



**I. Introduction . . . . . 1**

**II. Cultural challenges and denominational trends . . . . . 2**

**III. Move to being a “collaborative” denomination: structure, culture, and leadership . . . . . 4**

**IV. Summary statement on the CRC history of organizational development. . . . . 6**

**V. Background to and mandate of the task force. . . . . 8**

**VI. Key issues to address and tensions to navigate . . . . . 10**

**VII. Background to revision of the position description of the Executive Director of the CRCNA . . . . . 12**

**VIII. Recommendations to Synod 2012 . . . . . 14**

**Appendices**

Appendix A: Summary of Staff Comments . . . . . 15

Appendix B: Key Principles for Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture . . . . . 20

Appendix C: Position Description for the Executive Director (ED) of the CRCNA (2006) . . . . . 21

**I. Introduction**

As the Christian Reformed Church has grown, its administrative organization has also grown. Throughout the years, as the church has identified ministry needs, it has frequently responded by creating new agencies to carry out the work of the denomination. Through the efforts of competent and dedicated people the Lord has blessed our efforts. We are grateful.

Most often, however, new agencies were created and new programs were initiated with little effort to coordinate these new ministries with existing ministries. Good stewardship recommends coordination of our various denominational ministries in order to avoid overlap and to promote the effective use of the time, efforts, and money of God’s people. With an increasingly complex administrative structure, the denomination would be well served by a set of common guidelines, a unifying purpose, and a means for planning and implementing an overall strategy.

*(Agenda for Synod 1990, p. 331)*

The above words make up the opening two paragraphs of the synodical Structure Review Committee report presented to Synod 1990.

The Christian Reformed Church has reviewed its structure often. The report to Synod 1990 actually notes that Synod 1971 adopted a series of organizational moves, at the center of which was the expansion of a previous three-member synodical committee into a new Synodical Interim Committee consisting of more than a dozen members representing various regions of the denomination. With the date of 1971 as a marker, it is clear that for the past forty years there have been ongoing adjustments and structural changes in an effort to have the denominational administrative structure effectively serve the agencies and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church.

A review of the past forty years would note that the ongoing conversation began to take on a recognizable pattern. Dissatisfaction resulted in the formation of a study committee. A bold proposal was crafted by a study committee and presented to synod. Synod adopted a “halfway” measure and introduced some level of change, but not to the extent that was initially proposed. A few years later some adjustment was needed, and the cycle began again.

The current Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture desires to acknowledge and appreciate the conversation and adjustments that have been made over the past four decades. At the same time, a review of this history leads one to wonder if the time is right for a process and a dialogue in which more than a “halfway” measure could ultimately be adopted. The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture was formed in a time of crisis that led the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and, eventually, Synod 2011 to mandate that the structure, culture, and leadership of the denomination be reviewed. The task force is only at the beginning of the journey, but it is clear that we may be dealing with issues that mark the very future of the denomination.

In a time when many people are wondering about the place of denominations in the life of the local church, we have an opportunity to align the structure of the denomination to more effectively serve the ministries and the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church.

We turn again to the challenge of the structure report presented to Synod 1990 (and noted above):

With an increasingly complex administrative structure, the denomination would be well served by a set of common guidelines, a unifying purpose, and a means for planning and implementing an overall strategy.

If this challenge was true in 1990, it certainly is also true in 2012. We face certain cultural challenges that are affecting all denominations, including the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

## **II. Cultural challenges and denominational trends**

Recent literature highlights the changing world within which we live and minister. The rise of individualism in our culture can be seen as a factor in what is sometimes termed “declining denominational loyalty.” At the same time, a multitude of cultural challenges are making an impact on the church and will likely affect the future of denominational ministry.

Our North American world is moving from one with some Christian memory to one that is post-Christian, with a limited Christian memory.

Our North American world is moving from modernity, with its trust in new programs to “fix” problems, to post-modernity, with its distrust in authority and structures.

Our North American world has moved from having separate “ethnic colonies” that formed the core of certain denominations to a diverse, multi-ethnic world.

The 2007 Denominational Survey of the Christian Reformed Church confirms that we are an aging, declining church communion. We may debate the rate of aging or even of decline, but the challenge of what it means to minister now and in the future is before us.

We have the challenge before us of identifying what type and kind of structure, culture, and leadership will be used by God to move us from a state of slow but steady decline in maintenance mode to one of engagement, innovation, and mission growth.

What does it mean to be a thriving church and to be a denomination of thriving churches? David T. Olson in his recent book *The American Church in Crisis* (pp. 136-40) identifies four key factors that can be instructive for us:

1. Fruitful growth begins with **spirituality**, which is a commitment to deep spiritual transformation that brings about God’s work in people’s hearts.
2. **Chemistry** is a reflection of an inviting, relational atmosphere within the church.
3. **Strategy** creates a process of sequential actions that produce fruitful ministry in harmony with God’s directed goals. Five components . . . make up a church’s strategy:
  - a. Vision
  - b. Division of Ministry
  - c. Ministry Development
  - d. Connection with New People
  - e. Patience
4. And, finally, **leadership** for growth is the link that provides stability and strength for the other three.

A recent cover story in *Christianity Today* titled “Life in Those Old Bones” (June 2010) by missiologist Ed Stetzer concludes with the following summary:

To paraphrase Churchill’s comments about democracy: Denominations are the worst way to cooperate—except for all the others. They are riddled with weak, ineffective and arrogant leadership, prone to navel-gazing, and often move more slowly than they should. But these aspects are products of human fallibility and sin. Every time churches work together, ego, failure and inefficiency will arise. And when they don’t work together, ego, failure, and inefficiency will arise. People, not denominations, are the source.

