Rapids East, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland.

VII. Congregational Records Management proposal

Synod 2008 instructed the Historical Committee to bring a proposal to Synod 2009 for a records management document that would facilitate the keeping of permanent records, raise the awareness of the need for keeping records, and provide continuity for clerks in performing their duties (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 448). The first draft of this document, "Christian Reformed Church in North America Congregational Records Management," is attached as the Appendix to this report. We ask that each congregation as well as synod review the document and send comments and suggestions to the Archives at crcarchives@calvin.edu or CRC Archives, Calvin College, 1855 Knollcrest Circle, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Richard H. Harms when matters pertaining to the mandate of the Historical Committee come before synod.

B. That synod reappoint Dr. James A. De Jong to a second three-year term.

C. That synod ask each congregation to review the "Christian Reformed Church in North America Congregational Records Management" document, appended to this report, and send comments and suggestions to the Archives at crcarchives@calvin.edu or CRC Archives, Calvin College, 1855 Knollcrest Circle, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402.

D. That synod strongly encourage congregations and classes to send their Articles of Incorporation or a copy of these documents to the Archives for safe storage. (If originals are sent, they will be returned after duplication,

as is done with minutes.) *Note:* During 2008 the Archives received more than twenty requests from congregations and classes for copies of their Articles of Incorporation. Because these documents are seldom sent to the Archives for duplication, we were unable to comply with most of those requests.

Historical Committee
James A. De Jong
Richard H. Harms (ex officio), secretary
Angie Ploegstra
Lugene Schemper
William Sytsma

Appendix
Christian Reformed Church in North America Congregational Records Management

I. Keeping records

From its beginning the Christian church has emphasized the importance of keeping written records of its views, decisions, and work.[1] Likewise the Reformed tradition, of which the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) is one stream, has devoted, and continues to devote, resources to keeping records. As early as the classical meeting of January 19-20, 1870 (Art. 6), church leaders specifically endorsed the keeping of physical records, a practice that had been in place since before the official founding of the denomination in 1857. The questions, concerns, complaints, discussions, and decisions that led to the founding of the denomination were carefully recorded and kept, as the minutes of Graafschap CRC still make clear. When the four founding congregations met as a classis in April 1857, they kept minutes, which were unfortunately lost.[2] Later, some effort was extended to find those first minutes, or, at the very least, to recreate them as best as was possible.[3] As the denomination made clear, the reason for keeping records

[1] The letters of the New Testament and later the archives and libraries kept by the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Coptic Orthodox Church give long running evidence to the importance of keeping records.

[2] In past years April 8, 1857, the date on letters sent to the Classis of Holland, Reformed Church in America, has been used as a proxy for the beginning of the CRC denomination. The true date of beginning, however, would have been the first time the four met and organized as a classis. The exact date of that meeting is not known because the minutes were lost. But the intention to meet was announced on April 17, 1857, and a letter explaining to the churches in the Netherlands the reasons for the secession is dated April 24, 1857 (a copy obtained from the Netherlands by Janet Sheeres, biographer of Douwe J. Vander Werp, is in the denominational archives). This letter notes that Rev. Hendrik Klijn served as the presiding officer and Rev. Koenraad Vanden Bosch as the clerk of the meeting. As a result, the first meeting was held sometime during the week of April 18-24, 1857. Since classical meetings at the time tended to be held on Wednesdays, to allow for travel to and from the meeting places, it is likely that the first classical meeting of the Christian Reformed Church took place on April 22, 1857.

[3] Classical meeting, October 12-13, 1864, Art. 11.

was that these provided a more consistent reflection of actions than later human memory.[4]

Over the past 150 years, the denomination has defined the office of archivist and the mandate of the archives via a series of synodical decisions. Initially the denomination had assigned the task of preserving the official records, or archives, to a series of people. Initially the presiding officer or clerk of the meeting was responsible to keep the minutes and bring them to the next meeting for approval.[5] This resulted in the records being transferred among various people over time. To give some permanence to the storage place, after the Theological School in Grand Rapids was established in 1876, its head, then Rev. Gerrit Boer, was designated the archivist.[6] As the Theological School grew to eventually become Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College, sharing a common library, it was decided that the librarian serve as the archivist.[7]

As the denomination grew, so did the work of the archivist. The denominational Historical Committee was established in 1934 to oversee the archives and support the work of the archivist.[8] During the post World War II years with the rapid growth of the denomination due primarily to the growth of congregations in Canada, it was decided that the archives actively conduct field work to encourage the keeping of congregational records.[9] During the late 1950s, as the holdings in the archives grew and space became a problem, for a time the records were moved to the new denominational building and the denominational stated clerk was appointed archivist.[10] In 1962 the task was returned to the seminary and college library director. Synod 1971 appointed Dr. Herbert Brinks the denominational archivist in addition to teaching history at Calvin College.[11] Dr. Brinks retired in 1995, and in late 1997 Dr. Richard Harms was appointed full-time archivist.[12]

Although it was clear from the beginning that classical meeting minutes (later *Acts of Synod*), reports made to those meetings, and correspondence produced by those meetings should be retained in an archive, in 1912 the first official effort was made to deposit the records of discontinued classes in the archives. That year synod commended Classis Grand Rapids East, created in 1898 when Classis Grand Rapids was divided into two, for placing the minutes of the previously undivided classis in the archives. That synod decided that the records for all discontinued ministries also should be stored in the archives.[13] Almost four decades later all denominational agencies were encouraged to store their inactive permanent records in the archives, and the

[4] Classical meeting, August 10-11, 1870, Art. 9. Until 1865 classical meetings were the highest level of church governance in the CRC. That year a second classis was organized, requiring the formation of the General Assembly as the highest level of governance. In 1880 the name of the General Assembly was changed to Synod.

[5] Classical meetings, February 3, 1858, Art. 1; and October 12-13, 1964, Art. 11.

[6] *Acts of Synod 1881*, Art. 21.

[7] *Acts of Synod 1914*, Art. 34.

[8] *Acts of Synod 1934*, Art. 96.

[9] *Acts of Synod 1952*, Art. 63.

[10] *Acts of Synod 1958*, Art. 71.

[11] *Acts of Synod 1971*, Art. 164.

[12] *Agenda for Synod 1998*, pp. 29-30.

[13] *Acts of Synod 1912*, supplement.

next year all denominational agencies reporting to synod were mandated to send such records to the archives when those records were ten years old, unless there were compelling reasons not to do so.[14] A decade later the work of the archives again was expanded with the charge to also collect the records of local, active congregations and microfilm their minutes, returning the originals to the congregation, so that a back-up set of records was available to local congregations should anything happen to their original set.[15] By the end of the 1960s synod instructed all denominational agencies, not just those specifically reporting to synod, to send their inactive records to the archives.[16] The method of submitting records expanded with new technologies available, and congregations were allowed to submit electronic copies of records rather than originals to the archives.[17] In such cases, the archives makes the cautionary note to congregations that the confidentiality of records cannot be assured for electronic records submitted via email. Synod 2003 specifically approved the sending of all inactive membership records (records for those who died, transferred to another church, or otherwise were no longer active members) to the archives rather than being discarded.[18]

To protect the privacy of individuals about whom information may be contained in certain records while also dealing with requests for conducting historical research, synod authorized that, without exception, only agency heads, or those authorized by agency heads in writing, be granted access to confidential records.[19] Access to such records for discontinued ministries or agencies was vested with the denominational archivist. A subsequent decision permits the denominational archivist to grant access to such records, if those records are more than 100 years old, but confidentiality must be maintained by not allowing any personally identifiable information to be used.[20] The methods of granting access to records less than 100 years old was modified in 2007 when facsimile or signed email could be used in addition to signed, original letters on agency letterhead.[21]

The facility to store the official denominational archives likewise has changed as the mandate and holdings of the archives came to be defined. As noted, initially the presiding officers or clerks of meetings were charged with safeguarding records and bringing them to subsequent meetings. As the volume of records increased, this arrangement became unworkable, so the decision was made that the congregation hosting the synodical assembly hold the records until the next meeting.[22] Although not specifically stated, the respective congregations were relieved of this records storage responsibility in 1881 when the head of the Theological School was appointed archivist with the implication that the records were to be kept at the Theological School.[23] To ensure the longevity of archival records, Synod 1941 (Art. 68) mandated

[14] *Acts of Synod 1951*, Art. 68; *Acts of Synod 1952*, Art. 63 and 91.
[15] *Acts of Synod 1962*, Art. 115; *Acts of Synod 1966*, supplement 12.
[16] *Acts of Synod 1969*, Art. 109.
[17] *Acts of Synod 2002*, Art. 26.
[18] *Acts of Synod 2003*, Art. 17.
[19] *Acts of Synod 1952*, Art. 91.
[20] *Acts of Synod 2000*, Art. 26.
[21] *Acts of Synod 2007*, Art. 32.
[22] General Assembly 1875 minutes, Art. 30.
[23] *Acts of Synod 1881*, Art. 21.

that all such records be keep in fireproof storage. When the library of the seminary and college was not able to establish such space, the archives were moved to the Christian Reformed Publishing House until the library had suitable space.[24] When library space again became limited due to the rapidly increasing enrollment at the college during the 1950s, the archives were moved to the recently completed denominational building on 28th Street at Kalamazoo Avenue, then just outside the Grand Rapids city limits.[25] A few years later when the seminary and college moved to the Knollcrest Campus, the archives were placed in a new facility on that campus, named Heritage Hall, which has space specifically designed for records storage.[26]

Synod 2007 (Art. 32) instructed the Historical Committee to produce a records retention document for the local congregations, including in this document a description of the information that all congregations should retain and elements that should be included in minutes. In addition to the denominational mandates, church officers have a fiduciary responsibility for keeping records. Detailing these local, provincial, state, and federal laws and regulations is beyond the scope of this document, but every church officer must become familiar with these fiduciary responsibilities as well.

II. Record keeping systems

There are many organizational systems that have been developed, and each has advantages under specific circumstances. No one system, however, is best in every situation. Organization of subject material or correspondence alphabetically by topic or name is generally effective. Minutes, outgoing correspondence (a reader file), or financial records may best be kept in chronological systems, while giving records may best be kept in a numeric system. Given the diverse nature of congregational records, a typical records system uses all of these variations, depending on the record type, and may even contain a combination of systems within a single record type. For instance, voluminous correspondence files may be best kept in an alpha-chronological file, or some financial records may be best kept in an alpha-numeric file. Each congregation will have to determine which filing system best suits its needs for specific record types. Whatever system is used, it is best to keep the system as simple as possible to avoid misfiling and to allow others to readily learn it.

Records should be stored in a secure file or room, to protect the confidentiality of the contents, and access to records should be limited to a few, specified individuals. It is best to store records in an environment where temperature and humidity fluctuations are kept to a minimum—68-72º F and 40-50 percent relative humidity are best for paper records. To prevent mold and mildew growth, records should not be kept in an area where the atmosphere is stagnant or excessively humid. Records should also be protected from extended exposure to ultraviolet radiation, which speeds chemical reactions that cause fading. Such radiation comes from direct sunlight and direct fluorescent light, so reflecting such light off other surfaces or filtering such light is best. Incandescent light does not emit such radiation. To protect

[24] *Acts of Synod 1943*, Art. 48; *Acts of Synod 1951*, Art. 68.

[25] *Acts of Synod 1958*, Art. 71.

[26] *Acts of Synod 1962*, Art. 115.

records from water damage, do not store them directly on floors or under plumbing pipes/lines.

Digital (computer) records have many advantages for space saving and data manipulation. But they are not yet suitable for the archival storage of information. The generally accepted standard for archival storage is that the records will be retained unchanged for 50 years. Given the everchanging software and hardware used with computer records, this 50-year threshold has not yet been achieved. Test data indicate that magnetic disks and tapes begin to deteriorate after 20 years, while CDs/DVDs remain physically reliable for 10 years. Silicon-based storage systems (USB/flash drives) show greater promise in meeting the 50-year retention requirement, but this has not yet been conclusively demonstrated. Even if the formats were to be viable for 50-year storage, there are still questions about readability from various media. For example, the hardware is no longer available to play many older computer tapes and cassettes, 8-inch diskettes, and 5.25-inch diskettes. The ability to retrieve data from low density or high density 3.5-inch diskettes is also rapidly fading, and, with USB/flash drives, even DVD/CD storage is beginning to fade from use. Finally, new generations of software often cannot fully read files created by other software or even previous versions of the same-brand software. Although files created in digital format are being archived, the cost for hardware, software, and back-up hardware is very expensive. As a result, the archival storage of records in the denomination is still being done on hard copy or in micro formats (film or fiche).

This is not to say that congregations should not be using computers, software, or digital records for their purposes. When using such equipment and media, however, be mindful of their limitations. File storage and naming protocols should be clearly stated so that all can follow those protocols uniformly. File names like eldersmtg11-07-08, minuteselders8Oct2008, eldersmtg090708, and eldersminutes2008-12-06 will be listed in widely separate locations in directory searches, once multiple years of records have been stored. Using one uniform file-naming system will make finding and retrieving old files much easier. When creating a new record, it is tempting to open a previous record, with its formatting protocols, but when doing so it is also easy to save new data under the old filename, resulting in old data being overwritten. Finally, when new hardware or software is obtained, clerks or staff must ensure that all data are transferred to the new hardware and media.

Accident/injury reports Retain 6 years after case is closed, then destroy

Claims made by employees such as occupation injuries, accidents, illnesses; safety and compliance inspections and reports; claims for reimbursement; determination orders, rulings and decisions

Accounts payable records Retain 3 years after audit is accepted, then destroy; if item carries a warranty, retain receipt for the lifetime of the warranty, then destroy

Records used to track, evaluate, and monitor financial transactions, including (but not limited to) purchase orders, balance sheets, bills, invoices, invoice vouchers, requisitions, payment authorizations, receipts for goods or services

Accounts payable/receivable ledgers Retain 7 years, then destroy

Administrative/annual reports Retain 1 copy permanently

Reports of activity, accomplishments, progress by an individual or body

Adult Society records *See* Minutes and Dues payment records

Anniversary books/booklets/programs Send 1 copy to archives and retain 1 copy permanently

Annual reports *See* Administrative/annual reports

Applications rejected/unsolicited Retain 1 year, then destroy

Architectural records Retain permanently

Includes blueprints, building designs, specifications

Articles of Incorporation and bylaws Retain permanently (copy is filed with state/provincial agency), send to denominational archives once for microfilming

A congregation's Articles of Incorporation/Association generally provide information such as name, names of the people organizing the corporation/association, whether it is a non-stock, non-profit body (non-profit status may require Internal Revenue certification), the location of the congregation's "registered office"; articles of incorporation/association vary widely from one jurisdiction to another but generally do not go into great detail about operations, which are spelled out in more detail in the bylaws.

Assessments/surveys/vision files Retain 1 copy of the summary report permanently; then destroy the remainder after 3 years

Attendance records Retain 3 years, then destroy

Catechism classes
Sunday school classes

Audio recordings *See* Recordings

Audio-visual recordings *See* Recordings and Photographs

Audit reports Retain permanently

Renders an opinion on whether the financial information presented is correct and free of material misstatements; provides neither evaluation nor opinion as to the financial health, performance, or any other similar attributes of a congregation

Balance sheet ledger Retain 7 years, then destroy

Summarizes assets, equity, and liabilities at a specific point in time

Balance sheets, monthly/quarterly Retain 1 year, then destroy

Balance sheets, annual *See* Accounts payable records

Bank deposit slips Retain 3 years, then destroy

Bank deposits Retain 7 years, then destroy

Bank reconciliation statements Retain 7 years, then destroy

Bible class curricula *See* Curricular files

Bible class minutes *See* Minutes

Bills *See* Accounts payable records

Board of Management minutes *See* Minutes

Board of Trustees minutes *See* Minutes

Bonds Retain 7 years after date of redemption, then destroy

A debt security, which may have been issued or purchased by a congregation, by which a seller owes the holder a debt and is obligated to repay the debt plus interest at a later date

Budgets – annual Retain 7 years, then destroy

Budgets – monthly/quarterly Retain 1 year, then destroy

Building (property) files *See* Property records

Bulletins Retain permanently

Contain a chronological record of events and people that will be invaluable when reviewing the congregation's history

Bylaws *See* Articles of Incorporation and bylaws

Bylaws (also spelled *by-laws* or *byelaws*) passed by a congregation, as authorized by state/provincial laws, that regulate the operation of the congregation; typically congregational bylaws contain name, purpose, members, officers, meetings, executive board(s), committees, parliamentary authority, amendments; in summary these detail operations of the congregation

Cadets *See* Minutes, Curricular files, and Office files/subject files

Calvinettes *See* GEMS/Calvinettes

Canceled checks Retain 7 years, then destroy; official receipts should be obtained for the satisfaction of all obligations – canceled checks should not be used as proxies for such receipts

Cash journal If posted to a general ledger, retain 7 years, then destroy; if not posted to a general ledger, retain permanently

Record of original accounting entries, where transactions are recorded in chronological order; generally entries from the cash journal later entered into the balance sheet ledger

Cash receipts *See* Accounts payable records

Catechism class attendance *See* Attendance records

Catechism curricula *See* Curricular files

Ceremony files Retain 1 copy permanently

Certificates of deposit Retain 3 years after redemption, then destroy

Charter members list Retain 1 copy permanently

Check register Retain 3 years after last entry, then destroy

Checks – canceled *See* Canceled checks

Church Visitors' reports Retain permanently

Classical minutes Retain 1 year, then destroy (permanent copy kept by stated clerk of classis and/or the archives)

Clippings Photocopy onto bond paper; retain copy permanently, destroy original

Committee records Retain narratives permanently; *see also* Minutes; Financial records. *See* under the appropriate records type

Complaints Retain permanently

Formal complaints brought to the congregation's governing body, investigation of the complaint, and resolution of those complaints (*Note:* maintaining confidentiality must be considered)

Congregational meeting minutes *See* Minutes

Congregational self-studies/surveys Retain results report permanently; raw data can be destroyed when results report is accepted

Congregational profile/demographic studies Retain 1 copy of the summary report permanently; then destroy the remainder after 3 years

Consistory minutes *See* Minutes

Construction records Retain 3 years after facility is replaced or sold, then destroy

May contain contracts, specifications, architectural drawings, correspondence, payments/payment authorizations, permits

Contracts/leases for services, repairs Retain 3 years after termination, then destroy

Contracts for construction *See* Construction records

Cookbooks Retain 1 copy permanently

Correspondence – general Retain 2 years, then destroy

Correspondence – legal Retain permanently

Correspondence – letters of call Retain permanently calls accepted; destroy others after 1 year

Council minutes *See* Minutes

Couples Club minutes *See* Minutes

Credit card records Retain 7 years, then destroy

Curricular files Retain 3 years after last use, then destroy

Catechism
Sunday school

Daughters of Priscilla minutes *See* Minutes

Deacons' minutes *See* Minutes

Dedications files *See* Ceremony files

Deeds/Easements/Conveyance *See* Property records

Instruments that transfer or exchange title to real estate, or reserve the rights to property during a transfer or exchange

Demographic studies Retain 1 copy of the summary report permanently; then destroy the remainder after 3 years

Digital/electronic records Same criteria as for paper record categories; be aware of the need to update files based on hardware and/or software changes

Digital images *See* Photographs

Digital recordings *See* Recordings

Directories – membership Retain 1 copy permanently (*Note:* maintaining confidentiality must be considered)

Disability records (not Workers' compensation claims)

See personnel records or Workers' compensation records

Disciplinary actions – employees *See* personnel records

Disciplinary actions – members Retain permanently

Correspondence, meeting notes, decisions, appeals, notices having to do with discipline of members

Discipline Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Dorcas Society minutes *See* Minutes

Dues payment records Retain 3 years, then destroy

Education Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Elders' minutes *See* Minutes

Employee term contracts Retain 7 years after termination, then destroy

Employee evaluations *See* Personnel records

Employee medical complaints *See* Personnel records

Employee medical records *See* Personnel records

Employee salary schedules Retain 7 years after termination, then destroy

Environmental test records/reports Retain permanently

Equipment inventories Update regularly, destroy old inventories after 1 year

Equipment leases *See* Contracts/leases for services, repairs

Evaluations *See* Personnel files

Evangelism/outreach files Retain 3 years, then destroy

Family Visitation records Retain 3 years, then destroy (*Note:* maintaining confidentiality must be considered)

Farewells *See* Ceremony files

Fellowship Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Finance Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Financial records *See* specific record type (i.e., Accounts payable records, Audit reports, Bank deposits, Invoices, Loan records, Tax records, and so forth)

GEMS/Calvinettes *See* Minutes, Curricular files, and Office files/subject files

General ledger Retain 7 years, then destroy

The main accounting record that usually includes such items as current assets, fixed assets, liabilities, revenue and expense items, gains, and losses

Giving envelopes Destroy after information has been transferred to giving records

Giving records Retain 7 years, then destroy

Contains the names of donors and the dates and amounts of donations

Grant-in-Aid files Retain 7 years after the granting period ends, make sure all required reports have been filed with the granting agency before destroying records

Gravamen Retain 3 years after resolution, then destroy (classical or synodical file will be retained permanently)

Grievance(s) to be redressed, calling attention to breach(es) in church discipline presented by a lower body to a higher body for decision; individuals may not submit a gravamen; individual grievances must be taken up by the individual's council, which in turn must decide to submit

Groundbreaking ceremony files *See* Ceremony files

Guest registers Retain as desired – contains anecdotal data of who visited and when, but such data seldom have long-term historic value

Historical file Retain permanently

May contain newspaper/periodical clippings, manuscript and/or published history, personal recollections, images, recordings, programs, and so forth, that document the history of the congregation

Incorporation documents *See* Articles of Incorporation

Installation files *See* Ceremony files

Insurance policies Retain permanently

Invoice vouchers *See* Accounts payable records

Invoices *See* Accounts payable records

Invoices for major building construction Retain as long as structure is extant, then destroy

Journal entry sheets/ledger Retain 7 years, then destroy

Log of transcriptions into accounting journal that can consist of several items, each of which is either a debit or a credit; journal entries directly change the account balances on the general ledger

Joy Circle minutes *See* Minutes

Junior Guild minutes *See* Minutes

Junior League minutes *See* Minutes

Leases *See* Contracts/leases for services, repairs

Maintenance, equipment, facilities, services

Ledgers *See* specific ledger type

Litigation files Retain 7 years, transfer to archives (the courts will also keep a complete set)

Litigation in which the congregation was a party that may include legal opinions, briefs, correspondence, affidavits, photographs, reports, appeals, decisions, and other court documents

Loan records Retain 7 years after date of redemption, then destroy; *see also* Bonds

Manuals - equipment Retain as long as equipment is owned, then destroy

Manuals – instruction Retain 1 copy permanently

Mary/Martha Circle minutes *See* Minutes

Member self-studies/surveys *See* Congregational self-studies/surveys

Membership records Retain until membership becomes inactive, then transfer to archives

Register or files that record member names, births, baptisms, marriages, deaths, and so forth

Men's Society records *See* Minutes and Dues payment records

Ministry Board minutes *See* Minutes

Ministry Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Minutes Retain permanently—once every 10 years send to the denominational archives for microfilming (*Note:* maintaining confidentiality must be considered)

Each set of minutes should include

1) the name of the church and organization (e.g., congregation, council, elders, deacons)
2) the date and place of the meeting
3) the names of those who were present—in the case of a congregational meeting, rather than all the names it should be noted that a quorum was present
4) the time of the opening of the meeting
5) the action taken on each item (e.g., approved, not approved, accepted as information)
6) the vote on each item (e.g., passed unanimously, failed 4-6)
7) the time of the closing of the meeting.

Includes (but is not limited to) minutes from such meetings as

Congregation
Council[27]
Elders
Deacons
Executive committee/groups
Committees – Permanent
Committees – Ad Hoc
Societies
Clubs
Other decision-making bodies

Mortgage documents Retain until official receipt is received noting the discharge of the mortgage has been filed; retain certificate of filing and mortgage permanently – burn only copies

Mr. & Mrs. Club minutes *See* Minutes

Newsletters Retain 1 copy permanently

Nursery Committee minutes *See* Minutes

[27] In the Reformed tradition the term "consistory" has been used to refer to a congregation's elected ruling body; in some cases it referred to ruling elders, in other cases it was used to refer to a body of both elders and deacons. To avoid this potential for confusion, this document will use "council" to refer to a congregation's ruling body composed of elders and deacons.

Office files/subject files Review annually; retain only those that document significant congregational activities

Ordination files *See* Ceremony files

Organization of congregation Retain permanently

Organizational Flow Charts Retain until superseded, then destroy

Orientation/Instructions for office holders Retain until superseded, then destroy

Outreach/Evangelism Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Outreach/Evangelism files Retain 3 years, then destroy

Overtures Retain 3 years after resolution, then destroy (classical or synodical file will be kept)

Submission of a question or proposal by a lower body to a higher body such as classis or synod for resolution; as with a gravamen, individuals may not submit overtures; individual questions or proposals must be taken up by the individual's council, which in turn can decide to submit

Pastoral Care Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Pastoral Deacons' minutes *See* Minutes

Pastoral Elders' minutes *See* Minutes

Payment authorizations *See* Accounts payable records

Payroll records Retain 7 years, then destroy; *see also* Time records

Includes payroll registers, summary schedule of earnings, deductions, permanent earnings, and accrued leave

Personnel records Send to archives after person is no longer active; biographical and genealogical data retained permanently; the remainder is kept 25 years, then destroyed

A file should be maintained for each active employee, containing

1) Employee application
2) Job description (replace when superseded)
3) Resume
4) Tax eligibility verification and other information (replace when superseded)
5) Salary information
6) Sick leave record
7) Vacation record
8) Regular performance evaluations
9) Resignation
10) Medical records

Note: These records are confidential. In many states/provinces, employees and former employees have the right to inspect their own personnel files. The employer has the right to require that the request be in writing and has a stated number of working days to comply with the request. Items likely to be in a personnel file that specifically are excluded from mandatory employee inspection in many states:

1) Letters of reference
2) Testing results
3) Differences with another employee, release of which information may be an invasion of privacy of the other employee
4) Legal or criminal files

Petitions Retain with the resolution of the issue permanently

Photographs (not relating to congregation) Destroy when no longer needed

Photographs (relating to congregation) Retain permanently

Pledge registers/ledgers Retain 1 year after pledge campaign has been completed, then destroy

Policy Statements Retain until superseded, then destroy

Programming files Retain 3 years after programming end, keep a summary, destroy the remainder

Promotional/outreach material Retain until superseded, then destroy

Property records Retain permanently until property is sold; send to denominational archives once for microfilming

Includes such items as property appraisals, abstracts, deeds, title searches, easements, conveyances, surveys, contracts, agreements

Purchase orders *See* Accounts payable records

Real estate records *See* Property records

Receipts for goods or services *See* Accounts payable records

Receipts for satisfaction of obligations/debts Retain permanently

Includes the redemption of loans, satisfactions of mortgages/land contracts

Recordings – audio Worship services, retain no longer than 1 year, then re-record; unless there is/are compelling reason(s) to keep the original recording longer, be mindful that hardware and software development may quickly render formats obsolete

Recordings – video Retain longer than 1 year if it documents some aspect of the history of the congregation; unless there is/are compelling reason(s) to keep the recording indefinitely, be mindful that hardware and software development may quickly render formats obsolete

Reports to council Retain permanently

Refugee Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Remodeling *See* Construction records

Reports – congregation Retain 1 copy permanently

Reports – non-congregational Retain 1 year, then destroy

Requisitions *See* Accounts payable records

Retirement benefits *See* Personnel records

Retirement programs *See* Ceremony files

Retirement tributes *See* Ceremony files

Ruth Circle minutes *See* Minutes

Safety deposit container records Retain as long as container is leased, then destroy

Safety deposit contents Retain permanently

Search Committee files Retain 3 years; keep files relating to person hired with Personnel records; destroy remainder

Search Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Senior Guild minutes *See* Minutes

Service Elders minutes *See* Minutes

Service Leaders minutes *See* Minutes

Shepherd Elders minutes *See* Minutes

Shepherd Leaders minutes *See* Minutes

Steering Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Subject files *See* Office files/subject files

Sunday school attendance *See* Attendance records

Sunday school curricula *See* Curricular files

Task forces files Retain 1 copy of final report permanently

Tax exemption certificates Retain permanently

State/provincial/federal income, excise, property, sales/use, and so forth

Tax records/returns Retain 7 years, then destroy

Termination records *See* Personnel records

Time and attendance records/cards/sheets Retain 3 years from date of filing, then destroy

Title search papers and certificates *See* Property records

Toxic/hazardous substance reports Retain permanently

Trial balances Retain 3 years after audit is accepted, then destroy

A worksheet listing the balance of each ledger account in two columns (debit and credit) on a specific date

Trust Agreements Retain 3 years past the life of the trusts, then destroy

Vacation Bible School attendance *See* Attendance records

Vacation Bible School curricula *See* Curricular files

Video recordings *See* Recordings

Vision files Retain 1 copy of the summary report permanently; then destroy the remainder after 3 years

Wage and Tax Withholding statements Retain 7 years from date of filing, then destroy

Local/State/Provincial/Federal required forms

Warranties Retain until expiration, then destroy

Women's Association minutes *See* Minutes

Women's Society records *See* Minutes and Dues payment records

Workers' compensation records Retain 12 years after injury (filing), death, or last compensation payment

Worship Committee minutes *See* Minutes

Yearbooks – denominational Retain as needed; archives maintains a permanent set

Young Ladies' Society minutes *See* Minutes

Young Men's Society minutes *See* Minutes

Young People's Society minutes *See* Minutes

Youth Society records *See* Minutes and Dues payment records

I. Introduction

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) is honored to represent the CRC in its ecumenical relationships. Such relationships tie the CRC to the larger Reformed family and to other Christian communities throughout the world. Relationships among churches are, in most respects, first personal, and later they become institutional. Ecumenical relationships are developed in various ways, but the most common means are joint meetings and consultations, being involved and attending the same ecumenical gatherings, sharing information and resources, and exchanging visits and fraternal representatives.

In the changing environment of ecumenicity, IRC judges that a name change for the committee is in order. For many years the focus of the Interchurch Relations Committee has been on other denominations with whom we share a confessional heritage. The CRC is involved in a broader range of ecumenical relations than is reflected in the designation *interchurch*. It seems best, therefore, to change the name of the committee to the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC). At its meeting February 13, 2009, it was decided that the name change will take effect July 1, 2009, and the IRC requests that synod receive this decision as information that will thus constitute synod's concurrence.

The agenda of the IRC at any given time seeks to be responsive to what is happening in the ecumenical world of which we are a part. This year, in response to synod's own instruction, IRC is presenting its recommendation on the Belhar Confession. It is our aim to provide synod with the necessary background and rationale for the recommendations being proposed.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the IRC for the current year ending June 30, 2009, are

Rev. Pedro Aviles (2010/1); Dr. Emily Brink (2010/1); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2011/2); Rev. Marvin J. Hofman, vice chair (2011/2); Dr. William T. Koopmans, chair (2009/1); Dr. James R. Payton (2010/2); Dr. Carol Rottman (2009/2); Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam (2009/2); Rev. Peter Slofstra (2010/1) and Ms. Rebecca Warren (2011/1).

Rev. Bruce G. Adema, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, and Ms. Diane S. Recker served the committee in various staff capacities.

The IRC met two times since Synod 2008 and intends to hold its third meeting by telephone conference call in mid-April. The two-meeting-per-year schedule was adopted in response to the current budget-reduction necessity. The IRC normally rotates its meetings between Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario.

III. Nominations for membership

The first term of Dr. William T. Koopmans ends June 30, 2009, and he is eligible for a second term. The IRC heartily recommends Dr. Koopmans to synod for appointment to a second three-year term.

Dr. Carol Rottman and Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam are completing their terms of service and have faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. The IRC recommends that synod express its gratitude for their service.

Dr. Peter Borgdorff will also complete his service as a staff member to the IRC on June 30, 2009.

To fill these two vacant positions on the committee, the IRC solicited nominations from U.S. regions west of the Mississippi River and from regions in the eastern United States. The challenge of finding available nominees is significant while also balancing the membership of the IRC according to synodical guidelines and requirements. The IRC has identified two excellent nominees (one for each vacant position) and presents them to synod for appointment.

Dr. Shirley Roels is a professor of management at Calvin College, the director of the Van Lunen Institute for Executive Management in Christian Schools, and the director of the Lilly Vocation Project at Calvin College. Dr. Roels has served the denomination as a board member of CRWRC, as a consultant to the denominational administration and co-author of the 1999 synodical report on denominational governance. In addition, she served as a trustee and as chairperson of the Christian Schools International (CSI) Pension and Insurance board. Dr. Roels is a lifetime member of the CRC and has served in various CRC congregations as officebearer.

Ms. Anne Zaki is presently on the staff of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and expects to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary with an M.Div. degree in May 2009. Ms. Zaki is a native of Egypt, has extensive experience in the international church community, and has already served the broader church in a variety of contexts. She assisted with planning the worship for the 2005 REC Assembly meeting, is on the worship planning committee for the Lausanne Conference in Cape Town 2010, serves on the joint CRC-RCA Middle East Ministry Team, and serves as a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches worship planning team. Ms. Zaki is a member of Church of the Servant CRC, where her husband, Rev. Naji Umran, serves as an associate pastor.

IV. 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 (CRCNA) has a relationship or is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in America (RCA) annual synod in Holland, Michigan, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra.
2. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) meeting of synod, Rev. Jeong Gho.
3. To the synod of Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA), Rev. Bruce G. Adema.
4. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra visited with the Reformed Church of East Africa and the Anglican Church of Kenya (a CRWRC partner).
5. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra attended the synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), the church that first adopted the Belhar Confession in 1982.

6. The IRC facilitated the sending of Dr. David Holwerda to assist the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) in their discussion on the serving of women in the ecclesiastical offices of the church.

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. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves the NAE board as a member at-large.

2. Rev. Peter Slofstra and Rev. Bruce G. Adema served as the CRCNA's representatives on the governing board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC).

3. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra and Dr. Peter Borgdorff served as the CRCNA's representatives to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).

4. Rev. Bruce G. Adema represented the CRC to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).

V. 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, Michigan. Most of the present work of the REC is conducted by its executive committee, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff is presently serving as president of the REC and chair of the REC executive committee.

As has been previously reported to synod, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) are working toward the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), an organization that will be formed in 2010 by taking over the functions of both the REC and WARC. Synod 2006 noted with gratitude and appreciation the proposal to form the WCRC as proposed by the WARC and the REC cooperation committee. The grounds synod adopted as the rationale for its support were

> a. The unity of the church, especially those in the Reformed tradition, is enhanced by this development.
> b. Uniting together is a better testimony to the world than remaining separate.
> c. The confessional basis proposed for the [WCRC] will be inviting for others to join the new organization.
> d. The basis for the [WCRC] is consistent with the confessional basis of the CRC in that [the WCRC] 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."
> e. In times of financial constraint, combining the witness of WARC and REC is responsible financial stewardship.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 666)

The IRC reviewed the proposed constitution and bylaws for the World Communion of Reformed Churches and proposed one change in the language of Article II of the constitution. This suggestion will be considered by the joint-executive of WARC and REC at its meeting in May 2009. The complete text of the proposed constitution and bylaws is attached to this report as Appendix A.

The Christian Reformed Church agreed to be the official host church for the Unifying General Council meeting (at which the WCRC will be officially launched) to be held on the campus of Calvin College June 18-28, 2010. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA formally approved the request that the CRC function as the official host for this event with the understanding that other North American WARC member churches will co-host the event with us. This Unifying General Council will be composed of some 600 delegates and is likely to draw additional observers and guests for an expected attendance of 1,000 representatives from more than 100 countries. To plan and arrange for this global event, a North American Arrangements Committee has been formed composed of representatives from the various co-hosting denominations. The following have been appointed by IRC to represent the CRC at the Unifying General Council meetings: Rev. Bruce G. Adema, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, Dr. Mary Hulst, Dr. William T. Koopmans, Ms. Kate Kooyman, and Dr. Carol Rottman. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as the chair of the arrangements committee and will co-chair the Unifying General Council meeting with Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick (PCUSA) until new leadership is elected midway through the council meeting.

B. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC)

The CRC 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 the government on current issues of interest and concern.

C. Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has had representation 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.

E. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

The CRC's membership in WARC is now several years old, and there has been regular contact with the general secretary of WARC, Dr. Setri Nyomi, throughout the year. Part of that contact was occasioned by the CRC's

support for the Mission in Unity project. That project has been transitioned, and participation with WARC in the programmatic sense has now been assumed by Christian Reformed World Missions. CRC representatives are also invited to participate in various WARC discussions from time to time. The CRC's relationship within WARC is developing and wholesome.

The regional configuration of WARC is expressed through the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC). Rev. Bruce G. Adema serves on the executive committee of CANAAC.

When WARC met in 2004 in Accra, Ghana, it adopted what is now known as the Accra Confession. It needs to be pointed out that this is not a confession in the normal use of that designation. Rather, it is a statement of that General Council on concern for economic justice. This statement has been circulated among the member churches of WARC with the request that the member-churches give a response. The IRC decided to appoint a subcommittee of Dr. Emily Brink, Dr. Roland Hoksbergen, Dr. Shirley Roels, and Mr. Peter Vander Meulen. Their report, approved by the IRC and forwarded to WARC for consideration, is attached as Appendix B.

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 Christian 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 Historic Ethnic. The most recent meeting of CCT-USA was held in January 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland. This meeting was the third annual meeting of CCT-USA.

Synod 2004 authorized the IRC to participate in this 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.

VI. Bilateral relationships—international

Concerning the relationship of the CRC with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) Synod 2008 decided to

> declare that it is the desire of the CRC to develop and maintain a relationship with the PCN that:
> a. Is in the spirit of our Ecumenical Charter.
> b. Does not obscure the seriousness of the issues that led to restrictions placed on the GKN prior to the formation of the PCN—issues that appear to continue today in the PCN.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 512)

Synod 2008 then instructed the IRC

> to attempt to develop a mutually acceptable process to work with the PCN toward a long-term relationship between the CRC and the PCN and to report the progress to synod annually.
>
> *Grounds:*
> a. The PCN confesses the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions.

b. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ, and especially with those churches with whom we share a common history and confessional heritage; it follows that the CRC can value and benefit from fellowship with the PCN even though, as with every other ecumenical relationship the CRC maintains, there remain differences between the churches involved.
c. The CRC has an ecumenical opportunity to be in fellowship with the PCN as it seeks to be a Reformed witness in a radically secular European environment and is also seeking spiritual renewal within its own fellowship.
d. The PCN expresses its fervent desire to be in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC.
e. The historical character of the CRC's relationship to the GKN, which in spirit is continued in the PCN, is important to the ecumenical life of the CRC and lends credibility to our own witness as expressed in the CRC's Ecumenical Charter.
f. It is the expressed wish of the Gereformeerde Bond (Reformed Alliance), an evangelical and more conservative alliance of ministers and congregations within the PCN, that the CRC be in fellowship with the PCN.

(*Acts of Synod 2008*, pp. 512-13)

Subsequent to the meeting of Synod 2008, the IRC arranged for a meeting with PCN representatives to explain the decision of synod and to discuss how the CRC and the PCN might "develop a mutually acceptable process . . . toward a long-term relationship." The meeting was cordial and helpful. At its meeting in November 2008 the IRC, upon hearing the report of the CRC representatives, decided "to support a decision to work with the PCN to draft guidelines that would essentially function as a 'memorandum of understanding' describing the nature of the relationship between the CRC and the PCN." The IRC also decided that the three representatives (Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, and Dr. William T. Koopmans) who met with the PCN "carry out the correspondence and report back to the IRC in preparation for the annual report to synod." The draft of such a "memorandum of understanding" is in the process of being developed, and will be submitted to a later synod for approval.

VII. Bilateral relationships—North America

A. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

The CRC 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. 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 to 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:

> 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.

Cooperation with the RCA and its programmatic offices is in place as follows: a partnership agreement between CRWRC and the RCA office of disaster response; Faith Alive Christian Resources has formed a publishing and distribution partnership with the RCA office of faith and discipleship; and the CRC is using the RCA Study Guide for consideration of the Belhar Confession. In addition, a common introduction to the Belhar Confession has been developed. These references neither include the numerous consultative contacts that take place between denominational staff nor cooperative ventures conducted by classes and congregations throughout both denominations.

C. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)

The IRC continues to be in dialogue with the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC). This is a growing relationship and one that has promise for the future. Consideration is being given to formalizing that relationship to churches in dialogue status. That possibility calls for an additional comment.

Officially the ecumenical charter has two categories: the first is "churches in ecclesiastical fellowship," the second is "churches in dialogue." However, within the second category there is a subcategory. Among the many Christian churches presumed to be in the dialogue designation, there are those with whom conversations are presently under way. It is synod's prerogative to designate the churches whose "in dialogue" status is elevated to a more formal discussion level. In the case of the conversations with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, it is likely that a recommendation to advance that relationship to formalized status is forthcoming to a subsequent synod.

VIII. 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 (RCC) 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.

The discussion about the Eucharist has been completed, and the official reports of that discussion have been published in booklet form under the title *The Lord's Supper and the Roman Catholic Mass—A Discussion on Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism*. The booklet is available on the webpage of the CRCNA at www.crcna.org/pages/synodical.cfm.

The present focus of the dialogue is on the sacrament of baptism. Several preliminary documents have been prepared, but formal consideration of the report is being delayed by editing procedures within the RCC. The IRC has not yet had opportunity to review them. It is likely that synodical deliberations on this report will not happen until 2010.

IX. Interfaith dialogue

A development in recent years that is increasing in popularity is interfaith dialogue. The IRC distinguishes this development from ecumenical relations in that interfaith dialogue involves people of faith from other than the Christian faith (e.g., Muslims, Mormonism, and so forth). While the IRC is not prepared to make a recommendation at this time, the question is whether such dialogue is the responsibility of the IRC (with an expanded mandate) or whether such dialogue needs to be assigned by synod to a different committee. The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to create better understanding between people of faith living in a pluralistic society. The matter is raised in this report only to indicate the nature of the discussion that engages the IRC.

X. The Belhar Confession

Synod 2007 instructed the IRC as follows with reference to the Belhar Confession process:

> That synod encourage the ongoing work of the Interchurch Relations Committee to inform and engage the churches concerning the Belhar Confession and the issues raised by it through: (1) a greater dissemination of the Belhar Confession to the congregations in order to familiarize the denomination with it and the issues raised by it, and (2) regional level dialogues to be initiated by the Interchurch Relations Committee as part of their process of expediting a recommendation to Synod 2009.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 592)

By the time Synod 2008 convened, all of the regional discussions had been held, and the ecumenical advisory committee formed into a focus group to discuss the Belhar Confession. The study guide for congregational use was made available to every congregation, pastor, and church education staff person throughout the denomination.

As is clear in the recommendations to be considered by synod, the IRC believes that a period of discernment and discussion is advisable before synod makes a definitive decision concerning the Belhar Confession. If Synod 2010 adopts the procedure recommended by the IRC, then the discussion will be officially on the denomination's agenda (much like the report of a study committee would be), and a subsequent synod (2012 recommended) will be in a better position to reflect the mind of the church concerning the issues raised in and by the Belhar Confession. Some may advance the position that Synod 2010 does not need to act on the IRC recommendation because the discussion could happen without Synod 2010 proposing the adoption of the Belhar Confession. The IRC, however, believes that for the discussion to be more than just a dialogue among some who have an interest in this discussion, it is better to follow the provisions of Church Order Article 47 with respect to a matter of this magnitude. Therefore, the IRC presents its recommendations contained in the report attached as Appendix C.

Attached to Appendix C is a statement of introduction (Appendix C-1) that was developed cooperatively with the Belhar Implementation

Committee of the RCA. Also attached is the original letter (Appendix C-2) sent by the Moderamen (executive committee) of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa when the Belhar Confession was first introduced to the world community of Reformed churches in 1986. It is not unusual for a cover letter to travel with a (new) confession and there is historical precedent for such a communication. Finally, the Belhar Confession itself is included as Appendix C-3.

XI. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and ecumenical visitors at synod

The CRC maintains a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with a wide range of Reformed denominations. A complete list of such churches is attached in Appendix D.

It has been the custom for many years to invite all churches in ecclesiastical and corresponding fellowship with the CRC to send fraternal delegates to each synod. Time is allocated for each fraternal delegate to bring the greetings of his/her home denomination. While this used to be a mutual courtesy in most denominations, now only some still follow that practice. It is also quite common that fraternal representatives meet with one of synod's committees, are treated as guests of the assembly, and only on special occasions actually bring public greetings. The IRC believes that the CRC might best revise its practice as well. It is not for the IRC to decide or recommend who may address synod, but it is appropriate that the IRC suggest a different way of inviting fraternal delegates to come. The IRC proposes that instead of inviting everyone every time synod meets, we adopt a rotation schedule that would invite perhaps six to eight churches per year (not all would likely come), with the exception that churches closest to the experience of the CRC (such as the RCA) could be invited every year. Provision could also be made for receiving a representative from the ecumenical organizations of which the CRC is a part. It is likely sufficient for synod to receive this direction on the part of the IRC as information.

XII. John Calvin's 500th anniversary

The IRC took note of the events that are scheduled throughout the world to observe the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth. Many churches and organizations in the Reformed family have arranged for special observances and conferences. The Christian Reformed Church has and will participate in various ways through the involvement of several of our related agencies and educational institutions. The Meeter Center at Calvin College is playing an especially significant role. The IRC encourages all the congregations of the CRC to participate in observing this significant anniversary either locally or with neighboring congregations.

XIII. Recommendations

A. That Dr. William T. Koopmans, chair, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Interchurch Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Dr. Carol Rottman and Dr. David M. Rylaarsdam for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot elect Dr. Shirley Roels and Ms. Anne Zaki to serve as members of the IRC for a three-year term.

D. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the reelection of Dr. William T. Koopmans to the IRC for a second three-year term.

E. Concerning the Belhar Confession IRC recommends the following:

1. That synod propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession) and authorize the revision of Church Order Supplement, Articles 5, 23-a, and 32-d and the Public Declaration of Agreement to reflect that adoption.

   Grounds:

   a. It is important at this time for the CRC to formally state its commitment to, and live out, the biblical principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
   b. Adopting the Belhar Confession is an important testimony to the membership of the CRC that together we stand firm on matters that are rooted in scriptural teaching and flow from the heart of God.
   c. It is an important testimony to Reformed churches worldwide that the CRC will stand with them in matters of confessional integrity.
   d. Adopting the Belhar Confession is consistent with the decision of Synod 1996 when it adopted the recommendations concerning *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.
   e. This action would mean that the CRC is taking this step in concert with the RCA, a desire that previous synods have affirmed.
   f. Since previous synods have expressed no difficulty with the Belhar Confession on biblical grounds, and given Dutch Reformed shortcomings over the past four hundred years (e.g., slave trade on the Gold Coast, numerous denominational schisms), this action would testify to our ecumenical partners and the world (as well as CRC members committed to unity, reconciliation, and social justice) that the CRC is taking a public stand to promote the principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
   g. While there is no direct reference by name to the historic Reformed confessions in the Church Order itself, the Supplement to the Church Order Article 5 (the Form of Subscription) lists the confessions by name.
   h. Allowing for a three-year period of reflection (2009-2012) is consistent with the intent of Church Order Article 47 and its Supplement for a confessional matter of this magnitude. The additional time is given to the churches to adequately study and reflect on the proposal and be better prepared for response.

2. That Synod 2009 authorize the IRC to promote the study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during this consideration period, and designate the IRC to represent Synod 2009's proposal to adopt the Belhar Confession at the meeting of Synod 2012.

3. That synod express its gratitude to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa for enriching the heritage of Reformed churches worldwide by developing and writing the Belhar Confession.

   Grounds:
   a. The themes of unity, reconciliation, and social justice as expressed in the Belhar Confession are important dimensions of our common faith in obedience to the demands of biblical teaching.
   b. The testimony of the Reformed family of churches from the Southern Hemisphere is an important contribution to the awareness and faith of churches in other parts of the world.
   c. The Christian Reformed Church in North America wishes to stand in solidarity with brothers and sisters who together bear witness to all matters that reflect "the heart of the gospel."
   d. Synod 2009 affirms the decision of Synod 1990, which stated that "the Belhar Confession is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions. . . ."

4. That synod grant time on its agenda for the IRC to make a formal informational presentation on the Belhar Confession in addition and prior to what the advisory committee may bring to the floor of synod for discussion.

F. That synod receive as information the decision of the IRC to change the name of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC) effective July 1, 2009.

Interchurch Relations Committee
Peter Borgdorff, ecumenical staff member

Appendix A
Constitution and Bylaws of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)
THE CONSTITUTION
PREAMBLE

Jesus Christ is the foundation and head of the Christian church.

It is in Christ that the Word became flesh and the gospel is embodied.

It is to Christ that the holy Scriptures bear witness.

It is through Christ that the members of the church receive abundant life and spiritual vitality.

The churches in this World Communion of Reformed Churches are called together in the name of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Under this sovereign God, with Christ's followers across the globe, we belong to the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

ARTICLE I - NAME AND SUCCESSION

The name of this organization shall be World Communion of Reformed Churches. The following constitute the name of the organization in French, German and Spanish:

Communion mondiale d'Église réformées (CMER)

Weltgemeinschaft Reformierter Kirchen (WRK)

Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas (CMIR)

The World Communion of Reformed Churches succeeds the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and its antecedents, as a united ecumenical body for Reformed Christians.