Denominations at their best are not places to get something but places to give and to serve. Our gifts, passions and experience have greater influence through a world-wide denominational network. Through a denomination, we can provide resources to people we will never meet, reach places we will never go, and preach the gospel to lost souls who are beyond our personal reach. We can find what we need and give as much as we want—because the key to cooperation is to both give and receive.

A healthy denomination ultimately gives us strength. It’s a home, not a prison. It allows us to share specific theological convictions, practice expressions of

ministry relevant to our communities, and serve a common mission in the one thing that brings true unity: the gospel.

To serve in this common mission, we need more collaboration. A key question we continue to face is, How does the CRCNA transform to a more collaborative culture and structure?

### III. Move to being a “collaborative” denomination: structure, culture, and leadership

Unlike many organizations to which we may *belong*, a church denomination largely shapes our identity, faith, and worldview for participation in the Lord’s kingdom. The CRCNA is a living organism that is *interconnected* (meaning that the various parts, including agencies and boards, influence each other). It also needs to be *open* (receiving resources and other input from its environment and responding and reacting within that environment). This living organism constantly needs to grow and develop to effectively and efficiently minister in and to a changing world.

A picture that may best describe the CRCNA, or any denomination, is that of a living tree.



There are three major components ensuring its health. These include structure, culture, and leadership. The *environment* around it is the external force that plays an important role in its development and growth.

The *structure* is the root system and is basically the physical presence of our denomination, including the social structure—formal and informal. A healthy system provides the underlying stability and provides the nourishment. *Culture* is the system of branches and leaves.

Every organization possesses a unique culture and is shaped by its founders, its experiences, and its members. Culture defines the organization’s values and behaviors—often these are unspoken rules and hidden from outsiders. *Leadership* (all leaders, including synod, the Board of Trustees, and the senior executive team) makes up the trunk of the tree and serves to nourish the leaves, flowers, and fruit—praise and worship, spreading God’s Word, assisting the poor and disadvantaged, and other services and products with a view to the ultimate outcome: to advance God’s kingdom. A healthy trunk is neither rigid nor too flexible. Leadership enables and supports but does not produce.

It is not uncommon for organizations to go through conflicts and the processes of change. A systems perspective of the CRCNA helps to identify the potential sources of change or conflict rather than simply deal with the symptoms. Demographics, changing attitudes, ongoing funding, internal and external relationships, social changes, and so forth are only some of the *environmental factors* affecting the CRCNA—and all other denominations.

Each organization approaches a crossroads in its evolution where the environmental changes are so significant that only bold and sometimes painful changes are needed to advance the organization to its next level of growth. Emerging environmental changes in the CRCNA include (but are not confined to) declining membership, decreasing loyalty of youth to their traditional denomination, and local church autonomy. These changes demand strong interconnectivity among leadership, culture, and structure to manage the change and make the church grow and prosper—along with much prayer.

Denominations are founded and developed, then grow and mature; this is common to most organizations. Our founding fathers and mothers provided the impetus for the establishment and initial development of our denomination (church family), based on strong biblical tenets and beliefs. Over time, complexity and sheer growth overwhelmed these gifted leaders in managing a growing church. New structures were established to manage the church. Various departments and agencies were established—thus a unique culture began to develop. As with most denominations, these departments and agencies (and to some degree local congregations) demand autonomy from the centralized unit (known as the “autonomy crisis”) and seek agreements to manage the relationships. Eventually, the denomination creates more formal structures (known as the “red tape crisis”). It eventually requires significant “renewal” to transcend or break through structural, cultural, and leadership barriers. This is the stage at which the CRCNA finds itself. In the mature stage, the denomination will have gone through the renewal crisis and entered the “growth and collaboration” stage.

So how does the crucial interconnectivity of leadership, culture, and structure contribute to the denomination’s shift to the “collaborative” stage? In a nutshell, organizational leaders are key in taking the initiative to lead their organization through a change process. This requires key leadership skills, including a thorough understanding of the vision for the denomination, the ability to articulate that vision to the members, and a solid methodology to implement that vision. Such a process involves working closely with denominational staff, the Board of Trustees, and synod through an ongoing and effective strategic planning effort. This change is immersed in appropriate communication and participation. Participation of organizational members is critical to understanding the vision, shaping it, and, most of all, “getting buy-in” before implementation of the vision.

When the culture and structure of the organization become an obstacle to moving that vision ahead, and the denomination is not able to readily adapt to the changing environment, organizational leaders are the most important element to influence the culture and structure change process—through tone, modeling, participation of members, and changing the behavior of how staff and members work. As that change takes place, the culture will start to shift. Inviting disagreement, encouraging diversity, clarifying values, rewarding

creativity, and creating mechanisms for healthy conflict resolution affect the culture to the benefit of the church.

As stated above, as a denomination grows and matures, it normally adopts formal organizational structures. The combination of both size and age are predictive of *bureaucratization*. This structure does not always allow for the informal participation, linkage, and harmony needed for a growing church.

Leadership is crucial not only in reviewing the structure but also in putting in place formal and informal structures that move the vision of the church ahead, link programs and services, and develop the collaboration needed in a mature denomination.

Structural, cultural, and leadership change is not easy and is often painful. In fact, things usually get worse before they become better. Performance may decline, relationships may grow strained, and resistance can be expected. Full leadership engagement, accompanied by a genuine participatory culture within a robust and collaborative structure, are key in developing a strong and vibrant church.

Note: Acknowledgment for material in this section is owed to *The Little Book of Healthy Organizations* by David R. Brubacker and Ruth Hoover Zimmerman (Good Books, 2009).

The metaphor of a healthy tree illustrates the need for us as a denomination to change if we are to meet the challenges of an ever-changing environment—not by revolution, but by intentional evolution. The history of the CRCNA organizational structure is illustrative of how the tree initially developed even as we seek to see it continue to adapt, develop, and grow.

#### **IV. Summary statement on the CRC history of organizational development**

Everything that exists is part of a story—important for understanding the organizational development that is currently operative in the denominational structure of the CRC. It is a long and complicated story that goes back to the early beginnings (1880s) of agency formation. For the better part of seventy-five years, synod authorized the formation of ministry committees and agencies (e.g., Calvin College and Seminary, World Missions, Home Missions, and CRC Publications) as free-standing entities that mostly developed their own policies, procedures, and structures. What these entities had in common was that they all reported directly to synod, were supported by CRC congregations, had classical representation on their governing boards, and in some cases shared office facilities. That is how it was until around 1980.

The ferment for change—growing discomfort with the lack of ministry and administrative coordination and the discussion that we could do better than what was—occurred over a period of a decade or more. Therefore, when Classis Hudson sent an overture to Synod 1983 asking that the structure of the denomination be addressed, synod concurred and appointed the “Vision 21” committee. It is not an overstatement to say that this committee likely constituted the most significant address toward organizational change in the history of the CRC.

Concurrent with the appointment of the “Vision 21” committee was synod’s growing concern about tensions between World Missions and CRWRC, especially in mission fields where both agencies had mission staff in place.

That concern was addressed by synod in the appointment of the World Missions and Relief Commission that led to the formation of the Board of World Ministries in 1986. Both World Missions and CRWRC then came under the supervision of the Board of World Ministries, which had its own executive director. This initiative was rolled into a more general organizational development in 1993.

The “Vision 21” committee proposed a radical reorganization for the governance of all of synod’s ministries—so radical that Synod 1987 was concerned that adopting it would affect our church polity principles. So it was decided that, while synod agreed with the three principles and eleven guidelines (as found below and detailed in Appendix B to this report) that were the foundation of the recommendations, synod declined to adopt the organizational structure proposals presented at that time. The three principles and eleven guidelines that were adopted are as follows:

- I. Principles
  - A. The Lordship of Christ is paramount.
  - B. The local consistory possesses “original” authority.
  - C. We govern by means of delegated authority.
- II. Guidelines
  1. Denominational programs should be unified in purpose, and, insofar as appropriate, in style.
  2. A combined ministry as extensive as that of the Christian Reformed denomination requires careful, unified, long-range planning.
  3. Efficiency is subservient to effectiveness.
  4. Coordination requires authority.
  5. Administrative layers within our denominational structure should be kept to a minimum.
  6. Astute fiscal operations are imperative.
  7. Synod should delegate responsibility and authority.
  8. Boards should be only as large as necessary.
  9. New ministries should be placed in existing agencies.
  10. All board and staff members—paid and volunteer—should be carefully selected and appropriately evaluated.
  11. All board and staff members—paid and volunteer—should be encouraged to act creatively within necessary boundaries of freedom and control.

As indicated above, synod did not adopt the implementation proposal but, instead, appointed a Structure Review Committee to further develop a proposal and report back to synod. It was when the next report was submitted in 1990 that much of the current structure was approved for implementation. It took a while to accomplish synod’s intent, but significant strides were taken with the appointment of the Board of Trustees (BOT) in 1992 and the adoption of the Constitution and Bylaws in 1993. In the structure that came to be, all of the agencies and ministries reported to synod through the BOT. Synod also approved the appointment of an Executive Director of Ministries (EDM) who, on behalf of the BOT and synod, was charged with executive authority to coordinate and oversee the ministries of the denomination. The position of General Secretary (GS) was retained until 2005 when, in another refinement of the management structure, the functions of the EDM and the GS were redesigned.

The intent of the 1990 administrative structure included placing a high value on collaboration. It was recognized that both in governance and in administration the core values of Reformed polity would be honored. There

was not a positional hierarchy but, rather, a strong emphasis on shared leadership. Organizationally, that shared-leadership value was reflected in the functions assigned to the Ministry Council—a working group composed of all of the senior ministry leaders. The later dissolution of the Ministry Council is now viewed as a key factor in precipitating conflict over the past few years. At the time of this report, the Ministries Leadership Council has been established to exercise shared leadership of denominational ministries and strategies.

Throughout the years, another dimension of church life also took center stage. The former Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada transitioned into the Canadian Ministries Board, which subsequently transitioned into the Canadian delegation of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. The Canadian members of the BOT serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation—a counterpart to the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation. Because of the desire to reflect the binationality of the CRC in equitable form, it was decided that the two corporate entities together (fifteen delegates from each country) would form the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and have the responsibilities as outlined in the constitution that synod adopted. Hence, the CRCNA is *one* church with corporate entities in *two* countries. Binationality is no simple matter—especially since the membership and classes of the CRC are not evenly distributed between the two countries. At the core of the challenge is to serve effectively in the context where the CRC ministers while taking seriously the cultural, geographical, and political realities that exist.

There certainly have been other adjustments and refinements that have affected the course of organizational development. In general, however, such adjustments and refinements have been relatively minor. Collaboration among the ministries is better than it once was—which is surprising, since most are still governed by separate boards that are, for the most part, separately registered charities and/or 501(c)(3) corporations.

It is a challenge to see how some of the principles and guidelines adopted by Synod 1987 should or can be implemented today. The task force realizes that part of its task will be to review those principles and guidelines (Appendix B) as it moves ahead. The desirability of greater collaboration, integrated governance, and a more coordinated ministry needs to be understood in the light of our history as a church. Much has been accomplished for good; much remains yet to be done to achieve the high goal of a serving church.