ARTICLE II - BASIS

The basis of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be the Word of the triune God, incarnate in Jesus Christ and revealed in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is to this triune God that the church bears witness. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is committed to embody a Reformed identity as articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and the Ecumenical Creeds of the early church, and as continued in the life and witness of the Reformed community.

ARTICLE III - VALUES

1. The World Communion of Reformed Churches is called to demonstrate and live the oneness in Christ we profess and to carry out its ministry in a way that enables all members to share their gifts for the good of all and for the transformation of the world. We will serve our members with love and care, encouraging their mutual support and nurture of one another.
2. The World Communion of Reformed Churches in its order and actions is called to respect, defend, and advance the dignity of every person. In Jesus Christ all human differences must lose their power to divide. No one shall be disadvantaged for, among other reasons, race/ethnicity or gender, and no individual or church may claim or exercise dominance over another.
3. The World Communion of Reformed Churches embraces God's covenant promises for the redemption and restoration of all that God has made. In doing so, it affirms the biblical calling of the members to a unifying effort in ministry that will bear witness to God's justice and peace, and to the integrity of creation.

ARTICLE IV - AIMS AND PURPOSES

1. Drawing on the heritage of the Reformed confessions, as a gift for the renewal of the whole church, the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall foster communion among its member churches by

a. promoting unity in and among churches through mutual recognition of baptism, membership, pulpit and table fellowship, and ministry. Interpreting Reformed theology for contemporary Christian witness.
b. encouraging the renewal of Reformed worship and spiritual life.
c. renewing a commitment to partnership in God's mission, through witness, diaconal service and work for justice, so as to foster mission in unity, mission renewal, and mission empowerment.
d. encouraging leadership development and nurture of the covenant community.
e. engaging other ecumenical organizations and churches of other traditions in the ecumenical movement through dialogue and cooperation in ministry.

2. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall assist its member churches by

   a. widening and deepening understanding and community among the member churches and helping them to fulfill their own responsibilities in the service of Christ.
   b. facilitating the transformation of the member churches into interdependent missional communities that support, empower and challenge each other as partners in the one mission of God.
   c. promoting the full and just participation of all members, of all ages, in all aspects of the church's life and its public witness.
   d. promoting the full and just partnership of women and men in church and society.
   e. encouraging and promoting diaconal service in the church.

3. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall contribute to the ecumenical movement and the transformation of the world by

   a. promoting economic and ecological justice, global peace, and reconciliation in the world.
   b. promoting and defending religious, civil, and all other human rights wherever threatened throughout the world.
   c. encouraging and promoting relief and sustainable development in the world and focusing on the eradication of poverty.
   d. providing Reformed perspectives on church unity.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP

1. All current member churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches that at the time of the formation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches are not under suspension in either organization shall be members.
2. Other churches of the Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, other First Reformation, United and Uniting traditions are eligible for membership, if such a church affirms this constitution.
3. Member churches are expected to join in achieving the Aims and Purposes of the World Communion of Reformed Churches by, among other things, participating in meetings, taking seriously its actions and decisions, and engaging in its collective work.

4. Fellowships of churches that affirm a Reformed identity and include in their membership World Communion of Reformed Churches' members are eligible for associate membership. Such associate members shall share in the fellowship and programs of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, participate on a reciprocal basis without a vote in governance, and thereby strengthen the broader Reformed family's participation in the church ecumenical.
5. An institution established by one or more member churches or whose faith basis and operation are in agreement with that of the historic Reformed confessions are eligible for affiliate membership, without voting privileges.
6. Membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches does not limit the autonomy of any member church or restrict its relationships with other churches or with other ecumenical organizations.
7. Members in the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall support the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches through an annual financial contribution reflecting the resources and membership of that church. The General Council or the Executive Committee shall set a minimum contribution requirement for all member churches, associate and affiliate members.
8. Application for membership shall be made to the office of the General Secretary not later than six months before a General Council meeting. Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Executive Committee following consultation with other member churches in the region. The General Council shall ratify new members by a two-thirds majority of ballots cast. A new member shall not vote on the ratification of its own membership.
9. A member church may terminate its membership by giving notice in writing to the office of the General Secretary. They will be encouraged to give reasons for this action.
10. The Executive Committee may suspend the membership of a member church for actions in violation of the Basis, Values, or Aims and Purposes of this constitution or for persistent failure to support or communicate with the organization, subject to the following conditions:

    a. Such action may be proposed to the Executive Committee by one or more member churches, after such church or churches have previously presented their concerns to the church in question. A proposal to suspend a member church shall be presented to the Executive Committee at least six months prior to its meeting.
    b. The Executive Committee that has received a proposal for suspension shall conduct an investigation. The officers shall develop an investigative process for the specific charges. The process shall be approved by the Executive Committee.
    c. The Executive Committee shall take final action only after the church in question has been given sufficient opportunity to defend itself.
    d. After such an investigation has been completed the Executive Committee may decide by a two-thirds vote to suspend the membership of the member in question or refer the case to the next General

Council. When an Executive Committee decides suspension, it may be lifted at any subsequent Executive Committee meeting.

e. When a member church is suspended at a General Council meeting, that suspension may be lifted at any subsequent General Council meeting upon recommendation of the then current Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall, therefore, maintain communication with that member church about the matters related to the cause for suspension.

f. Any member that fails to make membership contributions and does not communicate with the secretariat may be suspended by the Executive Committee. Such a member may be reinstated by the Executive Committee upon resumption of contact and fulfillment of its obligations.

11. A suspended member may send observers to plenary sessions of the General Council but shall not have the right to vote or address plenary sessions of the General Council except by extraordinary permission of the President. A suspended member shall not have any financial obligations to the World Communion of Reformed Churches during the suspension.

ARTICLE VI - GENERAL COUNCIL

1. The General Council is the main governing body of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The General Council is legally constituted to transact the business of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when representatives of one-half plus one of its member churches are present to establish a quorum.
2. The General Council shall

   a. provide leadership for the World Communion of Reformed Churches in achieving the aims and purposes of the organization.
   b. adopt and amend the Constitution and the Bylaws.
   c. make and adopt policies and programs for the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
   d. elect officers and members of the Executive Committee.
   e. consider matters brought before it by member churches.
   f. ratify decisions of the Executive Committee.

3. Decisions of the General Council concerning its organization and institutional activities shall be binding.
4. Decisions of the General Council involving the life and witness of the member churches are advisory in character.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS OF GENERAL COUNCIL

1. The General Council shall ordinarily meet once in every seven years.
2. At the request of at least one-fifth of the member churches, the Executive Committee shall convene the General Council into special session.
3. The time, place, and program of a General Council meeting shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

4. The General Council, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall adopt rules of procedure for the conduct of its business.

ARTICLE VIII - COMPOSITION OF GENERAL COUNCIL

1. Participants at the General Council are delegates, associate and affiliate delegates, ecumenical delegates, consultants, observers, guests, and visitors.
2. Member churches shall be entitled to appoint delegates on the basis of their baptised membership according to the following plan:

   a. two delegates for churches with up to 100,000 members
   b. three delegates for churches with 100,001 to 200,000 members
   c. four delegates for churches with 200,001 to 300,000 members
   d. five delegates for churches with 300,001 to 500,000 members
   e. six delegates for churches with 500,001 to 750,000 members
   f. seven delegates for churches with 750,001 to 1,000,000 members
   g. eight delegates for churches with more than 1,000,000 members

3. Where a church sends two or more delegates, no more than half shall be ordained ministers, and the delegation shall be gender-balanced. Where a church sends two delegates, at least one shall be a woman. Where a church sends four or more delegates, at least one third of the delegates shall be women and at least one delegate shall be thirty years of age or younger on the date the General Council is convened.
4. Each of the officers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be an ex-officio delegate (with vote) to any General Council that meets during the officer's term of office.
5. Delegates shall have the right to vote and to move or second a motion in all sessions of the General Council.

ARTICLE IX - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The Executive Committee shall have twenty elected members, including four officers, plus the General Secretary ex-officio (without vote). The Executive Committee is legally constituted to transact the business of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when a majority of its members is present to establish a quorum.
2. The Executive Committee may invite Executive Secretaries to participate in its meetings in an advisory capacity.
3. Conveners or Secretaries of the Regional Councils are invited to Executive Committee meetings as Corresponding members. Corresponding members are persons representing specific geographical or organizational entities related to the World Communion of Reformed Churches and are invited to participate in officially called meetings but without the power to make or to second motions or to vote.
4. If any member of the Executive Committee is unable to attend a particular meeting of the Committee, an alternate may be appointed under the provisions in the Bylaws.
5. The Executive Committee shall meet annually.
6. When the President and the General Secretary deem it necessary to secure a decision of the Executive Committee between its meetings, a vote by

mail, email, telephone conference, or other electronic means may be taken. In such cases the required majority (one-half plus one) is based on all the members of the Executive Committee.

7. The Executive Committee shall:

   a. exercise general oversight of the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches between meetings of the General Council including, but not limited to, the formation of departments, committees and commissions to carry out the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
   b. authorize the President and/or the General Secretary to speak for the World Communion of Reformed Churches between meetings of the General Council. The Executive Committee may, by way of exception and if needed, appoint one or more additional persons to speak for the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
   c. perform all duties specified elsewhere in this Constitution and in the Bylaws or committed to it by the General Council.
   d. approve the annual financial reports and adopt the annual budget.
   e. fill vacancies among the officers and in its own membership, as specified in the Bylaws, which may occur between meetings of the General Council.
   f. elect a General Secretary and appoint Executive Secretaries.
   g. decide on admission to and suspension of membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches subject to ratification by the next General Council.

ARTICLE X - OFFICERS OF THE WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES

1. The General Council shall elect the following officers from the delegates to the General Council, to hold office from their installation until their successors are elected and installed in office:

   a. a President
   b. two Vice-Presidents
   c. General Treasurer

2. The officers of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall have power to

   a. approve the agenda~~s~~ for Executive Committee meetings.
   b. ensure coherence in the interdepartmental work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
   c. provide advice and direction to the General Secretary.
   d. report for review to the Executive Committee concerning the actions they have taken.
   e. oversee the assets of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

3. Any two of the following: the President (or one of the Vice-Presidents if substituting for the President), the General Secretary, and the General Treasurer, are authorized to sign jointly for all legally required registration, opening of bank accounts and other legal transactions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

ARTICLE XI - GENERAL SECRETARY

1. The General Secretary shall be the chief executive officer of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and shall be responsible to the General Council and to the Executive Committee to direct and coordinate the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
2. The General Secretary shall serve a term of seven years and shall be eligible for one renewal for another seven-year term. A comprehensive performance review will be scheduled at the midpoint of each seven-year term and prior to the decision to appoint the General Secretary to a second seven-year term. The performance review is conducted by persons appointed by the Executive Committee.
3. The General Secretary shall make all necessary arrangements for the convening, reporting and the proper conduct of the General Council.
4. The General Secretary shall supervise the personnel of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and be responsible for the proper functioning of the secretariat.
5. All publications shall be under the supervision of the General Secretary.

ARTICLE XII - EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES

1. Executive Secretaries shall be appointed for the operations of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
2. The number of Executive Secretaries serving at any one time, and the scope of their responsibilities, is determined by the Executive Committee upon recommendation of the General Secretary.
3. Executive Secretaries shall serve a term of five years and shall be eligible for one renewal for another five-year term. A comprehensive performance review will be scheduled at the midpoint of each five-year term and prior to the decision to appoint an Executive Secretary to a second five-year term. The performance review is conducted by the General Secretary.

ARTICLE XIII - FINANCE

1. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be financed by contributions from member churches, associate and affiliate members, and gifts from individuals, congregations, organizations, and other sources.
2. The General Treasurer and the General Secretary shall be responsible for the preparation of the annual budget, which shall be presented to the Executive Committee for approval.
3. The financial accounts of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be audited annually by auditors approved by the Executive Committee. The audited accounts shall be adopted annually by the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XIV - DEPARTMENTS, COMMITTEES, OFFICES AND COMMISSIONS

1. The General Council or the Executive Committee may form departments, committees, and commissions to carry out the work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

2. All committees or commissions shall be accountable to the General Council and the Executive Committee.
3. Departments and offices shall be accountable to the General Council and the Executive Committee, through the General Secretary. They shall function in a manner that promotes the coherence of the programs of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. To this end they are not independent entities but function interdependently.

ARTICLE XV - ORGANIZATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

To promote the closest possible community and cooperation among member churches in a particular area of the world, and the effectiveness of the total work of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the General Council may authorize the organization of a Regional Council composed of the member churches in that defined geographical area. Such a Regional Council shall be accountable to the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches through its appointed administrative structures.

1. The number, boundaries, and names of the areas shall be determined by the General Council or by the Executive Committee in consultation with the member churches of the region.
2. The organization of a Regional Council shall be effected by the member churches within the area, in conformity with the Constitution and Bylaws of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Each Regional Council shall adopt its own Bylaws subject to ratification by the Executive Committee.
3. Each Regional Council shall meet from time to time within the geographic area, provide for an Administrative Committee, and elect officers pursuant to its Bylaws.
4. A Convener or Secretary and a Treasurer for each Regional Council shall be elected by the Regional Council, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XVI - LEGAL STATUS

The legal status of the World Communion of Reformed Churches shall be that of an international non-governmental, not-for-profit organization. In the event that the World Communion of Reformed Churches ceases to exist as a corporate entity, any remaining assets, after the payment of existing liabilities, shall be distributed pro-rata to the member churches.

ARTICLE XVII - AMENDMENTS

1. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the delegates in attendance at any meeting of the General Council, provided the proposed amendment has been transmitted to each member church, to members of the Executive Committee, and to the Regional Councils at least six months before it is submitted for approval.
2. The Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the delegates in attendance at a meeting of the General Council, provided notice of at least 24 hours has been given to the delegates attending that meeting.

3. The Bylaws may also be amended between meetings of the General Council by the Executive Committee. Such changes shall be ratified by the next General Council.

Bylaws of the World Communion of Reformed Churches

I. GENERAL COUNCIL

1. The Executive Committee shall serve as the Business Committee of the General Council.
2. The President, with the advice of the Executive Committee, shall appoint from among the delegates such Standing Committees and Task Groups as may be necessary.

II. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. Elections

   a. The General Council shall elect officers from among the delegates to that General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, and experience.
   b. The General Council shall elect an Executive Committee from among the delegates to that General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, experience and the advice of regional councils.
   c. The Executive Committee members shall hold office from their installation until their successors are elected and installed in office.
   d. Members of the Executive Committee shall be eligible to serve for not more than two consecutive terms.
   e. The General Council, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall elect a Nominating Committee of not more than ten persons, two of whom must be under 30 years of age, one of them female and one male. The nomination procedure shall take into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, and gender.
   f. Members of the Nominating Committee are not eligible for election as officers or as members of the Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee shall receive and consider proposed nominations from delegates from Regional Councils and shall make its own proposals.
   g. The Nominating Committee shall present to the General Council a slate of nominations for officers and for members of the Executive Committee. When the proposal of the Nominating Committee has been presented, nominations from the floor may be proposed as an alternative to any of the nominees recommended by the Nominating Committee.
   h. The election of General Council Officers and Executive Committee members shall take place no sooner than twenty-four hours after the presentation of all candidates.

2. Alternates and consultants

   a. If any member of the Executive Committee is unable to attend a particular meeting of the Executive Committee, the President and the General Secretary, after due consultation, may appoint an alternate from the same region, to serve for that particular meeting as a member of the Executive Committee.
   b. The Executive Committee may invite churches or organizations to appoint a representative to attend meetings of the Executive Committee. Such an invited representative shall be able to participate in the meeting without the right to vote.

3. Removal from office

   a. When an officer or member of the Executive Committee is deemed by another officer or member to have failed to perform his or her duties, a hearing or hearings shall be conducted.
   b. Having heard the accusations, having considered the appropriate evidence and having heard the response the accused person chooses to make, the Executive Committee may reprimand, suspend, or remove the accused person, or declare that the person's service will continue. The seriousness of the offence will determine the action to be taken—not necessarily the number of occasions of transgression.
   c. When an officer or member of the Executive Committee has been found guilty of an offence by the ecclesiastical procedures of his or her church, the Executive Committee may declare the office or membership vacant after having taken note of the official statement of the charges (formal accusation), decision, and censure (judgment, sentence). The member shall be offered the opportunity to make a response in writing or in person (at her or his own expense) to the Executive Committee.
   d. Whether or not there is a response, the Executive Committee may remove or suspend the person, or take no action.

4. Vacant positions
   When the position of a member of the Executive Committee becomes vacant through death, resignation in writing to the General Secretary, removal from office by action of the Executive Committee, or non-attendance over an extended period, the Executive Committee may fill such vacancy in the following manner:

   a. When the office of President becomes vacant, the Executive Committee shall fill the office of President by election from among the Vice-Presidents.
   b. When the office of a Vice-President becomes vacant, the Executive Committee shall fill the office by election from among members of the Executive Committee.
   c. When a general position on the Executive Committee becomes vacant, the Executive Committee may fill the vacancy by election from among those who were delegates to the previous General Council, taking into consideration geographical distribution, cultural and denominational diversity, gender, age, and experience.

5. Meetings

   a. The Executive Committee shall meet once a year, the specific time and place to be set by the Executive Committee or by the President and General Secretary.
   b. The President and the General Secretary may call special meetings of the Executive Committee, and shall do so at the request of a majority of the members of the Executive Committee.
   c. A quorum shall be a majority of the total membership of the Executive Committee.

III. FINANCES

1. The Executive Committee may propose proportionate financial contributions to the churches.
2. Any proposals for the disbursements of any funds relating to the World Communion of Reformed Churches, other than disbursements included in the annual budget, shall be approved by the Executive Committee.
3. In exceptional cases, the General Secretary shall be permitted to initiate an action with financial consequences, within the parameters of the purposes and aims of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, after consultation with and the approval of the President and the General Treasurer.
4. If necessary for timely consideration, the Executive Committee may vote on the adoption of the budget by mail ballot, teleconference, or other electronic means upon the recommendation of the officers.
5. The General Treasurer and the finance secretary shall report regularly to the Executive Committee.
6. The expenses of the President, the General Secretary, the General Treasurer, and other members of the staff will be met from the funds of the World Communion of Reformed Churches when they attend meetings of the General Council and the Executive Committee.
7. The expenses of delegates to the General Council and of members of the Executive Committee attending the General Council shall be paid by the churches of which they are members unless a prior agreement for support has been negotiated.
8. The World Communion of Reformed Churches shall pay for the expenses of the Executive Committee in accordance with established administrative guidelines.
9. Each Regional Council shall submit to the General Secretary a copy of its annual audited financial statements.

Appendix B
CRCNA Response to the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice

I. Introduction

Delegates of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) adopted the Accra Confession in 2004 to express deep concerns about global poverty, unjust distribution of the world's resources, environmental degradation, and the failure of the church to respond adequately. Delegates hoped that the global Reformed community would attend to their expression of faith and

thus issued a call for education, confession, and action related to these concerns. Since 2004, the Accra Confession has been discussed in many contexts, including several forums in Asia and Africa. In a May 2006 meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the Council for World Missions and WARC raised questions about current prevalent human-centered perspectives on nature. Subsequently an April 2008 statement, "Living Out the Accra Confession in Africa," arose from the Alliance of Reformed Churches in Africa. It asked the worldwide Reformed community of churches to seek a future that empowers the poor and downtrodden, connecting faith and theology to the work of our hands. These gatherings have extended and deepened the global Reformed conversation about how faith, patterns of human life, and the natural world are interrelated. The whole church is blessed when so many voices unite in a call to faithful stewardship and to lives of justice.

By issuing this call, WARC also called on Reformed churches throughout the world to engage in a process called "covenanting for justice." In the Christian Reformed Church we join with our Reformed brothers and sisters in understanding that the nature of this covenanting process involves "confessing our faith together, coming together in relationships of mutual solidarity and accountability, and working together for justice in the economy and the earth in our own local contexts and globally."[1] It is within this framework of understanding about the nature of "covenanting for justice" that the Christian Reformed Church responds.

We too are committed to a process that

- engages us at our deepest levels of faith and life and opens us to transformation and changed behaviors.
- follows the Spirit's guidance to restore "our relationships with one another based on the virtues of mutual love, respect and justice, and our interconnectedness with the earth, and with the compassionate God, the very source of life." We need to "reclaim the significance of spirituality in our lives" so we learn to "rejoice with those who are rejoicing . . . , weep with those who are weeping, celebrating God's love and care for all creation in the giving, sustaining, transforming and ending of life."[2]
- entails a prayerful commitment to clear-minded and open-hearted listening, dialogue, discernment, and action—*in community and fellowship with sisters and brothers of the global Reformed church.* Together we must reclaim the "true theological and biblical meaning and activities of economy." Truly economic life should be God's *oikonomia* on God's good earth. Yes, it should be "God, not the market, who ultimately shapes the form and direction of the world." As churches together we must reclaim this "theology of life sustaining wholeness."[3]

To authentically and honestly engage in this covenanting process, we must respond thoughtfully regarding the signs of the times as interpreted in the Accra Confession. While honoring and respecting the analysis that has

[1] This quote is taken from the joint consultation of the Council for World Missions and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Chiang Mai, February 12-15, 2007.

[2] From: "Living Out the Accra Confession," Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-19 May 2006, a joint statement of WARC and CWM.

[3] From: "Living Out the Accra Confession," Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15-19 May 2006, a joint statement of WARC and CWM.

been done, we are concerned that it is incomplete and must go deeper. The frames of analysis about signs of the times need expansion. The Accra Confession presents a particular reading of the signs of the times, but there are also other significant voices regarding power, economics, and ecology. The church will do well to be aware of these alternative frameworks too. Considering these along with the analysis presented in the Accra Confession may lead to a more productive covenantal future.

While suggesting further study regarding the signs of the times, the Christian Reformed Church also recognizes the growing urgency to respond to troubling global realities. Deepening our understanding of alternative analytical frameworks should not deter us from acting together now. We should intertwine mutual service and learning with continued thinking.

II. Our affirmations

With the writers of the Accra Confession, the Christian Reformed Church affirms understandings of important Christian beliefs:

- "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." God as Creator and Sustainer of all life calls us as "partners in the creation and redemption of the world."
- Yet because of a fallen world, the creation does continue to groan with "the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself."
- We too live under "the promise that Jesus Christ came so that all might have life in fullness." God was pleased to dwell fully in Jesus Christ and "through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."
- Upheld by the Holy Spirit, we must open ourselves to receive as well as proclaim in word and deed God's covenant of grace and vision of justice for all, but particularly for the "least of these." They bear the heaviest burdens for intertwined patterns of global sin, evil, and injustice.

With the writers of the Accra Confession, the Christian Reformed Church also recognizes certain global realities that bear witness to our failures to be faithful to God:

- Abuses of power by those who have collective power and resources under their control.
- A "scandalous world" in which there is persistent global poverty, particularly among women and children, with wide gulfs between the rich and the poor.
- Poor stewardship of the global environment regarding climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion, and threats to fresh water, with devastating consequences.

While relying on God's provision, we confess our own complicity in these realities as those who struggle to be faithful to God instead of Mammon. The economy and the environment should exist to serve the dignity and well-being of people in community within the bounds of sustainable creation. Our world is not as it ought to be. All these contemporary injustices and evils should be offensive to Christians. They demand a genuine and committed

response. It is our hope that God will take our struggling, stained, and partial efforts into his bigger plan for renewing and restoring the creation. This same hope inspires our efforts and the joy of participating in God's promise and process of reconciliation.

III. Interpreting the "signs of the times"

We affirm the Accra Confession in recognizing the "enormity and complexity of the situation." Each person, resource, structure, and system is part of one interrelated global web. There are multiple parties in a global economy and a vast mix of human motivations involved in the use and distribution of resources. Because of this we need to gather abundant knowledge so that we can deeply discern the causes of injustice, our personal and corporate part in them, and paths to a more sustainable ecology with a just economy. Respected scholars, thinkers, and practitioners from many fields of study and geographic roots are working to read the signs of the times. But because of this web's complexity, there are many and varied interpretations of those signs.

The Accra Confession emphasizes an analysis that focuses on empire, which the confession defines as a "system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests." This particular reading of the signs has roots in the dependency frameworks of the 1960s and 1970s. Some contemporary theologians and social scientists still find this analysis persuasive, and we should pay careful attention to this reading. A nexus of powerful interests can indeed shape empires of influence that thwart global human flourishing, especially among those who struggle for the basic necessities of life. Such hubs of influence can deal daily death, at times through conscious sin and at times through the blindness that can accompany any concentration of power. Thus, we affirm the need for international law-based means to call such centers of global power to account, be they governments, private corporate enterprises, or other influential groups. As Christians, we believe that human power, although inherently a good gift from God, tends to be badly distorted by human sin. Furthermore, particularly within Reformed Christian communities of faith, our propensity for good order may at times support alignments of power that thwart our address of such impoverishing structures. We must become more closely conformed to the redemption and justice that Christ's death and resurrection promise for humans and the created world. We stand ready to join in the identification of such power centers, our own as well as others, and in the reshaping of power through moral, ethical, and legal accountability. Yet we must also be careful regarding analysis that places too much blame for the present reality on systems of national domination driven by the nefarious designs of empire.

We are concerned that the Accra Confession oversimplifies the causes of global poverty, and therefore is an inadequate basis for the conversation about covenanting to which we are called. Many economists who study global poverty and its solutions are proponents of improving and reforming existing systems through freer and fairer trade and globalization. Among these are Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and the highly respected economist Jagdish Bhagwati. A compelling contemporary voice from Africa comes from Ghanaian economist George Ayittey. While he in no way excuses the abuse of colonialism, he writes that free and globalizing markets are a key

part of the answer to the problems that continue to plague Africa. Likewise, Grameen Bank founder Mohammed Yunus argues strongly for the efficacy of well regulated markets and the creativity generated in the marketplace. He points out that markets and enterprise are human institutions and activities that can be formed to address human needs as well as to make profits. They can contribute to the common good as well as to individual well-being.[4] These voices indicate that further diagnosis of global economic dynamics is essential to our communal covenanting response. We urge attention to such alternative well-grounded and persuasive interpretations of the economic signs of the times.

Care of God's creation is also deeply interwoven with human choices. Environmental degradation occurs for many reasons. It can be related to our limited knowledge and social ways of life as well as a desire to exceed the bounds of God's creation. Often environmental problems deepen human poverty, and sometimes in our poverty we make short-term choices that create long-term environmental damage. To care for creation, we must consider many factors that contribute to this challenge.

This systemic intertwining of powerful influence, economic strategies, and environmental sustainability is very complex. So we must remain open to multiple frameworks for analysis, explanation, and recommendation. We should listen to voices from every sector of society and from every part of the world in our mutual search to understand signs of the times.

IV. We are called to covenant for justice

The church as an institution must think carefully about its particular role in addressing these global challenges as well as the appropriate tasks of those with special expertise on such issues. Certainly the church must engage Christians in mutual inquiry, learning, discussion, discernment, and compassionate action. The church should nurture us in our calling as Christians who care about the entire global body of Christ and the whole of God's creation. It should articulate Christian norms to undergird our social witness. The church should proclaim that we are all responsible for the global web in which we live, and each of us is called to act as a Christian in that web. The church should ask us to make Christian decisions in our homes, local communities, regions, and nations that respond to the poor and use resources well. The church should declare that systems and practices can and should be redeemed, shaped, formed, and held accountable so that we weave a tapestry of life more fully resembling what God desires.

But to do so, the church as a body should engage those from the entire circle of life as it seeks to understand and address these complex issues that have so many contingencies. At the church's table we need everyone to listen and learn together, including biblical scholars, community developers, farmers, ministry leaders, resource specialists, scientists, theologians, and a host of others. As Christians we need creativity, commitment, energy, and ideas from every worldwide sector regarding sustainable paths into the future. Every good insight and idea is needed. Thus, the church in its sphere of responsibility should invite all to reshape global living as God intends it.

[4] *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism,* New York: Public Affairs Books, 2008.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America commits itself to be at this covenant table of the church. It hears and wishes to share the deep concerns expressed in the Accra Confession. We recognize the stubborn refusal of many to live within God's boundaries, the unjust distribution of the basic resources for human survival, the sad discounting of our creation care duties and their rightful costs, and the untenable barriers faced by many in the Global South to sharing in God's good gifts for human thriving and growth.

The CRCNA, through its people and missions, has been deeply involved in efforts to relieve acute suffering, develop churches and communities, and improve our participation in seeking global economic justice. Still, we confess that we have fallen short. We have not sufficiently engaged these realities. We have not fully confronted the disturbing possibilities of deep flaws in the policies and principles that guide our global effort and our assumptions for cultural growth and development.

We wish to engage, then—to covenant—with the global Reformed family of churches in a process of mutual inquiry, discussion, learning, and discernment that works toward

- a re-formed, more global understanding of the world and its structures of power.
- a better awareness of our shortcomings, the logs in our own eyes, and tendencies to honor the idols of our time and place.
- more clarity concerning God's will for his world in light of Scripture and our common Reformed Christian heritage.
- principles, practices, and plans for concrete mission together that go to the roots of injustice and through which we are deeply faithful to God and to each other.

V. We are called to urgent engagement

The Christian Reformed Church acknowledges the urgency of these challenges. Thus, while all of us continue to analyze, the Christian Reformed Church will also address these challenges as part of our covenanting process. Therefore, as we walk and work together, we will

- spread the call for justice and work for it in our local congregations as well as in the many places of learning to which our local churches are connected. We should take the call of the Accra Confession into serious study at the local level. We need to foster the development of decentralized global learning among our local church communities. But we also need service projects in which local congregations across the globe can work together. We need the transforming cross-cultural encounters that such projects provide for the people of the Christian Reformed Church.
- garner and listen to those with expertise regarding the economy, the environment, and the well-being of all the world's people. Let us actively identify experts in the nongovernmental world, in business, ecology, economics, health care, and other related fields who have significant knowledge. Institutions of Christian higher education connected with Reformed churches can become excellent hubs for global connections, helping us to pinpoint needs and support the gathering of needed scholarship.

– value the many Christian Reformed Church agencies through which our members can readily channel support regarding global needs. These collective service arms of the church have already learned many effective ways to respond to global needs. They are recognized for their expertise in the greater world of churches and nongovernmental organizations. We should eagerly support their efforts.
– ask planners of the Christian Reformed Church Assembly of Worldwide Partners to make themes from the Accra Confession central to its 2011 gathering. This could be an excellent forum in which this denomination continues further reflection and action on this call.
– invite members of Reformed Christian churches worldwide to face-to-face engagement on these issues as part of a June 2010 conference hosted by Calvin College. This conference will occur just prior to the assembly at which global delegates from both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council join their efforts. The conference, "Reformed Mission in an Age of World Christianity," will have sessions that further engage issues raised in the Accra Confession. It will be an opportunity to learn what our churches can do together to deepen God's justice, peace, and full human flourishing.

At all of these levels we must engage in ongoing dialogue and practice. At all of these levels Reformed Christians need to embrace each other across the multitude of beautiful cultures that God sees. Whether we are parents in households, people in the church, prophets across a host of Reformed denominations, professionals in business and government, or partners in Christian academic enterprises, we should commit ourselves to good and fruitful paths for engagement regarding the challenges that the Accra Confession has identified. As part of the broader Reformed family within the one body of Christ, the Christian Reformed Church commits itself to all of these levels of engagement.

VI. Conclusion

We covenant with Reformed Christians the world over to seek a different global future before the face of the only God who creates, redeems, and sustains us each and every day. We covenant to listen, learn, and contribute to further discussions about the signs of the times. We promise to work and serve with the circle of Reformed Christian churches to address the challenges of power, economy, and ecology so that people everywhere and all of creation can flourish together.

Appendix C
The Belhar Confession: What the CRC Can Do with This Gift

I. Introduction

Synod 2007 mandated the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to study and assess the Belhar Confession and to present recommendations concerning it to Synod 2009. This report is in response to that mandate, and the IRC is pleased to bring these recommendations for discussion. In addition to extensive discussion within the IRC itself, this report reflects the

contributions of all who were invited to participate in fourteen focus groups conducted during the first six months of 2008. The IRC has also benefited from materials provided by the Reformed Church in America and from First Seattle CRC. The level of interest in the CRC about the discussion of the Belhar Confession has been encouraging and gratifying.

A summary of the focus group responses follows:

- The participants were unanimous in the conviction that the CRC should develop a meaningful response to the Belhar Confession.
- A few of the participants suggested that it would be adequate for the CRC to receive the Belhar Confession "as information and with appreciation."
- A number of the participants suggested that the Belhar Confession should be adopted as the "fourth confession" and become part of the confessional basis of the CRC.
- There was a broad consensus that synod will need to be very conscious of the impact of any decision made concerning the Belhar Confession—an impact both within the CRC as well as with respect to the CRC's ecumenical partners.
- There are no overriding theological issues in the Belhar Confession that would prevent the CRC from adopting or strongly endorsing it.
- If synod judges that adopting the Belhar Confession is problematic, then it is desirable that the Belhar Confession at least be endorsed by synod as an important statement on church unity, reconciliation, and justice.

The IRC believes that it would be helpful to provide the delegates to Synod 2009 the same information on the background and questions about the Belhar Confession that the focus groups received.

A. Why is the CRC considering the Belhar Confession?

The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) has given the Belhar Confession as a gift to the worldwide Reformed community because the use or application of this confession in the life of the church is far wider than its original context. The URCSA has asked Reformed churches around the world—by way of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)—to consider adopting the Belhar Confession so as to make it a part of the global Reformed confessional basis (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 197-200; *Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 235, 246; *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 592).

B. History of the Belhar Confession's development

1. The Development of churches in South Africa

- Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa established in 1652; three confessions: Heidelberg Catechism (HC), Belgic Confession (BC), and Canons of Dort (CD); "white" denomination associated with the system of apartheid.
- Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) established in 1881 by the exclusively white DRC for people of color.

- Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) established in 1951 for "blacks."
- Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) established in 1994; the DRMC joined with the DRCA.

2. Dates leading up to the Belhar Confession

- 1652 – The Dutch formed a station at the Cape and introduced slavery.
- 1857 – The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa decided to have separate services for "colored" members (discrimination at the Lord's Supper was already occurring well before 1857).
- 1881 – The Dutch Reformed Mission Church was established by the white Dutch Reformed Church for people of color.
- 1951 – The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa was established for "blacks."
- 1978 – The Dutch Reformed Mission Church and Dutch Reformed Church in Africa decided to work for unity, an ideal that took sixteen years to fulfill. In the process, the Belhar Confession was formulated (1982).
- 1982 – The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), with Dr. Allan Boesak serving as president, declared a *status confessionis* concerning apartheid. *Status confessionis* is a Latin term meaning that which is foundational for belief and behavior and must be affirmed by professing members of the church. In addition to calling apartheid a heresy, WARC suspended the white Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

Later that same year, the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (meeting in Belhar) also declared a *status confessionis* regarding apartheid, reasserting that it is a heresy and a misrepresentation of the gospel. In addition, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church drafted a confession dealing with three issues: (1) the unity of the church, (2) reconciliation in Christ, and (3) the justice of God. The synod adopted an official accompanying letter to explain the decision to draft the confession and to attest to the seriousness, spirit, and purpose behind it. The beginning of the accompanying letter states:

> We are deeply conscious that moments of such seriousness can arise in the life of the Church that it may feel the need to confess its faith anew in the light of a specific situation. We are aware that such an act of confession is not lightly undertaken, but only if it is considered that the heart of the gospel is so threatened as to be at stake. In our judgment, the present church and political situation in our country and particularly within the Dutch Reformed church family calls for such a decision. Accordingly, we make this confession not as a contribution to a theological debate nor as a new summary of our beliefs, but as a cry from the heart, as something we are obliged to do for the sake of the gospel in view of the times in which we stand.
>
> . . . We are aware that the only authority for such a confession and the only grounds on which it may be made are the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. . . . This confession is not aimed at specific people or churches. . . . This confession must be seen as a call to a continuous process of soul-searching

> together, a joint-wrestling with the issues, and a readiness to repent. . . . Our prayer is that this act of confession . . . will be reconciling and uniting.[1]

The resulting Belhar Confession was adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. When these denominations united in 1994, the newly formed Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa reaffirmed the Belhar Confession as one of its four confessions. The Dutch Reformed Church synod refused to adopt it as an official confession of faith, viewing it as a product of liberation theology. After much debate, the Dutch Reformed Church synod of 2004 ruled that each congregation could make its own decision.

The question whether the Belhar Confession reflects the tenets of "liberation theology" has been frequently discussed and is addressed again in section II, B of this report.

C. History of the Belhar Confession and related matters in the CRC

It is important to note that the CRC has a history of its own related to the Belhar Confession. What follows is a summary of that history (much of it taken from material prepared by Dr. David Rylaarsdam of Calvin Theological Seminary). Synod has, on several occasions, encouraged further consideration of the Belhar within the CRC.

- 1959 – "In view of the racial tensions and the flagrant violation of the scriptural principle of equality occurring in society and the church both in America and in our world, the church has a calling to register a clear and strong witness to her members and her world" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 84).
- 1984 – "The IRC is giving careful consideration to the synodical decisions of the [Dutch Reformed Mission Church] at its meeting in 1982, particularly the New Confession which is adopted" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 172). "It is also essential for our denomination to relate with integrity to those who long and work for racial justice in South Africa" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 220). "Furthermore, the confession adopted by the [Dutch Reformed Mission Church] can only be judged to be in essential accord with the declarations on race issued by the [Reformed Ecumenical Council] and by synods of the CRC. . . . In view of the relation of ecclesiastical fellowship that exists between the CRC and the [Dutch Reformed Mission Church] and other Reformed churches in South Africa . . . , and in view of the ecumenical relationship of the CRC with the Reformed churches of South Africa in the Reformed Ecumenical Council, it is incumbent on the CRC, out of integrity toward these relationships, to judge the rightness of the judgment of the [Dutch Reformed Mission Church] concerning apartheid (that it is a sin) and the "moral and theological justification of it" (that it is a theological heresy) and concerning the faithfulness of the Reformed confessions and Scripture of the . . . new confessional statement. As for the latter, it is our judgment that the new confessional statement is in accord with the decisions of several synods of the CRC" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 602-3).
- 1985 – "Further informal discussions were held [with the Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa] on such questions as the relations

[1] *Reformed Journal* 34.5 (1984): pp. 23-24.

between the constituent synods of the 'Algemene Sinode,' reactions to the Belhar Confession, and the assessment of the recent constitutional changes in South Africa" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 211).

– 1989 – "That synod instruct the IRC to study the Belhar Confession and present recommendations to Synod 1990 in response to the REC request" (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 497).
– 1990 – "That synod endorse the IRC's evaluation (pp. 217-219) which judges that the Belhar Confession is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades; and, therefore, that synod declare that it has no objection to its inclusion in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution" (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625). *Note:* At a subsequent meeting of REC the recommendation to add the Belhar Confession to Article II of the REC Constitution was vigorously debated but then not adopted. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the position of the synod of the CRC stands.
– 1996 – Synod considered an extensive report from its Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 510-15, 595-619). This report was published in 1996 (by Faith Alive Christian Resources) under the title *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.
– 1997 – "We believe . . . the ministry of racial reconciliation has to take a greater role and priority in the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. . . . We therefore urge synod to increase its efforts and its commitment toward the advancement of racial reconciliation" (Pastoral Ministries Report, *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 686).
– 1999 – "The general synodical commission of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa met in Bloemfontein on October 19-22, 1998. The CRC delegation was warmly welcomed to the meeting and was permitted a presence at the discussion table for the duration of its visit. We brought greetings, and in response we received greetings to our churches in which the relationship between our churches was prized, our well-being was prayed for, and our churches were challenged to adopt the Belhar Confession as their own. . . . The URCSA's challenge to the CRC to adopt the Belhar Confession needs further reflection. . . . The URCSA believes it is necessary that the Belhar Confession be accepted as part of the confessional basis of a new, unified church in South Africa. To the URCSA this is a nonnegotiable condition" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 197-200).
– 2003 – "The general secretary of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) reiterated what he had told the IRC earlier, namely that URCSA was asking churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with it to study the Belhar Confession to determine what place that confession might take among the faith statements of the respective denominations. The IRC has received this oral invitation as an official request from the URCSA and has committed itself to review and study the Belhar with a view to making a recommendation to synod about its status sometime in the future" (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 235). "The CRC did make an initial decision regarding Belhar in 1990 when it said that the

Belhar Confession 'is in harmony with "the Reformed faith as a body of truth" articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades. . . .' (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p.625). . . . Synod 1990, however, did not say anything about the Belhar Confession's status within the CRC itself, and that is the kind of decision the URCSA would like the CRC to consider" (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 246).

– 2004 – "The BOT is also committed to seeing the implementation of the decisions made in 1996 when synod adopted the report *God's Diverse and Unified Family*" (Board of Trustees Report, *Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 68). "The Christian Reformed Church has always had a good track record on addressing hunger and poverty but has realized that more needs to be done to address the *root causes* of world hunger. Understanding that hunger is always part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation, the CRC formed the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJHA) to address these root causes. Today, the OSJHA works to develop a deeper understanding of, and response to, God's call to let justice flow like a river in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger and poverty" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 68-69).
– 2005 – "The CRC and RCA delegations first met in December 2002. Three items were given priority for consideration: (1) the so-called orderly exchange of ministers from one denomination to the other, (2) a unified approach to dealing with the Belhar Confession as requested by the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa, and (3) a concerted effort to find new ways to cooperate in ministry and among our congregations and classes. Our discussions with representatives of the RCA have been guided by the following agreed upon items (as reported to Synod 2003): . . . Examine the Belhar Confession together because the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) has requested both the RCA and the CRC to study and adopt the Belhar. It may be possible for our two denominations to formulate a united statement of agreement on it. That would be a powerful statement to the URCSA" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 240). "The RCA has made great strides toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the Belhar Confession. The CRC participants in the dialogue group encouraged the RCA to produce their study materials in a form that would allow for its use as a discussion guide in the CRC context" (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 241).
– 2007 – "That synod encourage the ongoing work of the Interchurch Relations Committee to inform and engage the churches concerning the Belhar Confession and the issues raised by it through: (1) a greater dissemination of the Belhar Confession to the congregations in order to familiarize the denomination with it and the issues raised by it, and (2) regional level dialogues to be initiated by the Interchurch Relations Committee as part of their process of expediting a recommendation to Synod 2009" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 592).

The RCA synod of 2007 provisionally adopted the Belhar Confession, which means that it will be considered for final adoption by the RCA synod

in 2009. The polity of the RCA requires that for the final adoption to take effect the decision of the synod must be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the classes of the RCA. The result of that vote will then be reported to the RCA synod of 2010.

During the time of the IRC's consideration, and in conversation with representatives of the RCA, it was judged that a statement of introduction to the Belhar would help present the confession in the North American context. A joint statement was developed and is included in this report as Appendix C-1.

In response to the encouragement of our own Synod 2007, the IRC offered a copy of the Belhar Confession study guide, *Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice*, to every congregation in the CRC. This study guide was produced by the RCA and we were granted permission to promote its use in the CRC. Several hundred requests for copies were fulfilled. The IRC also initiated a series of focus group discussions about the Belhar Confession. The responses of these groups are in large part reflected in this report:

- Calvin Theological Seminary faculty
- Northwest Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota at Dordt College
- Great Lakes region at Trinity Christian College
- Great Lakes region at Ridgewood CRC, Jenison
- Great Lakes region at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids
- Ontario region in Guelph
- Ontario region in Ottawa
- East Coast, United States, in North Haledon, New Jersey
- Northwest and British Columbia in Lynden, Washington
- Alberta at The King's University College, Edmonton
- California at Rosewood CRC, Bellflower
- Black and Reformed Leadership representatives
- Board of Trustees of the CRCNA
- Interdenominational Matters Advisory Committee at Synod 2008

The summary of synodical decisions listed above concerning the history of the Belhar Confession and related matters in the CRC references the decisions of Synod 1996. At that time synod adopted a comprehensive statement titled *God's Diverse and Unified Family*. The IRC encourages all who are seriously interested in struggling with issues surrounding unity and reconciliation to read the report attached below as Appendix C-4. While synodical reports are at risk of collecting dust on bookshelves, this particular report is critical to the discussion on the Belhar Confession. There is substantial consistency in the content of synod's decisions concerning matters of racial justice and what is confessed in the language of the Belhar Confession.

That consistency is clearly demonstrated in Synod 1996's adoption of the twelve biblical and theological principles as follows:

Creation

1. The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.
2. The created world with all its diversity has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.
3. The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).

Fall

4. A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of the community.

New Creation

5. The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.
6. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.
7. Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.
8. In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.
9. The church is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.
10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Jesus Christ.
11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us, individually and corporately, to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the powers of evil.
12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 512-13)

Following the adoption of these principles, Synod 1996 also adopted the following recommendations:

> That synod, on the basis of the above principles, declare that to be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people, and that to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions.
>
> *Grounds:*
>
> a. The . . . report demonstrates that the Bible declares this reconciled community to be God's will.
> b. The confessions declare that the catholicity of the church means that Christ "gathers, protects, and preserves" the church "out of the entire human race" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21 [Q. and A. 54]).
>
> [And] that synod call the whole church—individual members, congregations, assemblies, agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA—to respond to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by committing themselves
>
> a. To pray and work for the increased enfolding of ethnic-minority persons into the CRCNA in order to reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.
> b. To ensure the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 513)

While these decisions of Synod 1996 do not directly address the issues surrounding the CRC's adoption of the Belhar Confession, they do lay the biblical and theological framework for giving serious consideration to the Belhar Confession's emphasis on unity, reconciliation, and justice. The 1996 decisions of synod focus primarily on the one unified family of God while the Belhar Confession covers a broader area of biblical teaching. Nevertheless, the consistency and overlap between these two sources is striking and can be considered as complementary.

II. Content of the Belhar Confession

A. An overview

Like the Barmen Declaration (1934), the Belhar Confession is a declaration of faith that emerged when certain practices of the church were so clearly contrary to biblical teaching that the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel was at stake. The Belhar Confession focuses not only on the importance of believing and proclaiming biblical principles aright but also on the importance of obedient living and costly discipleship. The Belhar Confession's call for faithfulness in the areas of unity, justice, and reconciliation is similar to the Presbyterian Confession of 1967 with its four strong declarations against domination, nationalism, indifference to poverty, and lack of compassion. The five articles of the Belhar Confession (Appendix C-3) and its tone-setting Accompanying Letter (Appendix C-2) are as follows:

1. Faith in the triune God

   Like the Barmen Declaration, the Belhar Confession first confesses faith in the triune God. However, it goes further in identifying the practices of such a God "who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit." This phrase clearly echoes Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 54 (Lord's Day 21).

2. Unity of the church

   The structure of the Belhar Confession is similar to the Canons of Dort, a confession that also arose out of a serious controversy in the church. Articles 2-4 of the Belhar begin by affirming biblical doctrines and then reject teachings that are contrary to Scripture.

3. Reconciliation of people in Christ.

4. God's justice and care for the suffering and the call of the church to work against injustice.

5. A call to confess and practice the teaching of the Belhar Confession.

   All of the confessions adopted since the Protestant Reformation emerged within specific circumstances. Likewise, the Belhar Confession emerged out of a specific South African experience. However, the themes of the Belhar Confession are biblical and universal. Even if one assumes the Belhar Confession to be primarily a response to the practice of forced (racial) segregation in South Africa (though its themes reach far beyond the issues of racial discrimination alone), the global picture reflects that racial divisions are a cancer-like reality in many cultures. The North American experience is no exception. Forced segregation has also been practiced in both Canada and the United States, and the practice of functional racial divisions is deeply embedded in North American culture (e.g., Native-American boarding schools, reservations, the containment of Japanese during World War II, public school segregation, the Timothy Christian School episode in CRC history, etc.). In that sense the Belhar Confession speaks to the context of life in the CRC as well as the general cultural setting within which CRC members live and work.

   Among the nearly 200 participants in the focus groups, not a single voice was raised claiming that the Belhar Confession lacks applicability to the North American context. How it ought to be addressed and

what options synod has for dealing with it were discussed extensively. Responses ranged from the suggestion that synod gratefully note and receive the Belhar Confession as the testimony of the South African churches that have adopted it, to the suggestion that the synod of the CRC (like the synod of the RCA) adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional testimony alongside the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Stating the range of responses does not mean that participants were equally divided – or even that those preferring one option were unwilling to consider an alternative. The fact is that responses favorable to considering the Belhar Confession in some substantial way were by far in the majority. There is a strong conviction among many participants that the Belhar Confession raises deep issues reflected in our biblical faith and understanding of what the core gospel is about (see section C, 2 below).

Finally, the focus group discussions also dealt with questions raised about issues that might flow from the use of the Belhar Confession. For example, the statement "that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church." Does such a declaration exclude consideration of a member's ethical and moral life-style practices? IRC believes that such statements need not to be interpreted as excluding all other considerations. In fact, at the 2008 synod meeting of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa it was suggested that the Belhar Confession demands the inclusion of all people into the membership and offices of the church, including those committed to same-sex relationships. It is noted, however, that the synod firmly rejected this suggested interpretation as flowing from the Belhar Confession as adopted in 1984.

B. Is the Belhar Confession biblical?

In 1990 the CRC synod endorsed the IRC's evaluation "that the Belhar Confession is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions and is in basic agreement with REC and CRC decisions on race made over the past decades; and, therefore, that synod declare that it has no objection to its inclusion in the list of Reformed confessions in Article II of the REC constitution."[2]

The fact that the synod of the Christian Reformed Church said what it did in 1990 does not deny that a few Reformed Christians have drawn attention to a phrase in the Belhar Confession's Article 4 that states, "We believe . . . that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is *in a special way* the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged. . . ." What does "in a special way" mean? Does this language suggest an implied endorsement of what is known as "liberation theology"?

Liberation theology can be described in a variety of ways, but at its core it is "an interpretation of religious faith from the perspective of the poor, oppressed and victimized" (B.A. Robinson). It is true that the Belhar Confession emerged out of the crucible of suffering, and it is also true that the language of the Belhar Confession clearly calls the church to recognize "that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry" (Art. 4).

[2] *Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 625.

But such language is not the exclusive domain of liberation theology, and the phrase "that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged" does not mean that the Belhar Confession is flawed in its biblical understanding of God's concern.

The IRC believes that the phrase "in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged" should be read in the context of the rest of the article and notes that the language of this article is remarkably close to the language of Scripture. It is possible to read into almost any phraseology some unintended meaning and it is more likely, as John de Gruchy argues, that the Belhar actually provides "a creative Reformed response to the challenge of liberation theology."[3]

C. Would the Belhar Confession enrich the CRC's confessional basis?

Here follows a rationale for adopting the Belhar Confession:

1. The Belhar fills a significant gap. There is little mention in our three historic Reformed confessions (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) of the large biblical themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice. These three confessions were written within sixty years of each other and were adopted within the then context of conditions in northern Europe. Much has been learned about the fullness of the Reformed faith since that time, and the Belhar Confession supplements the confessions that have guided Reformed churches.

2. The Belhar Confession's content is the gospel and is fundamental to our faith. The biblical themes of the Belhar Confession are larger in Scripture than some of the themes the historic confessions focus on. For example, Scripture is less explicit about total depravity than the obligation for God's people to live in unity. Further, countless passages of Scripture indicate God's concern about justice for the poor, widows, orphans, the suffering, and so on. This scriptural emphasis is substantially greater than the verses addressing the doctrine of reprobation.

3. The Belhar Confession addresses key issues of concern to all churches. For example, racism and other forms of exclusion are universal. The Belhar Confession is currently being studied by a number of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. A leader of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches (MECC) believes that the Belhar is highly relevant to the conflict in Palestine and Israel.

4. The time and place of the Belhar Confession's origin expand the breadth of our confessional base, making it more representative of worldwide Reformed faith throughout history. What is particularly significant is that the Belhar Confession is the first and only confessional contribution received from the Reformed community in the Southern Hemisphere. Also, the

[3] John W. de Gruchy, "The Church Always Reforming," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, ns. 12, no. 2 (1991), p. 174. For more than 30 years, John de Gruchy was a Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Cape Town and served as an ordained minister of the United Congregational Church of South Africa. A much-published author, de Gruchy received the Karl Barth Prize in 2000 from the Evangelical Church in Germany for his work on Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Belhar Confession is the only confession in the global Reformed community's history that wasn't written during the sixty-year period from 1561 to 1619.

5. The Belhar Confession can enrich our Christian way of life. As the URCSA points out, the Belhar Confession functions as "an instrument for profound self-examination, to help determine whether the church really lives by the faith it proclaims." The Belhar Confession's theological confrontation of sin has made a contribution to the reconciliation effort among Reformed churches in Southern Africa and has aided the process of reconciliation within the nation of South Africa. It may do so elsewhere. In South Africa, the Belhar Confession has also been integrated into Christian music, worship, and personal and corporate confessions of guilt. It can be used in the same way by CRC congregations.

6. The CRC is part of the global Reformed fellowship of churches and, in the spirit of our own ecumenical charter and previous synodical decisions, we identify with the experiences of the Reformed churches worldwide. There is much to be said for embracing the confessional identity of the larger church family and standing in solidarity with them for the scriptural teaching about unity, reconciliation, and justice.

III. Options considered by the IRC

There were several options (not necessarily of equal weight) considered by the IRC:

A. Option 1: Propose as a fourth confession (with or without a preamble)

That Synod 2009 propose the adoption of the Belhar Confession as its fourth confession (on par with the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort). Because such an affirmative action involves a substantial change in the CRC's present confessional basis, as well as changes in several Church Order Articles and related Supplements, a subsequent synod (2012) would need to adopt the proposal of Synod 2009. The IRC adopted the following ground for this option:

> This is consistent with the intent of Church Order Article 47 and its Supplement for a confessional matter of this magnitude.

B. Option 2: Adopt as an ecumenical confession

That Synod 2009 adopt the Belhar Confession and place it in a new category called "ecumenical confessions." Such a category could function like Presbyterian confessions, but they would not have the same weight as the CRC's three main confessions.

C. Option 3: Approve as a statement of faith

That Synod 2009 approve the Belhar Confession as an important statement of faith on par with the Contemporary Testimony.

After careful review of the options considered, the IRC decided unanimously to recommend Option 1 because it is the most consistent with our understanding of the core of the gospel and previous synodical declarations on racial justice, unity, and reconciliation. As indicated above under option 1, because the adoption of a confession is a significant decision in the life of

the church, the IRC recommends that Synod 2009 propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as the fourth confession of the CRC.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession) and authorize the revision of Church Order Supplement, Articles 5, 23-a, and 32-d and the Public Declaration of Agreement to reflect that adoption.

Grounds:

1. It is important at this time for the CRC to formally state its commitment to, and to live out, the biblical principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
2. Adopting the Belhar Confession is an important testimony to the membership of the CRC that together we stand firm on matters that are rooted in scriptural teaching and flow from the heart of God.
3. It is an important testimony to Reformed churches worldwide that the CRC will stand with them in matters of confessional integrity.
4. Adopting the Belhar Confession is consistent with the decision of Synod 1996 when it adopted the recommendations concerning *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.
5. This action would mean that the CRC is taking this step in concert with the RCA, a desire that previous synods have affirmed.
6. Since previous synods have expressed no difficulty with the Belhar Confession on biblical grounds, and considering Dutch Reformed shortcomings over the past four hundred years (e.g., slave trade on the Gold Coast, numerous denominational schisms), this action would testify to our ecumenical partners and the world (as well as CRC members committed to unity, reconciliation, and social justice) that the CRC is taking a public stand to promote the principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
7. While there is no direct reference by name to the historic Reformed confessions in the Church Order itself, the Supplement to the Church Order, Article 5 (Form of Subscription), does list the confessions by name.
8. Allowing for a three-year period of reflection (2009-2012) is consistent with the intent of Church Order Article 47 and its Supplement for a confessional matter of this magnitude. The additional time is given to the churches to adequately study and reflect on the proposal and be better prepared for response.

B. That Synod 2009 authorize the IRC to promote the study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during this three-year period, and designate the IRC to represent Synod 2009's proposal to adopt the Belhar Confession at the meeting of Synod 2012.

C. That synod express its gratitude to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa for enriching the heritage of Reformed churches worldwide by developing and writing the Belhar Confession.

Grounds:

1. The themes of unity, reconciliation, and social justice as expressed in the Belhar Confession are important dimensions of our common faith in obedience to the demands of biblical teaching.
2. The testimony of the Reformed family of churches from the Southern Hemisphere is an important contribution to the awareness and faith of churches in other parts of the world.
3. The Christian Reformed Church in North America wishes to stand in solidarity with brothers and sisters who together bear witness to all matters that reflect "the heart of the gospel."
4. Synod 2009 affirms the decision of Synod 1990, which stated that "the Belhar Confession is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions. . . ."

Appendix C-1
The Belhar Confession: A Statement of Introduction by the CRC and the RCA

From the very beginnings of the church, often in times of crisis or threat, Christians have sought ways to say to the world, "Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, this is who we are, what we believe, and what we intend to do." These statements of faith, including the ecumenical creeds and the historic Reformed confessions, though centuries old and far removed from their place of origin, still guide our understanding of Scripture and of faith today, and of the life they call us to live.

In the late 20th century the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa, like Christian leaders centuries before them, stepped forward to confront yet another critical issue that threatened the very core of the gospel message. The church and the society in which it ministered were torn by internal conflict, injustice, racism, poverty, and subjugation of the disenfranchised. From this crucible of suffering emerged the Belhar Confession, a biblically based doctrinal standard of justice, reconciliation, and unity. This confession is intended to guide not only the personal lives of God's children but also the whole body of Christ as it speaks and lives out God's will—"to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly" with God (Mic. 6:8).

Like the confessions that preceded it, the Belhar Confession becomes a gift from a particular expression of the church to Christians in other parts of the world—a testimony for all of God's people in our time. South Africa is not alone in its journey with conflict, injustice, racism, poverty, and the subjugation of the disenfranchised. The history of oppression in our own countries, and the reality of racism and injustice in our own time call for the voice of the Christian church to be heard with unmistakable clarity—to confess that the Lord of life, who entrusted to us the "message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19), is the Lord of our hopes and aspirations for a just and reconciled people.

Our South African brothers and sisters have asked us to join them in confession, forgiveness, and healing by formal adoption of the Belhar Confession, that we might together say it aloud and live by it. May our prayer as we respond mirror the words in the "Accompanying Letter" to be read as a

preface to the confession: "Our prayer is that this act of confession will not place false stumbling blocks in the way and thereby cause and foster false divisions, but rather that it will be reconciling and uniting. . . . "

Appendix C-2
Original 1986 Accompanying Letter to the Belhar Confession Issued by the Moderamen of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

1. We are deeply conscious that moments of such seriousness can arise in the life of the Church that it may feel the need to confess its faith anew in the light of a specific situation. We are aware that such an act of confession is not lightly undertaken, but only if it is considered that the heart of the gospel is so threatened as to be at stake. In our judgment, the present church and political situation in our country and particularly within the Dutch Reformed church family calls for such a decision. Accordingly, we make this confession not as a contribution to a theological debate, nor as a new summary of our beliefs, but as a cry from the heart, as something we are obliged to do for the sake of the gospel in view of the times in which we stand. Along with many, we confess our guilt, in that we have not always witnessed clearly enough in our situation and so are jointly responsible for the way in which those things which were experienced as sin and confessed to be sin have grown in time to seem self-evidently right and to be ideologies foreign to the Scriptures. As a result, many have been given the impression that the gospel was not really at stake. We make this confession because we are convinced that all sorts of theological arguments have contributed to so disproportionate an emphasis on some aspects of the truth that it has in effect become a lie.

2. We are aware that the only authority for such a confession and the only grounds on which it may be made are the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. Being fully aware of the risk involved in taking this step, we are nevertheless convinced that we have no alternative. Furthermore, we are aware that no other motives or convictions, however valid they may be, would give us the right to confess in this way. An act of confession may only be made by the Church for the sake of its purity and credibility and that of its message. As solemnly as we are able, we hereby declare before men that our only motive lies in our fear that the truth and power of the gospel itself is threatened in this situation. We do not wish to serve any group interests, advance the cause of any factions, promote any theologies, or achieve any ulterior purposes. Yet, having said this, we know that our deepest intentions may only be judged at their true value by him before whom all is revealed. We do not make this confession from his throne and from on high, but before his throne and before men. We plead, therefore, that this confession would not be misused by anyone with ulterior motives and also that it should not be resisted to serve such motives. Our earnest desire is to lay no false stumbling blocks in the way, but to point to the true stumbling block, Jesus Christ the rock.

3. This confession is not aimed at specific people or groups of people or a church or churches. We proclaim it against a false doctrine, against an ideological distortion which threatens the gospel itself in our church and our country. Our heartfelt longing is that no one will identify himself with this objectionable doctrine and that all who have been wholly or partially blinded by it will turn themselves away from it. We are deeply aware of the deceiving nature of such a false doctrine and know that many who have been conditioned by it have to a greater or lesser extent learnt to take a half-truth for the whole. For this reason we do not doubt the Christian faith of many such people, their sincerity, honor, integrity, and good intentions and their in many ways estimable practice and conduct. However, it is precisely because we know the power of deception that we know we are not liberated by the seriousness, sincerity, or intensity of our certainties, but only by the truth in the Son. Our church and our land have an intense need of such liberation. Therefore it is that we speak pleadingly rather than accusingly. We plead for reconciliation, that true reconciliation which follows on conversion and change of attitudes and structures. And while we do so we are aware that an act of confession is a two-edged sword, that none of us can throw the first stone, and none is without a beam in his own eye. We know that the attitudes and conduct which work against the gospel are present in all of us and will continue to be so. Therefore this confession must be seen as a call to a continuous process of soul-searching together, a joint wrestling with the issues, and a readiness to repent in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in a broken world. It is certainly not intended as an act of self-justification and intolerance, for that would disqualify us in the very act of preaching to others.

4. Our prayer is that this act of confession will not place false stumbling blocks in the way and thereby cause and foster false divisions, but rather that it will be reconciling and uniting. We know that such an act of confession and process of reconciliation will necessarily involve much pain and sadness. It demands the pain of repentance, remorse, and confession; the pain of individual and collective renewal and a changed way of life. It places us on a road whose end we can neither foresee nor manipulate to our own desire. On this road we shall unavoidably suffer intense growing pains while we struggle to conquer alienation, bitterness, irreconciliation, and fear. We shall have to come to know and encounter both ourselves and others in new ways. We are only too well aware that this confession calls for the dismantling of structures of thought, of church, and of society which have developed over many years. However, we confess that for the sake of the gospel, we have no other choice. We pray that our brothers and sisters throughout the Dutch Reformed church family, but also outside it, will want to make this new beginning with us, so that we can be free together and together may walk the road of reconciliation and justice. Accordingly, our prayer is that the pain and sadness we speak of will be pain and sadness that lead to salvation. We believe that this is possible in the power of our Lord and by his Spirit. We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ offers hope, liberation, salvation, and true peace to our country.

Appendix C-3
Confession of Belhar
September 1986

1. **We believe** in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God 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 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; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity (Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; John 13:1-17; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:1-6; Eph. 3:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; Gal. 6:2; 2 Cor. 1:3-4);
- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Eph. 4:7-13; Gal. 3:27-28; James 2:1-13);
- that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while 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 the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ, that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Matt. 5:13-16; Matt. 5:9; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21-22).
- that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world (Eph. 4:17–6:23; Rom. 6; Col. 1:9-14; Col. 2:13-19; Col. 3:1–4:6);
- that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;
- that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

4. We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;
- that God calls the church to follow him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;

- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church 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; James 1:27; James 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 the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

5. **We believe** that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Eph. 4:15-16; Acts 5:29-33; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 1 Peter 3:15-18).

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory forever and ever.

Note: This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the confession as it was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986. In 1994 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). This inclusive language text was prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Appendix C-4
Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God

I. Mandate

At the request of participants in the Multiethnic Conference of 1992, Synod 1992 adopted the following recommendation:

> That Synod 1992 appoint a study committee to engage in a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

The study is to include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. The biblical basis for the development and use of multiethnic leadership.
b. An assessment of the present criteria for leadership in the life of the CRCNA.
c. Biblical guidelines for church-planting principles to be used in the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

Grounds:

a. The CRC does not have at the present time a clear biblical and theological basis for its multicultural vision.
b. The CRC's past and present responses to multiculturalism have been based on sociological factors more than on a well-developed biblical articulation.
c. Racism negates the redemptive intent of the cross, and the presently growing racial tension must be addressed through Jesus Christ and his Word.
d. The Multiethnic Conference requests this action.

(*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 720-21)

II. Background

A. Brief overview of past synodical declarations on race

1. Synod 1959, in response to declarations of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1958 (Potchefstroom, South Africa), adopted as its own the declarations of that synod (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 82-84).

2. Synod 1968, in the context of unprecedented racial strife in America's cities, called for a day of prayer for racial reconciliation and adopted a declaration affirming the call of the gospel to racial reconciliation (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 18-20).

3. Synods 1969 and 1977 affirmed Resolutions on Race Relations, which were originally adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1968 (Amsterdam) and were subsequently revised at the Reformed Ecumenical Synods of 1972 (Australia) and 1976 (Cape Town, South Africa) (*Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 50-52; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 34).

B. Brief overview of racial and ethnic diversity in the CRCNA

From the time of its birth in western Michigan in 1857 and for nearly one hundred years to follow, the congregations and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remained almost exclusively ethnic Dutch American—except for the few German-American congregations. Although the CRC sent its sons and daughters as missionaries to people of other races and cultures in other lands, for the most part, the task of its "home missionaries" was to gather the sheep of Dutch descent who had scattered beyond the reach of already-established congregations in Canada and the United States.

The earliest notable exception was the denomination's mission efforts to Native Americans, especially the CRC's sustained outreach to the Navajo and Zuni nations in Arizona and New Mexico, which began with two missionary couples in 1896. Efforts at urban outreach to non-Dutch neighbors in Grand Rapids and Chicago were initiated as early as the 1920s, although the "converted" generally were kept at a distance—worshiping in chapels, often pastored by unordained men and women, sometimes even steered toward membership in English-speaking congregations from other denominations.

It took an entire century for the church to grant equal status to non-Dutch groups of believers. Prompted by the organization of the believers' group in Gallup, New Mexico, in late 1956, Synod 1958 advised the classis that this all-Navajo congregation be upgraded from associate-church to full-church status. The 1950s also saw increasing debate over the separate, lesser status of the neighborhood chapels. At this same time, however, the CRC was crossing several other racial and ethnic boundaries as well. Jewish and Chinese ministries were started in Chicago and New York, and African-American pastors were credentialed in Grand Rapids and New York. In the 1960s and following, Hispanic ministry was launched in New Jersey and Florida, Korean churches affiliated in Chicago and Los Angeles, ministries were started among Southeast Asian immigrant groups, and breakthroughs were seen in the forming of multiethnic congregations.

Synod 1959 adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Synod's twelve-point Declarations on Race, which initially seemed to have little bearing on the life of the denomination. By the mid-1960s, however, as cities burned and national leaders were assassinated, the CRC was forced to deal with race relations head-on. When a group of Black children from Lawndale CRC were denied admission to Timothy Christian School on Chicago's west side, the matter was brought to synod. The result was the formation of the Race Commission under the auspices of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Synod 1971 replaced the Race Commission with the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR). SCORR was provided full-time staff and was mandated to work toward the eradication of racism in the church and in society. Synod also affirmed equality of opportunity for persons from ethnic-minority groups (see note below) and urged the agencies and institutions of the denomination to promote social justice in their policies and practices. Through broad-based partnership with the churches and agencies, SCORR has consistently supported the development of ethnic-minority leadership in the CRCNA. SCORR also has been unequivocal in its advocacy of racial and ethnic diversity and equality within the CRCNA as a denomination and in relationship to its neighbors—whether in South Africa, south Chicago, or south Grand Rapids.

Note: Though it is recognized that all persons are ethnic, i.e., of a national origin and may be in minority in certain contexts or environments, in this report the term *ethnic minority* refers to non-Anglo or non-Caucasian persons and groups.

How racially and ethnically diverse is the Christian Reformed Church? At the writing of this report, the total number of ethnic-minority members is estimated at 15,000 persons, or 5 percent of the denomination's 300,000 members (compared to national averages between 20 percent and 25 percent) in approximately 150 ethnic-minority or multiethnic congregations. This 5 percent includes 7,000 members in the fifty or more Korean congregations and an estimated 8,000 members in predominantly African-American, Chinese, Hispanic, Native American, Southeast Asian, and multiethnic congregations.

Much of this growing diversity has been facilitated by Christian Reformed Home Missions—in partnership with growth-oriented churches, classes, and other agencies. By means of locally based *leadership training programs* and *apprenticeship positions* (formerly called Multiethnic Recruitment), scores of

ethnic-minority persons are being further trained for ministry leadership in the CRC. Of all the 150 new and emerging churches receiving CRHM funding annually, more than half are predominantly ethnic-minority or multiethnic, most of which also are led by ethnic-minority pastors. Home Missions' *ethnic-ministry directors* are key resource persons for their respective churches, leaders, and planning groups as well as for their dominant-culture partners. The ethnic-ministry directors oversee the development of contextualized resource and training materials, have a voice in shaping church-development policy, and support the development of ethnic-minority leadership on the CRHM board and in other strategic positions.

The CRC's commitment to multiethnic leadership is reflected in other denominational contexts as well. The commitment of the CRCNA Board of Trustees to racial inclusiveness is demonstrated, among other ways, by its appointment of an African-American director of personnel. The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada has committed itself to addressing the needs and concerns of Indians and Metis in Canada and in recent years also has explored and worked toward ameliorating the causes and impact of racism in Canada with the assistance of a nationwide conference. CRWRC has shown special concern for issues of race and ethnicity, as illustrated by its hiring of ethnic-minority persons on central and regional staff and by its community-development programming. CRC Publications [now Faith Alive Christian Resources] has worked intentionally to recruit and retain ethnic-minority employees and board members, to improve curriculum sensitivity to multicultural readers, and to obtain ethnic-minority vendors and writers.

Among the denomination's educational institutions, Calvin College employs numerous strategies to encourage multicultural leadership development, including a Minority Concerns Task Force, the president's Multicultural Advisory Council, Minority Fellowship programs for potential new faculty, filling various specialized staff positions with ethnic-minority persons, mentoring services for ethnic-minority students, and a MOSAIC 2000 endowment to provide special scholarship assistance to ten ethnic-minority students annually. Calvin Theological Seminary regrets that it has yet to recruit its first non-Caucasian faculty appointee. At the same time, it has instituted a number of ethnic-minority training programs, conducts an orientation program for ethnic-minority leaders, has a non-Caucasian student population of about 30 percent, and employs ethnic-minority support staff and special lecturers.

Notwithstanding laudatory goals and the long road the CRC has already traveled in race relations, the process and progress have been slow—and there still are many miles to go, on various fronts. For example:

- Ethnic-minority persons working within the agencies, although growing in number, serve primarily in support roles. The ethnic-minority community also remains underrepresented in executive and faculty positions, on denominational boards and committees, and as delegates to synod.
- A disproportionate number of the ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways, such as through Bible colleges, local training programs, and other seminaries. Credentialing also tends to

follow nontraditional paths—admission to ministry on the basis of special need and gifts, or by way of doctrinal conversations, or by ordination as evangelists. (The point is not that nontraditional routes should be discouraged but rather that traditional routes should be reexamined in light of the changing needs of a changing church.)

– Generally speaking, ethnic-minority pastors are compensated at lower levels than Anglo pastors are. This fact can be explained in part by the smaller size of their congregations (100 members on average, compared to 315 denomination-wide), the comparatively high number of evangelists and bivocational leaders among them, and the economic realities of the communities they serve. At the same time, it is necessary to review extant CRC policies and practices regarding personnel benefits and related matters.
– At all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of belonging. Ethnic-minority members from multiethnic or predominantly Anglo congregations often are expected to stretch their comfort zones far more than their ethnic-majority brothers and sisters are expected to do so. Leaders of ethnic-minority congregations wonder who made the rules, and they tend to occupy the back seats in many denominational settings. Too many persons from ethnic-minority groups have left the CRC—not because of its Reformed world and life view but because of the lack of full acceptance at the family table.

As the CRC nears the threshold of the third millennium, it is important for us to be increasingly aware of the rapid demographic shifts in North America and of the dramatic reality that in little more than one generation the present majority culture of Canada and the United States will cease to be the majority. This change in the ethnic balance will give us the wonderful opportunity to experience profound new understandings of becoming the new people of God—of becoming a more inclusive church that more faithfully reflects the racial and cultural diversity of the nations among which God has planted us. This is a truly exciting challenge for the CRCNA, which in God's sovereign grace already is becoming a diverse, multiracial, and multiethnic family of God. It is our prayer that what we slowly and painfully learned in our not-so-distant past will instruct us to go far beyond ourselves and that our struggle to be a sign of the city that is to come will bring much glory to our diversity-loving God.

III. Biblical and theological principles

A. Introduction

Inasmuch as our mandate calls for "a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God," we set forth twelve principles below.

Three introductory comments:

1. We have chosen the framework of creation, fall, and new creation within which to articulate these biblical principles. *New creation* is an inclusive term referring to the one re-creating, reconciling work of Christ, beginning

with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth.

2. A common thread in many of the principles articulated below is the reality of "the one and the many." There is "oneness," and there is "manyness" in God's world, or unity and diversity. We see this reality in God himself in his triunity. We see unity and diversity functioning in perfect harmony in the world as God created it. We see how Christ in his saving work creates a single new body, united in him but diverse and inclusive beyond our imagination. The two verses below capture both notes of this song that permeates the Scriptures:

> . . . for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Cor. 8:6)
>
> 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. (Rev. 7:9)

   Having studied Scripture and sought to hear its message anew, the committee judges the following to be a simple but foundational statement of the biblical message with respect to racial and ethnic diversity, a statement that rests centrally upon the unity/diversity theme in Scripture:

   To be in Christ is to be reconciled with one another as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people of God.

   We see this statement as both declaration and judgment, indicative and imperative. It is a statement of the way things are in God's program; it is also a prophetic call to "become who we already are" in Christ.

3. Below are working definitions of terms that arise in the subsequent discussion of these matters.

   Race – a term used to describe men and women who share biologically transmitted traits that are defined as socially significant.

   Ethnicity – a term used to describe men and women who usually share a common place of ancestral origin, a traditional language, and a historical religion, which together confer a distinctive social identity. Including a reference to "a historical religion" in this definition of ethnicity does not mean that we celebrate or affirm any non-Christian religions as elements in our oneness in Christ.

   Culture – the values and beliefs that are institutionalized in a people's collective life; the outward discipline in which inherited meanings and morality, beliefs, and ways of behaving are preserved.

   Prejudice – a negative attitude or assumption about others on the basis of their identification with a certain group of people.

   Racism – a prejudicial attitude and/or behavior directed against persons on the basis of their race. Racism may manifest itself interpersonally as well as institutionally.

Ethnocentrism – the tendency to assume that one's own ethnic and cultural values and preferences are everyone's or to believe that they should be.

Stereotype – an oversimplified opinion or uncritical judgment which unfairly categorizes persons or groups.

B. Biblical and theological principles for a racially and ethnically diverse family of God

CREATION

1. **The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.**

   The creation account (Gen. 1) explodes with myriads of divisions—light from darkness, water below from the vapors above, land from water. The world God creates is marvelously varied, with thousands of different flowers and leaves, stars and planets, mountains and meadows, fish and fowl. God loves diversity. Variety and differences are not bad things but are enriching things in the world as God created it.

   The crown of this varied creation is the human person, God's image-bearer. As God's imagebearers all human beings without exception are endowed with royal dignity and share in dominion over all creation. As God blesses them with fruitfulness, all their descendants without any exception also share equally in this royal dignity. Human beings also image God in their capacity for loving relationships with God and with each other in righteousness and holiness.

   Human beings are diverse in that each human person is unique—no two people are alike. More profoundly, human beings exhibit this deep principle of unity and diversity in their maleness and femaleness. Human beings, in their maleness and femaleness, are a kind of model of the way diversity functions in the good creation. The differences between male and female are a cause for celebration and joy (Gen. 2:23). The differences between male and female make for attraction, complementarity, and deep communion. Diversity is enriching; it releases creative energies that in turn increase diversity. Again, variety and differences within the human family are not bad; they enrich the world as God created it.

2. **The created world, with all its diversity, has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.**

   The fact that God created the world is clearly attested throughout Scripture. The New Testament elaborates upon the presence and role of Jesus Christ in the creation of the world. Three specific passages deserve mention in this regard:

   > In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

   > He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

> In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Heb. 1:1-2)

From these three passages, which set forth foundational truths, we learn that

a. Jesus Christ was present with God the Father already at creation.

b. Jesus Christ's role at creation involved "all things." The Greek word for "all things" (*panta*) is used in all the passages to define the scope of Christ's involvement in creation, a scope that is all-inclusive. John further underscores this by stating that without Christ "nothing was made that has been made."

c. The Greek prepositions used in these passages underscore the rich, even mysterious, involvement of Christ in all things as they were created. All things were created *in* (*en*) him (translated "by" in the NIV), *through* (*dia*) him, and *for* (*eis*) him. Somehow Christ himself is the source (*en*) of creation, the mediator (*dia*) of creation, and the purpose (*eis*) of creation.

d. Christ the creator holds all things together. Paul says that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). There is a coherence, a unity, in all things as they were created by Christ.

This teaching of Scripture is significant for the purposes of our study for at least three reasons.

First, when we seek unity among different peoples and different things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things, just as, when people put a puzzle together, they assume that all the pieces were cut in such a way that they do fit together. The puzzle was designed that way. Conversely, a puzzle that consists of pieces thrown together from ten different puzzles will never fit together. The former, not the latter, is the picture of our world as God created it. When we seek the unity of diverse peoples and things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things and to the goal of God for creation.

Second, applied more narrowly to the human race, this truth of the unity of all things in Christ implies a radical unity and equality of all people. In the biblical picture, all humanity has been created in God's image and has its source not only in Christ but in Adam and Eve, our first parents. Referring to Adam, Paul says, "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth" (Acts 17:26, NRSV). And, according to Genesis 3, Eve is "the mother of all living" (v. 20). All human beings of all races are related to one another through their common origins in our first parents. The Christian faith allows no room for holding that other human beings are fundamentally different from "us" or somehow less truly made in God's image than "we" are.

Third, the unity that Jesus Christ died and rose again to bring into being is not a new unity created for the first time, unknown and untested; it is a primal unity restored, a unity re-created. When the world is reconciled through Jesus Christ, it is going back to being a world that has

already been and to the one by whom and in whom and through whom all things were created and existed in unity. This gives Christians hope and direction in their work.

3. **The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).**

In the classical formulation of the Trinity of God, the church has spoken of God as *one in being* and *three in person*. Students of the Trinity have developed this basic Trinity doctrine as a model for human society. "Social Trinity" is a particular emphasis in trinitarian theology that asserts that the unity and community of the human family are rooted in the very nature of God.

God reveals himself in a community of triunity already in Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'let us make man in our image, in our likeness.'" In John's Gospel, the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:11). The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does (John 5:20). The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father (John 10:15). When the Son returns to the Father, the Father will send another Counselor, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-18). The Son prays that his followers will be one just "as we [the Father and the Son] are one" (John 17:11).

The triune God, in the mutual giving and receiving of intratrinitarian fellowship, is the first model for human society. In God's oneness God calls us to unity. In God's threeness God affirms our diversity. The communion in which God created us and to which God calls us is already displayed in the triune God.

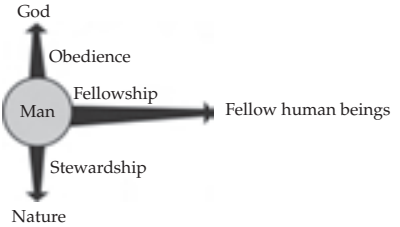
FALL

4. **A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.**

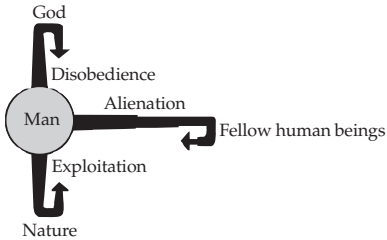
a. The image of God and relationships

Human beings were created in the image of God. To be an imagebearer of God means many things, but central to *any* description of what it means to be an imagebearer of God is *the capacity for relationship* with which God has endowed human beings. We are relational beings. Giving and receiving, loving and being loved, working with others in creative and upbuilding ways, building community—these are activities at the heart of being human and of human community.

The late Dr. Anthony Hoekema, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, often spoke of the threefold relationship into which human beings were created—in relationship to God, to one another, and to nature. Before sin entered the world, these were relationships of obedience, fellowship, and stewardship.



Sin perverts these relationships. In our relationship with God we are now disobedient, in our relationships with one another we are now alienated, and in our relationships with nature we now tend to exploit nature instead of acting as its steward.



Although the effect of sin upon any one of these relationships cannot be separated from its effect upon all of them, our primary interest in this report is sin's effect upon our relationships with one another.

b. What sin does to human relationships

In our biblical study of the effect of sin upon human relationships, we discern the following biblical principle: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us*.

1) The principle applied to the male-female relationship

Genesis 3 is a kind of foundational case study for understanding what sin does to our relationships with one another. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, the Lord cursed the serpent and then announced the effects of Adam and Eve's sin upon their lives. Of particular interest to us here is the effect of sin upon their relationship with each other. Genesis 3:16 summarizes the effect of sin upon the relationship of Adam and Eve when God says to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The exact meaning of this verse is a matter of debate among students of the Bible. Whatever one's interpretation, this much is clear: sin takes a healthy relationship between male and female, husband and wife, and distorts it, resulting in alienation and harm to fellowship and community. Sin takes a relationship that was intended to be most expressive of the image of God in us and significantly damages and distorts it.

2) The principle applied to other relationships

Again, the principle under discussion is this: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us*. Marriage is that relationship within which we develop and express much of our "God-likeness": giving and receiving, making and keeping commitments, procreation, enjoyment. We have seen how deeply our fall into sin harms marriage.

This principle is illustrated further in the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4). Brotherly love has much richness and beauty (David loved Jonathan like a brother [2 Sam. 1:26]). But this very relationship becomes the setting within which the worst imaginable envy, hatred, and violence take place.

To illustrate this principle further, it can be argued that the tongue and our human sexuality are two aspects of humanity that give expression to the image of God in us. The tongue is a marvelous means for language, communication, the expression of ideas, and the articulation of truth—all activities at the heart of how we image God. But in the fall, the tongue became a key weapon of destruction of human community (James 3:1-12). Human sexuality is that marvelous means by which husband and wife give to and receive from one another and express God-giving and God-imaging love. But in the fall, human sexuality became perverted in a host of ways (Lev. 18).

Extending this more general principle to the subject of this report, we observe that racial and ethnic diversity also can be the occasion for mutual appreciation, greater self-understanding through seeing how other people live and think and relate, and the glorification of God for the rich variety in human communities and cultures. All of these activities are centrally expressive of the image of God in us. But in the fall, sin turns the very diversity that God intended to be deeply humanizing and enriching into lines along which deep alienation takes form. The alienation of Jew and Gentile in the Bible is indicative of broader alienation along racial and ethnic lines. Regrettably, the primary story line of recorded human history is the alienation of peoples along racial and ethnic lines.

c. Two misunderstood texts

Two biblical texts deserve mention in this discussion of the effects of sin upon the racial and ethnic diversity of the human community. The point here is to indicate what they do *not* have to say about racial and ethnic diversity.

1) The curse of Ham

Genesis 9-10 gives us the account of Noah's sons in which Canaan is cursed because of the sin of his father, Ham, whereas Shem and Japheth are given blessings and promises of prosperity. Canaan will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers (Gen. 9:25). This verse has sometimes been used to justify the enslavement of Blacks, since the descendants of Ham eventually did settle, among other places, in northeast Africa. However, this argument fails to take into account the simple historical fact that those cursed here were Canaanites, who were Caucasian, and the important exegetical fact that the purpose of the Genesis 9-10 narrative (Gen. 10 goes on to list "The Table of Nations") is not to justify human oppression, but to set up the redemptive line from the post-flood peoples to Abraham, a line established in Shem. Our primary reason for including these clarifications on this somewhat obscure passage in Genesis is not that the interpretation refuted above is so strong and plausible that it requires extensive refutation. Rather, we include

it to observe how the Bible can be misused by one group seeking to justify the exploitation of another group and to observe that, regrettably, even erroneous biblical interpretations such as this one have a way of persisting in the minds of some Christians long after their exegetical basis has been refuted.

2) The Tower of Babel

Another biblical narrative that has often been misunderstood is the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11. The purpose of the Tower of Babel narrative is to demonstrate the futility of human attempts to build community without God. God's confusion of language at Babel was a tool of God's judgment against human pride and not a sign that there is any inherent sinfulness in diverse languages. Human beings cannot build community without God. It doesn't work. The positive significance of Babel for our subject will be further elucidated below when we look at the Pentecost event.

d. The root of alienation: fear

Behind alienation, whatever the lines along which that alienation takes place, lie fear, insecurity, and a loss of identity that are a result of our separation from God.

Instructive here (again) is the story of humanity's fall into sin as recorded in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve disobey God, they are immediately afraid. They sew fig leaves to hide from each other (Gen. 3:7), and they hide from God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). In our alienation from God, we lose our proper self-understanding. As John Calvin points out at the beginning of the *Institutes*, our knowledge of God and knowledge of self are interrelated. If we don't know God, we don't know ourselves. We lose our bearings as to who we are.

This loss of proper self-understanding creates fear and anxiety. In this crisis of self-understanding, we often turn to racial, ethnic, or cultural forms of self-confirmation and self-understanding. At the very least, these forms of self-confirmation are incomplete and distorting. They quickly become idolatrous. We re-create God in our own image. These forms of self-confirmation often become the means by which we harm others who are different from ourselves. As differences between individuals or groups increase, so does fear, and the cycle of fear and differentiation spirals in intensity. The effect upon the community is pain, misery, and brokenness.

John says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear . . ." (1 John 4:18). This statement follows John's declaration that "God is love" and "whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). Only love, the perfect love of God, can give people a renewed identity that casts out fear and anxiety and gives them the courage to relinquish these incomplete and harmful ways of identifying themselves. Only love, the perfect love of God, can create new hearts in people which cause them to see the world and others in new ways. To that redemptive love of God we now turn.

NEW CREATION

Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). In Christ, God comes to create a new world. In the reflections below, we will see that reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines is not just some tangential goal that gets tacked onto the saving work of Christ; rather, it is at the heart of God's plan to create a new heaven and a new earth.

5. **The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.**

   In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul seeks to place the work of Christ into the broader perspective of God's plan for the ages. One important Greek word that recurs in those chapters is *oikonomia*, variously translated "management, administration, or plan."

   a. In Ephesians 1:9-10, in the middle of Paul's opening doxology of praise to God for his great work of salvation, a work that is the unfolding of his eternal will, Paul says that

      > he [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10, RSV)

      What is the plan of God set forth already in Christ? To unite all things in Christ. Notice how Paul grasps for the most inclusive language he can ("all things . . . , things in heaven and things on earth") when he describes the scope of God's plan. And the purpose of God in his saving work is to unite all things in Christ, indeed, to bring all things back to that unity they had in Christ from the beginning.

   b. In Ephesians 3:2 Paul again refers to the *oikonomia* of God when he says, "Surely you have heard about the *administration* of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation. . . ." In verse 6 Paul spells out the mystery:

      > This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

      The grand plan of God brings together Jew and Gentile. The Greek prefix *sun* ("with") occurs three times in verse 6 (literally "heirs with," "body with," and "sharers with"), underscoring the unifying thrust of God's work.

   c. Finally in Ephesians 3:8-10, Paul says,

      > . . . this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the *administration* of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His 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, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, the plan of God is to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to *everyone*—Jew and Gentile. And this has been God's plan from the beginning.

6. **Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.**

Although the New Testament term *reconciliation* (*katallassoo*) is not a frequently used term, it occurs at very strategic points in Paul's writings and is integral to the biblical vision of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God. For our purposes in this report, we look at four important passages.

a. Romans 5:10-11

> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

It's important to notice, first, that reconciliation is God's program, not ours. In non-Christian religions, people attempt to be reconciled to God through their own actions. In the Christian religion, God is the initiator of reconciliation. Second, sin in this passage, as in all the reconciliation passages, is specifically described not so much as "guilt," though that may be involved, nor "pollution," but as our alienation from God. Sin manifests itself in the breakdown of relationship and community. Third, here in Romans 5, in distinction from the passages to be considered next, "believers" are the "object" of God's reconciliation.

b. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 (NIV, with modification in v. 19)

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, by not counting men's sins against them, and by having given to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

First, notice that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is "the world." The world is obviously thought of primarily as the world of human beings in contrast to the whole of God's created world (visible and invisible). The world here is not limited to those who have already believed but includes also those who must yet respond in faith to the message of reconciliation, thus giving God's program of reconciliation a strong missiological character—which leads to the second observation: Notice the strategic role God gives the church in this work of reconciliation. Two different times in this passage (vv. 18 and 19) Paul says that God has given us (the church) this ministry of reconciliation. Paul places his own ministry of reconciliation alongside God's work of reconciliation. The church's ministry of reconciliation is not just some human idea or political agenda but an integral part of God's program of reconciliation.

c. Colossians 1:19-22

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight. . . .

Interpretation of these verses is made difficult by the fact that the biblical genre changed within these verses: Verses 15-20 are almost certainly an early Christian hymn; they are followed by Paul's application of the truth in that hymn to the Colossian situation (v. 21 ff.).

Nevertheless, it is clear that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is not "believers," as in Romans 5, but "all things" (*ta panta*), explicitly including "the things on earth" and "the things in heaven." God's program of reconciliation is thus as broad as creation. Just as the creation of the world was "in," "through," and "unto" Christ (*en, dia, eis*), so the work of reconciliation is "in" him, where all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and "through" him, and "unto" him.

(*Note:* That verses 15-20 may be a hymn is probably important in understanding the universalistic statements in verse 20. The statements of the hymn should not be made to provide grist for theological analysis. [It is believed by some that the universalism of church father Origen may be grounded in this verse.] It is probably better to see that the hymn is *not* trying to specify the extent of salvation but to acclaim who is the "mediator of creation and redemption." Thus the "reconciling to himself all things" in verse 20 is best understood to mean that "Christ is the Redeemer/Reconciler of everything in heaven and on earth that is to be reconciled." The point is that the Colossian Christians do not need to seek any means of reconciliation outside of Christ.)

d. Ephesians 2:14-16

> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two [Gentile and Jew] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

In this passage the single biggest new factor, not explicitly present in the other passages, is that God's program of reconciliation is not simply vertical (reconciling believers/the world/all things to himself) but also horizontal (reconciling Jew and Gentile, "uncircumcised" and "circumcised," v. 11). What has separated them is the dividing wall, identified as "the enmity," and thus, correctly, the NIV translation "the dividing wall of hostility." Christ "destroyed" that dividing wall of hostility by in his flesh "abolishing" (rendering ineffective) "the law with its commandments and regulations."

Paul does not say how Christ rendered ineffective (abolished) the law with its commandments and regulations. From what Paul says

in other places, we may suggest that Christ did so by fulfilling the law, both by his active and passive obedience. That is, he fulfilled the law by actively obeying it and by passively taking on himself its curse against mankind's sins. Since the law has thus been completely fulfilled, it can never become a source of "enmity" between Jew and Gentile—especially in regard to what the Jews had quite specifically identified as their "identity markers," especially circumcision, clean and unclean foods, and feast days (preeminently the sabbath). God thus created in Christ out of the two, the "circumcised" and the "uncircumcised," "one new man." Here the "one new man" must be understood in its corporate sense and almost identified with the church. Thus Christ "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), "thus making peace" (Eph. 2:15), and he "preached peace to you who were far away [Gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews]" (Eph. 2:17).

Whereas humans often divide people according to race or nationality God ever made only one division among human beings, namely Israel and the nations, or Jew and Gentile. The breathtaking news of this passage is that God has now removed the only division he ever made in the human family. The point for us is clear: If God himself took away the only division that he had ever made within the human family, how much more have all other "man-made" divisions within the human family been taken away.

7. **Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.**

A common misunderstanding of the mission of God is the belief that in the Old Testament, before Christ, the scope of God's mission is only ethnic Israel and that only in the New Testament, with the coming of Christ, does that scope extend to all nations. In the old covenant, Israel is the redemptive focus of God's mission. The movement is always toward Jerusalem and toward the king. In the new covenant, Pentecost turns the movement of God's mission outward. Instead of people having to come to Jerusalem, the Spirit goes out to people everywhere. The "energy flow" of God's mission changes from centripetal to centrifugal. However, it is important not to confuse these dramatic *developments within* the mission of God and the universal *scope* of God's mission. The scope of God's mission always was and remains racially and ethnically inclusive.

All nations are in view from the beginning of God's saving work. Already with Abraham God promised, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen. 18:18), and with Israel, "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen. 26:4). Isaiah sees the day coming when all nations "will stream" to the temple of the Lord (Isa. 2:2), "for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7). And when he cries, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you" (Isa. 60:1), the vision that follows is a chapter-long vision of all peoples coming to the throne of God: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isa. 60:3).

The Old Testament prophets made it clear that ethnic identity was subordinate to spiritual identity. Ethnicity is always penultimate to the kingship of Yahweh. Jerusalem is significant because Yahweh is there. Physical circumcision is never enough for a person to be a part of God's people. Moses and Jeremiah call the people to circumcise their hearts (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4). Israel does not result from Israel's own biological ability (Sarah is sterile). God even inverts the normal inheritance protocol (Esau, the older, will serve Jacob, the younger). The book of Jonah is a judgment against ethnocentrism and the mistaken identification of God's mission with ethnic Israel alone. The psalms are filled with references to all people and all nations praising the name of the Lord. The family tree of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17), with its mention of the likes of Rahab and Ruth, reveals the way the scope of God's mission reaches beyond ethnic Israel already in the old covenant.

Again, the purpose in stating this principle is not to downplay the dramatic developments within the mission of God. It is rather to head off mistaken notions regarding changes in the scope of God's mission which can lead to mistaken notions regarding the unchanging purposes of God and the role of ethnicity in the mission of God.

8. **In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.**

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This prediction of a worldwide mission follows Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations." When God's Spirit is poured out upon the church on the day of Pentecost, people from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5) hear the apostles (who were Galileans) speaking in their native language. This is the day of the Lord foretold by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21). Now "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21).

In the biblical drama, the blessing of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost stands in bold contrast to the curse of Babel. In the confusion of language at Babel, God declares that his people cannot build human community without him. At Pentecost God creates a new community where, in the Spirit, people have a unity that transcends their own particular language. The significance of Pentecost is not that everyone who believes in Christ now speaks one language. People still speak in a multitude of languages. But in the Spirit, God creates a unity that transcends the barriers of language. Racial, ethnic, and cultural differences are not erased; they are subordinated to the new unity believers have in the Spirit.

In Acts 10, God shows Peter what the church looks like in this age of the Spirit. Through a vision, God reveals to Peter that the old divisions of clean and unclean, Jew and Gentile, have been demolished (Acts 10:15). Then Peter goes to the house of Cornelius to tell the people there

of God's new ways. He announces that God no longer calls anyone impure or unclean (Acts 10:28). "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35).

Paul sees this new unity as transcending every human division, even the division between Abraham's seed and the rest of humanity: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

9. **The church, in its unity and diversity, is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation.**

The church is strategic in God's plan to effect this new oneness. In Ephesians 3 Paul discloses God's plan to unite all things in Christ. In verses 10-11 he explains the role of the church in that plan:

> His [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, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The church, Christ's gathered body in the world, is the means by which God intends to reveal himself, to proclaim the good news, and to unite all things in Christ.

In John 17, Jesus is more precise as to how the church reveals God. Jesus prays that all the people who believe in him "may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21). Why does he want them to be one? "May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent 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 17:21, 23). When the church is one, people see God. The power of the church's witness lies precisely in her new oneness in Christ, a oneness of believers that transcends external differences.

The church will be effective in the mission God has given her only when she understands and lives out of a vision of the church that appreciates both its unity and diversity in Christ. The church is one in Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 12:12-13). Christ is the one foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11) and the one head of the body (Eph. 1:22-23). "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). But the church is also marvelously diverse. Just as the body has feet and hands and eyes and ears and is incomplete without all those parts, so the body of Christ is made up of many parts. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul teaches that each part of the body is necessary to make the body function with complete effectiveness, and all parts have equal dignity regardless of size or function. The gifts of the Spirit to the church are marvelously diverse (1 Cor. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:3-8).

This teaching on the unity and diversity of the church is extremely important as we think about matters of racial and ethnic diversity in the church. On the one hand, Scripture calls us to be one in Christ. This is not just some theoretical oneness. It is a visible, actual unity of people

with one another because they share in the common source of life—Jesus Christ. This unity is so real that the world comes to know God through it (John 17:23). This scriptural call to unity judges the church in her lack of unity.

But unity does not obliterate differences. To be whole, the body needs each part. In terms of racial and ethnic differences, the goal in the church is not to rub out those differences and try to make everyone the same. Each of us has a particular race, ethnicity, and culture. We do not cease to be Korean or Kenyan or American when we become part of the body. Rather, each particular person (and community) plays a part in making the body whole. Each person and community brings unique gifts and makes unique contributions. In the Spirit, diversity is no longer threatening, but enriching. And unity and diversity together confirm that indeed the church is the Lord's work, not our own.

In our work as a committee we have encountered the confusion that comes when the unity and diversity of the church are not clearly distinguished. On the one hand, we sometimes speak of leaving our culture behind when we come to Christ. On the other hand, we speak of affirming and respecting each person's culture. Often we say these two things in the same breath. The fact is, we don't simply leave our culture behind when we become Christian. Such a statement betrays a superficial understanding of the profound senses in which we are cultural beings. The person who was Italian before she became a Christian is still Italian. When the Chinese brother becomes a Christian, his tastes in food do not suddenly get transformed into some universal diet. When the Native American becomes a Christian, her tastes in music do not suddenly get transformed into some universal musical style. Race, ethnicity, and culture are profoundly important for personal and communal self-identification. They are important before and after someone becomes a Christian.