The picture of being a serving church is manifest in the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church. It is a biblical picture that continues to inform our ministry, including the mandate of our task force.

## **V. Background to and mandate of the task force**

The Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church, adopted in February 2010 by the BOT, provides the following context, as identified in that document (see *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 56-64):

The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church support and unite the efforts of the CRC congregations and assemblies to implement the vision, mission, values, and ministry priority of the Christian Reformed Church (Sec. VII).

Our assemblies, offices, agencies and institutions are increasingly aware that they can empower the church for ministry most effectively when they work together, with each contributing what it does best. However, current



organizational structures and cultures do not lend themselves well to joint planning and action (Sec. V, 7).

[Our objective is that] CRC ministry agencies and institutions will, through responsiveness to the expressed requests and needs of congregations, offer resources that foster congregational health and enhance ministry, including stronger local ministries and a church planting movement (Sec. VIII).

Acts 6:1-7 states,

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

This text is a biblical model for leadership that produced a change in structure, which resulted in a deeper culture of community. The Grecian Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The community faced a fissure of trust.

In response, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and identified a key foundational principle for facing their future as a community called by God to serve in his world. The ministry of the Word of God was not to be neglected, but the community was consulted and challenged to "restructure." What we now consider as the "office of deacon" was developed as the community itself chose persons to serve the entire community. As a result, the organization of the church changed, and the culture of serving one another crossed barriers and continued.

God continued to bless the faith community in that the Word of God spread, as shown by the increasing number of disciples, including even those most skeptical to the gospel (a number of priests) becoming obedient to the faith.

The CRC desires that the Word of God spread. We desire to see the number of disciples increased. We know that to a skeptical world the apologetic of loving God and loving others as ourselves is central to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The structure, culture, and leadership of the CRC denominational office should enhance, not hinder, the spread of the gospel and the transformation of lives and communities.

In keeping with that calling, the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture was tasked with the following mandate by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, in keeping with the actions of Synod 2011 (see *Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 864-65):

1. Verify the analysis of organization and culture detailed in the 2011 Stratagem Report through consultation with stakeholders, and advise

the Board of Trustees as to the extent of agreement with that analysis, gaps, and any additional significant factors related to structure and culture to be considered by the Board of Trustees.

2. Recommend actions focusing on structure and culture, including (but not limited to)
  - a. Short-term or immediate steps that either the Board of Trustees or synod can take to improve the culture, structure, and leadership within the CRCNA.
  - b. Medium measures, including policy and procedure changes, structural changes, or cultural modifications that
    - clarify, modify, or change the current roles, responsibilities, or accountabilities of the various authorities, ministries, governance structures, and leadership
    - strengthen working relationships and collaboration across the various bodies or agencies
    - consider methods of governance and strategic planning to enhance services provided, collaboration, transparency, accountability, and cost-effectiveness.
  - c. Medium to long-term measures that
    - enhance meaningful strategic planning with respect to process, ownership, participation, staff orientation, and implementation
    - strengthen staff and organizational morale, cooperation, collaboration, innovation, and work satisfaction
    - identify the required senior leadership skills and style, including the associated key competencies, accountability, and performance management needed in large organizations
    - revise senior leadership job descriptions to reflect the required leadership skills and identify current and potential roles for any potential structure change
    - enhance the work environment that fully incorporates diversity and the binational character of the CRCNA
    - develop a sustainability plan for the CRCNA to provide for systematic reviews to enable ongoing change, planning, and improvement.

## **VI. Key issues to address and tensions to navigate**

The breadth of the mandate given and the scope of seeking to identify short-term, medium, and long-term measures led the task force to enter into an extended time of listening and learning. We are still in a time in which more listening and learning must take place. At the same time, we have already identified a number of key issues to be resolved, as well as some of the tensions that need to be navigated. Many of these were identified by staff and are summarized in Appendix A, which is a brief summary of extensive listening sessions with the staff of the CRCNA.

We present the following list as a *possible* progression for year-by-year prioritization of the above-mentioned issues and tensions in reporting to synod, recognizing that these matters cannot be addressed by the task force in just one year. This list forms the extent and scope of concerns that we believe will appropriately fulfill our mandate.

### *Year 1 – Synod 2012*

1. Revise the senior leadership position description and begin considering how a “leadership team” may function after identifying an executive director.
2. Identify the realities and trends that need to be addressed as a denomination in the 21st century.
3. Describe the intersection and relationship of culture and leadership and identify barriers that need to be navigated.

### *Year 2 – Synod 2013*

1. Analyze the structure and culture that will best support, and be most relevant for, the local churches and will best enhance the growth and ministry of Christian Reformed churches.
2. Define how the Human Resources, Finance, and Advancement departments and other administrative support services function within a denominational office, as well as how they intersect with and serve the various agencies and offices.
3. Define the process of providing participatory training and developing a participatory culture.
4. Delineate the nature and definition of being a binational denomination and how best to incorporate this into CRCNA structure.
5. Delineate the continued role and support structure for specialized ministries that sometimes describe themselves as “orphans” within the current structure.
6. Specify the pathway for enhancing communication and collaboration within the denominational offices and to the local churches.

### *Year 3 – Synod 2014*

1. Develop a process for assessing meaningful outcomes of a Ministry Plan, and assess the effectiveness of the Scorecard/Dashboard method of assessment.
2. Describe the nature of the relationship and authority of the Board of Trustees to agency boards and vice versa.
3. Describe the nature of the relationship and authority of the Board of Trustees to synod and vice versa.
4. Describe the nature of the relationship and authority of the Board of Trustees to local congregations and vice versa.
5. Identify the tensions and possible pathways for agency directors as they navigate multiple levels of accountability and collaboration.
6. Define ways to enhance multiethnicity and diversity as an outgrowth and outcome of our mission.