But when we become Christian, our identity in Christ judges and transforms those old and incomplete ways of knowing ourselves. The Cuban who becomes a Christian is still Cuban. But now her being a Christian shapes her being a Cuban. We never cease to be of a certain race, ethnic group, and culture. But in Christ, those ways of identifying ourselves are no longer definitive of who we are. Christ is definitive for personal and communal self-understanding. Christ is ultimate; race, ethnicity, and culture are penultimate for self-identification and self-understanding.

Having said all of that, we still must acknowledge difficulties in this area. When we become Christians, God requires that we leave behind those aspects of our culture that are incompatible with his kingdom. The difficulty comes in that the new Christian invariably adopts new cultural patterns, and these are often not specifically Christian but simply patterns formed by other cultural groups.

The point here is that, as Christians of different backgrounds work through these complex issues, it is crucial that, among other things, they keep the unity and diversity of the church in proper balance. Stressing the unity of the church at the expense of its diversity can lead to excesses in which we imagine that becoming a Christian erases all cultural differences among Christians. Stressing the diversity of the church at the

expense of its unity can lead to excesses in which we give an importance, even an idolatrous autonomy, to race, ethnicity, and culture—an importance that Christ eliminated on the cross.

Our confessions articulate the unity and diversity of the church. Belgic Confession Article 27 speaks of "one single catholic or universal church," which, though it is "spread and dispersed throughout the entire world," is "still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith." Concerning "the holy catholic church," Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism states,

> I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

The church is as diverse as the human race and as singular as Christ.

10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ.

Unfortunately, it is possible to seize upon this acknowledgment of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences in the church (set forth in Principle 6) and seek to justify attitudes, practices, and behaviors that, in fact, are sinful in that they unnecessarily create barriers and walls between people and add to the separation that Christ came to remove. Put another way, there is often a fine line between healthy ethnic and cultural self-identification, which enriches community, and ethnocentrism, which fractures community.

The call of the gospel is radical and clear: Love God above all, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus says that anyone who loves his father or mother or son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37). We finally find our life when we lose it (Matt. 10:39). Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). It's no remarkable achievement to love people who love you, Jesus says. (We could paraphrase that as "It's no big deal to love people who are like us.") Even pagans do that. The call of the gospel is to love those who do not love you. Paul says that we should look out not just for our own interests but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4) and that we should develop attitudes toward ourselves and others that model Christ's self-effacing, self-denying life (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jesus certainly modeled this kind of behavior in his commitment to minister to all types of people. Jesus actually enjoyed being with people the religious establishment considered "sinners" (Luke 15:2; Luke 7:36-50). He had good news for, of all people, a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). He responded to the Roman centurion's faith and healed this Gentile's son (Luke 7:1-10). In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus told of the love of Christ at work in a person (the Samaritan) whom others, through ethnocentric eyes, saw as inferior and unworthy of grace. Jesus' social world and world of ministry were not defined along lines of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or social standing. He looked past those external characteristics of people and saw instead people as image-bearers of God.

As significant as race, ethnicity, and culture are for self-identification, Christians find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ. The rhythm of the gospel is not one of self-justification and self-preservation. It is certainly not one that seeks to build up self by defining ourselves favorably over against others who are different from us. There is no room in the kingdom for attitudes that foster pride toward self or resentment toward others. Rather, in the security we have because we know ourselves to be children of our Father in heaven and to be loved by Christ, Christians become "self-forgetful." The love of Christ casts out our fear. In Christ we have the courage and commitment voluntarily to step across and seek to break down those barriers that have been erected by race, ethnicity, and culture and to repudiate the ways of self-identification and self-confirmation that have become unhealthy or even idolatrous.

11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us individually and corporately to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the powers of evil.

We must be forthright in acknowledging that racism is sin. Racism is more than just bad manners; indeed, any attitudes, words, or deeds of omission or commission that inflict harm upon others and break down community constitute sin against God and sin against God's children. Racism is a disgrace to a civil society. But it is a much greater disgrace in the church, for racism sends exactly the opposite message from the message Christ sends in his reconciling work on the cross.

In its penetrating analysis of the sixth and ninth commandments, the Heidelberg Catechism shows how racism is diametrically opposed to the will of God. In its teaching on the sixth commandment, the catechism says that

> I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others. . . .
>
> (Q. and A. 105)

And in its teaching on the ninth commandment, the catechism says,

> God's will is that I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on me God's intense anger. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.
>
> (Q. and A. 112)

When Paul analyzes our fallen nature, he sees "envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice" at the heart of our brokenness. People alienated from God are "gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Rom. 1:29-31).

Indeed, racism is a glaring manifestation of our sinful condition, which Christ died to eradicate and which, when it is not eradicated, opposes Christ's reconciling work on the cross.

Furthermore, repentance from this sin, as from all sin, must be radical. It begins at the foot of the cross in confession and self-denial. Indeed, to repent of sin, according to the catechism, is "to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it" (Q. and A. 89).

Such repentance calls for fervent prayer on the part of the Christian community. In as much as our prayers reveal our deepest concerns, the Christian community must engage in regular prayers of confession for sins of racism and regular intercessory prayer for racial reconciliation and healing.

Further still, those who have found their identity in Christ not only should have no part of behavior that causes alienation along racial and ethnic lines; they should be on the front lines of working for racial reconciliation. The deafening silence of the church in matters of racial reconciliation must be broken. A legitimate test of discipleship in this racially polarized world is whether our life and witness for Christ are building racial reconciliation and understanding and breaking down walls of alienation.

Ephesians 3:10 says that "through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places" (NRSV). In Ephesians 6:12 Paul reminds us that these same rulers and authorities are also pitted against us in a cosmic spiritual battle. The church needs to be deeply aware that racial and ethnic division is so deep, demonic, and pervasive that opposition to it will involve us in all-out spiritual warfare. In the church's struggle to realize God's will for reconciliation, the powers of evil will seek to divide us anew and destroy our every effort toward unity. Only in the might of God's Spirit, the truth of God's Word, and persistent prayer will we prevail.

12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

In the beginning of this biblical study we explained that in its major divisions of creation, fall, and new creation, *new creation* refers to the one re-creating, reconciling work of Christ as that begins with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and is completed in the new heaven and the new earth.

There is certainly a difference between the present world and the new heaven and new earth Christ will usher in upon his return. But from the biblical perspective, the work of Christ at his first coming is the decisive moment in history. According to the writer of Hebrews (1:2), the "last days," of which the prophets spoke, are here. The promise of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) has been fulfilled in the outpouring of Pentecost. "If anyone is in Christ," says Paul, "he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). The decisive turning point of history is the death and resurrection of Christ. All that lies ahead is simply the realization of what Christ has already accomplished.

Yet there is a tension in the New Testament between the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom. Christ's new creation is already being made manifest to us, but it is also not yet fully realized. Christians long for the full realization of Christ's rule. We know there is a difference between the brokenness of our world and the day when there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). We eagerly await the Savior (Phil. 3:20).

Central to the biblical vision of the new heaven and the new earth is the perfect unity in Christ of all the peoples of the earth. As John gazes at the people of God, he sees "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" (Rev. 7:9). The angels sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). The reconciliation of all nations and all things in Christ is our fervent hope.

This vision gives Christians encouragement, especially those who suffer because of the racial and ethnic divisions in our world. "Lord, come quickly" is the cry of those who see little of this new unity of all things and who suffer because of walls of separation Christ came to abolish. The fact that one day God will set things right is the deepest hope for many who have tasted little of the shalom and righteousness of the kingdom.

This vision also gives Christians confidence. It is possible to look around us and be dismayed. But we know that Christ rules. We know where things are going. We know and live with full confidence that one day

> every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it.
>
> (Isa. 40:4-5)

IX. Recommendations

The following recommendations were adopted by Synod 1996 regarding the above report:

A. That synod recommend the revised report to the churches for study.

B. That synod adopt the following biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God:

Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse and Unified Family of God

Creation

1. *The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.*

2. *The created world with all its diversity has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.*

3. *The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).*

Fall

4. *A fundamental act of sin is the breakdown of community.*

New Creation

5. *The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.*

6. *Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.*

7. *Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.*

8. *In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.*

9. *The church is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.*

10. *God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Jesus Christ.*

11. *Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us, individually and corporately, to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the forces of evil.*

12. *Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.*

C. That synod, on the basis of the above principles, declare that to be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people and that to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

1. The above report demonstrates that the Bible declares this reconciled community to be God's will.
2. The confessions declare that the catholicity of the church means that Christ "gathers, protects, and preserves" the church "out of the entire human race" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

D. That synod call the **whole church**—individual members, congregations, assemblies, agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA—to respond to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by committing themselves

1. To pray and work for the increased enfolding of ethnic-minority persons into the CRCNA in order to reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.

2. To ensure the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.

Note: The total estimated ethnic-minority membership of 5 percent in the CRCNA compares to an ethnic-minority population of approximately 20 percent in Canada and the United States.

E. That synod call the **churches**

1. To articulate the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by means of the preaching, teaching, and study of the above biblical and theological principles.

2. To evaluate their life and ministry with regard to their racial and ethnic composition, the social factors contributing to their composition, the selecting and training of their leaders, their worship style, and their ministry to congregational members and to their community in light of their sense of God's vision and call for them as congregations.

3. To develop racially and ethnically diverse congregations by all appropriate models and strategies, such as

   a. Established churches becoming more inclusive ethnically and culturally.

   b. Planting and developing multiethnic congregations.

   c. Sponsoring new congregations that are ethnically and culturally different from the parent congregation, in the same or separate facilities.

   d. Developing relationships (e.g., joint worship, workshops, and work projects) with congregations from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

   e. Supporting persons and programs at home or abroad that are committed to racial reconciliation.

4. To witness publicly *against* racism, prejudice, and related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and *in defense of* all people as imagebearers of God.

5. To call individual members to promote and establish interracial and cross-cultural relationships in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

F. That synod request the **classes**, with the assistance of the CRCNA offices and agencies

1. To arrange during the next twelve months for the careful classis-wide study of this report and its implications for the churches and their ministries.

2. To provide to the churches and ministries of classis guidance in support of racial and ethnic diversity (and unity) by means of public forums and learning events, multicongregational worship celebrations, and joint cross-cultural ministry ventures.

3. To assist the churches in developing and supporting new churches and other outreach ministries that are committed to ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation.

4. To recruit and assist persons from ethnic-minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA.

G. That synod mandate the **Board of Trustees**, under the leadership of its CRCNA staff and with the assistance of the Race Relations division of Pastoral Ministries and other CRCNA agencies,

1. To coordinate and monitor the role and response of the agencies in providing guidance and assistance to the churches and classes in support of ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation as outlined above.

2. To serve Synod 1998 with advice and recommendations for ensuring the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence with the classes and synod, the Board of Trustees, denominational agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA. The recommendations should include transitional and long-term strategies, training and support needs, financial implications, and periodic reporting to synod on efforts and progress.

3. To continue to explore ways whereby the biennial Multiethnic Conference can assist the churches, classes, and synod to respond more completely to God's call for ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation in the CRCNA.

4. To review CRCNA policies and practices in relation to the training, credentialing, and compensating of ethnic-minority pastors and to give recommendations and advice as indicated.

H. That synod respectfully urge **future synods**

1. To include in their worship times the articulation and celebration of the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God.

2. To encourage the development of specific recommendations and specific practical guidelines for supporting ethnic diversity in all aspects of denominational life, including interchurch relations in general and ministries of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in particular.

3. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 1998 on the basis of an interim progress report by the Board of Trustees.

I. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 2000 in the light of another progress report with advice and recommendations by the Board of Trustees to Synod 2000.

J. That synod recommend that the Board of Trustees ask representatives of various language groups in the denomination to translate the document into the languages of their groups.

K. That synod ask Calvin Theological Seminary's Morren Conference Committee to consider organizing a conference on "racial and ethnic reconciliation with repentance and justice" to explore the theological meaning of racial reconciliation and the implications for ministry, pastoral care, ecclesiology, and social justice.

Grounds:

1. Racial reconciliation with repentance is urgent in the light of the above report.
2. Reformed theologians are well positioned historically and theologically to address this issue.
3. The Reformed churches of South Africa are presently experiencing such a process.

Appendix D
Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Formal Dialogue

I. Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Following is a list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the year in which such fellowship was established.

A. Africa

1. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) (1974)
2. Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv (NKST) (1974) (Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv)
3. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (1983) (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika)
4. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) (2001) (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika)
5. Midlands Reformed Churches in South Africa (MRCSA) (1991) (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suide-Afrika—Sinode Middelande)
6. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) 1982
7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Potchefstroom) (1974) (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
8. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) (1989)
9. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (2003)
10. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) (1982) (Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika)

B. Asia, Australia, and Indonesia

1. Christian Church of Sumba (Indonesia) (1974) (Gereja Kristen Sumba)
2. Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (1997)
3. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (1974)

4. Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka (1974)
5. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)

C. Europe

Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
(Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken-Buiten Verband)

D. North America

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (1977)
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) (1986)
3. Reformed Church in America (RCA) (1976)

E. Latin America

Christian Reformed Church in Cuba (2001)
(La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba)

F. South America

1. Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil (1974)
   (Ireja Evangelica Reformada no Brasil)
2. Reformed Church in Argentina (1974)
   (Iglesias Reformadas en le Argentina)

II. Churches in Formal Dialogue

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in *formal dialogue*. Following is a list of churches currently in *formal dialogue* with the CRC:

A. Christian Reformed Church in Eastern Africa (Uganda)

B. Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar

C. Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod) Malawi

D. Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

E. Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi

F. Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)

G. Reformed Church in Zambia

H. Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya)

I. Brief overview

In 2008 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-seven sermons that are available on the denominational website (www.crcna.org under "Devotion" and "Resources"). The webmaster reports that the reading sermons section of the website receives around 2,000 hits per month. Email and other information we receive indicates that this service continues to be used and is widely appreciated within the denomination and sometimes outside the CRC as well.

This past year we had several requests that have prompted us to investigate alternate ways to make the website more useful. Currently sermons are listed only by author and alphabetically by Bible text. We will try to add "listed by text canonically," "listed by catechism reference," and "listed by special occasion." In addition, we will be looking for ways to make more sermons on the web available to churches that request them. We will include with the sermons we publish a link to additional sermons—manuscripts, audio, or video—by each author if such are available.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Richard J. deLange (2009), serving as chairman and secretary; Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins (2011); Rev. John Kerssies (2011), and Rev. Paul D. Stadt (2011). We request synod's approval for Rev. Richard deLange to serve a second three-year term.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the sermons for reading services on the CRCNA website.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot approve the appointment of Rev. Richard J. deLange for a second three-year term.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Kenneth F. Benjamins
Richard J. deLange, chairman/secretary
John Kerssies
Paul D. Stadt

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

Over the past several years, Dordt College has been "passing the torch" to a new generation of leaders. As long-time administrators and faculty have retired, they have been replaced by younger leaders who are committed to building on a strong tradition of offering a comprehensive Christian education that will prepare students to live and work as God's hands and feet in today's world. With new leadership usually comes some new programs, and that has been the case here too.

In the past year under the leadership of provost Erik Hoekstra and associate provost for co-curricular affairs Bethany Schuttinga, a new structure for integrating student development with the academic program has been implemented. New leadership positions and programs in the residence community are helping create an even stronger environment in which students can develop in all parts of their lives.

Our new Core Program is being implemented and refined. The Core Program lays the foundation for the common parts of student's lives and provides a context for their majors. The goal of the core is to help our graduates be adaptable and informed professionals and also be good parents, faithful church members, and responsible citizens.

Thanks to a generous donation, the Andreas Center for Reformed Service and Scholarship is providing new ways for Dordt College faculty and students to be involved in our contemporary global culture and to serve Christians in our community and around the world. Where possible, the goal is to partner with other Christian organizations to have a greater impact. A wide range of projects are currently being supported:

- A communications professor and digital media students are working on a documentary about slums around the world.
- An agriculture professor is collaborating with colleagues at Northrise University in Zambia.
- An archive for Reformed Christian organizations is being set up. At present we have possession of documents from the Center for Public Justice and the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE).
- A foreign language professor is consulting with Christian schools in Latin America.
- Dordt faculty are collaborating with IAPCHE to support faculty development programs for Christian university faculty in other parts of the world.
- A team is planning events and a conference celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin.
- A feasibility study is being done to explore setting up a Center for Psychological Restoration for the local community.
- A mathematics professor is working on a resource text for middle school teachers.
- Education professors are helping set up professional development resources for teachers.

– A group of presidents from five continents met in October to plan a Global Summit for presidents of Reformed Christian higher educational institutions to be held in 2010.

Another new program introduced last year was the Nicaraguan Studies Program, which is closely connected to the Nehemiah Center in Managua. By living with host families in Leon, students are immersed in Nicaraguan life and develop a Christian understanding of cultural diversity and the shaping power of different worldviews.

Dordt College also continues to serve churches in our area. Several faculty members have prepared and given presentations on topics ranging from shaping worship to climate change, from understanding the Middle East conflict to reading Scripture. Our annual Day of Encouragement regularly draws over 300 people to the campus to participate in workshops that benefit church leaders involved in a variety of internal and external programs.

Many other developments, programs, and activities keep members of our community busy and energized. Construction of a new classroom building, increased enrollment, a new football team, the sprouting of prairie grass on a new restoration plot, a choir trip to Europe this summer, committed graduates, a new academic senate, a slowly growing international community, and faithful supporters even in times of economic turmoil make us grateful for the blessings we have been able to enjoy again this year. We ask for your continued prayers and support as we do the day-to-day work to which we have been called.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

Institute for Christian Studies

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) was established in 1967 to address the North American academy at its highest levels with a Christian word-in-edgewise. It is meant to bring to the forefront the religious roots of scholarly work and understanding, addressing scholarly problems so central to life that they are shared by many disciplines. It does this work primarily via M.A. and Ph.D. programs. In this way, it both produces scholarship that articulates a Christian interdisciplinary voice while preparing self-consciously Christian scholars for service in our society's colleges and universities. Second, ICS does its scholarly work in the conviction that faithful Christian scholarship must bear fruit in faithful Christian action. It gives form to that conviction via a master's degree in worldview studies that aims to form Christian activists such as Christian day school teachers, campus chaplains, or political advocates to self-consciously Christian action. Finally, ICS does its work in the conviction that faithful Christian scholarship must equally bear fruit in faithful day-to-day Christian living. It lives out this conviction principally via its Worldview Conferences held on an annual rotation in cities across North America.

This year the number of students following one of three programs of study at ICS is down from previous years. Historically this population has fluctuated between 30 and 60 program students. This year there are 36 students. In addition, ICS annually serves another 40-70 students who take one or more ICS offerings. That means ICS serves between 70 and 130 students per year via its academic offerings. This year ICS has served 92 students in its various courses. (The number will go up when registration into ICS's two summer school offerings are counted.) In addition to its program students, Ontario Christian School Teachers' Association members working on their certification program(s), and other interested parties (e.g., clerics looking for professional development opportunities), ICS has served graduate students from the University of Toronto and the University of Guelph, and above all from the colleges of the Toronto School of Theology, of which ICS is an affiliate member. This makes ICS a gift of Christian Reformed people to a wide range of Christian communions.

The M.A. and Ph.D. programs at ICS culminate in theses and their formal defense. Moreover, its Ph.D. has an earlier and preliminary climax in what is termed a pre-thesis examination. Over the course of this year, the following programs/culminating examinations were completed:

- Three M.W.S. programs were completed.
- Five M.A. theses were successfully defended.
- Four Ph.D. pre-thesis examinations were successfully passed.
- An ICS/Vrije Universiteit Ph.D. thesis will be defended by July 1, 2009.
- A TST Ph.D. (University of St. Michael's College) thesis was defended with an ICS supervisor.

This year ICS has held and will hold Worldview Conferences in seven different locales. Its keynote speaker is Dr. David Smith of Calvin College and Calvin's Kuyers Institute. His theme is "Rekindling Christian Imagination" and is directed at the ways in which "we picture the world to ourselves" out of the conviction that such picturing has much to do with how we live in

that world. ICS has been privileged to host these events in association with Calvin College and its Kuyers Institute.

Institute for Christian Studies
Robert Sweetman, academic dean
and acting president

The King's University College

Greetings from The King's University College to delegates to synod of the Christian Reformed Church!

"The King's University College exists to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King"—the new mission statement generated by our academic community and adopted by the Board of Governors in 2008. King's is now engaged in a strategic planning process that places this mission in the center, exploring its implications for the programs and services we offer, the desired characteristics of King's graduates, our internal culture, our external profile, and so forth. We want to set a strategic direction that is not growth-dependent but views growth as God's blessing on our mission. We pray for the Spirit's leading as we seek to embody our mission.

Student enrollment at King's increased by 7 percent to 625 students in 2008-2009. The enrollment climate in Alberta in general, and in Edmonton in particular, continues to be very challenging, with intense competition from new low-cost degree programs at several public institutions. We are deeply grateful for the blessing represented by our enrollment increase.

Plans are well under way to launch our new bachelor of education–secondary program in September 2009. This program promises to contribute significantly to the needs of Christian education, particularly in western Canada, by providing well-prepared high school teachers with an integrated, faith-inspired vision for education. Plans call for a cohort of twenty-five students in each year of this two-year after-degree program.

In 2008 King's again achieved outstanding results in The Globe and Mail Canadian University Report. The King's University College ranked at or near the top of its size category in all the important academic categories. We are particularly proud of our food service team; they scored an A-, tied for the highest rank of any university in Canada.

In July 2009, King's will enter into a very significant partnership with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). Under the terms of a contract with CRWRC, Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, director of the Micah Centre at King's, will devote a significant portion of his time to developing theological resource material in support of the ministry of CRWRC and its worldwide partners. His responsibilities will include presentations to local congregations and classes regarding biblical foundations for transformational community development. We are excited about the potential of this partnership to benefit all involved–CRWRC and local churches, as well as King's.

The King's University College continues to enjoy generous support from Christian Reformed churches. Through regional college ministry shares and other offerings, churches contributed $475,000 to our 2007-2008 budget, enabling us to maintain programs, offer student financial support, and control tuition. We thank God for this expression of our shared mission to advance God's kingdom.

The King's University College
Harry Fernhout, president

Kuyper College

Kuyper College . . . Reformed Bible College . . . Reformed Bible Institute . . . is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. Praise God! It has been wonderful to look back over the decades at the history of the college and to take note of the many graduates who have gone around the world serving in missions and ministry. Our relationship with the Christian Reformed Church started out with a *unique* background as our founder and editor of *The Banner*, Rev. H.J. Kuiper, took steps to provide CRC young people with a more direct and focused program to equip them as missionaries, evangelists, and Sunday school teachers. Ever since that time members of the CRC have been strong and faithful supporters of the institution and have helped it grow into the (much larger) Christian leadership college we are today.

We are very grateful to God for the blessings we have seen that have brought us into this era of growth that we have been experiencing. For your encouragement, we wish to share how exciting it is to see more and more young people acknowledging their sense of God's call on their lives to be ministry agents in the world today. There is a spiritual sensitivity that is growing in many parts of the world and *our young people* increasingly want to engage that world to direct people to the Lord and extend assistance in the name of Christ. Thank you for your part—your prayers, support, and encouragement—in helping us respond well to this opportunity.

This past year we experienced our third year in a row of record enrollment. We anticipate that we will see another record set this fall. Our biggest challenge is to provide sufficient student aid as we strive to keep our costs manageable and thus help students who go into the lower-paying calling of missions, ministry, and service. We are also challenged to provide additional student and academic space and facilities on campus, being cautious not to overbuild and incur debilitating debt.

We are enthusiastic about the future of the college and the mission we have that engages us to serve Christ and his church in such a focused way. Again, you can be proud of and encouraged by the reality that God is doing something special in our days—and the youth of the Christian Reformed Church are increasingly a part of it! Thank you for your help along the way as you demonstrate your goodwill and partnership in a calling we all share. If you would like further information on our programs, please visit our website: www.kuyper.edu. God's blessings to you in your service to the church.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Redeemer University College

We praise the Lord for the blessings we have experienced over the past year and appreciate this opportunity to share some highlights with you. We welcomed 866 students (826 full-time equivalent) this past September, which equals our record enrollment of 2005. We are also working to make our campus more of a kingdom microcosm, with greater racial and ethnic diversity.

Continuing education is another area in which we hope to see significant growth, having received a grant of $500,000 for the development of this strategic area, building on our successful program of courses for in-service teachers. Funds will be used over a three-year period to allow us to develop programs, workshops, and courses that will extend the mission and purpose of Redeemer to new communities, expanding our enrollment of non-traditional students.

We continue to emphasize service learning, including opportunities for ministry in other cultural settings. Over 25 percent of students and a number of faculty and staff are actively involved in a wide variety of ministry opportunities. We have connections with Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Haiti. This year students also went to Mexico, the Netherlands, and Mississippi, while others stayed closer to home, serving in a variety of service agencies in downtown Hamilton, Ontario. Several students were also involved in year-end trips to Nicaragua, India, and a native healing center in Edmonton, Alberta.

It is encouraging to see that Christian university education is beginning to receive a higher profile in Canada through student survey results in national publications. This past October, Redeemer University College, along with The King's University College, received among the highest scores in Canada in a national survey of student satisfaction published by the *Globe and Mail* (see www.globecampus.ca). Redeemer will also be featured in the *Maclean's Magazine* student satisfaction issue of February 2009. It is a new experience to have our mainstream media helping to build the reputation of Christian higher education.

In the area of academic recognition, our teacher education program received renewal of its accreditation from the Ontario College of Teachers. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario (ICAO) recently approved four new accounting courses at Redeemer, so students can now satisfy all the course requirements for the Chartered Accountant (CA) designation. In addition, Redeemer is completing program changes for the recognition of a bachelor of science program in kinesiology.

Redeemer University College continues to expand its outreach through conferences. This fall our conference on worship led by Dr. Syd Hielema was well attended. In January, Redeemer partnered with the Paideia Centre for Public Theology to organize an ambitious academic conference on the topic of "Mission, Worldview, and the Christian University: Living at the Crossroads," which was an inspiration to our faculty, staff, students, and conference guests. This past month our students also organized the second annual Social Justice Conference, which again was well attended by campus and community guests.

In the area of campus development, the archeological dig that was required on the site of the future second soccer field has been completed, having unearthed a 14th-century first nations village. Redeemer hopes to work

with first nations people to commemorate this site in an appropriate way. We continue to work at raising additional funds for scholarships, bursaries, and work study to ensure that a Christian university education remains accessible and have now reached the $2.7 million mark in our $3.3 million Student Support campaign. Redeemer University College has decided to wind down the Redeemer (Canadian) Foundation, incorporating its membership and scholarship programs into the university, and to use this opportunity to increase the number of people supporting student financial aid at Redeemer.

In light of the decision of the college president to step down when the current term concludes on June 30, 2010, Redeemer is in the midst of a strategic planning process to envision its growth over the next ten years. A search committee has been appointed to begin the task of selecting the person who can best implement this vision to be Redeemer's next president.

We are indeed very grateful for the prayer and financial support received from the Christian Reformed community, including the ministry shares sent by area Christian Reformed churches. These gifts 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

As Trinity Christian College anticipates the *Jubilee!* celebration of its 50th anniversary on October 2, 2009, faculty, staff, and friends of the college reflect on the past five decades of challenges, changes, and accomplishments and look forward to "founding" the next 50 years of God-glorifying Christian higher education.

In October of 1959, 37 students enrolled in Trinity's first freshman class, while our fall 2008 enrollment reached a combined total of 1,404 students in the traditional baccalaureate program, the adult studies program, and Semester in Spain. Approximately 50 percent of traditional students are drawn to Trinity from the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed denominations committed to making Christian higher education a priority for future generations of Christian leaders. Over 19 percent of students in our traditional undergraduate program are ethnic minority students, and in "America's Best Colleges for 2009," *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Trinity Christian College 10th in the area of Racial Diversity: Baccalaureate Colleges (Midwest).

The first new building added to Trinity's campus in 1962 housed maintenance equipment and was built at a cost of $3,400. In the decades that followed, the College continued campus development. In the past ten years, Trinity has purchased or built six new buildings, including the Bootsma Bookstore Café at Navajo Creek and the Art and Communication Center in 2008. Through Trinity's first comprehensive capital campaign "The Time Is Now," millions of dollars have been pledged and donated to support the planned expansion of the gymnasium and the development of athletic fields on 80 acres less than a mile from the main campus.

The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT) partners with Calvin Theological Seminary, the Center for Excellence in Preaching, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to strengthen local churches. The CCIT hosted workshops such as Tuesday Retreats for Church Leaders and the Chicagoland Youth Ministry Event. The first of many planned events in 2009 featured William Paul Young, author of *The Shack*. Young's presentation attracted more than 800 visitors to campus.

The Office of Community Partnerships nurtures Trinity's relationship with area neighborhoods by offering service-learning opportunities for students with such organizations as Elim Christian Services, Restoration Ministries, Roseland Christian Ministries, and Habitat for Humanity.

Partnerships with local schools and non-profit organizations here and abroad provide opportunities for Trinity students to be educated through experiential learning while also serving others. Students from Trinity's Rotaract Club were recently awarded a Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Academic Service Entrepreneur Grant to help them implement the next project in a continuing two-year partnership with the Christian Entrepreneurs Association of Malawi in Africa. This partnership was developed through the efforts of Partners Worldwide to connect Trinity with this community-based, microfinance organization in Malawi.

The Senior Academy of Learning at Trinity (SALT), which offers courses in the spring and fall for people 55 years of age and older, saw the largest number of enrollees for 2008. One participant commented: "The maturing

of the SALT program over the past few years has been amazing. Each year the program has increasingly fit its offerings to the interests and lifestyle of seniors." Classes for 2009 will cover subjects from health to the Internet, and the program includes a new "field trip" offering called Salt on the Road.

We covet your prayers as we look back with gratitude on the past 50 years and look expectantly toward the future, continuing to commit the work of Trinity Christian College to God.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

Every reader of *The Banner* knows the highlight of 2008 for the Cadet Corps. It was the international camporee, held August 6-13 near Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario. God's plans and ours are not always the same, and three years of planning this wilderness event for more than 1,300 people went down the drain—literally. The rain and mud forced an end to the event halfway through the week and, for the first time ever, we evacuated a camporee.

Though we did not understand at the time, God used that situation to bring about his purposes. For example, it reminded us to rely completely on him—God alone is worthy of our confidence and trust. We also saw innumerable examples of selfless giving (food, dry clothes, help in moving), and testimonies from the cadets and counselors revealed more evidence of grace. We heard reports from dozens of boys who say they want to come back to the next camporee as junior counselors. In addition, the generous support of parents and friends of the Cadet Corps has been overwhelming. Although there were large unanticipated costs involved in the evacuation, they have been more than covered. God is good.

In other news, although the Cadet Corps did not return to Kenya last year, the cadet coordinator who lives there monitored the Cadet clubs currently operating and trained men to lead even more. We now show 30 Cadet clubs in Kenya, all in the Reformed Church of East Africa. Our coordinator's goal for 2009 is that we again send North Americans to lead training, this time expanding into other denominations. This would also mean working with other tribes, and promoting the need for peace among tribes. It is an ambitious agenda, and we ask for your prayers.

Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

In Titus 2, God gives us our assignment: women are to teach and train younger women—the girls that come behind us, what is good. We are to teach them the things of God.

That verse is the guiding light for this ministry. We understand that our God-given responsibility is to help young girls know, understand, and embrace the things of God. And we do this by building enduring relationships with them—women meeting regularly with a small group of girls in club, teaching and modeling Christ's love.

Currently 23,000 girls from all backgrounds are members of the 825 GEMS Clubs active in the United States, Canada, Zambia, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and Spain. Whether a girl has grown up in the church or has never had the opportunity to learn about God, whether she lives in a loving home with Christian parents or is an orphan and cared for by a grandparent, whether she attends a Christian school, is home schooled, or attends an overcrowded, resource-lacking, government school half days only—all are welcomed and enfolded at GEMS Clubs.

Why is GEMS able to continue to grow and reach more girls for Christ? Because God continues to nudge godly Christian women to be obedient and do as he asks—to teach young girls. So training, equipping, and inspiring women to serve as mentors to girls continues to be a clarion call for the ministry. This past year over 3,000 of the 5,200 women who serve as counselors to girls attended at least one training event hosted by GEMS. Forty area-wide training events, one regional conference, and one large international conference were held—all with the common goal of developing strong leadership skills in the women serving in the ministry. For many of these women, their work in GEMS is related to calling. This is their personal ministry—the area of kingdom service where they can best use the gifts God has given them.

The GEMS ministry continues to place a special emphasis on partnering with parents. This year, through our annual theme study, Walk the Micah Road, complimentary devotional/object lesson booklets for use in the home were made available to parents. The purpose of this booklet was to facilitate discussion of the Micah 6:8 passage within the family unit.

Our *Call to Africa* continues to expand as God provides. The eight children and momma who live in the Zambian orphan home that GEMS helped build and now provides for, continue to thrive. In August, we were given twenty-five acres of land near Chongwe, Zambia, on which the Esther School for orphaned and underresourced children is to be built. Establishing a GEMS Service Center in Zambia with a community library also continues to be part of our plan to invest long-term in the lives of Zambian people.

God's faithfulness to this ministry continues. And we are grateful for the opportunities he continues to bring to minister in his name.

GEMS Girls Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited is celebrating its 90th birthday this year! Established in 1919 as the American Federation of Reformed Young Men's Society, it evolved and grew to become the Young Calvinist Federation in 1955. In 1992 the name was again changed to what we know today as Youth Unlimited. Over the past 90 years many changes occurred, but one thing has remained constant: a desire to support churches as they challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform their world for him.

As Youth Unlimited reflects back on its history, we see evidence of God connecting to youth and the local church through relevant topics and people who had a heart for young people. Whether it was at convention back in 1926 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with the theme "The Problem of Our Rising Generation"; in 1959 in Edmonton, Alberta (the first co-ed convention), with the theme "To God Be the Glory"; or in Summer 2009 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, themed "Living Inside Out"—God has been there!

This summer as Youth Unlimited enters its busiest and most fun time of year, we again are filled with anticipation to see how God will show himself to the young people through our events in a way that draws them to him. The 2009 theme, "Living Inside Out," is based on Romans 12:1-2, which says,

> So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you (The Message).

In addition to our life-impacting events for youth, we are committed to supporting those whom God has called to minister to youth. Local church youth ministry is not an easy calling—with youth culture changing quickly, traditional families eroding, increased demands on students' time, and a culture that is all about self-gratification, today's youth workers have their work cut out for them. As Youth Unlimited invests in youth ministry leaders through events and resources, we recognize we are not big enough to meet every need. That is why Youth Unlimited is committed to be kingdom-minded partners, with a desire to work arm in arm with others that have a similar mission.

It truly is a blessing to say we are a partner (since 1919) with the Christian Reformed Church in this great mission. As a result of our teamwork, may we see youth coming to know Christ, youth workers supported, and churches better equipped to be the arms of Christ embracing young people. It is Youth Unlimited's prayer that we hear God say, "Well done, my good and faithful servants."

Youth Unlimited
Jeff Kruithoff, executive director

STUDY COMMITTEES

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II (majority report)

Outline of the report

I. Introduction

II. Continuity with the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34)

III. Overview of the third wave movement
A. Pentecostal, charismatic, and third wave
1. Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave
2. Excursus: Baptism/filling with the Holy Spirit

B. Key representatives of third wave
Excursus: Key representatives

C. Beyond the third wave: New apostolic reformation

D. Distinctive facets of the third wave movement
1. Prophecy
2. Prayer
3. Healing ministries
4. Spiritual warfare and deliverance

E. Conclusion to the overview

IV. Why third wave has widespread appeal
A. Theological compatibility
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V. Evaluating the third wave movement
A. Observations and evaluation
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4. Healing
5. Spiritual warfare and deliverance

B. Discernment: Manifestations and ministry expressions of the third wave

VI. Recommendations

Appendices
Appendix A: Bibliography (for both the majority and minority reports)
Appendix B: Executive Summary of the Survey Results
Appendix C: Models of Protocol on Receiving and Sharing Prophetic Words

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*, p. 608)

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.

The committee reported to Synod 2007, submitting both a majority and minority report. The advisory committee's observations included the statement that "this advisory committee affirms the gracious openness of the majority report and believes it is the beginning of a thoughtful dialogue concerning a movement that already has significant influence in the denomination." However, they also noted that the report "must go further in grounding its recommendations biblically, confessionally, and theologically so that it will become a more useful pastoral tool" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614). Synod 2007 adopted the recommendation "that synod recommit the majority report and augment the membership of the majority study committee in order to fulfill the study committee's original mandate, answer the significant issues and questions raised by Overture 36, and report to Synod 2009" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614). In response, we have significantly expanded the evaluation section of the report with overviews that provide more extensive and overt biblical and theological reflection and interaction with third wave principles and practices.

We also added a completely new section on discernment in relation to manifestations and ministry expressions evident in the third wave. This is intended to meet the request to "provide a more fully developed biblical-theological rubric (guidelines) to assist pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be identified as third wave" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 615).

In this report we have also sought to more extensively incorporate key elements of the 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34) in reference to the specifics of the third wave, which Synod 2007 also requested. The committee sees itself as standing in fundamental continuity with Report 34. While we do interact with this report, we did not find it realistic or necessary to duplicate all of Report 34'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.

It is notable 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*.

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 titled "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 Faith Alive Christian Resources (2006). 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 movement 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" [p. 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 long 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 (pp. 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" (p. 403), and it gives considerable space to the testimony of those who have been spiritually

revitalized by the movement (pp. 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" (p. 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 had also given certain 'gifts' to members of the believing community" (p. 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 (pp. 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" (p. 438). Furthermore, the gift of prophecy today need not exclude the possibility of prophetic prediction (p. 452). After all, "nothing in Scripture forbids us to believe that the Lord may work signs and miracles in our day" (p. 456). The report is also quite open to the present reality of demon possession and exorcism (p. 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 (pp. 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 (pp. 422, 444). It challenges the notion that to act spontaneously is somehow more Spirit-led than to act with deliberation or careful preparation (p. 452). Similarly, it rejects the idea that guidance by the Spirit somehow rules out thoughtful and responsible deliberation on the part of believers (pp. 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 every other doctrine into its vortex" (p. 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" (p. 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 (pp. 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 (p. 438).

However, it is on another point that the 1973 report is most critical of the charismatic movement: the way this movement tends to interpret Scripture. In a long section titled "Hermeneutic and Individualism" (pp. 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 (p. 467) and of "ignoring the linguistic and historical tools forged historically by the Christian community" (p. 468). Furthermore, in the report's own detailed exegesis of the New Testament exhortations concerning the Spirit (pp. 424-29) and the charismatic gifts (pp. 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 post-conversion Spirit-baptism has ceased to be a defining characteristic, and the third wave is not 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 Wagner was describing something new or whether this was 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, p. 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 had 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 neocharismatic 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 it has significant 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, that 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," pp. 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.

1. Excursus: Biblical interpretation in the third wave

   As we have seen, one of the main criticisms of the charismatic movement described 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.

2. 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, p. 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 second edition of *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* authored by Alvin J. Vander Griend and published by CRC Publications (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) in 1996, there is an acknowledgment 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 (Student Manual, p. 43). Interestingly, part of an application exercise includes 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" (p. 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 C. 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 AVC and held by many in the third wave, that being baptized with the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion (Holwerda 1974, pp. 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" (p. 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 (p. 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 (p. 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 Faith Alive Christian Resources 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 the charismatic 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 titled "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*, 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 1980, developed the Dunamis teaching materials since 1990, and authored several books including *Receiving the Power* (coauthored with

Doug McMurry). 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*. We strongly warn against these distinctive tenets of the NAR and see it as 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

   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 a book in *The Beginner's Guide to . . .* series, titled *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. 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 Christian Reformed 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. Sheets develops typical third wave themes of a two-way

relationship with God in prayer, prayer being powerful, and the idea that God sometimes limits 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* (1986, 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 (now Faith Alive Christian Resources) 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 he includes some specific steps for developing a healing

ministry, 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, inner healing has been part of the third wave movement from its beginning. John Wimber embraced inner healing as part of healing ministry and gave this explanation of the need for healing from emotional sickness: "sickness of the emotions is generally caused by what is done to us. It grows out of the hurts which are done to us by another person or some experience we have been exposed to in the past. These hurts affect us in the present in the form of bad memories, and weak or wounded emotions. This in turn leads us into various forms of sin, depression, a sense of worthlessness and inferiority, unreasoning fears and anxieties, psychosomatic illness, etc." (Wimber, *Signs and Wonders and Church Growth*, p. 3). Charles Kraft, another pioneer of the third wave, authored *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing*, promoted as a complete guide to inner healing, which maintains how we need to recognize the spiritual roots of our emotional wounds in order to receive deep and lasting healing. Brad Long defines inner healing as "part of the process of undoing the hurtful effects of sin. This includes the results of our own sin and being sinned against. It is a process of restoring to wholeness the shattered image of God within us. As the wounding of sin is overcome, we increasingly reflect the character of Jesus Christ. This is the process of sanctification, which comes from the work of the Holy Spirit within us (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)" (Long, *In the Spirit's Power*, p. 110). Michael Evans, like Long, especially emphasizes inner healing in teaching materials. Evans, in his course *Learning to Do What Jesus Did*, defines inner healing as being "concerned with the healing of past hurts, [and] involves vividly recalling and honestly facing those times of hurt and asking Jesus to bring healing to those wounds. . . . Our understanding of Jesus' mandate in Luke 4:18-19, is to free us from the evil that burdens us today, take the memories of the past and heal the wounds that have resulted from them and which still affect our lives in the present" (Evans, pp. 1-3).

Ed Smith, who pioneered Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM) in 1996 may be considered to be in the third wave in a way that is not an organized movement but is generally inclusive of particular paths of ministry in evangelical circles. TPM may be the fastest-growing method of inner healing in evangelical churches today, and it shares much with what is being practiced and promoted by the inner healing methods of others in the third wave.

Some common themes that flow through third wave expressions of inner healing are that the roots of emotional pain and resulting ways of life in the present are in the past, that being taken back to memories is part of the inner healing process, that our reactions and conclusions in

the memory are the root cause, and that confessing and repenting lies and then having God replace them with the truth as renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2) is a form of healing that is walked out with discipleship on a renewed path and way of living in freedom. The process of inner healing is marked by such common biblical practices as prayer, repentance, and forgiveness. It also engages in what may be seen as the more extraordinary gifts of "words of knowledge" received as thoughts and mental visual images.

4. Spiritual warfare and deliverance

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 and 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 (such as 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 in Jeff Stam's *Straight Talk About Spiritual Warfare* and *Battle of the Angels* (youth curriculum), published by Faith Alive Christian Resources. 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 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*, and Charles Kraft, in both *Defeating Dark Angels* and *Deep Wounds, Deep Healing*. 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 House Cleaning*. 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* (1992), 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 with 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*, p. 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 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 Faith Alive Christian Resources). 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 (p. 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 (p. 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, Kabala, 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

In this section of the report, the committee seeks to interact on a biblical and theological level with the third wave in general and with each of the distinctive facets of the third wave: prophecy, prayer, healing, spiritual warfare and deliverance. Each section begins with a general evaluative overview and concludes with a section of affirmations and cautions that capture the tone of the evaluative overview while not being exhaustive or summative. These affirmations and cautions can serve as a ready reference but rely on the evaluation overview for their biblical and theological basis and for more detailed application to particular facets of the third wave.

While seeking to provide a measure of detailed evaluation in general terms and on the distinctive facets of the third wave, the committee cannot exhaustively address every possible angle nor anticipate new developments in the third wave. Therefore contained in this evaluation portion of the report is a section on discernment that provides both an overview and particular guidelines that are illustrated. It is the committee's hope that these guidelines will serve well in assisting pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be identified as third wave.

A. Observations and evaluation

1. General: 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 tongue-speaking, prophecy, miraculous healings, and deliverance ministry. 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

God's 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 be recognized by humans, 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.

A Reformed worldview framework provides a grid to evaluate the third wave movement as 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. We continue with general affirmations, as each particular section will too. 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. In this way we express our open but cautious viewpoint.

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 with 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 (such as 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*, Art. 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 leads to a spiritual elitism in which those with the most manifestational gifts are the most esteemed. 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 phenomena. A fuller discussion on discernment and a proposed set of guidelines are provided in the final section of this report ("Discernment: Manifestations and ministry expressions of the third wave").

4) While the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) 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

The 1973 report (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, pp. 450-53) stressed that prophecy is much more a matter of "forthtelling" (speaking the word of God) than of "foretelling" (predicting the future). Consequently, it reaffirmed an interpretation of the New Testament gift of prophecy which has long been held in the Reformed tradition, namely that it is closely linked with preaching as the exposition and application of Scripture. The report states, "We should affirm, therefore, that preaching is prophecy—or, more fully, [that] the proclamation of God's word by a Spirit-filled believer, in which the word is so spoken and applied that the hearers are taught, encouraged, edified and comforted is prophecy" (p. 451). Note that this

definition does not restrict prophetic preaching to the officially authorized proclamation of Scripture from the pulpit.

The 1973 report also emphasizes that prophecy is subject to Scripture. "Every prophecy today, as in Paul's day, is subject not only to the other prophets but ultimately to the Scriptures. No prophecy can deny what Scripture teaches, for God cannot contradict himself. Since the words of the prophets are subject to testing, they do not have the measure of inspiration, infallibility and authority that Scripture has. The sufficiency, uniqueness and normativity of Scripture need to be fully maintained" (p. 452).

Although the 1973 report highlights the connection between prophecy and preaching, it also qualifies that linkage in a significant way. It states, "On the other hand, we caution against a too facile identification of preaching and prophecy. . . . The preponderant emphasis on prophecy as forthtelling need not exclude altogether, however, the possibility of prophecy as foretelling such as in the case of Agabus [Acts 21:10]. Any utterance, however, must be subject to the full range of biblical teaching as well as to community scrutiny (1 Cor. 14:32 [see 14:29-33]) and the inner assent of those to whom this prophecy is directed. To allow for this may appear to be opening the door to all kinds of aberrations and excesses. . . . However, sufficient guidelines and limitations are given in the Scriptures (e.g., Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 32:6-9 [*sic*; no doubt 28:6-9 was meant]; 1 Cor. 14; and 1 John 4:1-6) so that the people of God who are truly willing to follow the way of the Lord as revealed in Scripture may be confident that they will discover that 'God is not a God of confusion, but of peace' (1 Cor. 14:33)" (p. 452).

The report concludes its discussion of prophecy with the following reminder: "We would also call attention to the words of the Apostle Paul that even though 'our prophecy is imperfect' (1 Cor. 13:9), he says, 'So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy' (1 Cor. 14:39), and, 'Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything' (1 Thess. 5:19). In addition, we would urge the church to continue diligently to search the Scriptures and to be always on guard against false prophecy" (pp. 452-53).

Implicit in the report's discussion is the distinction between the prophecy recorded in the Old Testament, which is inspired and infallible, and the gift of prophecy in the New Testament church, which is fallible and subject to testing by Scripture and the Christian community. It should be noted that this distinction between prophecy in the Old Testament and prophecy in the New does not mean there is not also considerable diversity of kinds of prophecy in each Testament. Thus the ecstatic prophecy of Saul (1 Sam. 10:9-11) is different from the literary prophecy of Isaiah, and the prophecy of the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:6-11, 16-18) is different from the prophecy regulated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14. It is also significant that according to the report prophecy and preaching only partially overlap. Some preaching is not prophecy, and some prophecy is not preaching.

Since the time of the 1973 report there have been some significant developments with respect to our understanding of the gift of prophecy in the New Testament. This has been partly due to the charismatic movement, where the prophetic gift is widely acknowledged and practiced, and partly due to renewed scholarly investigation of the New Testament

data. A significant example of the latter is Wayne Grudem's book *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (1988, revised edition 2000), which has been widely influential in evangelical and Reformed circles, and has been endorsed by prominent Reformed theologian J. I. Packer. Within our own circles we can also point to a significant essay by the late George Vandervelde titled "The Gift of Prophecy and the Prophetic Church" in the book he edited *The Holy Spirit: Renewing and Empowering Presence* (pp. 93-118). Also in our own immediate tradition is the Dutch essay "Profetie en Toetsing" [Prophecy and Testing] in C. van der Kooi, *Tegenwoordigheid van Geest. Verkenningen op het gebied van de leer van de Heilige Geest* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), pp. 130-44.

In what follows we will take our cue mainly from Grudem's work. However, although the committee believes that his exegetical work on New Testament prophecy has been responsibly done, and carried out with explicitly Reformed theological commitments, it does not endorse his exegesis on every point. The committee acknowledges that Grudem's work on prophecy has been controversial in some quarters and that there are other legitimate ways of understanding contemporary prophecy. Nevertheless, the majority of the committee sees his work as providing credible biblical justification and guidelines for the responsible exercise of the gift of prophecy in the church today.

A significant conclusion of Grudem's book is that preaching involves the exercise of the gift of *teaching* rather than that of prophecy. He writes, "In conclusion, *teaching* in terms of the New Testament Epistles consisted of repeating and explaining the words of Scripture (or the equally authoritative teachings of Jesus and the apostles) and applying them to the hearers. In the New Testament Epistles, 'teaching' is something very much like what is described by our phrase 'Bible teaching' today. By contrast, no prophecy in New Testament churches is ever said to consist of the interpretation and application of texts of Old Testament Scripture." He then goes on to say, "All the things said about 'teaching' in the previous section apply to 'preaching' as well" (p. 120). If he is right, then the overlap between preaching and prophecy may be much smaller than assumed in the 1973 report. In most cases, prophecy is something quite different from preaching.

If prophecy is not to be equated with preaching, then what is it? The crucial passage here is 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle there writes in verse 29 (NIV): "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said." From the instruction to "weigh" (Greek *diakrino*) the prophecies, it is clear that not everything that was prophesied was to be considered valid. In the verses that follow Paul goes on to say, "And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged." From this we learn that prophecy was based on "revelation," although this word is here used in a more restricted sense than is common in systematic theology. As elsewhere in the New Testament (see Matt. 11:27; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 1:17; Phil. 3:15), *revelation* here refers to any communication from God, not necessarily resulting in authoritative Scripture. It seems that Paul is referring to something that God brings to a person's mind, or impresses on his or her heart, but with

the sense that it comes from God. If that person then puts into words what they understand that revelation to be, the resulting utterance or "prophecy" is to be weighed by other believers. It is not itself "revelation," and it is neither divinely authoritative, nor infallible. It is a human report of something God reveals.

It is important to stress that prophecy in this sense is subordinate to the authority of the Scriptures, both to the inspired prophecy of the Old Testament and the apostolic tradition as embodied in the New Testament. As Paul goes on to say in verses 37-38 of this same chapter: "If anybody thinks that he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored." The prophet must yield to the authority of the apostle.

Another pivotal text in connection with New Testament prophecy is Ephesians 2:20, where Paul speaks of the church as being "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." Biblical interpreters are divided on whether the prophets here referred to are the prophets of the Old Testament (so Calvin), or the prophets of the New Testament (so most contemporary New Testament scholars). If the second interpretation is correct, it could be argued that the "prophets" here are on a par with the apostles, and like them are limited to the foundational period of the Christian church in apostolic times. In that case these prophets, perhaps like those of Ephesians 3:5, may be a narrower and more authoritative group than those mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. In fact, the Greek construction here allows them to be identified with the apostles themselves.

That New Testament prophecy is not infallible is also illustrated by the example of Agabus in Acts 21:10-11. Agabus prophesied that the Jews in Jerusalem would "bind" Paul and "deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." This was essentially an accurate prediction, but not in every detail. It was in fact the Romans who bound Paul (Acts 21:33), and the Jews tried to have him killed (Acts 23:12-22). Paul was delivered into the hands of the Gentiles despite the best efforts of the Jewish leaders. The prophecy did give reliable information about the future, but it was not infallible.

A further point to note is that New Testament prophecy is generally described as a *charisma*, that is, a gift, not an office (see Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1). Unlike such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah, who were called to the prophetic office, people gifted with prophecy in the church exercise their gift regardless of whether they are an ecclesiastical officebearer. On the other hand, this need not rule out the possibility that specific individuals may on occasion be called to the office of prophet (see Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28).

It may be that the phenomenon which in charismatic circles is designated with the expressions "word of knowledge" or "word of wisdom" (taken from 1 Cor. 12:8, KJV) is actually a manifestation of the gift of prophecy. Sometimes the Lord gives certain believers an insight into a particular situation, or words to speak to a particular person, which is not based on any prior knowledge and proves to be remarkably accurate and edifying. Such experiences, which are not at all uncommon in the Christian community, are probably best understood as examples of what the New Testament means by prophecy.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that the gift of prophecy can easily be abused or counterfeited. The New Testament contains repeated warnings against false prophecy. In this we see that both the exercise of the gift of prophecy and the church's testing of all claims to prophecy is part of the broader spiritual struggle between the truth and the lie, between Christ and Satan. We must therefore see the whole phenomenon of prophecy as part of the broader context of spiritual warfare, in which the enemy seeks to deceive God's people, and the church tests everything by the Word of God.

Prophecy understood in the way sketched above is a common experience in the history of the church. The contemporary Dutch Reformed theologian C. van der Kooi writes the following in his essay on prophecy: "The experience of God speaking and of his communication with mankind is not restricted to the time of the Bible. Through history there flows a river of stories about revelations, visions, prophecies: the story told by Bede of the prophecy for King Edwin in 625, the spiritual experiences of Hadewych, the prophecies of the Anabaptists, Farel who adjures Calvin in God's name to remain in Geneva and not to withdraw into his study, the Great Awakening of 1742-1743 described by Jonathan Edwards. Then too the events of Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906, in our little land the preacher A. A. Leenhouts. And there are so many more who know about words which occurred to them, a message which burned in their souls, a dream which was for them more than a nightmare, a night vision that would not let them go" (*Tegenwoordigneid van Geest*, p. 132). Although we might debate the legitimacy of some of these examples, they nevertheless represent a significant strand of Christian experience in church history, which was recognized as "prophecy" from the time of the early Church fathers. In fact, it was not uncommon in patristic writings to make a "distinction between two kinds of prophecy, the one represented by canonical prophecies of the Old Testament, ranking next after apostolic teaching, the other being exercised in the primitive Church and resembling other spiritual *charismata*" (Lampe, *Patristic Greek* Lexicon, under *propheteia* II, A). In fact John Chrysostom wrote that the prophetic gift was widely distributed in every church (*Hom. 31.1 on 1 Corinthians*).

If we acknowledge the present reality of the gift of prophecy, what guidelines should the church bear in mind for the proper encouragement and regulation of the exercise of the gift of prophecy? In addition to the general criteria for discernment laid out elsewhere in this report, the following points of pastoral advice seem wise.

- Approach the subject with an attitude of prayer and humble submission.
- Provide sound scriptural teaching on the subject, both from the pulpit and in other contexts, such as leadership training.
- Be patient and proceed slowly.
- Recognize and encourage the gift of prophecy as it has already functioned in the church, perhaps under a different name.
- Provide initial opportunities for the exercise of the gift in smaller and more intimate settings than the public worship service, strictly bearing in mind biblical guidelines as laid out in 1 Corinthians 14,

with the goal of edification of the body, not personal prestige or attention.
– As the exercise of the gift grows, continue to stress the far greater importance of Scripture as the uniquely reliable source for hearing God's voice. It is only on the basis of Scripture that we can authoritatively proclaim "Thus says the Lord."

Appendix C provides (for illustration purposes) two examples of guidelines for receiving and sharing prophetic words that have been developed for use in public worship and other ministry settings.

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

Intercessory prayer has always been a significant part of the Christian tradition. From its inception, the apostle Paul exhorted the churches of Asia minor to pray for each other. "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all of the Lord's people" (Eph. 6:18). In the early church, intercession was incorporated as a key component of the worship service, a practice that continues presently in the form of the congregational prayer. Today, many of our churches have prayer groups that meet regularly to pray for the community, the church, and the needs of our

world. According to the survey, numerous churches have held healing services or prayers for healing in the spirit of James 5 to intercede on behalf of a sick person in their midst.

Implicit in these acts of prayer is the conviction that our prayers achieve something, that is, we pray with the expectation that something will be different because we pray. Exactly what is accomplished by our prayers, however, continues to be a subject of discussion among Christians. While some traditions have emphasized the way prayer changes the one who is praying, others claim that prayer changes the way God acts in our world. Third wave understandings of intercessory prayer emphasize the latter, focusing on prayer as powerful and effective (see James 5:16b) in shaping the future.

According to third wave literature, through prayer we move the hands of God to bring about healing, pour out blessing, and establish his kingdom in this world. Al Vander Griend in his course on prayer speaks about "releasing the power of God,"[1] a phrase that is also found in the writings of C. Samuel Storms.[2] Dutch Sheets, in his book *Intercessory Prayer*, goes further, claiming that "God needs our prayers"[3] and without prayer, God may choose not to pour out his blessing and grace in the same way. Such claims are based on the interpretation of a number of biblical narratives which suggest that without prayer, God will not or cannot act for the sake of his people. In Exodus 17 when the Israelites go out to battle against the Amalekites, Moses ascends the hill and adopts a posture of prayer (lifting his hands in appeal to God for help). When Moses grows weak and lowers his hands, the Amalekites begin to overcome the Israelites. In other words, the prayers of Moses affect the outcome of the battle. Similarly, in Ezekiel 22:30-31, after a long description of the sinful practices of the people of the land of Judah, the Lord says to Ezekiel, "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger. . . ." This is often interpreted as a reference to the task of prophetic intercession on behalf of the people. It is claimed that if someone had been found to pray and petition the Lord for the sake of Judah, God would have postponed or even abandoned his plan to destroy the land.

In third wave circles, praying in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18) is an important element of prayer that is powerful and effective. While Pentecostals and charismatics have equated praying in the spirit with speaking in tongues, the third wave associates "praying in the Spirit" with being attentive to the promptings of the Spirit who leads us as we pray, "perhaps revealing things about the situation to us, or bringing Scriptures to our minds so we can pray for them in the situation."[4] Dutch Sheets goes on to note that sometimes, the Spirit empowers our prayers "by literally praying through us as we pray in the Spirit."[5] Our prayers are effective particularly when

[1] Al Vander Griend, "Passion and Power in Prayer" (Grand Rapids: Church Development Resources, 1991), Session 6.

[2] C. Samuel Storms, *Reaching God's Ear* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988).

[3] Dutch Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), p. 32.

[4] Sheets, p. 98.

[5] *Ibid*.

we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers such that our requests align with the divine will.

Prayer in third wave circles is distinguished from more traditional forms of intercession by the conviction that prayer is powerful and effective and by the practice of "praying in the Spirit." What follows is an evaluation of these aspects of third wave prayer in light of biblical teachings and the Reformed confessions.

a. Prayer as Powerful and Effective

While the third wave places more emphasis on God responding to our prayers than we are accustomed to (and perhaps comfortable with), the notion that prayer is powerful and effective is firmly rooted in Scripture and in the Reformed tradition. In Scripture, for instance, we discover numerous examples of God acting, sometimes in extraordinary ways, in response to the prayers of his people. Moses intercedes for the Hebrews when God's wrath threatens to destroy them (Ex. 32:1-14) and God relents (see also Ps. 99:6). When Joshua cries out to God for help in the battle against the Amorites, we read that the Lord listened to a human [Joshua's] voice (Jos. 10:14). Hannah testifies that the birth of Samuel is God's response to her prayer in 1 Samuel 1. Hezekiah prays to God to heal him from a life-threatening illness, and 2 Kings 20:5 suggests that God responds directly to his prayer. In Acts 12, the church prays fervently for Peter, and that night an angel of the Lord rescues him from prison. In addition to these accounts of God responding to the prayers of his people, there are many passages that exhort believers to pray with persistence and confidence (Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13; 18:1-7; John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24; Phil. 4:6; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15). By example and by directive, we are invited to pray in faith and with the hope that God will respond to our prayers.

What complicates any theology or practice of intercessory prayer is the doctrine of the sovereignty and providence of God. If God is all knowing and all powerful, doesn't he already know what we need before asking it? If it is God's will to heal someone, won't he do it regardless of whether we pray? Is prayer not superfluous? Calvin recognizes the problem but assures his readers that prayer is not only not superfluous but the chief exercise of faith and hope.[6] "To know God as the sovereign disposer of all good, inviting us to present our requests, and yet not to approach or ask of him," Calvin writes, is "just as if one told of a treasure were to allow it to remain buried in the ground" (Bk. III.xx.1). While Calvin admits that prayer is a spiritual exercise given mostly for our benefit, he is adamant that a good part of the benefit is derived from knowing that God responds to our prayers. To this end, Calvin suggests that God sometimes gives the impression of "one sleeping or idling" in order to spur us on to prayer so that he might respond to our petitions and requests (Bk. III.xx.3). "'The keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:4),' and yet he is inactive, as if forgetting us, when he sees us idle and mute" (Bk. III.xx.3). Thus, while God is completely and solely in control of the world, he acts as if

[6] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Ephesians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Eph 6:18). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

he is dependent on us. Furthermore, Calvin implies that there may be situations into which God will intervene only if people pray because God has ordained it to be so. In some cases, the prayers of God's people are part of the total matrix of God's providence.[7] In this way, Calvin firmly holds together a high view of God's sovereignty with free will and human responsibility (see particularly Bk. I.xvii.3-5). Therefore, as Christians, we should pray and pray expectantly.

Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism makes some remarkable statements regarding prayer. In response to Question 116, "Why do Christians need to pray?" the catechism answers, "Because 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" (emphasis added). The implication is that there are things God doesn't bestow on us because we fail to ask.

b. Praying in the Spirit

In third wave circles, *praying in the Spirit* is construed as receiving divine guidance in how to pray. Such guidance is an important factor in prayer for Calvin as well. Prayers are effective when they are aligned with the divine will (1 John 5:14). Thus, in prayer, we are to submit our own wills to that of God's and allow the Spirit to guide our thoughts and prayers.

God gives us the guidance of the Spirit in our prayers to dictate what is right and to regulate our affections. For seeing that "we know not what we should pray for," the Spirit makes "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26), "not that he actually prays or groans, but he excites in us sighs, and wishes, and confidence, which our natural powers are not at all able to conceive" (Bk. III.xx.5).

It is important to note, however, that for Calvin, guidance by the Spirit does not mean we become idle and dull in our praying, that we empty our minds so that they might be filled by the Spirit. Instead, Calvin asserts that "while the inspiration of the Spirit is effectual to the formation of prayer, it by no means impedes or retards our own endeavours" (Bk. III.xx.5). The guidance of the Spirit doesn't release us from investing our hearts and minds in the act of prayer but should compel us to greater reverence, submission, and attentiveness as "befits those who enter conversation with God" (Bk. III.xx.4). For Calvin, a right demeanor in prayer is akin to praying in the Spirit and a key to effective prayer.

Calvin uses the metaphor of a conversation to get at this aspect of prayer (see also Bk. III.xx.5). Prayer is not just about us talking to God, but God, by his Spirit, communicating with us through our thoughts, impulses, and intuition (John 14:26). Calvin stopped short of exploring more explicit kinds of divine guidance in the form of visions and "words of knowledge,"[8] limiting communication to common human

[7] James 1:5 provides an interesting example of God bringing something about in response to prayer.

[8] The spiritual gift of "words of knowledge" is given no precise definition in Scripture. The 1973 report describes the gift as "a heightened insight and understanding of the Scriptures, and the ability to communicate this to others in teaching (p. 458)." At the same time, the report acknowledges that this description is no more than a suggestion. In this report, "words of knowledge" is being used according to third wave definitions of this gift as supernatural revelation given for a specific situation.

experiences. Even so, he lays the groundwork for an understanding of prayer that is dialogic, attentive to the promptings of the Spirit who directs our thoughts to the divine will.

The 1973 report also addresses the notion of guidance. It notes the promise of God to guide his people (Isa. 58:9-11; Ps. 23:3) and recognizes the common practice of seeking divine guidance at the beginning of ecclesiastical assemblies or in confirming one's vocational calling. Furthermore, it commends "our neo-Pentecostal brethren for their desire to be led by God in all their decisions."[9] At the same time, the report cautions against some of the ways in which divine guidance is sought. These include opening the Bible randomly to seek a divine word for a specific situation or limiting divine guidance to a spontaneous message spoken by way of "prophecy" or tongues. While the 1973 report clearly prefers guidance that comes by way of regenerated hearts and minds through the reading of Scripture, it also states, "we do not wish to deny that guidance may come, from time to time in unusual ways."[10] In this way, the 1973 report creates room for the possibility that the Holy Spirit may guide us by means other than Scripture.

The point of this brief theological reflection on intercessory prayer is to show that the notion of powerful and effective prayer is not new in Reformed circles. Rather, the third wave focus on intercession is a helpful reminder of the importance of prayer. Where the Reformed tradition primarily differs from the third wave is in the area of divine guidance. While Calvin recognizes the need for guidance from the Spirit in order to pray effectively according to God's will, such guidance is limited to common human experiences. This is consistent with Calvin's conviction that the charismatic gifts are no longer operative today. In third wave circles, by contrast, gifts such as prophecy and "words of knowledge" are currently being exercised by believers through the power of the Holy Spirit, and divine guidance is sought through these forms of extrabiblical revelation.

While cautious, Synod 1973 departed from the cessationist position of historic Protestantism and acknowledged that God by his Spirit may work in both ordinary and extraordinary ways through his people to bring about his kingdom in this world. This report seeks to reiterate and encourage greater openness to the operation of all the gifts of the Spirit. As such, we reject the qualitative distinction that is often made between the charismatic and the more ordinary gifts, implying that some have greater value, are greater evidence of the Spirit, or ought to be viewed with greater suspicion. Instead, we believe that when any gifts are exercised to the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom, there we witness the Holy Spirit at work liberating and directing "natural" human functions. Just as all the gifts of the Spirit can be directed to the glory of God, so it is true that they are all susceptible to abuse and excess. The body of Christ must be discerning such that the exercise of all gifts conforms to biblical directives and pastoral guidelines.

Likewise, we suggest that we ought not to discriminate between the "usual" and the more "unusual" means of God's guidance as we find

[9] *Acts of Synod 1973*, Report 34, p. 461.
[10] *Ibid*.

in the 1973 report. In the matter of guidance for a specific situation, the appeal to revelation, whether by Scripture or other means in the form of promptings, intuitions, visions, prophetic words and "words of knowledge," will always demand scrutiny and discernment by the community of faith. As a result, we ought to be open to God's guidance in whatever form it comes to us, yet always on guard for the ways in which such guidance may be misconstrued, abused, or manipulated.

In saying this, we also acknowledge the potential for distortions in third wave circles with respect to intercessory prayer. First, power, in the third wave, tends to be limited to an extraordinary blessing or work that God does for the sake of his people or the world. While this serves as a good reminder that God may at times, work in extraordinary ways, it undermines the notion that God's power is also evident in the more ordinary ways of his providential care or in veiled ways through suffering (as in Jesus' death on the cross). As a result, we can become blind to the many ways God is at work in our world and fail to praise and thank him for his ongoing love and care. Second, in third wave circles, it is common to attribute blessings being poured out in the lives of individuals or more broadly in the world to prayer alone rather than recognizing the complex ways in which God works his purposes in the world. While we recognize the power of prayer, we also acknowledge that God's power is "released" through the ordinary use of human gifts and talents. Thus, when someone is sick, we pray for them, but we also bring them to a doctor. In trying to alleviate poverty and disease in developing countries, we pray for strength for the people, for the land to be fertile, for corruption to cease and for justice to prevail. However, we also equip people with new skills, work with them in planting hardier and more nutritious crops, and educate them about health issues. God uses each of these means to bring about his kingdom. Prayer and action properly belong together. Third, there is a potential danger of attributing power to the person praying rather than to God, thus robbing God of the glory due him. This danger is evident in the suggestion that God is dependent on our prayers to establish his kingdom. At times, third wave literature suggests that a certain amount of prayer is required to "tip the prayer bowls of heaven" and release the power of God.[11] However, God is not rendered impotent when we don't pray although he may choose not to act because we don't pray. Any theology that disrupts the delicate balance of God's sovereignty and human responsibility distorts the practice of intercessory prayer. Fourth, there is a tendency in third wave circles to attribute too much authority to the nudges, intuitions, "words of knowledge" and prophetic words believed to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The comment, "God told me . . ." or "The Holy Spirit is showing me . . ." fails to recognize our fallibility in receiving revelation from God and the wisdom required in discerning God's will. "Praying in the Spirit" is an act that requires caution and discernment.

[11] See particularly Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*, pp. 200-11.

c. Affirmations

1) Intercessory prayer is powerful and effective, which is a healthy antidote to fatalism and inevitability. In his sovereignty, God 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.

2) God has given us his Holy Spirit to help us pray (Rom. 8:26-27). Therefore we ought to be attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit that comes to us through Scripture, promptings, intuition, visions, prophetic words or "words of knowledge," revealing to us God's divine will as we pray.

d. Cautions

1) 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 God will do so in a specific way.

2) God's power is exhibited in a variety of ways that include extraordinary intervention, ordinary acts of providential care, and sometimes even situations of human suffering. In determining how our prayers are being answered, we ought to be open to the many ways God may be at work in our world.

3) Prayer and action properly belong together. Any notion of prayer that thwarts or discounts the application of ordinary human gifts and talents to the pursuit of the kingdom of God here on earth is a distortion.

4) 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.

5) The guidance received in listening to God in prayer may not supersede or disagree with Scripture and must be discerned.

4. Healing

Healing continues to be one of the most pursued and perplexing topics which is not unique to but also is expressed in the third wave. Physical healing continues to be a significant emphasis in the ongoing charismatic wave. The third wave has a somewhat different focus on physical healing and also encompasses and even emphasizes inner or emotional healing. In addressing the charismatic wave, the 1973 report provides a balanced and blended analysis of the phenomenon of physical healing that remains helpful today and applies to all forms of healing ministry. It rightly states that the gift of healing is given to some but that prayer for the sick has always been the practice of Christians and is even uniquely assigned to

the elders (James 5:14). At times answers are seen through the work of doctors and medicine and at other times in ways beyond their skill and ability. Carrying an overall positive tone, the report clearly concludes that "believers ought diligently to pray for healing for each other and themselves, elders in particular ought to pray for the sick, and all should pray believing that the Lord who sent the Spirit is still the Lord whose power can astonish us beyond measure and who does all things well" (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 455). Pastor Henry Wildeboer, a CRC minister, carries this positive encouragement through his book *Miraculous Healing and You* (1999), challenges the church in general to establish increased healing prayer ministry, and charges elders and pastors to teach and practice healing prayer according to the call of James 5 (Wildeboer, pp. 75ff).

a. Healing and the kingdom of God

Jesus and the apostles engaged in healing ministry as a witness to the gospel (Heb. 2:4). As was the case then, we need to be clear now that healing is not for its own sake—that it is not about us but about following Jesus, witnessing to the gospel, and advancing the kingdom of God. In the Bible, the ministry and gift of healing, like other signs and wonders, were given as a taste of the coming fullness of the kingdom, not as the fullness here and now. The Reformed conviction that the kingdom is both already and not yet also must continue to sound clearly in any ministry of healing or exercise of gifts of healing. That the kingdom has an "already" dimension encourages expectancy, and that the kingdom is also "not yet" curtails being presumptuous, making demands on God, or naively claiming healing and believing that it is true despite evidence to the contrary.

John Wimber, a pioneer of the third wave, was deeply influenced by the writing of George Eldon Ladd on the kingdom of God, resonating with his teaching on the already and not yet and the reality of our present battle with the kingdom of darkness, but also recognizing the power and authority in the kingdom of God that already is ours in Christ (Wimber, p. 41). Nicky Gumbel, in the Alpha Course, identifies the influence of John Wimber, including his teaching on the kingdom of God and healing at Holy Trinity Brompton, a church of the Church of England in London, England. Drawing on the teaching of the already and not yet of the kingdom of God in answering the question "Does God heal today?" Gumbel says, "We live between the times, when the age to come has broken into history. The old age goes on, but the powers of the new era have erupted into this age. The future kingdom has broken into history. Jesus preached the kingdom of God. He also demonstrated its breaking into history by healing the sick, raising the dead, and driving out demons . . . healing is one of the signs of the kingdom which was inaugurated by Jesus Christ and continues to this day. . . . Hence we should expect God to continue to heal miraculously as part of his kingdom activity" (Gumbel, pp. 204, 206). Brad Long, executive director of PRMI, defines the kingdom of God as "the growing reality of God's presence, life, and rule on earth as it is in heaven. The kingdom of God is the transformation of the fallen creation into God's new creation" (Long, *In the Spirit's Power*, p. 5). He teaches further that the

gifts of the Holy Spirit, including gifts of healing, are for life "between the times," drawing from Gordon Fee's teaching on the kingdom of God in *God's Empowering Presence*—"the early church . . . lived 'between the times'; *already* the future had begun, *not yet* had it been consummated. From the New Testament perspective the whole of the Christian existence—and theology—has this eschatological 'tension' as its basic framework" (Fee, p. 803; quoted in Long, p. 19). Long ties this identification of this age together with spiritual gifts like healing, maintaining that "the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts and manifestations in order to enable us to witness to Jesus Christ in this difficult, but exciting, 'between the times' as the end time people of God" (Long, p. 22). Further, Long teaches that "through gifts of healing, God shows forth His love and power. He shows His concern, not only for our souls, but for our bodies as well. The ultimate goal of the kingdom of God is wholeness in Christ" (Long, p. 110).

We affirm this biblically balanced placement of healing in the context of the already of the kingdom of God, while recognizing the reality of the not yet dimension. While at various times and places the quality and quantity of healing varies from Jesus, the apostles, and the early church, there is a kingdom theological continuity in the exercise of spiritual gifts of healing and a parallel to New Testament healings (Turner, p. 329). This seems a reasonable claim both in light of kingdom theology and also in terms of the effects of the experience of healing on people's lives, confronting them with the reality of Christ's presence by the Spirit in their lives, a freedom to serve, and a call to express gratitude in following Jesus Christ as his disciple in a multitude of varied callings.

b. The role of faith in healing

The role of faith in healing is one of the controversial touch points of this topic, but one which the third wave tends to balance in the way that the 1973 report encouraged. Briefly, in biblical cases of healing we sense that faith is part of the picture, but sometimes it is the faith of the person, at other times it is the faith of those who brought the person, and yet in other situations faith is not mentioned. Sometimes prayer and forgiveness are prominent, and at other times they are not. As the 1973 report says, with which we resonate, "healing can occur without the presence of any of these precisely because healing points to the power of God both to heal and to save" (p. 454). Yet there seems to be a general tie between faith and healing, understanding faith as an expression of trust that Jesus is able to work—and where there is not this trust, Jesus is able to do little, as was the case in his own hometown because of the lack of faith (Mark 6:1-6). John Calvin distinguishes between saving faith in Jesus and faith by which "miracles are performed in his name" (Calvin, quoted in Long, p. 107).

Mike Evans, founder of Wholeness Ministries, in biblically surveying the role of faith in healing, recognizes "that the role of faith is important, but not the single ingredient necessary for healing or effective prayer" (Evans, 2-1). Evans concludes his biblical survey by saying, "It should be evident after examining biblical examples of

healing that there is no pattern. From this observation of Scripture, we can submit a basic principle that is applicable in praying for healing: There is no universal method or experience that can be applied to all cases. . . . Our faith lies in the obedience of praying for the sick, despite our doubts" (Evans, 2-5, 6). In the third wave there seems to be a sense of the importance of general faith that acts out of obedience to Jesus' commands and believes that Jesus is able to work. Less emphasis tends to be placed on the faith of the particular person needing healing, thereby avoiding the hurt and spiritual devastation possible with the premise that healing always takes place if the person has faith. As Nicky Gumbel says in regard to faith and love, "the more we pray for, the more we shall see healed. Those who are not healed usually speak of the blessing of being prayed for—provided they are prayed for with love and sensitivity. . . . If we love people we will always treat them with respect and dignity. If we believe it is Jesus who heals we will pray with simplicity, because it is not our prayer but the power of God that brings healing" (Gumbel, pp. 211-12). We commend this biblically balanced perspective on the connection between faith and love and healing where it is promoted and practiced in the third wave, and in any healing ministry.

c. Inner healing

Assessing inner healing confronts us with a level of complexity beyond what we encounter in terms of physical healing. Inner healing relies on biblical, neurological (brain theory), and psychological bases, intertwined together.

1) Biblical support

In terms of biblical support, we find that articulation of the biblical basis for inner healing is often weak. There is a tendency to read into and interpret biblical passages in light of inner healing principles and practices, thereby resulting in too many forced connections and examples that ignore the context. These passages include but are not limited to Isaiah 34:18 ("the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit"); Isaiah 53:5 ("by his stripes we are healed"); John 8:29 ("the truth will set you free"); John 9:25 ("I was blind but now I see"); 1 Corinthians 8:1 ("knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"); and Hebrews 12:1 ("let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles . . ."). By this we are not saying that inner healing is unbiblical; however, an overdone desire to prove a textual biblical basis undermines credibility.

When biblical principles are drawn on, the credibility of the inner healing movement is helped. For example, we can underscore that God wants us to walk in truth and light, not in deception and darkness. And while God may have a positive purpose for leaving us in physical or other circumstances of affliction, it does seem that God would have no reason to leave us languishing in lies. Further, we support that sanctification can be pursued in inner healing, a dimension of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Replacing lies with the truth about God, life, and others, is a vital personal dimension of sanctification that works its way out in

many facets of life, including emotional and physical well-being, and healthy relationships.

While this dimension of sanctification can be supported in inner healing, we caution against a tendency in inner healing circles to only value experiential knowledge and see the key to sanctification as experiential truth replacing lies. The value of experiential truth from the Holy Spirit can be so emphasized that it devalues receiving truth directly from the Scriptures. While there is a commonly understood dichotomy between head and heart knowledge, the Spirit can work a balanced head/heart faith powerfully through logical and academic study and can illuminate the heart to encounter Scripture in many ways. Further, a balanced head/heart knowledge can come simply from putting faith into practice. Stressing sanctification as only or even primarily coming through experiential truth from the Holy Spirit is a myopic understanding that undermines the value of a full-orbed pursuit of sanctification with heart, soul, mind, and strength. Balanced inner healing ministry validates the importance of Bible study and other means toward Christian discipleship, including simple but significant repentance from sin and the commitment to live out the truth of Scripture.

2) Influence of psychology and neurology

Inner healing's connection with psychology begins with its basic premise that present emotional pain and irrational, undesirable behavior are usually rooted in the past—and, more specifically, rooted in terms of the conclusions one comes to as a result of traumatic experiences (from the severe, such as sexual molestation, to the less severe, as in the criticism of parent or teacher, or public humiliation). The premise is that a present situation that is similar or reminiscent in any way of a past traumatic experience can trigger lie-based thinking, emotions, and actions out of proportion to present reality. In the field of psychology, specifically psychotherapy, there is a common thread of understanding that psychological and emotional problems can be rooted in the past and that revisiting such past experiences may be necessary to resolve those problems. Further, inner healing holds to memories being able to be suppressed or repressed, and even to the possibility of disassociation of the self if the event is extremely traumatic. Here, in the theory and practice of inner healing, we find more concepts found widely in the field of psychology—the idea of a subconscious, the possibility of repression of memories, and even disassociation. Repression is a basic defense mechanism by which painful or guilt-producing thoughts, feelings, or memories are excluded from conscious awareness. Disassociation is a defense mechanism sometimes triggered by traumatic experiences. The part of the psyche containing the memories, including thoughts, emotions, and sensations, is compartmentalized and not part of ongoing conscious awareness or memory. These concepts are also explored in neurology, or brain theory, in terms of how memory is stored and recalled, including the theory that a different part of the brain registers knowledge learned through experience than what

registers knowledge learned through education—the common right brain/left brain distinction.

Christians take a wide range of positions on psychotherapy in general and specific aspects of its theory and practice, including its neurological basis. This is evidenced in the book *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*. Some reject inner healing simply for its use of elements of psychotherapy, since one view is that Christians are to reject any form of so-called secular psychology. Others accept the validity of psychology for Christians, but vary in their assessment of inner healing due to the level to which they agree or disagree with the very points in psychotherapy at which inner healing connects. While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully address this relationship, we do hold that a Reformed worldview would embrace an integration view and that psychology and Christianity can be mutually informed. Christian study in the field of psychology is then open to accepting theories about humanity that do not contradict God's revelation in Scripture, and psychology is enriched by the biblical understanding of such concepts as humanity being created in God's image, the effects of sin on human behavior, the reasons for disruptive temptations, and the role of God in bringing healing. However, even if an integrationist approach can be supported as fitting with the Reformed worldview, exactly what qualifies for integration varies even in Reformed circles and so cannot conclusively validate or invalidate the connection of inner healing with psychology.

That said, the theory that the emotional pain that affects many people's lives is rooted in false beliefs rooted in past experiences has a ring of sensibility about it, even though it may be overly simplistic and not fully account for other reasons—physical, relational, circumstantial—for the pain or for irrational and undesirable behaviors. These past experiences can very much be a part of our conscious memory and affect life in the present. However, there is a real possibility that they may be forgotten memories. Forgetting things is a common experience of human life, and can be selective, often the good memories being ones that remain conscious. We selectively remember, and selectively forget. These are realities of day to day living, whether or not we determine that this is caused by psychological categories like conscious or subconscious repression or disassociation.

How past experiences are recovered and the attached lies are revealed is a touch point for concerns regarding inner healing. In a typical inner healing ministry session, Jesus is invited to bring memories to mind, unmask the lies, and replace them with a revelation of the truth. This leading and revealing may be through a mental image or through a vision. Here we agree with concerns that there is a real risk of implanting suggestions, leading to false memories. Guided imagery and visualization practices involve this risk and are never appropriate. Guided imagery or visualization are processes of directed thoughts and suggestions that guide a person's imagination. We also support the caution that any thought or mental picture received from the Holy Spirit by the prayer minister or

intercessors ought to be shared tentatively, if at all, and perhaps only to serve as an internal confirmation of the process being on track. These cautions are present and demonstrated in most illustrations in the material presented by Long & Strickler and Ed Smith—Smith holding the tightest parameters. Charles Kraft generally maintains cautions against suggesting what people ought to see; however, he seems to quickly step over his stated line in such guided exercises as the "back-to-the-womb" or "back to conception" exercises. While we believe that God in his grace will not withhold effective ministry due to the inner healing practitioner occasionally taking an overzealous role of guidance and suggestion, we stress that the principle of avoiding suggesting and guiding ought to be diligently maintained in any inner healing ministry. We recognize that there needs to be structure and direction in inner healing sessions, such as to biblically test truths supposed to be from Jesus, but not to make suggestions on what the memory or attached lies may be.

Interestingly, the Christian Research Institute (CRI), after an exhaustive evaluation, indicated in articles in the *Christian Research Journal* (Vol. 29, No. 2, 2006) that they detected nothing unbiblical about the core theory and practice of Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM), the prominent inner healing ministry model founded by Ed Smith. The Christian Research Institute, whose president is Hank Hanegraaff, is known for its critical thinking and doctrinal discernment in probing contemporary ministry movements. They do have concerns about what they see as peripheral issues, such as teachings on the sin nature, sanctification, and satanic ritual abuse. They also think that more scientific research needs to be done to validate the claims of TPM, while affirming that anecdotal reports of its effectiveness in practice justify further investigation. However, they remarkably find no biblical or spiritual problem with Christians engaging in the TPM core process of inner healing; yet they still withhold full endorsement of TPM's theory of emotional pain and claims of efficacy.

We take a similar open but cautious approach. Should a church have or seek to develop an inner healing ministry, it ought to be clear that this is not clinical counseling but is prayer ministry. It is also important that some basic balanced training and guidance be provided by the leadership to ensure that people are helped and not harmed. Several courses that generally fit within this evaluative overview are found in the bibliography. Any inner healing ministry ought to operate under the spiritual authority of church leaders and include clear accountability. There are also matters of abuse prevention that ought to be adhered to in the ministry setting, such as typically having two people present to minister. Liability issues should be understood and included in a church's insurance policy, where inner healing ministry will typically be included under the wide category of "counseling." Some of the training resources provide direction in these areas and even supply sample release agreements. Here the material by Michael Evans of Wholeness Ministries and Ed Smith of Theophostic Prayer Ministry are especially helpful.

As can be the case with so many programs and approaches in ministry, inner healing also ought not to be seen as the complete or sole solution for those suffering from emotional problems. The problems people experience come out of a large range of experiences and causes. Obsessive thoughts may be a result of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and treatment by a medical professional may be in order. Inner healing may or may not be needed or appropriate, or it may be helpful in a complementary way. The same can be said for depression, which may be due to a chemical imbalance in the brain and require drug therapy treatment. Again, inner healing may still be in order, as the onset could have roots in negative past experiences, but it would not be the complete solution. Proper diagnosis requires wisdom. Sometimes it requires medical help. Referrals to trusted professionals in the medical and psychological/psychiatric fields can help find the right form(s) of treatment in complex situations. Similarly, alongside or in place of inner healing ministry for recovery from emotional problems, there is the consistent call in the Christian life and community to discipleship pursued through Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, and accountability.

d. Affirmations

1) Prayer for healing has always been a part of the life of the church, whether it be public or private. 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.

e. 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 and deliverance

Both Scripture and the Reformed confessions require us to acknowledge the reality of spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul reminds us that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Answer 127 of the Heidelberg Catechism refers to this spiritual conflict when it affirms that "our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us." Calvin alerts us to the need to not only be aware but keenly invested in spiritual warfare:

> We have been forewarned that an enemy relentlessly threatens us, an enemy who is the very embodiment of rash boldness, of military prowess, of crafty wiles, of untiring zeal and haste, of every conceivable weapon and of skill in the science of warfare. We must, then, bend our every effort to this goal: that we should not let ourselves be overwhelmed by carelessness or faintheartedness, but on the contrary, with courage rekindled stand our ground in combat.
>
> (*Institutes*, 1.14.13, Battles trans.)

While third wave literature on spiritual warfare recognizes the attacks that come via the world and the flesh (or sinful nature), there is great emphasis given to the more direct role of Satan and the demonic and to deliverance from those influences. This is a valuable emphasis, because it is easy for us to be influenced by the naturalistic worldview of our Western culture, which tends to relegate the concept of evil spirits and demons to the realm of fantasy, failing to take seriously the impact of the supernatural powers of darkness on our lives (Eph. 6:10-12). As Christians, we are called to recognize that our "enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). We also need to acknowledge that we in North America, as well as in other parts of the world, are subject to the attacks and influences of the demonic.

We acknowledge the reality and seriousness of spiritual warfare and the important role that the third wave has played in bringing it to the church's attention. There are concerns, however, regarding some third wave teaching that we feel necessary to address and about which we encourage churches to use wisdom and caution as they find themselves engaged at various levels of spiritual warfare. These concerns include biblical support, terminology, the role of sin, sources of knowledge, the practice of deliverance, and "strategic-level spiritual warfare" (SLSW).

a. Biblical support

Here again we face the struggle of assessing the third wave in light of the lack of *specific* biblical support for some of its teaching. We don't mean to imply that all third wave teaching that lacks this specific support is therefore contrary to Scripture, but our desire to have clear-cut, conclusive chapter and verse direction was often elusive, especially in the area of spiritual warfare. There is an obvious connection in the Bible between Satan and the demonic with sin and its various manifestations and results, but Scripture is frustratingly silent at times concerning details we would like in understanding and functioning in the context of the cosmic spiritual battle in which we are enmeshed. We must, therefore be careful when we fill in the blanks left by Scripture. We must also allow the simplicity of Scripture to keep us from over-focusing on details and possible tangents. That said, however, we cannot blissfully ignore the reality of experiences being reported by believers around the world. We must be careful to use the biblical principles that are clear in filtering and understanding those experiences.

We know that Satan is real and powerful, described in vivid and terrible imagery in Revelation 12. We glean from the same context (v. 17) that Satan is enraged and makes war against believers, those who "hold to the testimony of Jesus." He is an adversary, deceiver, and tempter (1 Pet. 5:8; John 8:44; 1 Cor. 7:5). Satan takes personal interest in individuals and groups, as he did with Job and the disciples (note the plural "you" in Luke 22:31). Satan, through his demons, attacks individuals (demonizes), as is seen in numerous examples in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Satan and the demonic are still a threat and need to be taken seriously (Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8). On the positive side, we know that Satan is a defeated (ultimately) foe (Luke 10:18), that we are called to successful resistance (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9), and we are empowered by one who is greater than the "one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). And even though Satan has temporary status as "prince of this world," he will be driven out (John 12:31; Rev. 20:10).

b. Terminology

Another area of difficulty is the terminology used in the discussion of spiritual warfare in the third wave context. The New Testament has multiple ways of describing being under demonic control: a person may be "demonized" (Greek, *daimonizomai*, translated "demon-possessed" or "possessed by a demon" in the NIV); a person may "have" (Greek, *echo*) a demon or evil spirit (Mark 3:22, accusation against Jesus); a person may be "with" (Greek, *en*) a demon or evil

spirit (Mark 1:23); in one case, a woman is crippled and "bound" (Luke 13:11, 16), while elsewhere people are "tormented by evil spirits" (Acts 5:16).

Some of the confusion is due to the NIV's penchant for translating the concept of being with, having, or being demonized all with the term possessed. Possession, to some, implies a total control that is akin to ownership. We believe that, at least in the case of a believer, Satan cannot claim ownership. 1 John 5:18 clearly implies limits to Satan's influence in the life of a believer (anyone born of God).

Another difficult term is *inhabited*. In many New Testament references it is evident either from the context or from parallel passages that those referred to are inhabited (not a scriptural term) by one or more demons, which then need to be cast out. To some third wave proponents the difference between having a spirit inhabiting an individual (implied from within) is significantly different from being attacked by a spirit from the outside. The distinction could result in using different methodology for helping the individual gain freedom. Scripture, especially the Gospels, does not always offer such clear-cut distinctions. The man in Mark 1:23 was with (*en*—could be "in" or "alongside"); while the Gadarene of Mark 5 is described as both with (*en*—v. 2) and demonized (*daimonizomai*—v. 16). In both cases, Christ commands the spirit to come out, implying inhabitation of some sort. In the crippled woman's case (Luke 13:10ff), however, there is no indication that the spirit was inside or cast out. Jesus simply proclaimed her freedom, and her "bondage" (v. 16) was ended. We will eventually run into difficulty if we try to force spiritual concepts (beings) into a spatial construct. The nuances that trying to define "in" or "out" include could unnecessarily clutter the process of proclaiming freedom.

We would prefer the terms *demonization* or *oppression* to describe the specific attack of a demonic spirit on an individual, regardless of the degree or cause of that attack or whether it is occurring from within or from outside.

c. The role of sin

Prevalent in the third wave's approach to spiritual warfare is the matter of identifying specific sin or sinful patterns that have allowed or caused a demonic attack on an individual or community. We recognize that there is an obvious connection between sin and Satan's attack on God's created order. Humankind's purpose, "to glorify God and enjoy him forever" (Q&A 1, Westminster Shorter Catechism), stands in direct opposition to that of Satan. In speaking of our warfare against Satan, Calvin states that "if the glory of God is dear to us, as it ought to be, we ought to struggle with all our might against him who aims at the extinction of that glory" (*Institutes*, 1.14.15). That Satan continues to attack through temptation to sin, as he attacked Jesus, in an effort to destroy our relationship to God and God's created order is undeniable.

As sin weakens our spiritual health and resolve, it can surely weaken our resistance to spiritual oppression and even open opportunity for attack. Paul warns about letting sinful anger give "the devil a foothold" (Greek, *topos*, "ground") in our lives (Eph. 4:26), and Peter suggests

that not being self-controlled or alert (to sin in one's life) could make us prey to the enemy's attack (1 Pet. 5:8). That said, we also recognize that New Testament demonic oppression is not always associated with deeply rooted patterns of sin in a person's life; rather, these people are often grouped together with those who are victims of various illnesses and physical disabilities. When Jesus gives demonized people relief, it is sometimes merely indicated that he healed them (Matt. 4:24).

Third wave writers frequently connect demonic oppression with sins in a person's life such as lust, pride, and greed as well as with addictions to such things as alcohol, drugs, and pornography. This could lead to a misunderstanding regarding demonization. Demons may often be involved in tempting us to commit sins, but examples of demonization found in the New Testament do not supply underlying reasons or point to specific sins in those person's lives. There may be many underlying causes that have built up to significant spiritual oppression, and simply "casting out a demon" based upon behavioral patterns may be overly simplistic, not dealing with other important issues.

The 1973 report makes a similar point: "Again in our day and in the Western world, there are reports of demon possession and exorcism. We express great reservation about some of these reports and the indecent eagerness with which some gospel practitioners 'diagnose' cases of demon possession, when the difficulties are cases of hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness, or diseases such as diabetes ('sugar demon'). All of these are serious, and the Christian counselor, minister, or physician must and can deal with them according to biblical insight."[12]

As stated above, we do not wish to completely disassociate sin from spiritual oppression. As a couple of third wave authors illustrate it—people need to get rid of the garbage (sins/issues) that attracts rats (demons), not just shoot rats. We agree with the analogy that where sin is present, we may be more susceptible to attack, but not all attack is the result of sin in the individual's life. The other side of the coin also deserves a caution—sin in our lives cannot always be blamed on a specific spiritual attack. We must own our responsibility for resisting that which comes from our own carnality (the flesh) and the worldliness of the societal structures within which we live.

d. Sources of knowledge

The sources used in seeking to understand Satan, the demonic and their manner of working is an important issue. Proponents of the third wave look to the Bible as a source of knowledge in this area; however, some also rely heavily on other sources of information. When the Scripture is silent or inconclusive on a given issue, many of these writers turn to "clinical evidence" (knowledge gained through experiences in counseling and deliverance sessions). Two other sources used to gain awareness of demonic activity include the spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits (1 Cor. 12:10) and knowledge obtained by interviewing demons themselves. An example of this would be determining the presence, identification, and purpose of demonic forces in a room

[12] "Report 34: Neo-Pentecostalism." *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 463.

or specific geographic area. Another would be relying on those who practice non-Christian religions to provide information about demons. While this is accepted in varying degrees (some, not at all) by proponents of third wave thinking, two key people in the movement that would accede to these practices are Charles Kraft and Ed Murphy.

Evidence that people in modern times may be "possessed" or inhabited by demons comes from around the world. The loa possession that is part of the practice of voodoo (vodun) in Haiti is one example among many. Our concern, however, is that much of the "clinical evidence" of demonic inhabitation presented by third wave writers is anecdotal and/or subjective. For this reason it must be carefully evaluated. In some cases, third wave authors describe situations in which "demons" manifest themselves in what seems to be a response to the suggestions or commands of a counselor or deliverance minister. In such cases, it is wise to consider the possibility that a suggestible individual is manifesting or providing information in response to the expectations of others and not because of demonic inhabitation. This possibility, however, does not eliminate the reality of demonic manifestations; nor does it allow us to make a sweeping claim that all such manifestations are merely psychological in nature. Again, Calvin is critical of "those men . . . who babble of devils [demons] as nothing else than evil emotions or perturbations which come upon us from our flesh . . ." (*Institutes*, 1.14.19). This drives home the need to find appropriate balance between that which is purely psychological (at times, even manipulated), that which is spiritual, and that which contains elements of both.

We must also examine the spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits. This gift has most commonly been understood as the ability to distinguish between the work of demonic spirits and the work of the Holy Spirit. Even the 1973 report states, "Because of the danger of false prophecy and because Satan is ever the great imitator, there is always need for the church to be gifted in 'distinguishing between spirits.'"[13] Bible commentator Gordon Fee, himself a charismatic, believes that the gift may include that kind of discernment, but he suggests that it refers "particularly to the phenomenon of 'discerning, differentiating, or properly judging' prophecies in 1 Corinthians 14:29."[14] While we have examples of both Peter and Paul, through the apparent gifting of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3, 9; 13:9-10), being able to identify demonic (or Satan's) presence and activity, and we may safely assume that the same spiritual gifting can be found in the church today, we should take great care that we don't reduce the gift of distinguishing spirits as a kind of "spiritual Geiger counter." We will discuss later the need for various manifestations of spiritual gifting to be tested and verified.

The belief that it is possible to obtain reliable information from demons themselves also is questionable and fraught with risk. If, as

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 459.

[14] Fee, Gordon D. 1987. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; pp. 596-97. He takes this position because the gift of distinguishing spirits follows the gift of prophecy in Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 12:10, and because those two gifts are followed in turn by "tongues" and "interpretation," which is similar to the pattern found in 1 Corinthians 14:26-29.

indicated by the possibility above, demonic manifestations have been produced by expectations, then counselors may think that they are interviewing demons when they are not. Even allowing for the possibility of interviewing demons, since demons serve "the father of lies," the truthfulness of what they say should be treated with great scrutiny. While Kraft believes we can put demons "completely under the authority of the Holy Spirit,"[15] this method of gaining information has little or no direct biblical support and is, at best, questionable and without caution could cross into the practice of spiritism.

In like manner, animists and others who practice non-Christian religions and may be worshiping demons, inadvertently or intentionally, often offer information about the spiritual world. It should not be casually assumed that they have an accurate knowledge of the names and hierarchy of the demons they worship or of the principles by which the spirit world operates. Our primary source of knowledge about the demonic must be Scripture. Information derived from other sources should be treated cautiously and carefully evaluated.

e. The practice of deliverance

When Jesus told his disciples that his church would be built on the fact that he was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" and that the gates of hell would not overcome (stand against) it (Matt. 16:16, 18), he was speaking of deliverance from one kingdom (of darkness) to another (of God). Jesus proclaimed the coming of God's kingdom (God's saving rule). He pointed to his authority over the demonic as evidence of the breaking-in of the kingdom: "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). He explained that it was because he had defeated Satan (bound the strong man) that he was able to liberate people from the power of the evil one (v. 29). He also warned his hearers that having a demon cast out without life change was dangerous, because the evil spirit might return with "seven other spirits more wicked than itself" (vv. 43-45).

Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to extend his ministry of proclaiming the kingdom among the lost sheep of Israel. To equip them, he "gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every sickness and disease" (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1). Later Jesus sent out the seventy-two, and they returned with joy acknowledging that "even the demons submit to us in your name" (Luke 10:17).