### *Year 4 – Synod 2015*

1. Analyze the appropriate structure to enhance global mission capability as it relates to Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, CRWRC, and Back to God Ministries International.
2. Embrace and develop greater flexibility in a structure not viewed as “friendly” to flexibility and innovation.

3. Identify the implications for church polity and bylaws and other appropriate legal documents of any changes that are adopted (in the work to be presented from 2013 to 2015).
4. Describe the future role of classes, as well as the potential role of regional structures and regional synods.
5. Study changes that need to be made to foster an environment in which the CRC structure and culture foster a learning organization.
6. Encourage strategic plans and priorities that are owned, developed, and implemented at all levels of the church (work to be presented from 2013 to 2015).
7. Research changes that need to take place in synod to accommodate a denomination operating in the 21st century.
8. Incorporate the results of the Office of Deacon Task Force, if any, that are adopted by Synod 2012 that may affect the work of this task force.

## **VII. Background to revision of the position description of the Executive Director of the CRCNA**

As noted above, the initial concern that the task force was asked to address was to analyze the role and function of the Executive Director position and to make recommendations related to the description of that position. We identify this question also as the key issue for Synod 2012 to address.

The resignation of the previous Executive Director of the CRCNA and the subsequent resignation of the previous Director of Denominational Ministries were an integral part of the background to the Board of Trustees report to synod in 2011 and, subsequently, to Synod 2011's appointing a Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture.

The previous Executive Director (with the approval of the Board of Trustees and synod) moved from a structure in which the primary working relationships and counsel were no longer with the agency directors but with senior leadership within the Denominational Office. Over time, this arrangement led to confusion, suspicion, and poor working relationships. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the alignment of the Executive Director to the agency directors and, thus, to the agencies and ministries of the CRCNA needs to be better acknowledged, nurtured, and developed. (A copy of the 2006 position description of the Executive Director is attached as Appendix C.) Any revision to the position description needs to address these concerns.

It is the judgment of the task force that the CRCNA will benefit from seeking an Executive Director who will be tasked in areas of responsibility as delineated in the proposed position description detailed below. The Executive Director is tasked with overseeing the Ministry Plan, in collaboration with the agencies and ministries of the CRCNA, under the governance of the Board of Trustees. In addition, the revised position description clarifies that the task of the Executive Director is primarily to cast vision and give voice in leading the church to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

At this time, the task force submits the following as the *proposed* position description for the Executive Director of the CRCNA:

## **Position Description**

### **Executive Director 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.

As people called by God, we gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond. We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ. We love and care for one another as God's people. We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus. We pursue God's justice and peace in *every area of life*.

### **Summary of Position**

The Executive Director is accountable to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and is responsible for nurturing a shared and vibrant vision for the mission of the Christian Reformed Church, and for ensuring the effective implementation of this mission through the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church and the work of the various boards, agencies, and institutions of the CRCNA.

### **Nature and Scope**

The Executive Director is called to keep the Christian Reformed Church attentive and responsive to a long-term vision for its mission in the world, both locally and globally. This includes providing a report to each synod, offering a vision for the future ministry of the Christian Reformed Church and recommendations for its implementation.

The Executive Director provides direction, supervision, and nurture to the staff of the various agencies, ministries, and institutions that serve the Christian Reformed Church. He or she is responsible to see that the staff works faithfully and cooperatively to carry out the mission of the Christian Reformed Church. The Executive Director also seeks to build a spirit of close collaboration and common vision among the various boards, ministries, and institutions that serve the Christian Reformed Church.

### **Leadership Profile and Qualifications**

#### *A. Strategic priorities*

Possess a strong desire and demonstrated ability to seek, discern, communicate, and implement God's vision for the future of the CRCNA.

#### *B. Professional qualifications*

Possess the ability to provide visionary, servant leadership within a multi-agency denomination.

### *C. Personal qualifications*

Exhibit dynamic skills in collaborative relationship building and participatory management, with the ability to bridge diverse perspectives and inspire trust.

### *D. Spiritual qualifications*

Exemplify a strong, vibrant, personal Christian faith marked by spiritual humility and moral integrity.

### *E. Educational and ordination qualifications*

Be or become by transfer an ordained minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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## **VIII. Recommendations to Synod 2012**

A. That synod grant privilege of the floor to Rev. Joel R. Boot, chair, and Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, reporter, when the report of the task force is discussed.

B. That synod affirm the ongoing work of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Ministries Leadership Council in framing a new Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. That synod accept this initial report of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture as completing the task of verifying the analysis of the Stratagem Report in keeping with its mandate.

D. That synod approve the proposed position description of the Executive Director of the CRCNA, as presented in this report.

E. That synod direct the Board of Trustees to form an Executive Director Search Committee with the goal that a candidate be presented for interview and approval by Synod 2013. It is suggested that the search committee be composed of three members from the Board of Trustees, three members from the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture, and three individuals from the CRCNA membership, for a total of nine members, with a chair to be appointed from among them by the Board of Trustees. It is understood that the formation of such a search committee includes authorization to obtain a consultant to assist in the search process.

A suggested timeline for the Executive Director search process, subject to the approval by Synod 2012, follows:

1. No later than August 2012: Appointment of the Executive Director Search Committee and retention of a consultant.
2. Fall 2012: Begin the search process.
3. February 2013: Update on the search process provided to the Board of Trustees.
4. May 2013: Presentation of a nominee to the Board of Trustees.
5. Synod 2013: Interview and, hopefully, appointment of the nominee.

F. That synod direct the Board of Trustees to design and implement a process for succession and transition and, as part of that process, consider retaining Rev. Joel R. Boot for an additional year beyond Synod 2013 to serve as a counselor to the new Executive Director, with duties to be assigned by the Executive Director. Rev. Boot was originally appointed by Synod 2011 to serve a two-year interim period.

G. That synod extend the term of service of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to a four-year reporting time frame, with the expectation that the task force will provide updates to the Board of Trustees and subsequent synods through 2015.

Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture  
Joel R. Boot, chair  
Joel DeBoer  
R. Scott Greenway  
Julius T. Medenblik, reporter  
Peter Meerveld  
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo  
Terry Vander Aa  
Jane Vander Haagen  
Katherine G. Vandergrift  
Colin Watson Sr.

## Appendix A Summary of Staff Comments

### To all CRCNA Staff:

Thank you for participating in the *Listening Sessions* held in Burlington, Ontario; Palos Heights, Illinois; and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Your comments and concerns are invaluable to the *Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture* as we move forward in developing recommendations for synod around this important work. We listened to many concerns, comments, and suggestions. Each comment was carefully documented for review by the task force.

The following chart **consolidates** the comments **by theme** under the headings of *Governance and Structure*, *Culture*, and *Leadership*. It gives you an overview of what we heard, and it tries to summarize most of the comments we received.

Your continued input is important to us. Please feel free to submit your comments on our website.

We ask that you hold the task force in your prayers as we analyze and come to better understand how best to create a vibrant organization, committed to healthy congregations in our Lord's kingdom.

**The Task Force Reviewing Culture and Structure**

*November 18, 2011*

**CONSOLIDATION OF STAFF’S COMMENTS - LISTENING SESSIONS**

*Governance and Structure*

<b>Common Themes</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
<p>The CRCNA operates largely as autonomous agencies and ministries—in part due to our history, culture, structure, and leadership—a “confederacy of non-profits” versus a “union of ministries.”</p> <p>Conflicting interests among agency boards, agency directors, and central administration (DO) are contributing to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a very complex organization.</li> <li>• collaboration issues.</li> <li>• competition and division.</li> <li>• communication issues.</li> <li>• under-represented specialized ministries.</li> <li>• funding distribution issues.</li> </ul> <p>Lack of clarity regarding lines of authority and strategic authority in the structure are two barriers that have contributed to the organization being less than optimally innovative, creative, collaborative, and visionary.</p> <p>Structure does not allow us to deliver easily on our priority of healthy congregations and has in some cases prohibited us from being the nimble and cohesive organization they need.</p> <p>Our congregations may be distancing themselves from us as an organization—our service to them is not what it ought to be or could be.</p> <p>Scorecard and Dashboard metrics are not always useful in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the organization.</p> <p>Is the classis the best link between synod and local congregations?</p>	<p>More awareness of and training in managing complexity—learning to work with tensions and promote collaboration.</p> <p>Some considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consolidate boards (or not to consolidate)</li> <li>• Fewer boards or one board</li> <li>• Change mandate of agency boards to advisory committees of the BOT</li> <li>• Ministry Council should be the binding agent for integration</li> <li>• Representative(s) from each board/ministry would be part of the BOT</li> <li>• Combine mission agencies into Council of Executive Ministries to enable long-term vision and collaboration</li> </ul> <p>Propose a “charter” outlining clear authorities and decision-making processes among ministries, BOT, DO, and synod.</p> <p>The CRCNA needs to focus on being an “empowering” organization.</p> <p>Restructure to combine all supports for congregations under one department/agency with one director who has a vision for congregational development.</p> <p>Review Scorecard and Dashboard processes and metrics to align with strategic priorities.</p> <p>Develop a regional services delivery system to churches through a team-based approach.</p>



What is needed to ensure that local congregations are “connected” and responsive to the work of synod and the organization and vice versa?

Binationality is becoming a “growing” issue for the organization and congregations in Canada. Increased sensitivity to Canada’s “back room” role in terms of leadership, relevancy, and innovation is contributing to very real dissatisfaction. This appears to be having some unintended and negative consequences for a cohesive organization.

The CRCNA models a hierarchical structure (in terms of positional authority) rather than a structure devoted to “servant leadership” that is devoted to congregations and staff.

Structure is not aligned to embrace people of other color and ethnicities.

The Board of Trustees and the denominational office largely operate as a “management board” rather than as “strategic.”

Structure, role, and participation in decision making are not well understood by staff.

Allow the CRCNA-Canada Corporation to meet separately with a view to the church’s common vision—focusing on the Canadian context and ministries.

Consider a dual leadership role between Canada and the United States.

Learn from Canada regarding collaborative management and leadership styles.

Organize functionally. Try to grasp what it means to demonstrate servant leadership. Turn organizational chart “upside down.”

Revive strategic planning as an ongoing process at the level of changing context, challenges, and opportunities leading to agreement on strategies coordinated by the DO and implemented by agencies and ministries.

**CONSOLIDATION OF STAFF’S COMMENTS - LISTENING SESSIONS**

*Culture*

**Common Themes**

The CRCNA has a more task-oriented culture than one of focusing on learning, innovation, and collaboration.

The nature of communication is *to*, not *with*. There are very few opportunities for collaboration—for staff to contribute their ideas for improvements, implementation of existing directions, collaborative projects, etc.

**Suggestions**

Develop a culture of “external adaptation” and “internal integration.”

Examine culture change, then leadership, and then structure (all are inextricably linked) through a comprehensive strategic planning process.

Share the vision.

Need to understand and define culture—artifacts, values, beliefs, and basic assumptions.