Two approaches to giving relief to individuals who have been inhabited by demons or who are experiencing demonic influence—*power* encounter and *truth* encounter—stand out in third wave teaching. Samuel Storms defines a power encounter as follows: "A power encounter occurs when you confront the demon directly and verbally command that it identify itself (name, function, point of entry, etc. [although this is not essential to the power encounter]) and cast it out (to the abyss or to wherever Jesus sends it). Jesus employed the power encounter approach, as did Paul in Acts 16."[16] Kraft advocates using a

[15] Kraft, 1995:119; 1992:161. See also Wagner, 1996:69-70.

[16] Storms, C. Samuel. "Deliverance, Part I." Website: www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/deliverance-part-i.

power encounter only after dealing with the "garbage" (such as bitterness, fear) in people's lives through inner healing.

Neil Anderson favors truth encounter. In his words, "Truth is what makes an encounter with Satan effective because his primary strategy is deception." He says that the belief that "freedom from spiritual bondage is the result of a power encounter with demonic forces" is a misconception.[17] In Anderson's deliverance process, referred to as the S*teps to Freedom in Christ*, he focuses almost exclusively on the power that is found in praying through the truths of Scripture. Individuals are encouraged to battle against Satan's lies and influence by recognizing and claiming biblical truth regarding who they are positionally as believers and how to recognize, confess, and renounce past sins and present patterns of sin and their root causes. Storms believes that the truth encounter approach should be used whenever possible, but that sometimes a power encounter is required.[18]

Whenever third wave proponents are seeking to help people struggling with sins or addictions, their advocacy of a power encounter approach often seems misplaced. The New Testament teaches us that the way to deal with people who are struggling with sin and temptation is through the application of such things as Scripture, prayer, and accountability. Anderson's truth encounter is closer to this pattern.

In seeking to help a person who truly is a victim of demonic influence and/or inhabitation, we concur with the 1973 report's call upon the church "to exorcise such cases of true demon possession as may come to its attention with unerring fidelity to Christ and the Scriptures."[19]

f. Strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW)

Many proponents of the third wave believe in the existence of what they call "territorial spirits." Wagner and others believe that a unique kind of spiritual warfare is needed to combat these demons: strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW). The promise of SLSW is that it will break the power of evil in a geographical region so that evangelism can proceed with far greater effect.

The concept of "territorial spirits" is not altogether clear. Third wave writers often describe such spirits as high-ranking demons who rule over specific territories or geographical regions. They also speak of them as being assigned to geopolitical entities, such as nations, ethnic groups, and/or other social networks; therefore, their understanding "territorial" is much broader than geography.

In Scripture, the evidence for such powerful demons is quite limited, with Daniel 10:13, 20-21 being the most common. The conclusion is that since the archangel Michael has the role of "prince" or guardian for Israel, the "princes" of Persia and Greece must be demons. This leads to the inference that other geographical areas are ruled by similar demons, and that smaller regions or cities are ruled by lesser demons. Elsewhere in the book of Daniel, however, Persia and Greece refer not to geographical areas, but to empires that succeed one another and

[17] Anderson, 2000:258 and 23.

[18] Storms, *Ibid*.

[19] "Report 34: Neo-Pentecostalism." *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 463.

have shifting boundaries. Another viable interpretation of Daniel 10 is that malevolent spiritual powers use these empires as tools to attack the people of God. The conclusion that there are demons assigned to a specific country (such as Uruguay) or city (such as Los Angeles), based on Scripture, is open to question.

Given the possibility that there are demons assigned to rule particular regions, there is little if any biblical warrant for combating them by means of SLSW. Wayne Grudem, who is sympathetic with some aspects of third wave teaching, points out that there are no New Testament examples of summoning territorial spirits upon entering an area, demanding that demons supply information about the local hierarchy, or seeking to break "demonic strongholds" over a city before preaching the gospel.[20] In addition, the practice of "warfare prayer," when it involves rebuking high-ranking demons, needs to be reconciled with the warning of Jude 8-10.

A technique referred to as spiritual mapping involves studying the history of a given area, as well as "the ideologies, religious practices, and cultural sins that may invite and perpetrate demonic bondage" in that area.[21] Such mapping is not always connected with the identity of territorial spirits, and it obviously can be helpful in guiding prayer and evangelism. Many in the Christian Reformed Church are familiar with the 10/40 Window (the region of the northern hemisphere between the tenth and fortieth lines of latitude), having been motivated to make this part of the globe a focus of their mission prayers. However, some forms of spiritual mapping, especially those involving the naming of territorial spirits and the discovery of "grids of power" appear to lean heavily on an animistic or occultic framework rather than biblical evidence, which raises the same concerns expressed earlier.

Another feature of SLSW is identificational repentance. This involves discerning the prevailing sins or historical sins of an area, identifying with them personally, and seeking God's forgiveness for them. Some associated with the third wave speak of the possibility of "remitting" these territorial or national sins. Such remission is said to break spiritual strongholds that keep geographic territories, nations, or cities in bondage to demonic powers. Third wave leaders point to Daniel and Nehemiah as examples of identificational repentance. Daniel and Nehemiah, however, were confessing sin as representatives of God's covenant people. They were not seeking to remit the sins of Babylon or Persia. The concern some third wave leaders have shown about sins of racism and sins against native peoples is commendable. It is often appropriate for us to confess such sins corporately and publicly, but the notion that Christians can identify with the sins committed by a modern state or nation and remove the temporal curse and penalty for those sins, again, has questionable basis.

Third wave teaching on spiritual warfare is well intentioned and helpful in many ways in reminding us that we have strong and cunning spiritual adversaries. There are risks, however, of going astray at several points due to debatable interpretations of Scripture and because of the

[20] Grudem, 1994:421.

[21] White, 1990:136; Wagner, 1992:153-154; Dawson, 2001:85, 123.

extensive use of questionably reliable sources of information about demons and spiritual realities. Scripture does not specifically call us to cast demons of lust or anger out of people, to evict demons from hotel rooms or to rebuke territorial spirits. It does, however, call us to recognize the spiritual nature of the battles we wage, to put on the full armor of God, to resist the evil one, to be holy and to stand firm, "because the one that is in [us] is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We are to wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:11, 13, 17), and our weapons of truth "have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:40). With them we can "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" and can "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

g. Affirmations

1) Demonic powers are at work in every aspect of life, leaving no facet of life over which demonic forces do not want to maintain or reassert 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 "antithesis," which is another way of expressing "spiritual warfare."

2) Demons can and do attack people in varying degrees, ranging from simple oppression to possession. Christians can come under severe demonic attack and influence, including influence over thoughts and behavior; however, a true believer in Christ cannot be demon-possessed (implying ownership), because he or she belongs, body and soul, to the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

3) Both truth and power encounters have their place in spiritual warfare and deliverance (freedom) ministry. Truth encounter, which recognizes the role of repentance, submission to God, resisting the devil, and embracing truth in bringing freedom from demonic attack and demonization is preferred, because it allows the individual to remain cognitively aware and in control of the time when they are receiving ministry. There are times, however, such as when a manifestation takes place or there is stronger demonic resistance, when believers must exercise authority in Christ, commanding the departure of an identified demonic spirit. This is often referred to as a power encounter.

h. Cautions

1) Christians have three enemies: our carnality or fleshly desires, the temptations of the world, and the demonic. Each needs to be taken into account and their interconnectedness recognized. There is great danger in oversimplification, which can lead to an unbalanced attribution of all our problems to the demonic, thereby ignoring or falsely diminishing recognition of our personal responsibility in the areas of fleshly and/or worldly temptations; or the opposite error, ignoring the spiritual dimension and not recognizing and addressing demonic influence.

2) Strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW), especially its focus on spiritual mapping and territorial warfare, which include identifying,

naming, ranking, and combating specific demonic activity, has little and tenuous biblical basis and often results in an unhealthy balance by an overemphasis on the demonic.

3) Likewise, the practice of identificational repentance may be helpful for Christians in dealing with corporate sins, but there seems to be no biblical warrant for Christians to engage in this practice for the sins committed in a specific geographical area or for an unbelieving people group.

i. Unresolved

We recognize that demonic forces are at work within various geographical, political, and societal regions or structures; however, we are not in agreement that spiritual mapping is a helpful way to address this reality. There are some indications that it may be a helpful means of discerning how to pray against possible demonic influence or control. It may also be helpful in discerning specific areas of ministry or discipleship which are most needful. After discussion about the practice of spiritual mapping and other practices often associated with it, as discussed in the section on SLSW, the committee is unresolved regarding further advice about this practice.

B. Discernment: Manifestations and ministry expressions of the third wave

We have provided an overview, observations, and evaluation of some of the ways the third wave is expressed in ministry—prayer, prophecy, healing, and spiritual warfare. These ministry areas involve the experience and expression of various manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "manifestations of the Spirit" are spiritual gifts. In the third wave this category is broadened to include other experiences that occur under the influence of the Holy Spirit. These include trembling, resting in the Spirit, and receiving "words of knowledge." Here we provide some specific interaction with manifestations and some general guidelines and ministry expressions.

1. Dangers associated with the manifestations

Those who experience the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit are not free of sin in this life. Thus, in their sinfulness, they may misunderstand and misinterpret the Spirit's purpose in giving them gifts or manifestations. They may be tempted to abuse the spiritual power they have received or to imagine that they are part of a spiritual elite. Believers with special gifts may engage in manipulation, be puffed up in pride, or wrongfully judge others. They may attempt to "capture" the power of the Spirit as a tool to be used for their own purposes rather than those of God. In the book of Acts, Simon the sorcerer was identified as a believer and was baptized. Yet he sought to gain the power to bestow the Spirit, so that he might use it for his own sinful ends (Acts 8:18ff). Because spiritual gifts and manifestations can so easily be abused, we must be careful in seeking to discern our motives and be open to the correction of others.

Another danger in connection with gifts and manifestations is the denigration of reason. Some pejoratively describe reason as "man's wisdom." They then incorrectly assume that spiritual experience always trumps reason. We should view our ability to reason as part of the *imago Dei*

within us. Our reasoning powers have been tainted by sin. However, they have also been redeemed in Christ, and the Spirit of God works through them. Certainly we must submit our thoughts and deductions (as well as our spiritual experiences) to the litmus test of God's Word. But we should make prayerful use of God's gift of reason, not abandon it.

2. Discernment of the manifestations

The manifestations we are referring to have provoked a number of questions and some misunderstanding. In part this is due to their experiential and subjective nature. They are usually highly personal and entwined around the emotional and spiritual core of those who experience them. Thus they are resistant to clear definition and objective evaluation. Nevertheless, as Christians, we have an obligation to scrutinize these manifestations carefully.

In Romans 12:2 the apostle Paul tells his readers: "[B]e transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." Paul also prays that the Philippians may be able to "discern what is best and may be pure and blameless" (Phil. 1:10). Discernment is necessary for living the Christian life and also for determining whether or not a given manifestation is from the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 Paul instructs us to "test everything." The reason for this testing is so that the church can "hold on to the good" and "avoid every kind of evil" (v. 22). Paul says this in the context of urging the Thessalonian believers not to "put out the Spirit's fire" or "treat prophecies with contempt" (v. 19).

The apostle John likewise commands a "testing" of the spirits (1 John 4:1). He urges his readers to do this testing "because many false prophets have gone out into the world." John does not tell his readers to dismiss any and all new teachings (some of which may have come through prophetic words or visions), but he does present the discernment guideline of having to *acknowledge* from the heart "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (vv. 3-4).

Testing is necessary because of the presence of both spiritual and human purveyors of false teaching. It is also needed because we are capable of misunderstanding, misinterpreting, and misapplying a word that may be from God.

False manifestations may be the result of the working of Satan. Paul reminds us that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). According to John Calvin, "The tendency of all that Scripture teaches concerning the devils [evil spirits] is to put us on our guard against their wiles and machinations . . ." (*Institutes*, 1.14.13). Calvin goes on to warn us that Satan is not only powerful, but also crafty. Scripture identifies Satan as the "father of lies" (John 8:44), the one who "leads the world astray" (Rev. 12:9) and who "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). Jesus warns Peter that Satan has sought permission to "sift [the disciples] like wheat" (Luke 22:31). No doubt he still does that today.

That Satan can be the author of spiritual manifestations is evidenced in the power of the secret arts practiced by Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians (Ex. 7:11-12, 22). Again, the account of the sudden victory by the King of Moab after a human sacrifice (2 Kings 3:27) appears to point to demonic, supernatural intervention. In the Fall 2007 issue of the Calvin Theological Seminary *Forum* we are reminded that "almost all the charismatic gifts claimed by Christians also occur in shamanism or in spiritism . . ." ("The Work of the Holy Spirit," p. 7).

Thus we need to be cautious and discerning, but not so cautious that we allow our fears to quench that which the Spirit wants to do in the church today (1 Thess. 5:19). Instead of approaching manifestations in an attitude of fear and doubt, the body of Christ must be ready to discern the Spirit/spirits that it encounters.

3. The discernment process

Discernment requires wisdom. Since God promises wisdom to those who ask for it (James 1:5), it is important to seek wisdom in prayer. Indeed, an enriched prayer life is itself an evidence of the working of the same Holy Spirit whose presence may also be evident in gifts and manifestations. As the prayer life of an individual or church becomes more profound, there will at the same time be an increased awareness of sin and of the need for confession and repentance. While there may be exceptions both in Scripture and in church history, it is usually the case that God's blessing and evidence of the Holy Spirit's working are given to those who seek to live in fuller obedience to God and in closer communion with him.

It is essential to seek discernment through prayer. But it is also helpful to have some criteria to use in assessing various manifestations and ministry expressions. The following criteria for discernment are similar to those used by PRMI (Presbyterian and Reformed Ministries International).

a. Does it glorify Christ?—According to John 16:14, the Holy Spirit seeks to bring glory to Christ. So regarding any manifestation in a ministry experience, the question may be asked: Does this glorify Christ? A vision or prophetic word may not explicitly refer to Christ. Thus we may need to ask whether or not anyone or anything other than Christ receiving glory or honor results in the glory of Christ being diminished. (Anything that glorifies the Father or the Holy Spirit will at the same time bring honor to Christ as a member of the Godhead.)

The 1973 report gave the following counsel to those who considered themselves to be neo-Pentecostals:

> Do not glory in your gift(s), or in those who are gifted, but only in Jesus Christ and in the salvation that you have in him. "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" (I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17; cf. Jer. 9;23, 24). "For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (I Cor. 4:7). "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).
> (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 478)

b. Is it consistent with Scripture?—In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul says that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Thus a second criterion that should

be applied to manifestations is that of consistency with God's Word. A manifestation need not be explicitly mentioned in Scripture to be consistent with Scripture. However, no work, word, or manifestation of the Holy Spirit will contradict the biblical principles that the Spirit himself inspired. For example, a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit would not encourage pride or cause intentional harm.

If we are to use Scripture as a tool for discerning various expressions of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we must treat it with utmost integrity. We must avoid reading our own ideas into God's Word (*eisegesis*). And we must not allow the secular, primarily Western worldview of scientific naturalism to blind us to the biblical teaching that the triune God is still at work in the world today.

c. Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced?—The church of Christ not only exists to proclaim the gospel and advance God's kingdom. It also exercises the function of mutual edification. "The word of Christ" dwells in us richly as we "teach and admonish one another" (Col. 3:16). As believers we depend upon one another for reproof and correction as well as for confirmation and guidance.

Mature believers are those who "correctly [handle] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). They also have demonstrated that they have the gift of discernment. They have a zeal for Christ's glory. Consequently they can sense when someone or something else is getting glory that rightfully belongs to Christ. Such believers will be honest. They will be concerned to maintain truth and integrity rather than catering to individual feelings and desires.

Any new "spiritual" experience should be confirmed by such mature believers. This is especially important when one has received what appears to be a "word of knowledge" or prophecy that contains a specific instruction. It is wise not to act on such an instruction before it has been confirmed by other Christians.

We should never assume that because we have validated our experiences repeatedly in the past, additional validation is no longer necessary. Through the process of having mature believers confirm an experience (such as a prophetic word), the meaning of that experience may become clear. When others assess our experiences, their assessment will undoubtedly be marked by a certain amount of subjectivity. But as these believers work together, the dangers of being ruled by the subjectivity of any individual will be diminished.

d. Does it bear good fruit?—In Matthew 7:20 Jesus says concerning false prophets, "By their fruit you will recognize them." The gifts and manifestations of the Spirit should be *gift-wrapped* in the characteristics that the apostle Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). So concerning a manifestation, one needs to ask, "Does it bear good fruit?" Concerning a prophecy or word of knowledge, one will ask a slightly different question: "Does it prove to be true?" (see Deut. 18:21-22).

The nature of fruit is that it takes time to develop. Thus applying this criterion can be difficult. Some prophetic words have a long-term rather than an immediate fulfillment. And some manifestations and ministry experiences may appear to produce little immediate fruit.

However, generally we would expect that prophetic words and other manifestations given by the Holy Spirit today would have the purpose of benefiting today's church. A manifestation or empowerment that is not a prophetic word should produce something visible—such as physical healing—or something more affective or relational—such as peace or reconciliation.

The criteria we have mentioned cannot be applied in the same way in every situation. Here are two real-life examples that show how they might be applied:

1) Loraine woke up suddenly from a very deep sleep and sensed very strongly that God was telling her to go to a specific apartment complex. Loraine had not had this experience before, but she had been actively seeking to be more open to God's guidance and the Spirit's leading. She knew about the apartment complex because a close acquaintance lived there. She was aware that it was a place known for drug trafficking and poverty and that illegal activity regularly occurred there. Because her experience was so unusual and yet so clear, the first thing Loraine did was to pray for confirmation and even more clarity. She continued to feel a sense of urgency about going to the apartment complex and was convinced that God had given her a very specific assignment.

   a) Does the experience glorify Christ? Because Loraine's experience provided her with little instruction, she was not sure how God or Christ would be glorified, except through her willingness to obey. Loraine did not tell a lot of other people about her experience. Thus she was not seeking to attract attention to herself. In fact, the idea of telling others made her uncomfortable.

   b) Is the experience consistent with biblical revelation and principles? What Loraine sensed she should do did not seem to contradict any biblical teaching or principle. She knew from the Bible that God often does use his people to accomplish his will. The Bible doesn't always reveal how God spoke to those he guided.

   c) Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced? Loraine talked to members of her church who were part of a group that prayed together and were familiar with experiences of the Holy Spirit's work. She asked this small group for help in knowing (discerning) what she should do. Loraine had tried to figure out what God wanted her to do and was mentally processing several ministry ideas. Her small group encouraged her not to "get ahead of the Lord." They urged her to go to the apartment complex and see if God made anything clearer for her. She had already made an appointment to talk to the apartment manager. When she met with him on the following day, she did not get any further light on what she should do. She did learn that another church had some kind of ministry in the complex, although the manager didn't know much about it.

d) Does it bear good fruit? Loraine is not yet aware of any measurable fruit from this assignment from God, other than her own sense of wonder that God would have a specific assignment for her and the personal growth that those around her are seeing in her life.

2) When Greg was attending a conference on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and requested prayer, he fell backward (that is, he was "resting in the Spirit"). Greg was not praying for this experience and at that time did not know what it was.

a) Does the experience glorify Christ? At first, Greg approached the experience very analytically, wanting to make sure that his experience was not simply emotional or psychological. Thus he was not looking for attention to be drawn to himself. He also did not give undue honor to the person who prayed for him. Eventually, he concluded that the experience came from God and praised God for it. In that sense, it glorified Christ.

b) Is the experience consistent with biblical revelation and principles? Greg knew that Scripture speaks of people falling face down before the Lord. It does not mention falling backward. Yet Greg did not believe that his experience was contrary to Scripture. So it seemed consistent with biblical revelation and principles.

c) Do mature believers concur with or confirm what we have experienced? Greg had an opportunity to talk with others about his and their experiences almost immediately. Some confirmed what he felt by describing their own experiences. For some, resting in the Spirit was new, and they had entered into the experience with varying degrees of skepticism, but none of them felt uncomfortable, controlled, or manipulated. They all believed that their experiences were genuine.

d) Does it bear good fruit? Greg felt his experience was specifically for himself, although later he was able to share with and encourage others who were seeking a better understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. As a result of the experience, Greg gained a deeper sense of trust and a greater openness to God's personal touch and involvement in his life. These appeared to be good fruit.

The above criteria should not be interpreted to mean that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and ministry expression of the third wave are fraught with danger and, therefore, are better avoided. On the contrary, the church should be encouraged to seek all that the Spirit has to offer. The more discernment we show as we receive and make use of the varied gifts of God's Spirit, the greater our impact will be in advancing God's kingdom and the more fulfilling we will find the privilege of working together with him.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Dr. Al Wolters, chair, and Rev. Ray Vander Kooij, reporter, as representatives of the report for the study committee.

B. That synod provide the following counsel to the churches 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 with thanks.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II
(majority report)
Amanda Benckhuysen
Gerard L. Dykstra (ex officio)
Jeff Stam
Paul Tameling
Ray Vander Kooij, reporter
Al Wolters, chair

Appendix A
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Appendix B
Executive Summary of Survey Results
(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 that 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 on 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 the 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: 70 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.

Appendix C
Models of Protocol for Receiving and Sharing Prophetic Words

I. Practical principles for administrating the gift of prophecy in the church

[Excerpted, with permission, from the Student Workbook (pp. 132-33) of the Dunamis Video Course II, "In the Spirit's Power," a program expression of Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International (PRMI).]

The expression of the gift of prophecy has often been problematic for the church. The following observations are made by The Rev. Bob Whittaker, a prominent leader in the charismatic renewal that touched the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in the 1960s and 1970s:

> In the prayer groups, church services, and large gatherings we need to develop helpful ways of encouraging prophecy, and regulating it in such a way that the good is received and the church is protected from the false.
>
> Over the years I have found some workable ways of administrating prophecy:

1. A helpful approach in large corporate meetings is that any person believing they had a message from the Lord was expected to submit it first to the leaders of the meeting. They were prepared for this by public announcement or by written notice in the bulletin. They would then walk to the front of the meeting place, sit down next to the one appointed to discern prophecies, share what was on their heart, and be told if they could or could not give it to the whole assembly.

   This may be helpful in large congregational gatherings. However, in small prayer groups it may quench the Holy Spirit.

2 We developed a trained core of good models through the give and take of small group prayer and share groups. In such an atmosphere persons could try their wings in sharing what God put on their hearts, and receive feedback in a caring atmosphere of mutual encouragement.

3. If someone in a larger gathering should speak in a way that is really "off" or "out of bounds" I would say something like, "Thank you for your desire to contribute, but in the light of thus and so scriptural truth, I think we need to be careful about that or re-examine that." In other words, I raise a question which usually confirms everybody's question. Or I might say, "We need to pray about that."

4. For persons who repeatedly spout off in unwise ways or dominate meetings with "words," we will admonish them gently in private and/or have someone sit near them and pray for them silently to be still.

5. Most prophecies are simply reaffirmations of biblical truth spoken at the guidance of the Holy Spirit into the *kairos* moment. For example: "The Lord is with us," "He loves each one of us very much," "He is telling us not to be afraid and to trust Him to see us through." If the message sounds right and is biblical and in the right spirit, I will respond with an "Amen" or "Thank you, Lord." If it is harmless, but questionable, I will say nothing. Usually, such things are happily overlooked and forgiven.

6. When a prophecy is predictive, or directive, or heavy, or controversial, then something needs to be said or done by the leaders in response. If it obviously requires an immediate response to prevent harm to the body, the leaders can quickly huddle and then publicly respond.

Over the years PRMI has applied many of these practical guidelines by Rev. Whittaker. They have helped us avoid error, but also have encouraged people to grow in experiencing the gift of prophecy.

II. A Protocol for Receiving Prophetic Words in Public Worship

(From Community CRC of Meadowvale, Mississauga, Ontario. Used with permission.)

Preamble

The Governing Elders of the Community Christian Reformed Church of Meadowvale re-affirm our commitment to welcoming the Holy Spirit and every expression of all His good gifts into the life of this congregation. Using His word as the standard and His Spirit as our guide, we will grow together in the grace of discerning and interpreting prophetic words. We welcome the prophetic gifts in the great variety of ways and through the holy assortment of people, young and old, through which they come. And we welcome the prophetic word and the prophets that God sends to instruct (1 Cor. 14:31), to strengthen, to encourage, and to comfort us (1 Cor. 14:3).

Biblical Instructions and Safeguards:

1. We will choose the way of Love. Because one can only ever prophesy "in part" and because we will only ever see "through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:9-10), we need all the love-gifts of patience, kindness, protection, trust, humility and perseverance. And when we fail one another in the way of love, we will ask for the grace to forgive and be forgiven.
2. We will not be afraid. Though St. John warns us against believing everything we hear, he does so in a context of reassuring us that we are God's children and that "the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).
3. We will test every word. "Dear friends," St. John writes, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God…" (1 John 4:1). John was responding to a question about a specific teaching to which the church was being exposed. Every spirit is tested with this question: Do you acknowledge that Jesus has come in flesh? This test is one safeguard. Furthermore the prophetic word must be in congruence with the text of Scripture. And finally, there must be an internal witness given by the Holy Spirit to those giving oversight that the word is or is not true. Such testing and discernment are not dependent on a full, immediate understanding of the word, only that all the tests have been satisfactorily performed.
4. We will seek God's peaceable order in receiving prophetic words. Those who are welcomed to this pulpit will be individuals that are trusted in the Body of Christ – known by their work and testimony here or in other parts of the worldwide Church as those "who correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We intend to give the Holy Spirit every freedom to speak even extemporaneously through those he sends to us. Confident that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets," we will together seek God's "fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40).
5. We will exhort the Body to "be eager to prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:39). We will not knowingly "put out the Spirit's fire" or "treat prophecies with contempt" (1 Thess. 5:20). But we will "test everything. Hold onto the good. [And] avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). Therefore we will continue to encourage the church to bring prophetic words. At times those words will be given to the corporate Body during appropriate times in public worship. The pastor and elders will in those moments test and discern the words and respond publicly. We also recognize that as this gift operates in the Body, individuals will receive prophecies from other individuals. The same safeguard tests are to be followed.

Conclusion

The prophetic gifts are essential to the vitality of the Community Christian Reformed Church of Meadowvale. Moreover, they can be evangelistic—signs of God's mercy and grace to those who don't believe in God among us (1 Cor. 14:24-25). When wholly integrated with all the other spiritual gifts, we grow up strong and mature into Jesus. We will not always recognize His voice. So the Body itself—our relationships being shaped by His Word and Spirit—is also a divine safeguard. We need each other. In our eagerness to have spiritual gifts, may God help us to "excel in the gifts that build up the church" (1 Cor. 14:12).

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II (minority report)

Outline of the report

I. Introduction

II. Questionable beliefs not adequately addressed by the majority report
A. General
1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief

B. Prophecy
1. Concerns associated with this belief
2. Evaluation of this belief

C. Healing
1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief

D. Prayer

E. Spiritual warfare
1. First questionable belief
2. Second questionable belief
3. Third questionable belief
4. Further questionable beliefs

III. Recommendations

I. Introduction

Synod 2007 decided to withhold action on the recommendations of both the majority and the minority reports of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism. The grounds for this action were

> a. By not providing sufficient biblical study and theological reflection on key aspects of the third wave movement, both reports fail to adequately 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, and so forth) with a view to providing advice to the churches" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 608).
> b. Overture 36 raises significant issues and questions that need to be addressed.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 614)

Synod 2007 also decided to recommit the majority report and augment the membership of the majority study committee in order to fulfill the study committee's original mandate and to report to Synod 2009. In its grounds for this decision synod said,

> c. The majority report needs to:
> 1) Address the issues and questions raised in Overture 36 in the areas of prophecy, prayer, healing, and spiritual warfare by providing adequate biblical study and theological reflection to ground the affirmations, cautions, and recommendations of the report.
> 2) Incorporate key elements of Report 34 of 1973, and address the relevance of that report to the specifics of the third wave movement.

3) Provide a more fully developed biblical-theological rubric (guidelines) to assist pastors and others in the church to exercise discernment when they encounter specific manifestations of the Spirit that could be indentified as third wave.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 614-15)

The undersigned was the author of Overture 36 to Synod 2007 and was added to the majority committee in that year. I have worked amicably with the other members of the committee and have helped shape parts of their report. At a number of significant points, however, my biblical and theological study has led me to conclusions that differ from those of other members of the committee. Thus I have found it necessary to submit this minority report instead of signing the report of the majority.

Sections I through IV of the majority report provide an informative overview of the third wave movement and explanation of its appeal. I differ with the majority primarily in section V, "Evaluating the third wave movement," and section VI, "Recommendations." This minority report consists of my evaluation of some questionable third wave beliefs that in my view are not adequately addressed in the majority report. The report concludes with recommendations that would modify the recommendations of the majority.

Note: To avoid duplication, the bibliographies of this report and the majority report have been combined in Appendix A of the majority report.

II. Questionable beliefs not adequately addressed by the majority report

A. General

The Reformed worldview framework set forth in the majority report is valuable and helpful. However, under the "General" heading, the report fails to address two questionable beliefs associated with the third wave.

1. First questionable belief: It is possible for Christians to have the Spirit *within* them for sanctification, but not *upon* them for empowerment. Thus it may be necessary for Christians to ask for an *initiatory* baptism or infilling with the Spirit *subsequent* to conversion that will empower them for successful ministry (and will often be accompanied by manifestations).

   Many proponents of the third wave do *not* believe that it is necessary for Christians to ask for an initiatory and empowering baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion. However, Presbyterian and Reformed Ministries International (PRMI), which identifies itself as third wave, *does* teach that asking for such an initiatory baptism for empowerment may be necessary for believers. In their 1996 book *Receiving the Power: Preparing the Way for the Holy Spirit,* Brad Long and Doug McMurry describe the "perplexing vision" of

   > whole congregations of Christians who have attained godly character but who manifest no power for ministry. American churches house many sweet, godly people with no effective ministry in bringing others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Too many Christians are content to be only half-filled with the Holy Spirit. They are "filled" (*pleitho*) but not "filled" (*pleiroo*), having "the Spirit upon" but not "the Spirit within," or vice-versa.

   Again Long and McMurry write

   > The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a threshold across which we may pass into the works of God, just as Jesus did at age 30. It involves us in a personal

> and spiritual crisis in which we give up a life based on rational certainty and surrender our desire for personal control. . . . [W]e long for significance in the Kingdom of God, power to bring the Kingdom here on earth "as it is in heaven. . . ." The power of the Holy Spirit . . . is for those who seriously want to accomplish a work of God, not just a work for God. The world is full of people doing works for God. Many of those are well-intended but badly managed. . . . But now this crisis has brought us to a place where we are tired even of working *for* God. We want to do something that is *of* God.[1]

Since PRMI is influential in the Christian Reformed Church through the workshops of its Dunamis Project, it is important to evaluate this questionable teaching.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The belief that it is possible for Christians to have the Spirit within them for sanctification, but not upon them for empowerment is of concern because it divides believers into two groups, those empowered by the Holy Spirit and those unempowered. Such a division carries with it the potential for spiritual elitism on the part of those who supposedly are empowered, and feelings of spiritual inferiority on the part of those who supposedly are unempowered.

b. Evaluation of this belief

The PRMI materials appeal to the book of Acts as the primary biblical foundation for their teaching that Christians may need a baptism of the Spirit to be empowered. The 1973 report on neo-Pentecostalism (Report 34) does a good job of setting forth the biblical teaching regarding baptism with the Spirit and filling with the Spirit. The report affirms that all who believe in Christ are baptized with the Holy Spirit at conversion. Then it continues,

> Is there some pattern in all this to be repeated in the life of every believer? For example, as Jesus was born of the Spirit (Virgin Birth) and later empowered by the Spirit (baptism), so believers must be born of the Spirit (faith/conversion) and later empowered by the Spirit (Spirit/baptism)? Or since the disciples already believed during the earthly ministry of Jesus and only later received the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, so now in the life of every believer the occurrence of faith and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit are similarly distinct events. Is there such a pattern? By no means. The events of Jesus' life are unique precisely because they prepare the way for the establishment of a new covenant. And one should note that the faith of the disciples prior to Pentecost was not a faith that fully comprehended (cf. Matt. 16:16, 23; John. 2:22, etc.). Although the disciples had a special relationship to Jesus during his ministry, they did not fully enter the new age until Pentecost. We live after the establishment of the new covenant. And we can no more repeat the sequence of those events in Jesus' life and in the lives of the disciples than we can repeat the transition from John's baptism to Jesus' baptism. Those events occurred at the establishment of the new covenant. We live after the establishment, and now to be in the new covenant is to have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
>
> If then the Holy Spirit is given to all who enter the new age and is the means by which they enter the kingdom, does it follow that there are no new experiences of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers? Of course not. The Holy Spirit continues to reveal his presence in various ways and at times in a decisive manner. The congregation in Jerusalem, which had received the Spirit at Pentecost (or subsequently), experienced

[1] Long and McMurry, 1996:100-1.

> another decisive manifestation of the Spirit during a time of persecution (Acts 4:31). But this is called being "filled with the Holy Spirit." And the Apostle Paul can exhort Christians to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Thus being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event. As believers who live under the new covenant, they must seek to be continually filled with the Spirit.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 437-38)

As Report 34 shows, Scripture does not support the idea that believers can have the Holy Spirit within them for sanctification and not have the Holy Spirit upon them for empowered ministry. It is simply not the case that unless one has a second experience of baptism or infilling of the Spirit, separate from conversion, one will have "no spiritual power to set people free from bondage or fulfill the task of evangelism and making disciples." It is also misleading to assert that when one has had this experience, one will have power to do the works of God as never before. When believers receive the gift of the Spirit at their conversion, they at the same time receive the gifts and the power of the Spirit. And they must constantly seek to be filled with the Spirit. But having the gifts of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit do not guarantee evangelistic success. As Donald Macleod has written,

> In order to have success the Spirit must come not only on the witness but also on the world, convincing it of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. No experience which is personal to the preacher can guarantee this divine cooperation. A man may be the most spiritual person on earth and yet know little blessing on his evangelistic labors. It was so with Isaiah and Jeremiah and even with our Lord himself. He had the Spirit without measure and yet at the close of His ministry all His converts could be gathered in one room.[2]

The third wave emphasis on being filled with the Holy Spirit should be welcomed. But the PRMI teaching that Christians must sometimes seek an *initial* infilling or baptism with the Holy Spirit for empowerment that is separable from their conversion cannot be endorsed.

2. Second questionable belief: Various psycho-physical experiences, often referred to as "manifestations," are caused by the Holy Spirit and may even be called "signs and wonders" of the Spirit. These include trembling and shaking, falling (forward or more commonly backward), running, jumping, mourning, laughter, and spiritual "drunkenness."

   In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul writes, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Then he lists a series of spiritual gifts. In third wave and other charismatic literature, "manifestations" are not only spiritual gifts but also what have been termed "psycho-physical experiences."[3]

   These experiences and behaviors have appeared at other times in church history. The Cane Ridge revival that occurred in Kentucky in the early 1800s was marked by psycho-physical phenomena. Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924), sometimes called the "Trance Evangelist," had people "falling under the power" during her ministry in the 1880s. Various phenomena, including falling, have been associated with the

[2] Macleod, 1986:55.

[3] Kelsey, 1978:43; Dobson 1986.

ministries of prominent "first wave" Pentecostal evangelists. The falling phenomenon was transferred from Kathryn Kuhlman to "second wave" (neo-Pentecostal) charismatic ministries in the 1970s, including Roman Catholic healing ministries.

All of the phenomena listed above have been present in the Vineyard and other third wave circles. They are associated with baptism and/or empowerment with the Holy Spirit and with healing ministry.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The belief that these experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit is of concern because it may lead people to focus primarily on "manifestations" as evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

b. Evaluation of this belief

1) Does the Bible attribute these experiences to the Holy Spirit?

It is certainly *possible* that the Holy Spirit is giving psycho-physical experiences to people today that are *not* attributed to him in Scripture. But if the Holy Spirit is edifying the church through psycho-physical phenomena, it seems more likely that they would be phenomena that *are* attributed to him in Scripture. With this in mind, let us review what Scripture says regarding some of the psycho-physical phenomena that are common in the third wave movement.

The Bible never associates literal trembling or shaking with the work of the Holy Spirit, nor is it a sign of blessing. The Bible also never attributes running or jumping to the work of the Holy Spirit. (The only exception might be Elijah's running in 1 Kings 18:46.) In Acts 3:8 the lame man who has been healed by Peter and John responds by "walking and jumping, and praising God." But it appears that this was a natural, human response to a supernatural healing.

Those who fall forward in Scripture do so in response to an awesome revelation of God's majesty (Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 8:17-18; Matt. 17:6; Rev. 1:17). In such instances, no mention is made of the operation of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be no case in Scripture where a person is prayed for and falls backward. Perhaps the closest parallel is Peter's rooftop experience of going into a trance (Acts 10:10). However, Peter was not being prayed for, nor does Luke mention that he fell down backward.

Mourning may be a human response to the Spirit's work of conviction of sin. But in the Bible, it is not said to be caused directly by the Holy Spirit. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and obviously joy may at times be expressed in laughter. But joy is not the same as uncontrollable laughter that has no apparent cause ("holy laughter"). Such laughter never appears in Scripture, nor is it attributed to the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual "drunkenness" is not found in Scripture. When the disciples were accused of drunkenness on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13), that was because they were speaking languages unfamiliar to many of their listeners. There is no evidence in the text that they were behaving like those who have had too much to drink.

None of the psycho-physical experiences we are considering are called "signs and wonders" in Scripture. In the New Testament, the nature of the "signs and wonders" referred to is often not specified. But they appear to be primarily miracles of healing and exorcisms (John 4:48; Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:13; 14:3; 15:12).

2) In light of biblical revelation and principles, is it likely that these experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit?

What follows is an attempt to evaluate two of the psycho-physical phenomena we have been considering by seeking to answer this question.

a) Falling backward

Given that those who fall backward may be (and have been) seriously injured[4] and that "catchers" must be employed to keep this from happening, this phenomenon seems more likely to have a psychological cause and less likely to be caused by the Holy Spirit.

b) Spiritual "drunkenness"

Drunkenness caused by overindulging in alcohol is often condemned in Scripture (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). And part of the fruit of the Spirit is "self-control." Thus it seems unlikely that the slurring of speech and loss of motor control associated with spiritual "drunkenness" would be caused by the Holy Spirit.

3) Do aspects of these experiences or the circumstances in which they occur help in determining their cause?

Those familiar with psycho-physical phenomena in the third wave report the following:

– These experiences sometimes happen to people who are not expecting them to happen or to those who do not want to experience them. This is often viewed as evidence that the experiences are caused by the Holy Spirit. However, a charismatic writer on the falling phenomenon notes that those who do not want to fall may nevertheless fall as a result of auto-suggestion.[5]
– Those who have these experiences sometimes say they have visions or are blessed with significant emotional healing or spiritual renewal while having these experiences. The spiritual blessings associated with the experiences may be evidence that the experiences themselves are produced by the Holy Spirit. Or the experiences may be a human, psychological response to the working of the Holy Spirit.

[4] MacNutt (1990:170-71) records an instance early in his ministry when a woman "went down and hit the back of her head with a horrendous cracking noise." Although the woman got up, she was later hospitalized with a concussion. MacNutt also reports that in 1989 a 67-year-old woman was hurt when she fell over backward during a healing service conducted by evangelists Charles and Francis Hunter. She spent two months in the hospital, and a jury ordered the Hunters to pay her $300,000.

[5] Dobson, 1986:42.

– In some cases, unbelievers have had these experiences without repenting of their sins or coming to faith in Christ.[6] This would seem to point to a purely psychological origin for at least some of the experiences.
– Certain personality types appear to be more prone to have these experiences. Others are labeled "HTR" ("hard to receive").[7] This may indicate that the experiences have a psychological rather than a supernatural cause.

Often those attending meetings and events are expecting that the falling phenomenon or "holy laughter" will take place and desire these experiences for themselves. Healing ministers sometimes prepare people by explaining the falling phenomenon and other "manifestations" ahead of time. "Catchers" are positioned behind those being prayed for by these ministers. Those who see others fall are often more likely to fall themselves. All of these factors point to a psychological cause for many instances of the falling phenomenon and other phenomena.

Some ministries become known for particular phenomena. Trembling and shaking was associated with the ministry of John Wimber. Holy laughter and spiritual drunkenness have been associated with the Word Faith movement (which is infected with serious theological error[8]), the ministry of Rodney Howard-Browne, and the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. Such connections make it seem likely that expectations, imitation, and the power of suggestion are often at work in producing these phenomena.

4) Conclusion

The Holy Spirit may bless those subject to unusual psycho-physical experiences with spiritual and emotional renewal, even though the experiences themselves have a psychological cause. For such blessings of the Spirit we should give thanks to God.

As we reflect on the meaning of psycho-physical experiences, the following points should be kept in mind:

a) Being filled with the Holy Spirit should not be confused with having such experiences. One may be filled with the Holy Spirit without having such experiences. One may have such experiences without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

b) Our focus should not be on having such experiences, but on being filled with the Holy Spirit and having the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, so that we may bring glory to Jesus Christ.

B. Prophecy

The majority report accepts the third wave understanding of the New Testament gift of prophecy. This understanding, however, is very much open to question.

[6] Beverley, 1995:96-98.

[7] MacNutt, 1990:135-40; Beverley, 1995:74; Mullen, 2000:77.

[8] Charismatic theologians Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright speak of Word Faith teaching as heresy (Smail, et. al. 1994:73-92).

Questionable belief: The New Testament gift of prophecy is "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."[9] God spontaneously brings to a person's mind a revelation (i.e., a truth of Scripture or an insight about a person or congregation that is needed at that particular time). Prophecy is a *fallible* human report of such a divine revelation.

Wayne Grudem is probably the most scholarly exponent of the third wave understanding of prophecy. In his view, the revelations that God spontaneously brings to mind are generally related to the specific situation of a congregation or an individual. God brings to mind a truth of Scripture or an insight about a person or congregation that is needed at that particular time. Prophecy is a report in human words of such a divine revelation. As such, it is fallible. Grudem believes that what people in the charismatic movement call "words of knowledge" are actually prophecies.

Grudem distinguishes prophecy from teaching. In contrast to New Testament prophecy, he says that teaching in the New Testament is not based on receiving a revelation. Rather, teaching involves interpreting and applying Scripture (or in New Testament times, the "authoritative teachings of Jesus and the apostles").

Grudem believes that potentially anyone in the congregation can prophesy. He says that prophecy should be encouraged but also needs to be regulated. Because prophecies are fallible, they need to be tested and weighed on the basis of Scripture. All members of the congregation, and especially its leaders, are responsible for carrying out this testing.

1. Concerns associated with this belief

   This belief is of concern because it involves a misunderstanding of the nature of prophecy in the New Testament. It can also result in confusion and disillusionment when misleading or false statements are presented as modern-day "words from God."

2. Evaluation of this belief

   a. The prominence of prophecy in the New Testament

      In evaluating this understanding of prophecy, it may be helpful to begin by reviewing the prominence of prophets and prophecy in the New Testament.

      1 Thessalonians 5:20 is the earliest reference to the gift of prophecy in the New Testament. This verse shows that prophecy was a part of the life of a newly planted church from its founding. Paul deemed prophecy sufficiently important to be concerned about it being treated with contempt. Some years later, when Paul wrote to the church in Rome, a church he had never visited, he listed various gifts and how they should be used. The first gift he mentions is prophesying (Rom. 12:6), which he assumes will be present in the Roman church. The importance of the gift of prophecy is confirmed by what Paul says about it in 1 Corinthians 12-14. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 he lists prophets as second only to apostles. Again, in 1 Corinthians 14:1 he writes, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." In Ephesians too New Testament prophets are listed alongside apostles (Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11).

[9] Grudem, 1994:1049, italics his.

Prophets appear frequently in the book of Acts. They include Agabus and other prophets from Jerusalem (11:27-28; 21:10-11), the prophets at Antioch (13:1), Judas and Silas (15:32), and the four unmarried daughters of Philip the evangelist (21:8-9). These prophets warn the church and give guidance to Christian leaders. They also encourage (or exhort) and strengthen their fellow believers.

The book of Revelation is itself a written prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). The prophets it mentions are evidently not just Old Testament but also New Testament prophets.[10] "Saints and apostles and prophets" rejoice over the fall of Babylon in 18:20. According to 22:6, "The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." And in 22:9 the angel reminds John, "I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book."

b. The definition of New Testament prophecy

Third wave writers make a fairly sharp distinction between prophecy in the Old Testament and prophecy in the New Testament. Grudem says that Old Testament prophets spoke "God's very words." Because of that, their words had "absolute divine authority." He says that New Testament prophets, by contrast, speak "merely human words to report something God brings to mind." Thus the words of New Testament prophets are not the word of God. Rather, they are fallible and need to be weighed and evaluated.

This distinction between Old and New Testament prophecy is questionable. The New Testament church gained its understanding of prophecy from the Old Testament. This can be seen in the case of the prophet Agabus, who according to Luke performs a symbolic action, like an Old Testament prophet, and prefaces his message with the words, "Thus says the Holy Spirit," much as an Old Testament prophet would (Acts 21:10-11). As commentator Gordon Fee writes,

> Paul's understanding—as well as that of the other NT writers—was thoroughly conditioned by his own history in Judaism. The prophet was a person who spoke to God's people under the inspiration of the Spirit. The "inspired utterance" came by revelation and announced judgment (usually) or salvation. . . . Often the word spoken had a futuristic element, so in that sense [the prophets] also came to be seen as "predictors"; but that was only one element, and not necessarily the crucial one.[11]

Grudem does seem to be correct in making a distinction between New Testament prophecy and the New Testament gift of teaching. As he notes, prophecy appears to be based on a revelation of some kind given directly to the prophet (1 Cor. 14:30; cf. also Eph. 3:5). Teaching, by contrast, is never said to be based on a revelation given directly to the teacher. Rather, New Testament teaching is based on truth that has been revealed to others. That truth may consist of the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the received teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Thus, what the New Testament calls teaching is more or less the same

[10] Beale, 1999:546.

[11] Fee, 1987:595; see also Aune, 1983:195; Hilber, 1994:243-58.

as what we call preaching.[12] Report 34 would appear to be incorrect when it says that preaching is prophecy.[13]

c. Was New Testament prophecy fallible?

Grudem and other third wave writers argue that New Testament prophecy was fallible on the following grounds: (1) Paul requires that prophecy should be evaluated (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 14:29); (2) Paul allows prophecies to be lost (1 Cor. 14:30); (3) Paul implies that there was no word of God from the Corinthian prophets (1 Cor. 14:36); (4) the prophets at Corinth appear to have less authority than an apostle (1 Cor. 14:37-38); (5) Paul appears to disobey the prophecy given in Acts 21:4; (6) the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:11 appears to contain errors.[14]

We will take these points up one by one:

1) Paul's requirement that prophecy should be evaluated need not imply that true prophecy in the New Testament was fallible. It need only imply that true prophecy had to be distinguished from false prophecy. In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Bruce writes: "The gift of prophecy lent itself to imitation, and it was important that counterfeit prophets should be detected."[15] In 1 Corinthians 14:29 Paul says, "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (literally, "the others should discern [*diakrinetōsan*]"). It seems likely that the others who discern are especially those with the gift of discerning spirits. As in 12:10, they must discern "the spirits," that is, the spirits of the prophets (see v. 32). They must determine whether or not the prophets are speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2) As Paul gives instructions regarding prophets speaking during church gatherings, in 1 Corinthians 14:30 he writes, "And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop." Grudem understands this to mean that "the first prophet's prophecy would be intentionally neglected, and probably never heard by the church."[16] But intentional neglect need not be involved. Paul may believe that if the Spirit gives a revelation during a church gathering, that is a signal that God now wants to convey a message through the prophet who has just received the revelation. It is at the same time a signal that the first prophet's message is complete.

3) Paul's statement need not be taken to mean that there was no word of God coming through the Corinthian prophets. The NIV translation of 1 Corinthians 14:36, "Did the word of God originate with you?" is a good translation. Paul is being sarcastic, asking the Corinthians if the word of God (the gospel of Christ) originated with

[12] Grudem, 2000:113-24.

[13] "Report, 34: Neo-Pentecostalism." *Acts of Synod 1973:* 451.

[14] Grudem, 2000:51-87.

[15] Bruce, 1982:125-26.

[16] Grudem, 2000:64.

them, or if they are "the fountainhead from which all Christian truth derives" (Fee).[17]

4) In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul insists that the prophets at Corinth acknowledge that what he is writing is the Lord's command. He says that anyone who thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted will demonstrate the reality of his gift by making such an acknowledgment. But that need not imply that true prophets at Corinth spoke prophecies that were fallible.

5) In Acts 21:4 Luke says that "through the Spirit" disciples at Tyre "urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem." Paul went anyway. Does this mean that Paul considered their prophecy fallible? Longenecker gives a more likely interpretation:

> Probably . . . we should understand the preposition *dia* ("through") as meaning that the Spirit's message was the occasion for the believers' concern rather than that their trying to dissuade Paul was directly inspired by the Spirit.[18]

6) The prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:10-11 is referred to by Grudem and others as an example of a prophecy that includes mistakes. Luke writes,

> After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

When this is compared with Luke's account of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, there appear to be some inconsistencies. In Acts 21:27-33, the Jews seize Paul in the temple, drag him out of the temple and then try to kill him. The commander of the Roman troops takes officers and soldiers and runs down to the crowd. Then the rioters stop beating Paul, and the commander arrests him and orders him to be bound with two chains. Grudem sees "two competing factors" in this passage. One is the introductory phrase Agabus uses: "The Holy Spirit says . . ." or literally, "Thus says the Holy Spirit. . . ." This, says Grudem, "suggests an attempt to speak like the Old Testament prophets, who said, 'Thus says the Lord. . . .'" The other factor is the fact that Agabus makes two mistakes in his prophecy: (a) The Jews did not bind Paul, the Romans did; and (b) the Jews didn't hand Paul over to the Romans, rather the commander came and arrested him. According to Grudem, these mistakes were serious enough to have resulted in the condemnation of an Old Testament prophet.[19]

Grudem then says,

> [T]he best solution is to say that Agabus had a "revelation" from the Holy Spirit concerning what would happen to Paul in Jerusalem, and gave a prophecy which included his own interpretation of this revelation (and therefore some mistakes in the exact details). Luke then

[17] Fee, 1987:710.

[18] Longenecker, 1981:516.

[19] Grudem, 2000:78.

> recorded Agabus's prophecy exactly, and recorded the subsequent events exactly, even including those aspects of the events which showed Agabus to be slightly wrong at some points.[20]

The difficulty that results from this interpretation is Agabus's introductory phrase, "Thus says the Holy Spirit. . . ." What are we to make of the fact that Agabus attributes his prophetic mistakes to the Holy Spirit? Grudem gives three possible interpretations, but says he prefers the view that the introductory phrase "means here not that the very words of the prophecy were from the Holy Spirit but only that the content generally had been revealed by the Holy Spirit."[21]

In evaluating Grudem's interpretation of these verses in Acts, we must ask whether Grudem and other modern commentators have a greater concern for precision than the Holy Spirit does. Grudem is concerned that Agabus speaks of Paul being handed over to the Romans when that is not literally what happened. But in Acts 28:17 Luke presents Paul as speaking in the same way. Speaking to Jewish leaders in Rome, Paul says, "I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans," (literally, "A prisoner from Jerusalem I was handed over into the hands of the Romans"). Strictly speaking, one might argue that Paul is being inaccurate here, since he was saved from the Jews by the Romans. However, Clowney appears to be on the right track when he writes,

> Neither the prophecy of Agabus nor the report of Paul is in the least mistaken. The Jews seized Paul and may well have tied him—with his own belt for that matter. They also handed him over to the Romans, however reluctantly. Without the Jews, he would never have been delivered to the Romans.[22]

Clowney makes the further point (made by several commentators) that both through his report of the prophecy of Agabus and through his report of Paul's account of his arrest, Luke is probably highlighting the parallel between Jesus, who was "handed over to the Gentiles" (Luke 18:32), and Paul who was handed over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:11) or the Romans (Acts 28:17).[23]

In summary, none of the third wave arguments purporting to show the fallibility of New Testament prophecy are particularly persuasive or conclusive.

d. Are there prophets in the church today?

If New Testament prophets, like their Old Testament counterparts, "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21), are such prophets present in the church today? If such prophets exist, their words potentially would have the same authority as the words of Scripture itself.[24] However, even within the New Testament

[20] *Ibid.* 81.

[21] *Ibid.* 82; see also 83.

[22] Clowney, 1995:267; see also Saucy, 1996:231.

[23] *Ibid.* See also Longenecker, 1981:515; Barrett, 1998:1239.

[24] Cf. the way the writings of Ellen G. White function within the Seventh Day Adventist Church: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html.

there is evidence that the role of prophets in the church may have been intended to be temporary rather than permanent.

In Ephesians 3 Paul talks about "the mystery of Christ"—the mystery "that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Jesus Christ." In verse 5 he says that this mystery "was not made known to [people] in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets." So the prophets of the New Testament, along with the apostles, were recipients of this key revelation regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles as part of the people of God. Perhaps because of their role in receiving and communicating such revelations, Paul describes the church in Ephesians 2:20 as being "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

Once the foundation of a building has been laid, the superstructure can be built upon it. Today most Christians recognize that because of their foundational role, we no longer have apostles in the church. The same may also be true for prophets. While they had great prominence in the early church, the time may have come when their work of receiving and conveying revelation was finished and the spiritual gift of prophecy was no longer given.

Certainly we see little evidence in the church today of people who on the basis of an extra-biblical revelation they have received can say with authority, "Thus says the Holy Spirit," or "Thus says the Lord." It is true that some associated with the third wave have claimed to have the gift of prophecy. But the exercise of this gift by some of the more prominent third wave "prophets" does not inspire much confidence that they are truly gifted by the Lord.[25]

e. Conclusion

The third wave view that New Testament prophecy differs substantially from its Old Testament counterpart is difficult to sustain on the basis of the New Testament evidence. The model of prophets who receive revelation from God and then fallibly and imperfectly report it is a model that fits with the exercise of "prophecy" in third wave circles. But it is not easy to find this model in the New Testament itself.

C. Healing

The majority report's observations and evaluation under the heading "Healing" are helpful. But some questionable third wave beliefs are not dealt with. And while some of the dangers of inner healing techniques are noted, a more complete discussion of these dangers is necessary.

1. First questionable belief: There is a high-degree of continuity between the healing ministries of Jesus and the apostles and our healing ministries today. Thus Christians should expect to see and perform many "signs and wonders" of miraculous healing today.

   This belief appears in many of the works by John Wimber. He taught that Jesus and the apostles are direct models for the church's ministry today. We are to engage in "power evangelism" as they did, "combining the

[25] Beverley, 1995:121-47; Oropeza, 1995:51-81.

proclamation with the demonstration of the gospel" through the use of spiritual gifts to do signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit.[26] Charles Kraft echoes this teaching, as does C. Peter Wagner.[27] Some third wave writers (e.g., Deere) seem to recognize some degree of discontinuity between the ministry of Jesus and the apostles and our ministries today. However the concessions they are willing to make in this regard are quite limited.[28]

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Most Christians believe that God does heal people miraculously in answer to prayer. But if one adopts the third wave belief that Jesus and the apostles are models for our ministries today, then one will expect to see dramatic miracles ("signs and wonders") of healing on a regular basis. And if such miracles do not occur, disappointment and disillusionment may result. The third wave belief regarding "signs and wonders" has also led to extravagant claims of divine healing that have subsequently been discredited.[29]

b. Evaluation of this belief

1) The earthly ministry of Jesus and his disciples

Because Jesus was the Messiah promised by God in the Old Testament, his earthly ministry was unique. He performed miracles as signs of the presence of God's saving rule (God's kingdom), which had arrived with his coming. In describing Jesus' ministry, the writers of the Gospels highlight the fact that he taught and acted with authority (Mark 1:22, 27). This authority was evidently related to his identity as the Messiah, God's promised Savior-King. Jesus demonstrated his authority as he healed people, usually instantaneously, by issuing a command, much as a centurion commands those under him (Matt. 8:8-9). Jesus claimed that he had authority to forgive sins, and proved that by enabling a paralyzed man to walk (Mark 2:1-2). He also showed his authority over the creation by performing so-called nature miracles—multiplying loaves and fish, walking on water, and stilling a storm.

In the course of his ministry, Jesus called twelve disciples to be with him, their number corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. He "gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:1, 2; see also Matt. 10:1). The Twelve were an extension of Jesus' own ministry. They were given authority, although not the unique authority of Jesus himself. As Meier writes, "The mission of the Twelve was something more than a piece of missionary strategy; it was one more prophetic-symbolic step toward the reconstitution of eschatological Israel."[30]

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[26] Wimber, 1986:xix-xx; 1987:xviii, 40, 41; according to Turner, 1998:338-39, Wimber later changed his mind about using Jesus and the apostles as direct models for healing today.

[27] Kraft, 1992:86; see also Williams, 1993:175-91; Wagner, 1996:132.

[28] Deere, 1993:66-67, 114.

[29] Beverley, 1995:103-20; Walker, 1994:117; see also Poloma, 2003:167-68, on claims regarding fillings in teeth being turned to gold.

[30] Meier, 2001:163; see also Smedes, 1992:29-33.

Luke tells us that Jesus also "appointed seventy-two [or seventy] others, and sent them two-by-two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1). Again, the seventy-two appear to have extended Jesus' earthly ministry. When they entered a town and were welcomed, they were to heal the sick who were there and tell the people, "The kingdom of God is near you" (Luke 10:8-9).

In the Great Commission Jesus told his disciples to teach the nations to obey everything he had commanded them (Matt. 28:19). Because of that, third wave authors argue that the instructions Jesus gave to the twelve disciples and the seventy-two are applicable to the church today. But as D.A. Carson notes, "The application of the text [containing these instructions] to all Christians is fraught with difficulties."[31] Jesus barred the Twelve from going to the Gentiles or the Samaritans. He sent the seventy-two "two by two ahead of him." He required them not to "take a purse or bag or sandals" and not to greet anyone on the road. Most would agree that these instructions are not binding on believers today. How then can we be sure that believers today are called to heal the sick in the same way that these disciples did? Ridderbos writes as follows about the mission of the Twelve:

> There is not yet any question of a permanent office. Their apostolate—as well as that of the seventy (-two) in Luke 10—is still of a temporary nature. From this it follows that the instructions given by Jesus [just as those to the seventy (-two) later] refer to this particular charge and need not have a permanent and universally valid significance.[32]

Another text third wave writers see as showing the continuity between the earthly ministry of Jesus and our ministries today is John 14:12. There Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." According to third wave authors Greig and Springer, in this verse "Jesus linked the miraculous works He did with the ongoing miraculous works He would do through anyone who believes in Him in the postresurrection period."[33] Greig and Springer do not really explain in what sense these postresurrection works done by believers are greater than those done by Jesus. D.A. Carson points out that the "greater things" that the believer will do cannot simply be "*more spectacular* works." There is no evidence that believers have performed more spectacular miracles than those of Jesus. So in what sense are the "greater things" greater? Carson suggests that they are greater because of the *time* in which they are done: they are accomplished after Jesus' crucifixion, his resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They "will therefore more immediately and truly reveal the Son."[34] Greig and Springer argue that the greater things are

[31] Carson, 1992:104.

[32] Ridderbos, 1962:370-71.

[33] Greig and Springer, 1993:393-95.

[34] Carson, 1991:496.

primarily miracles. But as Carson points out, they may well include other works besides miracles.[35] The verse does not necessarily mean that every believer (or even many believers) will have the ability to perform miraculous healings.

2) The ministries of the apostles and others in the book of Acts

In Acts Luke describes how the apostles and others were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The twelve apostles especially were empowered to be Christ's witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As part of this apostolic witness, Peter and John healed a man crippled from birth instantaneously by invoking the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 3). The apostles continued to perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people (Acts 2:43; 5:12). "People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them." All of those brought for healing were healed (Acts 5:15-16).

Eventually, because some of the needy widows were not being adequately cared for, seven men known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom were chosen to carry out this ministry (Acts 6:1-6). Two of the Seven showed themselves to be remarkably gifted. Stephen did "great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8). Later Philip went to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah and the good news of the kingdom. He too did miraculous signs, including casting out demons and healing people who were paralyzed and crippled (Acts 8:5-13).

Luke then describes how a zealous Jew named Saul of Tarsus had a vision of the risen Christ and was dramatically converted. Saul (or Paul) was eventually called to engage in mission work among Jews and Gentiles. In Lystra a man lame from birth was healed instantaneously when Paul saw that he had faith to be healed (Acts 14:8-10). On his second missionary journey, Paul commanded a spirit to leave a slave girl "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:16-18). Luke reports that in Ephesus "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (Acts 19:11-12). In 2 Corinthians 12:12 Paul speaks of the presence of the miraculous in his ministry. He writes, "The things [literally, "the signs"] that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance" (see also Rom. 15:18-19).

As eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection, the apostles (including Paul) had a unique and foundational position in the history of redemption. Because of that, it is a mistake to conclude that the signs and wonders that were part of their ministry should *necessarily* be part of our ministries today. It is true that in the book of Acts, people other than the apostles perform miracles, notably, Stephen and Philip. Both of them, however, were part of the seven, who appear

[35] Carson, 1992:108-10.

to have served a unique role as assistants to the apostles. Thus the ministries of Stephen and Philip, like those of the apostles, do not necessarily provide a pattern for our ministries today.

3) Healing in the New Testament letters

It is striking that the New Testament letters have relatively little to say about miraculous healing. In Galatians 3:5 Paul asks the following rhetorical question: "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" The implication seems to be that God is continuing to work miracles in the churches in Galatia, although that is not entirely clear. In 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 Paul lists "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles" among the gifts given by the Holy Spirit (see also vv. 28 and 30). But we have no information as to how these gifts actually functioned within the church.

James, in chapter 5:14-15, gives the following instruction,

> Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

This text cannot mean that in every single case prayer will make the sick person well. Moo's interpretation may be correct: "Prayer for healing offered in the confidence that God will answer that prayer *does* bring healing; but only when it is God's will to heal will that faith, itself a gift of God, be present."[36]

There is evidence in the Pauline letters that even for Paul at some points in his ministry, healing was not a foregone conclusion. Some of his coworkers who were sick were not immediately healed. Timothy had a problem with his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). Trophimus was too sick to come with Paul from Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). Epaphroditis almost died of an illness, and Paul attributed his recovery to the mercy of God (Phil. 2:27).

It might be argued that because the New Testament letters were written to address specific situations, miraculous healing is mentioned infrequently simply because it was not controversial. Be that as it may, these letters provide little positive evidence that "signs and wonders" should be a regular part of our ministries today.

4) The practice of healing ministry in the third wave

Somewhat surprisingly, the *practice* of healing ministry within the third wave is not necessarily consistent with the stated *belief* that we should follow the example of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus and the apostles did not pray for healing. Rather, they touched the afflicted person or spoke a word, and the person was healed. John Wimber sometimes spoke words of command to accomplish healing.[37] But more commonly he prayed that the sick might be healed, and that is now the usual third wave practice. Thus third wave ministry more

[36] Moo, 2000:245.

[37] Wimber, 1987:208-10.

closely resembles the kind of ministry described in James 5 than it does the ministries of Jesus and the apostles.

In addition, the healings recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts are nearly all instantaneous. Healings accomplished through third wave ministries are often gradual rather than instantaneous.[38] According to the New Testament, on some occasions at least, Jesus and the apostles healed everyone who came to them (Matt. 8:16; Acts 5:16). In third wave ministries of healing, some are said to be healed, but others see little or no improvement in their condition. Turner reports that in praying for children with Down syndrome, John Wimber saw improvement "in only one in about two hundred cases." Wimber claimed "between 3 percent and 8 percent success in prayer for different types of blindness."[39] At least some of the healings claimed by the third wave are of psychosomatic illnesses.[40] And a number of claims of healing, when examined closely, have not been verified.[41]

5) Conclusion

In summary, few Christians would deny that God does heal people in extraordinary and miraculous ways and that praying for healing according to the model in James 5 is appropriate. But the belief that we should follow the example of Jesus and the apostles by performing signs and wonders of healing has little biblical support. Nor does it appear that the actual practice of healing ministry in the third wave measures up to this belief.

2. Second questionable belief: Inner healing is a safe, effective process of guided prayer, in which (a) repressed memories are brought to consciousness and experienced, and (b) Jesus is visualized as being present in the memory and speaking and acting so as to heal the inner wounds.

Inner healers believe that memories of being wounded early in life or even before birth are often repressed and buried in the unconscious mind. They are convinced that such memories are a significant cause of problems such as depression, defensiveness, or a performance orientation. Although the very existence of repressed memories has been the subject of intense debate, here we will focus not on the reality of such memories, but rather on the process by which inner healers claim to heal them.

After praying for the Holy Spirit's leading, inner healers may direct those seeking healing to relax, close their eyes, and think back to significant memories in their childhood. Brad Long and Cindy Strickler of PRMI encourage praying in tongues during this time as "an effective way of allowing the Spirit to dredge up stuff from the unconscious."[42] Sometimes the prayer counselor may receive and share a "word of knowledge" that brings a repressed memory to consciousness. The memory may come in the form of an image, including the image of a child ("the inner child of the past"). Once a painful memory has been retrieved, inner healers say that the Holy Spirit can heal that memory as the person visualizes Jesus

[38] F. MacNutt, 1977:27; Lewis, 1989:21-43 (with references to degrees of healing).

[39] Turner, 1998:335-36.

[40] Walker, 1994:117.

[41] Beverley, 1995:103-20; Walker, 1994:117; Poloma, 2003:167-68.

[42] Long and Strickler, 2001:131.

speaking and acting in the situation that has been remembered. Typically, the person is reminded that because Jesus is omnipresent, he really was there when the event happened, or when the person's "inner child" was in the remembered situation.

Long and Strickler describe a case of using imagery, in which the prayer minister and the recipient of ministry "saw" Jesus dealing with the recipient's inner child of the past. Then they ask the question "Was this real? Was it really Jesus in the imaginations of both Portia and Janet?" They answer,

> While there is controversy over the issue, the great Christian pioneers of the spiritual realm, including Jesus, have used the imagination as the portal in the unconscious for entering spiritual reality. We may construct the doorway through active imagination and the use of symbols. If these are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are consistent with the doctrines of the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible, the Holy Spirit may choose to walk through the image or symbol and bring us to the actual presence of Jesus Christ, who actively works within us.[43]

a. Concerns associated with this belief

The process used by inner healers to bring repressed memories into consciousness could easily lead to the recovery of false memories of childhood abuse. In addition, the practice of visualizing Jesus as a way of promoting inner healing has the potential to be spiritually misleading.

b. Evaluation of this belief

In the 1980s and 1990s, a form of psychotherapy known as recovered-memory therapy was in vogue. Patients who were treated using this therapy often recovered supposedly repressed memories of horrible sexual abuse and even involvement in satanic rituals. These memories led to accusations that destroyed family relationships and sent some alleged abusers to prison. Then increasingly patients subjected to recovered-memory therapy began to conclude that the memories they had "recovered" in therapy were actually false and had been implanted during therapy. Some patients successfully sued their former therapists. The American Medical Association issued warnings about the unreliability of recovered memories.

Studies have shown that it is not especially difficult to implant false memories in a person's mind. Such memories may be vivid and detailed, and those who have them may be absolutely convinced that they are true.[44] The process used by inner healers to bring repressed memories into consciousness could easily lead to the recovery of distorted or false memories of childhood abuse. Relaxation and focusing on "whatever the Lord may reveal," can produce a trance-like state. Long and Strickler recommend praying in tongues as part of inner healing ministry. Speaking in tongues can in some cases involve an altered state of consciousness.[45] Such mental states have been shown to increase the likelihood of generating false memories.[46] The danger of

[43] *Ibid.* 138.

[44] McNally, 2003:229-59; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:404-15; Loftus and Davis, 2006:478-80.

[45] Malony and Lovekin, 1985:108-12.

[46] On the altered stated of consciousness produced by hypnosis, see McNally, 2003:218, 245-46; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:388-91; Loftus and Davis, 2006:484.

implanting false memories is especially great when the prayer counselor thinks that he or she has received an image or word in a "word of knowledge" and shares that with the recipient of healing. Such a suggestion could quite readily become the basis for a false memory.[47] Long and Strickler and also Charles Kraft show an awareness of the problem of false memory. Kraft warns against "guiding the imagery in such a way as to change what actually happened."[48] In a section titled "What About 'False' Memories?" Long and Strickler give a tragic example of a man accused because of false memories of childhood sexual abuse. But they argue that even if memories are false, they may be "symbolically true" in the sense that they are "apt symbols" of some other problem. "Often," they write, "discerning the actual facts is less important than seeing the recollected memory as an open door into the human heart where healing may take place."[49] Long and Strickler warn the prayer minister to be tentative in sharing images received in a word of knowledge. But they add, "Usually, if it is actually from God, one will know immediately because it will have hit a vortex memory, unleashing an immediate, obvious emotional response."[50]

Long and Strickler's relative lack of concern as to whether or not a recollected memory is factual is troubling. If a recovered memory is false, it has great potential to do harm. There is also no basis for their confidence that a memory that is factually false is "symbolically true." In addition, the fact that an image provokes an emotional response is hardly a sufficient reason to believe that it comes from God. A false memory that is disturbing can easily bring about an emotional response.

What about the inner healing practice of visualizing Jesus? The Bible never speaks of visualizing Jesus as a means of healing one's inner wounds. If this methodology is so effective, why is Scripture silent about it? Why did it have to be "rediscovered" by Agnes Sanford and other inner healers in the mid-twentieth century? Long and Strickler argue that Jesus often spoke in parables and that the Bible is "filled with vivid pictures and images." "Words of reason reach only the surface," they say, "but images touch the heart. Images and symbols are the language of the unconscious." "The Holy Spirit may take God's *logos* word in Scripture and speak it as a vivid image into our heart where it is ' . . . living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword' (Hebrews 4:12)."[51]

In the context of Hebrews 4, the *logos* of God is the Word of God *written* in Psalm 95 (including any images it contains). *This* Word of God is "living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." While it is true, as any preacher knows, that images are powerful, it seems unwise to imply that biblical "words of reason" are lacking in power. Nor does the power of

[47] McNally, 2003:73-74, 264-66; Brainerd and Reyna, 2005:391-93, 415-19; Loftus and Davis, 2006:484-85.

[48] Kraft, 1993:119.

[49] Long and Strickler, 2001:134.

[50] *Ibid.* 132-36.

[51] *Ibid.* 139-40.

images provide sufficient warrant for the extensive use of visualization as a therapeutic technique. The use of this technique carries with it the danger that those receiving inner healing ministry will confuse the Jesus of their imagination with the real Jesus. Instead of being encouraged to visualize Jesus, individuals needing healing would be better served by being directed to listen to Christ speak to them through his Word.

Christian counseling that seeks to help people deal with painful memories, including memories of childhood sexual abuse, can be very valuable. The techniques of inner healing, however, which include the recovery and experiencing of repressed memories and the visualization of Jesus, are without biblical support. They also have the potential, through the implantation of false memories and the creation of spiritual confusion, of doing more harm than good.

D. Prayer

The majority report's observations and evaluation under the heading "Prayer" are helpful and deal adequately with the questionable beliefs of the third wave in this area.

E. Spiritual warfare

The observations and evaluation presented by the majority under the heading "Spiritual warfare" are for the most part helpful, particularly in the section on "strategic level spiritual warfare." But several questionable third wave beliefs regarding spiritual warfare are not presented and critiqued as clearly as they should be.

1. First questionable belief: It is possible to be inhabited by one or more demons without knowing it or giving evidence of demonic inhabitation to others.

   Many writers on spiritual warfare, including those in the third wave, believe that people can be inhabited by demons for years and have no awareness of the inhabitation. They say that demons may sometimes manifest their presence only when commanded to do so in a counseling or deliverance session.[52]

   a. Concerns associated with this belief

      This belief can lead one to suspect demonic inhabitation in oneself or others when no demons are actually present.

   b. Evaluation of this belief

      The New Testament has a number of descriptions of people who are inhabited by one or more demons.[53] These people are delivered (or healed) when the demon or demons are cast out. Representative

[52] Wimber, 1987:114-15; Kraft, 1992:185-88; 1993:269; Long and Strickler, 2001:157-59,175-77.

[53] Most recent writers on spiritual warfare shy away from using the term "demon possession" because to their way of thinking "possession" implies ownership. In their view, it is impossible for a Christian to be "owned" by a demon, but he or she can be inhabited by one. These writers therefore prefer to speak of people being "demonized" (Dickason, 1987:37-40; Wimber, 1987:109-10; White, 1990:43-44; Kraft, 1992:35-37; 1993:258; Long and Strickler, 2001:146). In fact, the word "possess" need not imply ownership. It can mean to occupy or inhabit and dominate or control (Arnold, 1997:80). However, to avoid potential misunderstanding, we will speak of demonic *inhabitation* and will avoid speaking of *demonic* possession.

passages that describe exorcisms include the following: Mark 1:23-26; 1:32-34; 5:1-13; 9:14-29; Matt. 9:32-34; Acts 8:5; 16:16-18.

How does demonic inhabitation affect people? According to the New Testament in the more extreme cases, there is a "virtual eclipse of the victim's personality by that of the demon."[54] The person may also show unusual physical strength. He or she may be subject to fits of rage or show violent or self-destructive behavior or engage in verbal tirades. In some cases, demonic inhabitation makes the person unable to hear or to speak. Likewise, in modern cases of demonic inhabitation in the developing world (for example, *loa* possession in Haiti), distinctive behavior is associated with the inhabitation. The New Testament provides us with no evidence that when demons inhabit a person, that person and others may be totally unaware of their presence.

Third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare argue that "clinical evidence" from counseling and deliverance sessions supports their contention that one may be inhabited by demons without knowing it. However, they rarely consider the possibility that the "demonic manifestations" associated with deliverance ministries may be called forth by the expectations of both the deliverance counselor and the counselee. One can imagine an individual who receives instruction about spiritual warfare from third wave teachers or other sources. He learns that one can be inhabited by demons without knowing it, that demons can be inherited, and that demons may be attached to deeply rooted sins. Then he meets with a counselor who suggests or implies that his struggles with sin may be complicated by demonic infestation. After an intense time of prayer, the counselor commands the demon or demons to manifest themselves. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that this troubled individual expresses the expected manifestations. In the words of Powlison: "Counselors find what they are looking for; counselees produce what counselors are looking for."[55]

All in all, the belief that one may be inhabited by demons without knowing it appears unlikely to be true, given what the Bible says about demonic inhabitation and given the circumstances under which the "clinical evidence" for this belief has arisen.

2. Second questionable belief: In cases where a person is inhabited (possessed) by a demon or demons, it is possible to identify a specific cause for the demonic inhabitation.

   Within the third wave (and also in the majority report), the term "demonization" is sometimes used to refer to a variety of levels of demonic involvement in a person's life. The stages of demonization include (a) demonic temptation, (b) demons gaining a foothold in a person's life, (c) demons establishing a stronghold in a person's life, and (d) the person being inhabited by one or more demons. (In most third wave teaching, the word *possession* is avoided because it is said that it implies, or seems to imply, ownership. Or *possession* is said to apply only to unbelievers.) According to this understanding of demonization, one stage of demonization often leads to the next. When a person nurtures anger or lust, demons

[54] Storms, "The Nature of Demonization."

[55] Powlison, 1995:134. Note also the cautions of Page, 1995:181.

are said to gain a foothold or "ground" in his or her life. Satan and his demons then have a "legal right" to oppress or inhabit that person. When the sinful behavior becomes compulsive, it has then become a "stronghold." A stronghold may or may not be understood as involving demonic inhabitation.

According to third wave writers, demonic inhabitation may be the result of inviting demons to enter (either consciously, through involvement in occult or New Age activities, or unconsciously, by allowing "spiritual garbage" such as resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness to accumulate). Demons can become "attached" to certain sins, in such a way that they identify themselves with names such as "Lust" or "Anger." Demons can also enter a person by the invitation of others, such as parents or cult leaders. One can be inhabited by demons by inheriting an ancestral (intergenerational) spirit or by means of another person's curse. Those who have been sexually abused can be inhabited by demons as a result of that abuse.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Under the influence of third wave and other teaching about demons, suggestible people struggling with a variety of sins, addictions, and problems may be diagnosed or may diagnose themselves as having a demon, when they do not actually have one. Then they may be treated in accordance with this mistaken diagnosis. A failure to deal with their sins or problems in a biblical way can easily result.

b. Evaluation of this belief

The New Testament clearly teaches that Christians can experience varying levels of satanic or demonic temptation and influence. But third wave teaching about distinct stages of demonization (from gaining a foothold to establishing a stronghold to inhabitation) is not biblical. Ephesians 4:27, which speaks of "giving the devil a foothold," is saying that by holding on to anger, one can give the devil "room to work" in one's life or in the church through temptations to further sin. It is not saying that one is providing "an inhabitable space" for a demon. The "strongholds" spoken of in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 are "arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." They are not entrenched sinful habits or compulsions, reinforced by evil spirits.

In the cases of demonic inhabitation in the New Testament, the cause of the person's inhabitation is never explained. Contrary to third wave teaching, in Scripture demons that inhabit people are *never* identified as demons of lust, pride, or greed. Those who are inhabited by demons are instead grouped together with people who are victims of various illnesses and physical disabilities. When Jesus gives demon-possessed people relief, it is sometimes said that he has healed them (e.g., Matt. 4:24: "People brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them").

It may seem logical that involvement in certain sins or activities could result in demonic inhabitation. But the Bible does not teach that. Instead, it presents demonic inhabitation as a kind of victimization for which the afflicted individual bears little if any responsibility. If accumulating

"spiritual garbage," inheritance from ancestors, curses or sexual abuse could cause demonic inhabitation, one would think that the Bible would clearly warn us about that. However, no such warnings are given.

The idea that Satan and his demons can acquire a "legal right" to oppress or inhabit people is also not biblical. Satan is "the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph. 2:2), but not because he has a "legal right" to that position.

The following warning of the 1973 report (Report 34) appears to apply directly to third wave teaching and practice regarding demonic inhabitation and deliverance:

> Again in our day and in the western world, there are reports of demon possession and exorcism. We express great reservation about some of these reports and the indecent eagerness with which some gospel practitioners "diagnose" cases of demon possession, when the difficulties are cases of hardened sinfulness, character weakness, natural resistance to the gospel, self-induced fears, mental illness or diseases such as diabetes ("sugar demon"). All of these are serious and the Christian counselor, minister, or physician must and can deal with them according to biblical insight.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 463)

3. Third questionable belief: It is possible for Christians to be inhabited (not just oppressed) by one or more demons that then need to be cast out.

It is widely taught within the third wave that Christians can be *inhabited* (although not *possessed*) by one or more demons. Kraft estimates that "in many churches, at least a third of those who attend carry demons."[56] It is common for third wave authors to assert that a human being consists of three parts (trichotomy): body, soul (or mind), and spirit. They teach that a demon can inhabit the bodies and souls of Christians, but not their spirits, which have been born anew and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

a. Concerns associated with this belief

Christians who struggle with sinful habits or various psychological problems may come to believe that their problems are exacerbated by demonic inhabitation when in fact they are not.

b. Evaluation of this belief

Most Reformed theologians reject the idea that the Bible teaches trichotomy. They understand human beings to be a holistic duality of body and soul.[57] Thus, if Christians could be inhabited by demons, presumably the demonic inhabitation would affect both body and soul.

If demonic inhabitation is understood biblically, as a kind of victimization similar to being victimized by cancer, then it may be conceivable that a Christian could be inhabited by demons. Yet it is difficult to understand how a person whose "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) could at the same time be inhabited by a demon.

No clear example of a Christian having a demon is found anywhere in the New Testament. If demonic inhabitation were as common a problem among Christians as some third wave authors say it is, one would think that the New Testament would give some indication of that.

[56] Kraft, 1992:28.

[57] Berkhof, 1939:191-95; Berkouwer, 1962:208-18; Cooper, 1989:163-64; Grudem, 1994:472-82.

4. Further questionable beliefs

– Demons can be associated with objects (e.g., objects used in pagan rituals). The objects then become a source of demonic influence.
– A house, apartment, or hotel room may be inhabited by evil spirits.
– Curses can result in demonic inhabitation.
– Evil spirits can be inherited from one's ancestors, or one can be inhabited by demons because of the sins of one's ancestors.

All of the above beliefs can be found in books on spiritual warfare by third wave and other authors. The belief that demons can be associated with objects has led people to destroy or remove the objects in order to be free of demonic influence. Neil Anderson is convinced of the possibility that demons may exert an evil power in a room and suggests a prayer for cleansing a home, apartment, or room.[58] As part of a ceremony to eradicate demons from homes or rooms, Charles Kraft recommends using anointing oil that has been "empowered" by "invoking Jesus' name over it in blessing."[59] Kraft also speaks of "spirits that are passed down through the generations within a family."[60] Regarding the sins or occult involvement 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.[61]

Neil Anderson provides a "declaration" one can use for renouncing the sins of one's ancestors.[62]

a. Concerns associated with these beliefs

These beliefs are of concern because they appear to arise from a spiritistic, animistic worldview rather than a biblical worldview. They tend to foster a superstitious attitude toward objects and rooms believed to be infected by demons, toward curses, and toward ancestral or generational spirits.

b. Evaluation of these beliefs

1) Demonic attachment to objects and demonic infestation of houses and rooms

The Bible says nothing about the ability of evil spirits to attach themselves to objects or to infest rooms so that those who come into contact with them will be harmed. In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 Paul warns against becoming participants with demons by "having communion" with them through eating sacrifices offered to pagan gods. But he also teaches that the meat offered to a pagan idol is not harmful in itself.

Third wave writers assert that demonic attachment to objects or the presence of demons in rooms can be detected by a person who

[58] Anderson, 2000:247.
[59] Kraft, 1992:198.
[60] *Ibid.* 74.
[61] Dickason, 1987:221; emphasis his.
[62] Anderson, 2004a:20.

has the gift of the discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10). But most likely the gift of discernment of spirits has nothing to do with the ability to detect demons that may be attached to an object or lurking in a room. It rather has to do with the ability to discern between true and false prophecy.[63]

In animistic cultures, it is commonly believed that evil spirits inhabit trees, rivers, rocks, buildings, and other objects. Third wave and other teachers on spiritual warfare seem inclined to credit what animists say about this, assuming that animists know more about evil spirits than rationalistic Westerners. Yet since the devil is a liar and the father of lies, it is not clear that he gives his animistic children accurate knowledge about demons. It seems more likely that he misleads them so that they fear the presence of demons when no fear is warranted.

2) Curses that result in demonic inhabitation

Curses uttered in the name of the Lord may have power. But Scripture is silent about a connection between demonic power and curses. Proverbs 26:2 says, "Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest."

Animists believe that harm can be done to enemies by means of "verbal magic." Here again, it appears that third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare uncritically accept these animistic beliefs as valid.

3) Ancestral transmission of evil spirits

Third wave writers appeal to Exodus 20:5 and 34:7 when seeking to justify their belief that evil spirits can be inherited from one's ancestors or picked up because of the sins of one's ancestors. In those verses God speaks of "punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." But while these texts do speak of the punishment of sin, they say nothing about inheriting demons.

Third wave and other writers on spiritual warfare point to what they call "clinical evidence," which they say supports their belief that demons can be transmitted to children because of the sinful actions or demonic inhabitation of their ancestors. But this "clinical evidence" consists of the experiences of counselors in deliverance sessions. As noted in the evaluation of the first questionable belief regarding spiritual warfare, it appears likely that in these sessions, counselors find what they are looking for because both they and their counselees have similar (and erroneous) expectations.

4) Conclusion

Third wave books often include a chapter on worldviews, in which warnings are given against accepting a rationalistic, naturalistic Western worldview. These warnings are important and necessary. But in avoiding a rationalistic worldview, we must beware lest we fall into a spiritistic, animistic worldview, in which evil spirits are everywhere, curses have power, and the correct techniques must be used in combating them.

[63] See section I, B, 2, c, 1) of this report.

In their analysis[64] of third wave beliefs about the demonic, Priest, Campbell, and Mullen have noted that a number of third wave writers have served on the mission field. They suggest that perhaps unwittingly the thinking of these writers has been shaped by the magical and/or animistic worldviews that they have encountered. Kraft and Wagner vigorously dispute the idea that their worldview has been shaped by animism. But a number of third wave beliefs about the demonic have little if any basis in Scripture, and there are significant parallels in this area between third wave and animistic beliefs.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Rev. Timothy J. Brown, the writer of the minority report, when the matter of third wave Pentecostalism is addressed.

B. That synod adopt the counsels recommended in the majority report with the following substitutions and additions:

1. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 1 in the majority report: Acknowledge that this movement reminds us of our continual need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to make use of the spiritual gifts (charismata) that the Lord has given us.
2. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 3 in the majority report: Note that it is not clear that what the third wave calls the gift of prophecy is indeed the gift of prophecy described in the New Testament. Urge that whenever a believer claims to have received a message or "leading" from God, he or she should search the Scriptures and seek the counsel of fellow believers before acting on it.
3. After section VI, B, 6 of the majority report, add (as section B, 7): Recognize that techniques used by some forms of inner healing ministry have the potential to implant false memories or to cause spiritual confusion.
4. Insert the following in place of section VI, B, 7 in the majority report (as section B, 8): Acknowledge the reality of the believer's warfare against the world, the flesh (sinful nature), and the devil (including demonic powers). Avoid accepting beliefs about the demonic and using methods of spiritual warfare that have no basis in Scripture.

C. That synod recommend that the churches give consideration to the viewpoints expressed in the minority report as they seek to evaluate third wave teaching.

Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II
(minority report)
Timothy J. Brown

Note: Please refer to Appendix A of the Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism II majority report for the Bibliography for both the majority and minority reports.

[64] Priest, et al. 1995.

Outline

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I. Background

A. Mandate

Synod 2007 appointed the Faith Formation Committee after finding that it could not ratify the decision of Synod 2006 about admitting all baptized children to the Lord's Supper. Synod realized there were broader issues that needed attention and thus called upon the committee to carry out the following five-year 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) participation 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 with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.
> b. Describing how Christian Reformed congregations in various 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. Providing guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics in collaboration with Faith Alive Christian Resources.
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 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 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).

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 655-57)

In addition, Synod 2007 gave the Faith Formation Committee related work on the subjects of infant dedication and infant baptism:

4. That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism.

   Ground: Covenantal theology is foundational for faith formation (Gen.17:1-14; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:38-39).

5. That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide guidance concerning liturgical practices surrounding infant baptism.

   Ground: Because liturgical practices teach doctrine, it is important that liturgical practices reflect the doctrinal standards of the denomination.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 621)

The committee eagerly began its work in Fall 2007 with the awareness that its task was a large one and the timeline was longer than usual. We were given a five-year mandate with the responsibility to report to synod each year.

B. Dreams

The committee took on our five-year assignment with a healthy balance of realism and idealism. Though we began with some anxiety, knowing the task would be a challenging one, we took up our work eagerly because we carry in our hearts a passion for helping the church in its work of spiritually forming a new generation. If you had been able to sit down with us at the beginning of our work and to peek into our hearts, you would have detected a deep desire for a new generation of children and youth formed deeply, richly, and obediently in their faith. If you were able to listen to us express our dreams for our work, you would have heard a conversation that went something like this:

> We desire to engage the entire denomination in a study and discussion that is positive, edifying, and free of fracturing and polarization, one which effectively integrates biblical understanding, confessional faithfulness, liturgical vitality, and pastoral passion. . . . We desire a reversal of the current trend of youth leaving the church, and desire that they experience spiritual renewal. . . . We dream of the day when the sacraments are a welcomed means of grace that embody a rich tapestry of biblical meanings and spiritual nourishment, with worship practices that open up the sacraments in strong and imaginatively colorful ways and celebrate them as wholesome intergenerational events. . . . We dream together of a community in which all ages grow in faith, give thanks to God for his grace and for each other, that all be welcomed and nurtured into vibrant Christian lives, each according to his/her capacity, and with the entire denomination marked by the fruit of the Spirit to the glory of God.

While the committee frequently has had frank discussions about the barriers to faithful discipleship in contemporary culture and ministry, we are sustained and energized by a deep sense of anticipation about the ways that the Holy Spirit may work to renew and strengthen us all for ministry.

C. A new model for committee work

The mandate and task of the committee require that we develop a new model for the work of a synodical committee. We understand that our work involves more than writing a study report; it calls for shepherding the denomination through a process of listening, study, discussion, and decision making. We have, therefore, developed a new model for our work with the churches that will involve not only a report with synodical decisions but, even more important, denomination-wide learning, reflection, and growth.

The committee has noted that the key words of our mandate, given by Synod 2007, include terms such as *formulating*, *describing*, *a resource for discussions*, *providing guidance*, *material*, and *advice*. These instructions from synod have shaped the model for our work.

The committee is talking to persons, agencies, groups of leaders, and churches. We are researching the theological issues, the issues of church

polity, and the practice of the churches both within our denomination and others. We are in the infancy of developing guidelines and materials that are designed to aid the churches in their ministries.

The committee is eager to continue these efforts, working toward a comprehensive approach for the CRC that responds to changing needs and ministry contexts, coordinates work among congregations and agencies, and equips us all for effective ministry.

II. Progress to date

A. Synod 2008

Synod 2008 received the first report of the Faith Formation Committee and saw the beginnings of our website: www.crcna.org/faithformation. The new model for our work became evident when we engaged synod in a lunchtime roundtable discussion among all the delegates. We presented the following questions for discussion around each table:

1. Theological reflection on local practices – What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats do you discern in your congregation with respect to the faith formation of children and young people, especially related to profession of faith and participation in the Lord's Supper?

2. Theological reflection regarding 1 Corinthians 11 – What are the specific practices that lead your congregation into joyful obedience of the commands in 1 Corinthians 11 to "examine yourselves" and "discern the body"? How might your congregation more intentionally deepen those practices in spiritually life-giving ways?

After the conversations, delegates were asked to write a summary of their reflections on the subject, indicating what they had learned from the discussions. Though this format was very different from the usual pattern of synod and its study committees, the participants found these conversations to be insightful, fascinating, and very enlightening. The discussions were open, vigorous, and revealed a vital and deep desire for a healthy church. There was a strong sense of gratitude for the opportunity to be talking together and learning from each other.

Following are observations that will help you sense the content of many of these conversations.

- A common theme was an awareness of a surprising diversity of practices and approaches to the matter of faith formation.
- There is evidence of churches responding well to the decision of Synod 1995 to encourage younger children to participate in the Lord's Supper.
- Many described how we probably put too much emphasis on the Lord's Supper as an occasion for judgment rather than a means of grace.
- We need to reevaluate and energize the practice of profession of faith—what its content should be, how it should be done, and how to make it more significant in the life of a believer and the community.
- We must probe various possibilities for how to relate membership, table participation, and profession of faith.
- The church possesses a strong desire to practice genuinely intergenerational worship.

- We are all deeply aware of the severe threats to the faith of our children and youth in today's culture—including the weakening fabric of family life.
- Many have a longing to realize the missional significance of profession of faith, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.
- The practice of a service of preparation for communion invites new attention—how and when it should it be practiced, and how it might instill both seriousness and joyfulness.
- There is significant uncertainty about the role of elders in supervising communion and a search for the most constructive way to exercise this supervision.
- Many expressed surprise that we are able to think of 1 Corinthians 11 as a passage that aims for us to think of communion as a time of "joyful obedience."
- Differences quickly surfaced about what *discerning the body* means and how it is to be interpreted.
- The church is engaged in an earnest search for age-appropriate ways to affirm our faith, discern the body, and proclaim the death of Christ.
- Yet the church also senses significant anxiety about the journey that this study and discussion will involve, where it will go, and how we will all work together in the process.

The committee was grateful to hear positive response to this format. Several delegates expressed gratitude that part of their synod experience included time to share the challenges and discoveries of their congregation's experience and to learn about the challenges of other congregations. For many delegates, this was also a time to discover firsthand the diversity of congregations in the CRCNA and to discover how complex it is for a denomination with such diversity to explore these significant issues together.

B. Our methods of learning

During the past year the Faith Formation Committee has been corresponding with church councils and leaders to hear their concerns and experiences. We have been particularly interested to learn how they have responded to earlier synodical decisions on this subject, what issues they are currently concerned about, and what efforts they have made to develop policies and practices to enhance an awareness of our baptism, age-appropriate profession of faith, and their practices of admission to the Lord's table.

To this end the committee has initiated or participated in

1. A website that offers helpful materials (www.crcna.org/faith formation)—this website provides an opportunity to distribute materials and information to churches, and it gives the churches an opportunity to view the progress of our work and provide feedback. We have also provided a brief video on this site that any congregation, classis, or discussion group could use to begin a discussion on faith formation.

2. A pool of fifty-eight correspondents, including pastors, youth workers, educational leaders, and other leaders from nearly every classis in the denomination—their role is to provide feedback for us on our work and insight into the concerns and practices of the congregations in their area.

As our work unfolds, some of them may also convene discussion groups in their area.

3. Workshops and training events in congregations, classes, and other gatherings (including the Calvin Worship Symposium, Days of Encouragement in some classes and regions, and a variety of other workshops and conferences)—in the past year, we have engaged in these discussions in six states and provinces.

4. Classis meetings throughout the denomination—this past winter we indicated our willingness to meet directly with classes of the CRC and were pleased to receive a positive response from one-third of all classes within a few weeks of issuing such an invitation. We are heartily encouraged by such a response! By summer we anticipate having committee members present for reports and discussions in 12-15 classes.

5. A meeting with the Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands pastors and youth leaders (SEAPI) at one of their recent conferences—our members were warmly received and engaged in valuable dialog about our mutual concerns in faith formation matters. This meeting gave us the opportunity to explain our mandate to them, and to listen to them in group discussions about their concerns. We found that the Asian CRC churches encounter the same generational differences that Anglo congregations face in the faith formation of their children and youth. However, there are numerous other barriers that occur, such as language, separate services for the Asian- and English-speaking members, various levels of education, degrees of assimilation into North American culture, and the need to integrate the efforts of both the home and the church in faith formation.

6. Discussions, both formal and informal, with several agencies, organizations, and key leaders, including Calvin Theological Seminary, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Christian Schools International, the Association of Christian Reformed Educators, and Dynamic Youth Ministries.

The committee is pleased that we have found a very high degree of interest in learning from each other in the church and a healthy resistance to "creeping congregationalism." We believe that we will be able to serve the churches well by putting them in touch with one another as they develop helpful practices. We also hope in the near future to engage in similar conversations with the Korean Council, the Black and Reformed Conferees, and Hispanic representatives. We value these conversations as opportunities to stay in touch with and learn from all the portions of our denomination. We also look forward to ecumenical conversations with other denominations worldwide.

In our conversations, the committee soon discovered that the churches were focusing their efforts and concerns on six different areas of practice. We are grateful to observe these faithful efforts, and we aim to become the channel by which the healthy practices of one church can become a stimulant for similar efforts in others. We anticipate that our committee website (www.crcna.org/faithformation) will become one central sharing ground for such information. The six areas we have observed are

1. One-on-one mentoring—Both before and after profession of faith, the presence of another mature and respected Christian who pulls alongside and meets regularly with a child or youth can be a vital supplement to the efforts of parents. Many congregations are developing this ministry, and we hope that mentoring efforts will soon appear in many more. Mentoring can be key to preparation for profession of faith at any age, but such efforts can also be important to encourage a lifetime of continued Christian growth after profession of faith.

2. Celebrations of baptism—In the Reformed tradition, the administration of baptism is a very significant moment to a child and to parents. God's promises are signed and sealed. But often it is far too easy to lose sight of one's baptism. We find that churches are coming to realize that baptisms must be regularly remembered and affirmed. Within a family and in the worship life of the congregation regular reminders of baptism will serve well to form children spiritually.

3. Age-appropriate preparation for profession of faith—When Synod 1995 encouraged that younger children should be encouraged to make profession of faith, many churches found that the materials available for preparation and instruction were written for older children and youth. Both materials and procedures needed reevaluation. We are finding that many congregations carry a concern that the content of younger profession of faith remains healthy, and we aim to satisfy that concern by designing and writing materials and guidelines that are age-appropriate.

4. Age-appropriate liturgical tools for profession of faith—For years, the church has offered one liturgical form for profession of faith, with the assumption that most professions of faith would involve youth in their late teens. Churches find this material does not fit a profession of faith by younger children. Thus, congregations have begun to develop liturgies that can be used when admitting younger children to table fellowship.

5. Instruction in theological issues—The congregations of the CRC realize that the matters we are concerned about are not only matters of practice. Each practice has historical and theological issues behind it and must rest on the proper interpretation of certain key passages of Scripture. We are heartened to hear of councils and congregations that are meeting together in small groups with helpful study material in an effort to better understand the issues of theology and interpretation.

6. Joyful celebrations of the Lord's Supper—Though the question about admitting children to the Lord's Supper was the initial question that spurred the current discussions in the church, many other questions about the Lord's Supper are also present among us, including the frequency of the sacrament, the manner of distribution, and especially the spirit and tone of the liturgy.

Undoubtedly more issues and more questions will surface in the months ahead as we reflect and study together.

C. A variety of models

As the committee has listened and observed, we have found there are a variety of models present in churches of the Reformed tradition on matters of faith formation as they relate to admittance to the Lord's Supper. These are not always neatly separated into categories but rather represent a continuum of practices. As we look over the churches of the Reformation, we can see several general models that become apparent. In many Protestant contexts, the historical trend has been to admit younger and younger children to the table.

Note: These models are general descriptions, and there are certainly many local variables in practice.

1. Traditional model

   Profession of Faith is encouraged for young people who are approximately 18 years of age (allowing for many different circumstances depending on the person). There is a detailed profession of faith before the elders of the church, following a sequence of catechism instruction. Admittance to the Lord's Supper follows the public profession of faith ceremony. There is an immediate assumption of the responsibilities of adult membership.

2. Modified traditional model

   Profession of Faith is encouraged for young people in junior high to high school. (It is interesting to note that John Calvin encouraged profession of faith for 10 year olds.) There is a detailed profession of faith before the elders of the church, usually after a profession of faith class. Admittance to the Lord's Supper follows the public profession of faith ceremony. In some churches, there is an assumption of responsibilities of adult membership. In other churches, there is a delay for assuming adult responsibilities until age 16 or 18.

3. 1995 CRCNA model

   Profession of faith or a "welcome to table fellowship" is encouraged for children in grade school to junior high. After an age-appropriate class, children meet with the pastor or council representative rather than with the entire body of elders to testify to their faith. The pastor or representative brings a recommendation to the elders to welcome professing children to table fellowship. Admittance to the Lord's Supper follows the public profession of faith or "welcome to table fellowship" ceremony. Commitment to and assumption of adult responsibilities begin at age 18. In churches that call this a "welcome to table fellowship," a formal profession of faith is encouraged at an older age.

4. First communion model

   Many Protestant denominations and some Roman Catholic parishes follow a first communion model. Children of a certain age (perhaps first, second, or third grade) are welcomed to an age-appropriate introductory class, which leads to a public welcome to the table. At a later time (perhaps in junior high), there is a general profession of faith (or *confirmation* in many traditions) before the elders or official representative(s), or there is completion of profession of faith class with a pastor or official

representative, followed by a public profession of faith ceremony, with a commitment to and assumption of adult responsibilities at age 16 or 18.

5. Paedocommunion model

In this model, all baptized children may participate in the Lord's Supper at the discretion or their parents or guardians. In junior high or high school, churches encourage a general profession of faith before the elders or official representative(s), and/or completion of a profession of faith class with pastor or official representative(s), followed by a public profession of faith ceremony, with a commitment to and assumption of adult responsibilities at age 16 or 18. Additional reaffirmations of faith may be celebrated as circumstances allow.

Even this brief tour of some basic models suggests a range of practices—and some confusion about what language to use to describe each step along the way. Historians assure us that this complexity is not new. In fact, some historians refer to this entire process of welcoming people to the table as one of the most malleable and ever-changing of all Christian practices throughout the history of the church. That historical assessment can, of course, lead us to very different conclusions—some people long to return to a single clear model, while others are grateful for the implied flexibility these various models might offer.

As we explore how congregations actually practice these models, we are eager not merely to focus on pragmatic considerations or what practices will generate the least controversy. Rather, the committee wants to focus on which approaches best promise to help us follow scriptural teaching about baptism and the Lord's Supper. We want not merely to discern which practices are wisest but also to articulate why. And when variation in practice seems inevitable or wise, then we want to articulate some common principles to guide us.

D. The decisions of Synod 1995

In our work thus far, we have been especially surprised by the number of pastors, council members, synod delegates, and others who have very little awareness of the decisions of Synod 1995 to welcome younger children to the table with an age-appropriate profession of faith. We frequently hear comments like "we have ten- and twelve-year-olds who are sincere believers, but who are rather intimidated by the idea of making profession of faith," not realizing that synod's decisions then offer a natural response to that situation.

At the same time, we have learned a great deal from congregations who have implemented the decisions of 1995. Many express gratitude for the meaningful ways that believing children (ages 6-12) participate in the Lord's Supper.

The committee senses that there are several reasons why the decisions of 1995 have been received unevenly in the churches: (1) after Synod 1995, the issue of women's ordination received most of the attention in many churches, to the exclusion of other topics, (2) the topic of faith formation and the sacraments may not have been perceived as urgent by some churches, and (3) some churches were satisfied with their current practices.

At this time, however, we sense that it is crucial that each of us clearly understand the decisions made by Synod 1995 and learn from the churches that implemented changes following Synod 1995. Without this understanding, our discussions as a denomination are likely to be muddled.

III. Overall workplan

Surveying all of this communication, our present workplan includes (1) continuing communication, (2) the development of key documents to summarize our learning, (3) the exploration of developmental groups, (4) some additional and expanded documents, (5) a proposed timetable for synodical action, and (6) a proposed timetable for educational and training events.

A. Continuing communication

Cited above are the forms of communication in which the committee has engaged. We have found these very helpful and effective; however, we believe we have only begun in this process and plan to continue much more of the same. We look forward to annual reports to and conversations with the delegates of synod during each of the five years that we serve. We aim to continue the development of our website in hopes that it will become a place where churches and church leaders regularly go to find information and help. We will continue to stay closely in touch with our fifty-eight pastoral correspondents so that they are informed of our work and will be able not only to speak for us and answer questions in their local areas but also to inform us of some of the best practices in churches and provide helpful feedback on materials we will be providing. We will put forth constant efforts to meet with minority groups of leaders within our denomination and to engage in dialogue with classes. We will be providing workshops and training events in a variety of contexts. We also anticipate that our conversations with denominational agencies will be mutually helpful, and we currently are finding our regular communication with Faith Alive Christian Resources to be very valuable.

B. Documents

While discussion is certainly important, it is also crucial for us to articulate the fruit of this discussion in documents that gather shared wisdom, reflect on key biblical teaching, and offer guidance for our common work together. However, we are not certain that a traditional synodical report is sufficient to achieve our mandate. Instead, we are developing a set of materials, including a Bible study for adult study groups, an intensive study paper on 1 Corinthians 11, and a broad "call" document for teaching and learning. Each one is designed not merely for synod but for a specific audience in the church. We hope to present early versions of these documents to Synod 2009 before it convenes by means of the committee's website (www.crcna.org/faithformation), to receive advice and feedback from synod, and then to present revised documents to Synod 2010.

1. Affirming baptism

   It has become very clear to the committee from the beginning that we have some very healthy and life-giving practices among us that need to be affirmed and encouraged. In these practices there is potential power

for faith formation that has not yet been fully harvested. Thus we have worked to develop a document that expresses our core convictions, one that is sufficiently clear and succinct that churches and other groups can use as a basis for study, training, and reflection. This document should call not for changes in our polity but for learning to do better what we have already covenanted to do. We have called this document "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith." While beginning with our baptism, it quickly moves on to call us to regularly renew and affirm it in lifelong practices. Through such efforts profession of faith will be strengthened, and the Lord's Supper will more likely be a time of faith-celebration. This process is longer, larger, and more fundamental to the initial question of when children may be admitted to the Lord's table. We trust the church will be well served by a consideration of this document. We expect that this document will be available to the delegates of synod before they gather in June 2009.

2. Studies in 1 Corinthians 11

   It is obvious that the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 will figure prominently in our discussions about admittance to the Lord's table and about the spirit of a communion service. Several key statements in this chapter have figured very prominently in the consciousness of the church and have shaped our understanding of the issues associated with the Lord's Supper. Our committee is well aware of how important a careful examination of this passage is. Therefore, we aim not merely to address the church's work in interpreting the passage but also to provide materials by which the churches can be engaged in a study of this chapter in their local setting. We expect to have two documents ready by the time of synod: a six-part Bible study of 1 Corinthians 11 for use in youth and adult study groups, and an in-depth analytical study of key issues in 1 Corinthians 11 and the Lord's Supper.

C. Exploration of developmental concepts

In accordance with our mandate, the committee continues to widen its focus and broaden its dialogue with others around issues of intergenerational faith formation within the context of congregational life. As we've explored the use of new structures that might serve to deepen the faith of covenant members young and old, the "faith milestones" approach has captured our attention and imagination as particularly helpful. Built on research in the area of faith development and framed in a way that invites congregational implementation, this approach has been introduced and refined over the past several years by the Youth and Family Institute, an organization with roots in the Lutheran tradition.

The "faith milestones" approach is based on the premise that *all* people of faith, from the newly baptized infant to the elderly saint, grow in faith and mature in their walk as disciples *within the context of membership and life in a faith community.* For children and young people especially, the sense of *belonging to* a congregation is essential in the nurture of their faith and the support of their walk with Jesus. Significant steps in each child's faith development are intentionally (and publicly) recognized and celebrated by the entire body—hence the idea of "milestones." Similarly, the faith and life transitions experienced by teens, both sacred and ordinary, need to be acknowledged

not only by families but also by the entire congregation. Nor is profession of faith the ultimate milestone in this paradigm. Significant faith moments in the lives of adults also provide opportunities for the congregation to affirm its communal faith as it encourages, supports, and celebrates lifelong learning and growing in Christ.

It is the dynamic nature of this approach that excites us. Faith is viewed as a lifelong journey—begun at baptism and extending throughout life. God's work in us is accomplished through the power of the Spirit, in a community of believers who teach, encourage, nurture, tell their own stories, care for, and celebrate each other's milestones along the way. It is an approach that calls to mind the promises we make at each baptism—and one that suggests ways to help us keep them.

We believe there is great benefit for our churches in examining this perspective further. Too often both our understanding of profession of faith and the materials provided have been of the one-size-fits-all variety. We are pleased to help the churches understand that the development of faith is much more individualized, with multiple significant steps along that way that beg to be observed and celebrated. We aim to examine a variety of models to discern which developmental milestones ought to be recognized, and we are pleased to work with Faith Alive Christian Resources in this task.

D. Additional/expanded documents

The committee knows there will be additional materials that it will need to provide in the next few years. The issues we are dealing with certainly are addressed in the confessions, and so we will need to provide something about confessional perspectives on baptism, faith formation, profession of faith, and the Lord's Supper. We anticipate providing materials and resources that will be helpful for worship when baptism, remembering baptisms, age-appropriate professions of faith, admission to the Lord's table, and so forth are included. Councils will need training materials for elders and pastors with regard to the preparation of children and youth for admission to the Lord's table and profession of faith. Pastors and churches will need materials that include guidelines on how to deal with requests for infant dedication instead of infant baptism. Other materials will be needed concerning requests for rebaptism. We hope to provide for the churches a survey of the best and most helpful practices that we have discovered in churches. These materials will provide an excellent way for us to learn from each other. Perhaps we can also provide materials for pastors that will form the groundwork for a series of sermons on affirming our baptism and the formation of faith.

We eagerly welcome ideas and suggestions from the churches and from synod on additional materials that will be needed.

E. Timetable for synodical action

It is difficult to predict the pace of our work because the more we have immersed ourselves into it the more we have discovered new areas that require attention. Yet we remain aware of the sense of urgency in churches that desire answers, solutions, and materials soon. As we look ahead, the committee hopes to be able to provide the following.

In 2010 we hope to provide

- revised and completed Bible study on 1 Corinthians 11.
- revised and completed document titled "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith."
- revised and completed document titled "Perspectives on 1 Corinthians 11," including perspectives on the statements of the confessions.
- materials for a series of sermons on affirming our baptism and the formation of faith.
- more definitive material on the milestones that can helpfully be observed in the developmental process of forming faith and how these influence our practices of profession of faith.
- recommendations to synod concerning the practices of the churches in baptism, profession of faith, and admission to the Lord's Supper.

In 2011 we would anticipate

- if necessary, ratification of any Church Order changes that were necessary because of the decisions of Synod 2010.
- presentation of new materials, forms, and teaching aids that may be necessary to implement synod's decisions.
- knowing that many of our churches have small groups studying 1 Corinthians 11.
- many of our churches scheduling a series of sermons on "Affirming our Baptism."
- multiple local conferences on "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" throughout the denomination.

In 2012 the committee hopes to be able to focus on proposing events for study, growth, and training to fully and meaningfully implement decisions made in 2010 and 2011.

F. Educational and training events

The committee has begun to discuss what will be needed to aid church leaders in thinking through all these matters and the broad implications of it all. We anticipate the possible need to provide helpful materials for study, discussion, and instruction and to plan for training events throughout the denomination, as financial resources allow.

IV. Matters for Synod 2009

The Faith Formation Committee highly values the open discussions on major subjects that take place within the church. The importance of open discussions was obviously prominent in the mind of synod when our mandate was written, for it regularly refers to such matters as "ongoing discussion," "mutual accountability and learning," and calls on us to see our task as "shepherding this discussion" throughout the churches. We fully concur with this methodology rather than proceeding immediately to the writing of a report, recommending positions, and then seeking to defend them in order that they may be approved. How much better for all of us to first engage in times of discussion, study, and learning.

In that light, the committee hopes that Synod 2009 will schedule a sixty- to ninety-minute period of open discussion in a plenary session to review

two documents: "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" and "Perspectives on 1 Corinthians 11." Our committee will find it most helpful to listen to the delegates respond to these reports, raise their questions, and provide their insights from the experiences of their congregations. It would be most helpful if we could have the privilege of scheduling guided lunchtime roundtable discussions similar to those of last year, at which time each delegate will be able to reflect on the needs and opportunities in their own congregations, to be followed by a plenary session discussion on the same day. We will be interested in hearing the comments of synod delegates on the merits of these documents and will be happy to provide some guided questions to aid their discussion.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of our committee when our committee's work is being discussed.

B. That synod schedule a lunchtime roundtable session for a discussion of key questions related to our committee's report.

Grounds:

1. This type of discussion allows delegates to offer insights from their own congregation's experiences, enhancing synod's work as a deliberative body.
2. This type of discussion allows our committee to hear many more voices from throughout the denomination.
3. Last year's discussion was affirmed by many delegates as a wise use of synod's time.

C. That synod schedule time in plenary session for open discussion (without any vote) and a Q&A session with our committee on two documents: "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" and "Perspectives on 1 Corinthians 11," both to be available for download from the committee's website: www.crcna.org/faithformation.

Grounds:

1. The documents are not yet ready for formal synodical endorsement or approval.
2. Plenary discussion allows each of us to hear a wide variety of perspectives on both the form and content of these emerging documents. It is especially important for this to take place now so that our more substantive recommendations for 2010 can be developed on the basis of discerning reflection on the needs of the church.

D. That synod ask that each church review the decision of Synod 1995 regarding children, profession of faith, and the Lord's Supper (cf. *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 714-21, 762-63), and to learn from congregations who have implemented this decision (see materials from congregations at www.crcna.org/faithformation).

Grounds:

1. The decision of Synod 1995 and its advice to the churches forms a key part of our ongoing work.

2. We find that many churches are unaware of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding this matter. This lack of awareness makes it difficult for the churches to understand the context of the current discussions concerning faith formation and the admission of children to the Lord's Supper.
3. The reception of any decision that a future synod makes about children at the table will depend not merely on the decision but on whether churches are engaged in discerning discussions of this topic.
4. The formation of faith of children and youth is a matter of urgent concern, given the number of youth who are drifting away from the church. Honest ongoing assessment of local congregational practices is a crucial task for each church.

Faith Formation Committee
Irene Bakker
Andrew Chun
Jill Friend
Syd Hielema
Pat Nederveld
H. David Schuringa
Howard Vanderwell, secretary
John D. Witvliet, chairperson
Gerard L. Dykstra, ex officio

I. Background

A. History

In 2003, Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia (Classis B.C. South-East), overtured Synod 2004 to study the efficacy of the Form of Subscription on the grounds that many churches in that classis no longer used the Form of Subscription because many individuals had difficulty signing it. Classis B.C. South-East wrote, "When a tool such as the Form of Subscription becomes ineffective in our culture and time, a study into the reasons and attempts to once again make it effective is justified" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435).

Synod 2004 did not accede to the overture but, in response to it, requested that synod instruct the Board of Trustees (BOT) to inquire as to the methods by which the churches comply with the provisions of Church Order Article 5 and refer the results of such inquiry to Synod 2005 for appropriate action.

In late 2004 the general secretary's office sent out a survey concerning the current use of the Form of Subscription to all of the churches. The BOT referred the results of the survey to Synod 2005, and, based on its review of the survey data, made several recommendations. In response to the BOT's report and recommendations, Synod 2005 adopted the following recommendations:

> That synod adopt the following recommendations with reference to the Form of Subscription (BOT Supplement, section I, H):
>
> 1. That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2007 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.
> 2. That the proposed revision of the Form of Subscription be drafted by a committee appointed by the Board of Trustees.
> 3. In their work, we encourage the committee to take note of the guidelines as to the meaning of subscription in the Church Order Supplements (2004 edition, p. 26).
> 4. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2007. . . .
>
> *Grounds*:
> a. The survey conducted among the churches indicates that a substantial number of churches believe that an update is desirable.
> b. The present Form of Subscription contains statements that are subject to misinterpretation.
> c. A more contemporary expression of agreement will make the requirements more meaningful.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735)

In response to Synod 2005 the BOT appointed a committee and mandated it to clarify the Form of Subscription. This study committee reported to Synod 2008. The advisory committee of Synod 2008 responded to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee report found in the *Agenda for Synod 2008*, pages 243-50.

The advisory committee commended the work of the study committee in several ways. First, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee understood that the mandated clarification of the Form of Subscription required a more thorough restatement rather than a minor update of the language. The proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA was the study

committee's contribution toward faithfully and thoroughly carrying out its assigned mandate. The proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA raised critical questions and produced vigorous conversations not only about the Form of Subscription but also about the role of the confessions in our denomination.

Second, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee observed that one of the issues at stake in clarifying the Form of Subscription was the issue of encouraging rather than discouraging significant theological discussion. In its report, the committee wrote that "any regulatory instrument that is adopted by the church ought to be regarded as an invitation to the officebearers of the church to participate in this ongoing reflection rather than as a document that precludes or hinders such reflection" (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 247). The advisory committee endorsed this view because it reflects both the will of previous synodical decisions (see *Acts of Synod 1976* and *Acts of Synod 2005*) and the purpose of the Form of Subscription.

Third, the Form of Subscription Committee's work highlighted the need to address how the Form of Subscription functions within our increasingly diverse church family. A Form of Subscription, no matter how well crafted, is useful only if it functions to enhance the faithful ministry of the local church. The Form of Subscription, in whatever form, must offer a clear and compelling statement of Reformed Christianity, to which officebearers can submit, as well as bridge barriers of language and ethnicity. This is an especially relevant concern for our emerging and ethnic minority churches and their leaders.

Despite these strengths of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee's work, the advisory committee expressed the following concerns:

1. Several overtures, communications, and discussions raised questions about the clarity of language in the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers.

2. The advisory committee believed that the process of renewing the Form of Subscription must include an educational strategy designed to engage both the local church and denominational agencies. Because a document such as the Form of Subscription must live and function well across the various constituencies of our denomination, the advisory committee believed that the process of change was as important as its product. Believing this challenge presented a unique opportunity to educate our denomination as to the importance and usefulness of the confessions in the life of the church, the advisory committee advised a more comprehensive approach than was originally mandated to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee.

3. The advisory committee believed that a more comprehensive process of consultation and communication must take place between the study committee and the churches.

B. Committee composition and mandate

In order to address these concerns and to fulfill the original mandate of Synod 2005, Synod 2008 adopted the recommendation to recommit the original mandate and the work of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee to an expanded study committee. In addition, the newly expanded study

committee is charged to present a revised version of the Form of Subscription to Synod 2011 and to communicate annually to synod prior to the study committee's final report in 2011 (see *Acts of Synod 2008*, pp 476-77).

The Form of Subscription Revision Committee II has been given the mandate to continue the work of the 2005 committee to revise the Form of Subscription and to present a revised Form of Subscription to synod for possible adoption. In addition, the 2008 committee was mandated to engage a broad cross-section of the denomination in a process of discussion regarding the meaning of confessional subscription as well as to develop a process of communication and education regarding the Form of Subscription and the Reformed confessions, particularly in emerging and ethnic minority contexts, with the goal of clarifying the meaning of the Form of Subscription and increasing adherence to it, and encouraging robust engagement with the Reformed confessions.

II. Progress report

The Form of Subscription Revision Committee II began its work with a meeting in October 2008. The committee wrestled with some foundational issues with respect to the mandate, such as the purpose of a Form of Subscription and how the committee's work might best proceed as it crafts a document to replace the present Form of Subscription. The committee reached agreement that the purpose of the Form of Subscription revision should be unity with a secondary concern for purity. We also agreed that the Form of Subscription revision should be clear, compelling, and easily transportable across cultural and linguistic barriers. Finally, we agreed that the Form of Subscription revision should be precise in identifying the relationship of Scripture, creeds, confessions, and other documents which many affirm as useful contemporary expressions of Reformed Christianity but have not been granted confessional status (i.e., the Contemporary Testimony and the Belhar Confession).

The committee has thus far developed a "working document" as a potential revision of the Form of Subscription, a background document that briefly explains the reasoning behind the potential revision, and an engagement document designed to encourage reflection in large and small groups that may gather to discuss matters within the study committee's mandate.

III. Future work

In an effort to broaden the conversation and increase dialogue between the study committee and the various constituencies within the denomination, members of the committee will be attending the biennial Multiethnic Conference and the Black and Reformed Conference, reporting to synod, and engaging classes in times of discussion and reflection. We have already begun the process of translating the proposed documents that the committee produced into Korean and Spanish for those whose first language is not English. We are also open to additional translation in order to ensure that the work of the committee, in particular the revision of the Form of Subscription, is broadly understood and accepted throughout the CRCNA.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. James C. Dekker, chair, and Rev. Michael Borgert, reporter, when this matter is discussed.

B. That Synod 2009 allocate a discussion period over a mealtime guided by a facilitator who would encourage the delegates to share their reflections, best practices, and creative ways of engaging the Form of Subscription and the Reformed confessions and that synod grant time during the plenary session to receive a verbal summary report of those discussions.

C. That synod encourage the churches and classes to engage in earnest prayer and discussion on these matters and communicate with the committee as requested.

Form of Subscription Revision Committee II
Michael Borgert, reporter
Mark A. Davies
James C. Dekker, chair
Gerard L. Dykstra, ex officio
Eduardo A. Gonzalez
Sheila Holmes
Byung Duk Min
Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Kristen Van Engen
John Van Schepen
Wilma Vander Leek
Uko Zylstra

OVERTURES, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PERSONAL APPEALS

Overture 1: Re-evaluate Participant Assessment Regarding the Ministers' Pension Fund

Classis Chatham overtures Synod 2009 to re-evaluate the participant assessment regarding the ministers' pension fund.

Grounds:

1. Previous synods, including Synod 2008, have not addressed the concerns we have with inequities of participant assessments.
2. The 2009 Canadian assessment is based on $32.64 per member with a minimum assessment per participant of $8,148 for 2009. This equated to 250 members as a minimum assessment.
3. Many congregations (17 in Classis Chatham according to the 2007 *Yearbook*) are below the 250 active member threshold and are assessed in excess of $32.64 per member for the pension fund.
4. Some of the small congregations below 100 members are in reality assessed over $80 per member, and congregations between 150 and 100 members upwards from $55.
5. Ministry shares make adjustments for smaller churches and the pension fund penalizes the smaller churches.
6. The large assessment for this fund makes it very hard for smaller churches to meet the other ministry obligations.
7. This might result in certain programs being cut or not developed due to lack of funds. This will force councils to be more focused on current operations instead of looking for ways to make our denomination grow.
8. An "assessment" from the Pension Trustees has been something that we feel is not fitting for a structure that is built to represent a broader assembly of the church body.

Classis Chatham
Barry Wright, stated clerk

Overture 2: Appoint Diaconal Advisers to Synod

I. Background

The question of the role of deacons in church leadership has been discussed for many years in the CRC. In 1997 synod approved the delegation of deacons to classis if the classis so decided. While this issue has not had the heat of the discussion regarding the role of women in church office, there

is a parallel flow to the consideration. Even after synod allowed women to serve as elders (if a congregation approved) and allowed women elders to be delegated to classis (if the classis approved), women first had a voice at the synodical level as advisers. It was not until 2008 that women were permitted to be delegated to synod as either elder or minister of the Word.

Also, Synod 1995 approved the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod. Among reasons given were that the multiethnic character of the CRC was not adequately reflected at synod and that participation at synod, even if only as advisers, would be an effective training ground for persons who might later be delegates to synod.

There is precedent in CRC polity for the appointment of persons from under-represented groups in the church to serve as advisers to synod, thus helping these voices to be heard on the broadest stage. Classis Atlantic Northeast believes that deacons are one of the underrepresented (actually unrepresented) groups at synod and should have a voice when the church gathers on the synodical level.

II. Overture

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures Synod 2009 to mandate the appointment of up to seven diaconal advisers to synod, beginning in 2010. The Board of Trustees could consult with the staff of CRWRC and the classes to help identify deacons or those who have served as deacons in the past who would be able to serve as advisers.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1973, in response to the report on Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination, declared that offices are God's gifts to his church. Offices stand side by side, differing in function but not in importance or honor. Since pastors and elders are already present at synod, deacons should also have their voice heard.
2. A significant part of the agenda at each synod involves areas where deacons have both expertise and involvement at the congregational and classical levels. Their voice should be heard.
3. Councils already delegate deacons to classis meetings, if the classis has approved such delegation. Currently at least 19 of 47 classes seat deacons as delegates.
4. Synod in past years has appointed women and ethnic minority advisers to synod, allowing these important groups in the church a voice at synod, before they served as delegates or before there were significant numbers delegated to synod.

Classis Atlantic Northeast
Alvern Gelder, stated clerk

Overture 3: Note and Revise Errors in the Report of the Synodical Study Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000

I. Background

Synod 1995 approved the following recommendation:

> 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)

Synod 1995 also made the ordination of women elders, ministers, and evangelists a local option for congregations and classes. To achieve this, Synod 1995 did a couple of things: (1) Synod 1995 allowed any CRC classis to declare that the restrictive word *male* in Church Order Article 3 be inoperative within its jurisdiction, and (2) Synod 1995 approved some rules, included in a Supplement to Church Order Article 3, that localized the roles of women elders, ministers, and evangelists.

Five years later, Synod 2000 revisited the practice of ordaining women elders, ministers, and evangelists. It modified some of the rules in the Supplement to Church Order Article 3 to make the roles of women ministers and elders less localized. Also Synod 2000 served the churches by presenting summaries of the two widely held interpretations of Scripture, as expressed in previous study committee reports, both for and against the ordination of women elders, ministers, and evangelists (*Acts of Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73).

Subsequent synods further broadened the roles of women elders, ministers, and evangelists by modifying the rules in the supplement to Church Order Article 3. Synods 2006 and 2007 went beyond this by proposing and ratifying a decision to remove the restrictive word *male* from Church Order Article 3. Synod 2007 also opened the door for women ministers and elders to be delegated to future synods.

Most recently, at Synod 2008, more than 20 delegates were women, of whom one was chosen to serve as the vice president of synod.

Though much has changed since Synod 1995, there remain in the CRCNA two different and contrary interpretations of God's Word on the matter of women's ordination as ministers and elders.

II. A new look at the validity of synod's case for ordaining women ministers, elders, and evangelists

In the report to Synod 2000, the section that explains the rationale for ordaining women ministers and elders notes that

> the case for opening the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to qualified women rests upon the general analogy of Scripture, that is, on the "obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole."
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000,* p. 369)

Here is a summary of the "analogy of Scripture" data that the report lists as favoring the ordination of women ministers, elders, and evangelists:

A. Old Testament evidence

1. Creation. Male and female were both created in the image of God. Nothing in the creation account suggests male headship in the church.
2. Eve as Adam's helper. The priority of man in creation has lasting implications for marriage, but nothing in Genesis suggests that male priority in marriage applies to offices in the church.
3. There are exceptions to the rule of male prominence in the Old Testament. Hannah prophesied. Deborah was prophetess and judge. Hulda spoke as a prophetess. Yet the "rule" to which these women were exceptions does not seem to be divinely ordained but to reflect the customs of ancient patriarchal cultures.
4. God's prophets spoke of the Holy Spirit as coming upon all flesh, including male and female (see especially Joel 2).

B. New Testament evidence

It is true that Jesus chose male disciples and appointed male apostles, and that Paul appointed only male leaders in churches. Yet the New Testament shows that this pattern need not continue.

1. Galatians 3:28. The emphasis is on salvation, using the illustration of adoption. In Christ, all are "sons of God." Yet the teaching about oneness in Christ seems to have social implications for Jews and Gentiles, slaves and masters, male and female, since the privileges of "sonship" belong to all who are in Christ.
2. Baptism. Unlike the sign of the Old Covenant (circumcision), which was for males only, the sign of the New Covenant (baptism) is for females as well as males.
3. Gifts of the Spirit. The fulfillment of Joel 2 at Pentecost indicates that all the gifts of the Spirit are for both male and female.
4. The Office of Believer. As members of Christ's body (the church), both male and female share in the anointing of the Spirit and are equipped to serve in the office of believer as prophets, priests, and kings.
5. Women were agents of special revelation, in that they were the first to see and to speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
6. The Apostle Paul called women fellow-workers in Christ for the gospel.

According to the report to Synod 2000, the analogy of Scripture presents so much data in favor of ordaining women that "there would have to be explicit and universally binding scriptural arguments against this teaching in order to overturn it" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369).

The report also notes that in the CRCNA

> some think that such evidence exists in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, and 1 Timothy 2:9-15. These texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored. Rightly interpreted, these passages, too, can properly be understood

> to be in harmony with the general analogy of Scripture that has just been presented.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

Since the section of the report to Synod 2000 favoring women's ordination views these texts as being particularly important, we should take special note of the way the report interprets them as being in harmony with a general "analogy of Scripture" which allows for the ordination of women.

III. A review of two critical texts

A. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

The report to Synod 2000 notes that

> In Corinth the believing women were exercising their new-found freedom in Christ and were participating in the worship service by praying and prophesying. Paul in no way discouraged the women from praying and prophesying, but he did insist that they show proper decorum in doing so, probably by wearing long hair and an appropriate head covering. To support his concern, he states in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

A key element in the interpretation of this passage is the meaning of the term *head* (*kephalê*). The report to Synod 2000 states that the word *head* is used metaphorically in this passage, not literally. The report to Synod 2000 states

> There are two reasons to suggest that here Paul is using "head" to mean "source." First, in Greek the term "head" *(kephalê),* when used in a metaphorical way, did not mean "have authority over." It wasn't until later in Ephesians and Colossians, that Paul used it that way when he referred to Christ, so the Corinthians most likely would have understood *kephalê* as "source." Second, when Paul elaborates later on the man-woman relationship (1 Cor. 11:8-9), he elaborates on the idea of "source" ("for man did not come from woman but woman from man. . ."). In the context, then, kephalê ("head") probably has that same meaning in verse 3.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369)

However, in contrast to the report to Synod 2000, contemporary studies of the use and meaning of the term *head (kephalê*) indicate that the term was used metaphorically to refer to authority by the time when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. A study by Dr. Wayne Grudem, published in the *Trinity Journal* in the spring of 1985, found that in ancient Greek writings, the word *kephalê* was most often used literally to refer to a creature's physical head. Yet in some cases when *kephalê* was used metaphorically, it referred to "a person of superior rank, or ruler, ruling authority." The following instances of such metaphorical use (denoting authority) have been discovered in Greek literature pre-dating the apostle Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians.

The Septuagint – 3rd to 1st Century B.C.	13 instances
Herodotus – 5th Century B.C.	2 instances
Plato – 5th to 4th Century B.C.	1 instance
Testament of 12 Patriarchs – 2nd Century B.C.	1 instance

Therefore, the report to Synod 2000 favoring women's ordination erred when it stated that "in Greek the term 'head' *(kephalê*), when used in a metaphorical way, did not mean 'have authority over'" when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

It should also be noted that in Grudem's study of 2,336 uses of *kephalê* in Greek literature ranging from the 5th century B.C. to the 4th century A.D., he uncovered no instances in which the word meant "source, origin: person or thing from which something else is derived or obtained."

This would explain why most New Testament Greek lexicons have not mentioned "source" as a possible meaning of the word, *kephalê*. However, there is an entry in the Liddell, Scott, Jones lexicon (Ninth Edition: Oxford: Clarendon, 1968, p. 945) which included the following possible definition of *kephalê*:

> II. 1. Of things, extremity
> a. In Botany
> b. In Anatomy
> c. Generally, *top, brim* of a vessel . . . *capital* of a column
> d. In plural, *source* of a river, *Herodotus* 4.91 (but singular, *mouth*); generally, *source, origin, Orphic Fragments* 21a; *starting point* [examples: the head of time; the head of a month].

Three things should be noted about this Liddell, Scott, James entry. First, it refers to things and/or objects, not people. Second, the metaphorical meaning of *kephalê* is based on the concept of extremity (i.e., a person's head and feet are at the extremities of the body). Third, it's when the term is in the plural that it means "source" of a river; in the singular it refers to the "mouth" of a river.

Still, the Liddell, Scott, James entry might imply that the word *kephalê* could mean "source" in 1 Corinthians 11. To clarify the intent of the Liddell, Scott, James entry, the current editor of the LSJ wrote the following in a personal letter to Dr. Wayne Grudem, dated April 14, 1997.

> The entry under this word in LSJ is not very satisfactory. . . . I was unable to revise the longer articles in LSJ when I was preparing the latest Supplement, since I did not have the financial resources to carry out a full-scale revision.
>
> I am in broad agreement with your conclusions. . . . *kephal*ēis the word normally used to translate the Hebrew *r'osh*, and this does seem frequently to denote leader or chief *without much reference to its original anatomical sense, and here it* seems perverse to deny authority (italics added by Grudem, cited by Wayne Grudem in the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Vol. 2, No. 5, Winter 1997).

We must conclude, therefore, that the report to Synod 2000 is in error when it states that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, they "most likely would have understood *kephalê* as 'source.'"

B. 1 Timothy 2:9-15

Of the three "key" passages identified by the report to Synod 2000, this one is the most important because it is the most explicit. The report to Synod 2000 notes that

> Four features of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 deserve mention: (a) in the church women should pray and dress modestly and adorn themselves with good deeds rather than external finery (2:9-10); (b) women are to learn but must do so in quietness and full submission (2:11); (c) Paul does not permit a wife (or woman) to teach or usurp authority over a husband (man) (2:12); (d) he bases this restriction on creation and the fall (2:13-14) but concludes with a message of hope for the woman (2:15).

> Timothy was left in Ephesus to combat false teachers (1 Tim. 1:3-7) who were promoting speculative theories and wrong ideas about the law, leading many astray. They seem to have had considerable influence among some women, especially younger widows (5:11-15). It seems that some of the younger widows (5:13) were even propagating this false teaching and some (5:15) had already capitulated to Satan. The false teachers seemed to be forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices (4:3). The injunctions in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 can best be understood against this polemical background.
>
> The meaning of verse 12 is crucial, though it raises three disputable issues. It seems likely that here again Paul is addressing the marriage relationship. The word "submission" is the same one used in Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, where marriage is being discussed. And since 1 Timothy 2:15 refers to women being saved through childbearing, Paul seems to have the marriage relationship in mind—as he does in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 370-71)

Since the report singles out verse 12 as being "crucial," we should note how the report to Synod 2000 explains it as being in harmony with the ordination of women elders, ministers, and evangelists. The NIV translation reads, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." However, the report to Synod 2000 says,

> Although the word *authentein* in 1 Timothy 2:12 can mean "to have authority over," it seems likely that here it has the more pejorative force of "to usurp authority over," as in the King James translation. One point in favor of the latter is that Paul uses a different word in 1 Corinthians 7:4 when he affirms that in marriage a woman has authority over the body of her husband just as the husband has authority over the body of his wife. Given the context of teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12, what is probably being prohibited is the exercise of the wrong kind of authority within marriage, the domineering kind of usurping authority.
>
> Paul's injunctions in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 are rooted in an appeal first of all to the creation story: Adam was first formed, then Eve (2:13). (Paul made the same appeal in 1 Cor. 11:8-10 in grounding his injunction for women to wear head coverings in worship.) This affirmation is best understood here as countering the false teachers who were forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices by not adequately recognizing the good creation order (1 Tim. 4:1-5).
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 371)

At issue here is whether or not the term *authentein* is used pejoratively as meaning "to usurp authority" or if it used positively as meaning "to exercise authority." After all, if the inspired apostle Paul only forbade *the abuse of authority* over men by women in the church, then he did not forbid *the proper use of authority* over men by women in the church.

1 Timothy 2:12 includes the following grammatical construction: main verb with negative (I do not permit) + infinitive (to teach) + conjunction (nor) + infinitive (*authentein*).

A contemporary, extensive study of ancient Greek grammar indicates that when two verbs are linked by the conjunction *nor,* the verbs are either both positive or both negative. In 1 Timothy 2:12, since the meaning of the first infinitive (to teach) is positive, we would expect the other infinitive (*authentein*) to be positive as well. Therefore, based on the grammatical structure of verse 12, we would interpret *authentein* with the positive meaning of "to have authority" or "to exercise authority" but not with the pejorative meaning of "to usurp authority" (Andreas J. Kostenberger, "A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12," published in *Women in the Church, A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, pp. 81-103, Baker Books, 1995).

The positive meaning of *authentein* has been confirmed by extensive lexicographical studies on the part of H. Scott Baldwin of Singapore Bible College. Though the word *authentein* occurs just once in the Bible, H. Scott Baldwin has searched out, recorded, translated, and analyzed eighty-two other examples of *authentein* in ancient Greek literature, papyri, and other inscriptions. He points out the mistakes some have made, confusing the meaning of the verb *authentein* and the noun *authente-s*, "murderer," which apparently comes from a different root and has a different meaning, as was already noted in a 5th-century A.D. lexicon. Baldwin excludes pejorative meanings such as "usurp authority," "domineer," "instigate violence," or "proclaim oneself author of a man," which some recent articles have claimed for the word (H. Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: authenteo in 1 Timothy 4:12," published in *Women in the Church, A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, pp. 65-80, Baker Books, 1995; see also Baldwin's "Appendix 2" published in the same volume, pp. 269-306).

As rendered by the NIV translation, the word *authentein* simply means "to have authority" or "to exercise authority."

Therefore, based on extensive grammatical and lexicographical studies, it must be noted that in the report to Synod 2000, the section presenting the case for women's ordination erred where it said of *authentein* in 1 Timothy 2:12, "it seems likely that here it has the more pejorative force of 'to usurp authority over,' as in the King James translation" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 371).

IV. Overture

Based on the above review of the report to Synod 2000, Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2009 as follows:

A. That synod note the following errors in the section of the report to Synod 2000 that explains the biblical basis for the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist:

1. The report errs in stating that in 1 Corinthians 11 the word *kephalê* most likely means "source" instead of referring metaphorically to someone who has authority.

2. The report errs in stating that in 1 Timothy 2 the word *authentein* most likely means "to usurp authority" instead of meaning "to exercise authority."

B. That synod revise the report to Synod 2000 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) by correcting these grammatical and lexicographical errors.

Grounds:

1. The report itself states that "these texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 369).
2. The report to Synod 2000 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 355-73) is still very much in use. Visitors to the CRCNA website are referred to this report "to discover the biblical-theological argumentation undergirding the CRC's approach to this issue." (See http://www.crcna.org/pages/positions_women_office.cfm.)

3. It would be irresponsible for the CRCNA to continue to commend the report to Synod 2000 without correcting the grammatical and lexicographical errors it contains.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 4: Revise Church Order Supplement, Articles 40-a and 45-b, 1

I. Background

Synod 2007 ratified the decision of Synod 2006 to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3 and permitted female officebearers to serve as delegates to synod. Recognizing that some members of the CRCNA conscientiously object to the ordination of women to the teaching and ruling offices and that some might find it difficult to serve in good conscience as delegates to future synods, Synod 2007 adopted the following motion:

> That synod insert the following regulation into Church Order Supplement, Articles 40-a and 45:
>
> > Delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials.
> >
> > (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 612)

However, Synod 2007 did not establish a procedure for recording or publishing such protests. As a result, when delegates to Synod 2008 sent in their personal information sheets (credentials), the protests they recorded disappeared in the pre-synod paperwork.

According to the current Rules of Synodical Procedure (Article V, A, 2), a protest is one of several types of communications which is "a matter legally before synod."

One type of communication is a protest, which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly.

Though synod is not required to take any action with respect to communications, it should at least acknowledge communications (protests, in this case) in its official proceedings and records.

This is an important matter for delegates who believe that the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God. To ignore their protests does not affirm them or their convictions. Also, if their protests are not published in the official record of synod, future generations might mistakenly assume that, by serving as delegates to synod, they approve the ordination of female ministers of the Word and elders.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2009 as follows:

A. That synod add the following statement to Church Order Supplement, Article 40-a (the added statement is printed in italics):

> The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall

be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order. Delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. *Their names, along with their protests, shall be included in the official record of each classis meeting.* If a classis so desires, it may also invite emerging churches to delegate two officebearers to the meetings of classis.

B. That synod add the following statement to Church Order Supplement, Article 45-b, 1 (the added statement is printed in italics):

1. Regulations pertaining to the choosing of delegates to synod and synodical deputies

   Delegates who believe the seating of (or election of) women delegates (or synodical deputies) is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. *Their names, along with their protests, shall be included in the Acts of Synod.*

Grounds:

1. A protest is a communication which is officially before an ecclesiastical assembly.
2. A protest should be officially acknowledged by the assembly that receives it, even if it does not act on it.
3. It is meaningless for delegates to send protests to classis or synod if their protests are not officially acknowledged.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 5: Endorse the Recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee to Accept the Belhar Confession as a Doctrinal Standard of Unity

I. Background on the Reformed confessional tradition

During the first and second century of its existence the leaders of the Reformed church were alert to the significant social and spiritual issues that affected the lives of its new constituency and the culture in which it functioned. Once these issues were identified, organized guidance was developed and given, directing believers to the Scriptures that showed the way forward for true followers of Christ.

This practice began in the 16th century with the formulation and adoption of our three basic confessions, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. The issues addressed by each of these confessions, respectively, were persecution by the Roman government, the need for instruction for the newly established community of Reformed believers, and serious intra-church controversy over the doctrines of Arminianism.

Unfortunately this practice of confession development lay dormant until 1982 when leaders of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa prepared the Belhar Confession. Their people were struggling mightily under horrible conditions of injustice, racism, conflict, and disunity both in the church and in the contemporary world. Like a laser beam, Belhar's words focus on relevant Scripture giving direction and comfort for the conditions they faced then and, indeed, face now as well. A history of the

development of the Belhar Confession in the South African Apartheid context is laid out in the 2009 Interchurch Relations Committee report to synod.

A. Reformed response to the South African initiative

Since its development in 1982 it has been adopted by the ("Colored"[1]) DRMC, the ("Black") Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA), and when these two merged it was adopted by their successor, the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA), in 1994.

Both worldwide associations of Reformed denominations, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) have encouraged consideration of Belhar by the Reformed community.

Belhar has been adopted by two European Reformed denominations—the Evangelical Reformed Church of Germany and the United Protestant Church of Belgium.

In North America, the Belhar has been adopted by the First CRC of Seattle, Washington, and is now under consideration by the three mainstream Reformed communities, the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). The RCA and the CRCNA synods will be presented with recommendations to adopt the Belhar Confession in 2009, and the PCUSA will address it in 2010. A detailed report of the Interchurch Relations Committee to Synod 2009 provides historical background, traces the CRCNA twenty-seven-year history of consideration of the Belhar, provides rationale and grounds for its endorsement, and recommends that Synod 2009 propose adoption to Synod 2012.

B. Belhar Confession's relevance to 21st-century North America

It is an unfortunate misconception that the Belhar deals only with the issue of racism and that its relevance is largely restricted to the church setting in South Africa. The Belhar's major issues are not only injustice, of which racism is a significant part, but also reconciliation and unity. For South Africans as well as for us, the Belhar gives guidance for our relationships and actions within the church and how Christ calls us to function as salt and light in the world beyond the church.

As Reformed North Americans we have experienced and do experience our own racism as well as a variety of other injustices. Both the Reformed church and the world around us have been fractured by conflict and disunity. A look at South African history for us is in many ways a look in a mirror. Consider the ways. Both have

- national historical roots in white colonialism.
- a significantly Dutch heritage.
- a traditional belief that our nation is the apple of God's eye.
- a strong Reformed theology based on the three historical confessions.
- a covenantal orientation.
- members who have justified racism through Scriptural interpretation.
- subjugated and relocated native populations.

[1] This reference to mixed-race people, although offensive to many in our culture, is more common and has been more acceptable in South African circles.

– engaged in slavery for people of color.
– admitted to specific acts of racism.
– a sad history of church conflicts, fractures, and splits.

A serious focus on the Scriptural bases for the Belhar reveals a greater calling for the Christian community than that which arises out of the injustice of racism within our own ranks. How many other types of injustice are there that affect fellow believers but also literally billions of others in the world around us? The Belhar is a call to Christians and the church to be salt and light and to lead in addressing injustices in areas such as poverty, hunger, disease, the environment, conflict resolution, and human rights, to name but a few. Beyond injustice is the desperate need for reconciliation and unity in the church and among people everywhere.

In this technologically advanced world these injustices, disputations, and conflicts are in our face at every turn. They are no longer in some other neighborhood, or some far removed corner of the world, they are in our living rooms. Everyone in the world is now our neighbor, and there is desperate need of healing. The Belhar spotlights the Scripture, which calls the Christian, the church, to show the way. It is time for the CRCNA to follow our leaders' call to adopt this confession and implement it in our lives now.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod 2009 to endorse the recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee to accept the Belhar Confession as a doctrinal standard of the CRCNA on par with the historic three forms of unity, and classis urges synod to act this year to recommend to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar as a fourth confession of our denomination.

Grounds:

1. It is the task of synod to adopt the creeds and confessions of the church (Church Order Article 47).
2. The Belhar Confession has been studied by leaders in our denomination and other Reformed communities for some twenty-seven years and, in each case, has been determined to be biblical and consistent with our other Reformed confessions and the previous actions of synod.
3. There is little mention in the classical confessions of the central biblical principle of God's justice and care for the poor and suffering. The Belhar fills this gap in the standard confessions.
4. The unity of the church, reconciliation of people in Christ, and God's justice and care of the suffering and poor are fundamental biblical principles that lie at the core of the Reformed faith.
5. The issues addressed by the Belhar Confession, Christian unity, reconciliation, injustice, and racism are as relevant for the Reformed churches in North America and the world today as they were for the Reformed churches in South Africa under apartheid. Church splits continue, proliferating new denominations, often pitting brother against brother. The evils of racism following centuries of slavery, discrimination, and abuse of minorities linger in most facets of North

American society. Growing poverty and injustice are major worldwide issues affecting billions of people in nations around the globe.

6. There is historical precedent for the church to assertively move forward to inform and enlighten its constituency regarding the response required of Christians to the significant contemporary issues it faces.
7. In our reluctance to move forward from our attitude of awe and respect for traditional confessional formulations, the church must not avoid its responsibility to lead as Christians struggle with the understanding and application of Scripture to a Christian way of life in the world. We diminish ourselves and the power of the Holy Spirit if we act as though confessional formulation must end with Guido de Brès or the delegates to Dordrecht.
8. Moving forward with the discussion and adoption of the Belhar would provide a dramatic means, a practical answer to the longstanding search of the CRC and its component parts to address the issues of church unity, racism, discrimination, and injustice. The last twenty-five editions of the *Acts of Synod* are replete with evidence of the quest by synod and its various committees to find ways to move our people to bring salt and light to these contemporary issues.
9. The Belhar Confession is the only confession the global church has from Africa and the southern hemisphere.
10. Moving forward to address the Belhar in cooperation with the RCA provides an unprecedented opportunity to accomplish the objectives outlined over the past several years by synods of both denominations to move toward unity and reconciliation and cooperative efforts in ministry.
11. World crises of poverty, economic injustice, racism, and conflict, coupled with the explosion of technological advancement, provide urgency in the church's attention to these issues. Never in history has there been greater evidence of need for Christians to demonstrate their faith, to love their neighbor, and to bring the kingdom of Jesus into our global community. We can put this off no longer.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Timothy B. Toeset, stated clerk

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Classis Minnkota

Classis Minnkota wishes to participate in the ongoing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church out of loyalty to the principle that it is part of the larger body of Christ, but it does so under protest because synod permits the seating of women delegates who have been ordained as elders and deacons.

Grounds:

1. We believe the practice of seating women at synod fails to listen to the voice of Christ as Head over his church but appears to follow the voice of the world.
2. This practice contradicts previous decisions of synod.
   a. It contradicts the decisions of Synod 1994 that were based on clearly articulated biblical reasons for honoring differing roles for men and women. We believe Scripture alone should determine our practice here.
   b. It further contradicts the decisions of Synod 1995 that declared both positions valid in the Christian Reformed Church. We do not concede the validity of the new position that allows female ordination, but in effect the seating of women who have been ordained as ministers and elders favors the new position and forces all delegates to recognize female ordination as valid.
3. Seating women as delegates to synod obscures the biblical teaching of Ephesians 5:22-33 where the sacrifice of Christ as Head of his church and the subjection of the church to Christ is reflected in the marriage relationship. Seating women at synod contradicts the divinely ordained pattern for Christian marriage and therefore tends to obscure the gospel itself.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Heartland

Classis Heartland endorses the minority report on Third Wave Pentecostalism. In particular we agree with Recommendation B, 4 of the minority report because we believe that in regard to demonology and spiritual warfare some of the teaching of the third wave goes beyond the clear teaching of Scripture; therefore, caution should be encouraged. Second, we agree with

Recommendation B, 2 of the minority report, believing its more cautious statement regarding contemporary prophecy to be the prudent approach.

Grounds:

1. Members of our churches have participated in conferences put on by Presbyterian/Reformed Ministries International (PRMI), and their councils should be informed on these teachings.
2. The teaching of the third wave regarding certain aspects of demonology goes beyond the clear teaching of Scripture, especially in regard to strategic level spiritual warfare (about which the majority report issues appropriate cautions) and operations of demons in the lives of Christians (which the majority report seems to accept).
3. The teaching of the third wave, in order to equate contemporary prophecy with New Testament prophecy, argues for fallibility in New Testament prophecy which we do not believe is adequately supported by New Testament exegesis. Thus we urge the more cautious approach of the minority report.

Classis Heartland
David L. Heilman, stated clerk

PERSONAL APPEALS

Personal Appeals

1. Mr. L. and Mrs. F. Garnanez
2. Ms. B. Hoekstra
3. Mr. A. Jae and Mr. Y. Min
4. Revs. J.J. Choi, P. Han, T. Lim, and C. Yoon