Communication is inadequate and does not flow freely. Not a culture of information sharing.

Town Halls help to disseminate information from top down (largely devoted to information coming out of synod) but do not allow bottom-up input and exchange of ideas about the organization, strategy, or innovation.

Decisions are not always fully explained to staff or to the local congregations.

Each agency has its own personality and culture—they work and use their authority differently.

A collaborative culture within the defined structure is not natural to the CRCNA in Grand Rapids, resulting in

- obstacles in moving ideas with merit through the organization.
- lack of collaborative coordination—Ministry Council abandoned.
- little follow-up and accountability on collaborative efforts that are made in meetings.
- duplication in services and effort.
- criticism rather than experimentation and innovation.
- culture of silence.

Need more collaboration on “playing field” or through informal means. Specialized ministries and agencies more closely connected to congregations tend to collaborate more successfully (e.g., World Missions and Home Missions). The Canadian Office tends to collaborate well.

There is a visible lack of trust between the DO and the ministries. There is a tendency to resist authority structures.

2850 (the denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids) fosters

Consider the priority for the new ED for the next few years invoking “cultural change.”

Communicate, Communicate, and . . . Communicate!

Increase communication significantly among Palos Heights, Burlington, and Grand Rapids.

Encourage many more informal connections to peers in other agencies and ministries rather than simply in mandated committees.

Potential for social events, cross-agency devotions, and other strategies to build bridges among staff of different agencies/ministries, color, and ethnicity. Celebrate diversity in ethos and with passion. Incorporate devotions that infuse justice and enhanced race relations.

Encourage ED and other senior executives to spend more time interacting with staff—recognizing and encouraging employees, exchanging ideas, and dialoguing.

Suggest that the ED take advice from a newly established “Staff Advisory Group on Workplace Environment.” Develop a culture of listening.

- division rather than cross-agency and ministry exchange and collaboration.
- a noticeable “upper floor” authority structure.

Success needs to be celebrated—staff that come together around a common passion connect well.

Diversity is a challenge the organization needs to embrace.

There are competing value systems throughout the organization.

Outside organizations see the CRCNA as professional, committed, and organized.

Race Relations, Disability Concerns, and Safe Church offices are perceived by other denominations as models.

## CONSOLIDATION OF STAFF’S COMMENTS - LISTENING SESSIONS

### *Leadership*

#### **Common Themes**

Leaders don’t appear to encourage creativity, innovation, and cross-agency/ministry experimentation.

Leadership does not appear to use ideas worked on by others.

Balance between the outside role of the ED as ambassador for CRC and internal staff leadership is not clear.

Clarity from leadership about decision making at any particular level is not clear.

The CRC lacks a unifying vision. Staff do not understand how the local efforts fit into the broader picture and continually look to the leadership for answers.

Lack of internal discussions about issues being discussed by leaders with BOT (e.g., diversity).

#### **Suggestions**

Increase role of ED as a “vision-caster” for all internal staff and church—be clear on the position’s role.

Significantly increase the role of BOT in strategic management and planning, using the ED and DO staff as key resources.

Require leadership to be proactive in building trust, collaboration, and support for innovation.

Leaders should ensure that staff have appropriate input into policy changes that affect their work.

Ombudsperson’s Office to handle complaints to free the ED to focus on vision casting, strategic planning, and communication.

Leaders not physically present to other parts of the building.

Succession planning—organization lacks intentional way of developing and promoting young leaders.

Pastoral care for employees and flexibility in dealing with personal health issues is good.

Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for developing leaders for the entire organization.

Assign the following five top priorities for the next full-time ED:

- Work with the BOT in leading kingdom visioning and a strategic planning process.
- Integrate internally and adapt (adopt) externally.
- Focus and manage current complexity of organization/issues.
- Put meaningful structures in place to initiate and maintain culture shift, integration of ministries, and clear decision making processes within a collaborative structure.
- Communicate more frequently and openly with staff.

Training for all staff in “servant leadership.”

## Appendix B

### Key Principles for Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture

Synod 1987 affirmed the following three “foundational principles”:

**1. The Lordship of Christ is paramount.**

Ultimate authority over the church, its agencies, institutions, and ministries resides in the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. All Christians live and serve in common submission to Christ’s authority. From Christ, her head, the church receives the mandate to find the lost, nurture the found, care for the needy, and serve the Lordship of Christ in all areas of creation (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22; Romans 8:22).

**2. The local council possesses “original” authority.**

“Original authority” (see Church Order Article 27-a) clearly does not imply autonomous authority. In Reformed church polity, as distinguished from Presbyterian and congregational polity, the council is the source from which church authority flows. The council exercises its authority as the representative of Christ, in submission to the written Word, in the manner in which Christ taught us, and for the welfare of the church and her ministries (Matthew 20:24-28; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17).

**3. We govern by means of delegated authority.**

The authority of major assemblies is delegated authority. Councils delegate members to classes, and classes delegate officebearers to synod. Synod delegates authority to carry out a mandate when it assigns responsibility for that mandate to a board. The authority of the board of an agency or institution is delegated authority.

By virtue of the authority synod delegates, a board governs an agency or institution of the church in line with its particular mandate. Such a board exercises its authority in Christ’s name and according to his Word, in line with Reformed

ecclesiology, and for the efficient and effective administration of the church's work.

(See *Agenda for Synod 1987*, Report 18, p. 276; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 596.)

Synod 1987 also affirmed the eleven guidelines of the "Vision 21" report:

1. Denominational programs should be unified in purpose and, insofar as appropriate, in style.
2. A combined ministry as extensive as that of the Christian Reformed denomination requires careful, unified, long-range planning.
3. Efficiency is subservient to effectiveness.
4. Coordination requires authority.
5. Administrative layers within our denominational structure should be kept to a minimum.
6. Astute fiscal operations are imperative.
7. Synod should delegate responsibility and authority.
8. Boards should be only as large as necessary.
9. New ministries should be placed within existing agencies.
10. All board and staff members—paid or volunteer—should be carefully selected and appropriately evaluated.
11. All board and staff members—paid or volunteer—should be encouraged to act creatively within necessary boundaries of freedom and control.

(See *Agenda for Synod 1987*, Report 18, pp. 277-81; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 596.)

## Appendix C

### Position Description for the Executive Director (ED) of the CRCNA (2006)

#### I. General Description

The person appointed to this office shall:

A. On behalf of synod and the Board, exercise leadership as a servant of the people, the churches, and the denominational agencies and respond to invitations, maintain liaison, and visit classes and churches.

B. Be invested with executive authority and a management responsibility that enhances the unified ministry of the CRC. Furthermore, the ED shall be responsible for the overall ministries and support functions of the denomination, all ecclesiastical matters dealing with polity and church practice, and denominational and interchurch communications.

C. Serve as an ex officio, nonvoting member of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board), and shall be responsible for its agendas, records, and communications. The ED shall function as an authorized agent for the U.S. corporate entity known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation. The ED shall also be responsible for the proper administration of the corporate entity known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Canada Corporation, though this responsibility can be delegated to the designated resident-agent in Canada.

## **II. Primary Qualifications**

The person appointed to this office shall:

- A. Be a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ and a member of the CRC who is strongly committed to the binational ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.
- B. Be theologically trained and be an ordained minister in the CRC who has served as a pastor in at least one of the congregations of the denomination.
- C. Have a good knowledge of, and commitment to, the teaching of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.
- D. Have a love for the mission of the Christian Reformed Church.

## **III. General Responsibilities**

The person appointed to this office shall:

- A. Have primary responsibility for the functions of synod, the Board of Trustees, and their respective committees.
- B. Oversee and coordinate the implementation of synodical and Board decisions.
- C. Supervise the performance of, and give leadership to, the director of denominational ministries (DDM), the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of finance and administration (DFA), the director of synodical services (DSS), the director of communications (DC), and the director of denominational advancement (DDA).
- D. Represent the denomination, or secure the proper representation of the denomination, at civic and religious functions in keeping with its relationship to the governments of Canada and the United States.
- E. Function as the chief ecumenical officer of the Christian Reformed Church in its relationship with other churches and ecumenical organizations.

## **IV. Accountability and terms of service**

The ED shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees and work under its supervision. The initial appointment shall be made by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church upon nomination by the Board of Trustees. Continued employment is subject to a favorable annual performance review by the Board.

*Note:* Additional information concerning the position of the ED is contained in the addendum.

## **Addendum to the Position Description of the ED-CRCNA**

This addendum provides additional detail on the qualifications and specific responsibilities associated with the position of ED.

## **I. Additional Information concerning the responsibilities assigned to this office**

The person appointed to this office shall also:

A. Serve as an ex officio, voting member of the executive committee of the Board of Trustees, the Interchurch Relations Committee, the CRC Foundation in both the United States and Canada, and such other committees as synod or the Board of Trustees may, from time to time, decide. The ED shall make arrangements for, and be an ex officio member of, all synodical study committees.

B. Have the privilege of the floor at synodical and Board meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office. The ED shall be present during all executive sessions of synod and of the Board, except when matters under discussion affect the person or performance of the ED and he/she is requested to be absent.

C. Be responsible for all official publications the synod or the Board shall authorize, all synodical papers, including correspondence, surveys, reports, questionnaires, materials, and minutes produced for synod or the Board, and keep a file of synodical and Board correspondence as well as an accurate record of the proceedings of synod and the Board.

D. Be responsible for denominational archives and historical documents and administer the right of access to such documents.

E. Be responsible for making all arrangements for the meetings of synod and the Board and function as operations officer during such meetings.

F. In performing the specific duties and responsibilities of this office, it is understood that, as a binational denomination functioning in both the United States and Canada, some of the communication functions in Canada may be exercised through the office of the director of Canadian ministries.

G. Convene and chair the meetings of the Ministries Council (MC), which functions as the senior administrative cabinet for all of the ministries and agencies of the CRC.

H. Be responsible for providing consultation services to congregations, classes, and synodical deputies on matters dealing with church polity, Church Order interpretation, synodical decisions, and ecclesiastical procedures.

I. Perform such other duties as synod or the Board shall direct.

## **II. Additional preferred qualifications**

The person appointed to this office shall:

A. Possess personal and professional integrity, forthrightness, and compassion for the poor, the lost, and the disenfranchised.

B. Be well acquainted with the Christian Reformed denomination, its history, its churches, its ministers, its lay leaders, and its ministries in both Canada and the United States.

- C. Be able to exercise authority in an unobtrusive manner in order to fulfill the requirements of this position and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of ministries and agencies of the denomination.
- D. Be able to move with ease and dignity in North American and international ecclesiastical circles. Be congenial and cooperative with representatives of other churches as well as with members of the Christian Reformed Church.
- E. Possess knowledge of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church and be competent in interpreting the same.
- F. Have the ability to write and be competent in public address.
- G. Demonstrate self-reliance and sound judgment in decision-making.
- H. Possess administrative and organizational ability in such measure as to be able to plan and work collaboratively with others.
- I. Have received appropriate educational training and prior senior management experience in which leadership and management skills have been demonstrated.
- J. Have the capacity to delegate authority.
- K. Have demonstrated capacity for listening, integrating ideas, and setting future priorities.



