

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2014



Christian
Reformed
Church

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2014



Christian
Reformed
Church

June 12-19, 2014
Kuyper Complex
Central College
Pella, Iowa

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1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508 U.S.A.
Printed in the United States of America

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Synod 2014 begins its sessions on Thursday, June 12, at 7:00 p.m. with opening worship at the Third Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa. First CRC, Pella, Iowa will serve as the convening church, and, because First CRC is currently vacant, Faith CRC in Pella will assist as needed. Reverend Ryan Faber, pastor of Faith CRC, Pella, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. A community-wide Synodical Service of Praise, with members of area Christian Reformed and Reformed churches invited, will be held Sunday, June 15, 2014, at 5:00 p.m. at the Vermeer Pavilion, 2110 Vermeer Road East, Pella, Iowa.

All delegates and advisers to synod are encouraged to take time to listen to the audio orientation segments for synod, accessed on the secure delegate site, prior to their arrival at synod. These segments will assist first-time delegates in understanding the nature of synod and will serve as helpful reminders for all returnees to synod.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on the Sundays of June 8 and 15. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience “the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

Joel R. Boot
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2014. Whether you are a returning delegate or 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 contact the synodical services office if you need information or have any questions before arriving by writing synod@crcna.org or calling 800-272-5125 or 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 2014 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 recorded. 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 [video recording] 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 2014:

Thursday orientation and opening worship

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Orientation for ethnic advisers, faculty advisers, and young adult representatives
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Orientation for chairs and reporters, and for alternate chairs and reporters of advisory committees
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.	Joint Opening Worship with RCA General Synod

Opening Friday

8:00 - 11:15 a.m.	Joint morning worship; opening session of synod; election of officers; finalization of committee assignments
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Advisory committees meet for introductions
11:30 a.m.	Orientation for officers of synod
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch
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

Saturday

8:00 - 8:45 a.m.	Morning worship
8:45 - 9:30 a.m.	Brief plenary session
9:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Advisory committee meetings
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Joint plenary session with RCA General Synod

Sunday

Attend area worship service of your choice	
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Joint workshops
5:00 p.m.	Community-wide Synodical Service of Praise

Monday – Wednesday

8:00 - 8:45 a.m.

Morning 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

Thursday

8:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Plenary session

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

Closing worship and adjournment*

*Synod will adjourn no later than noon Thursday.

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2014

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Gerrit J. Bomhof Richard J. deLange	Ministers Bruce E. Gritter Kornelis De Koning
Elders	Coby Benoit Gerry Schenk	Elders Peter Jonkman Dirk Velthuisen
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	Tony Maan Paul W.T. Verhoef	Ministers Paul J. Droogers S. George Koopmans
Elders	Albert Cramer Nelly Eyk	Elders Ian Parkinson
Arizona		
Ministers	Lawrence A. Lobdell, Jr. José Rayas	Ministers Jonathan Gerstner Marc Van Berkum
Elders	Rodney J. Huguen Eduardo A. Gonzalez	Elders _____ _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Phillip T. Westra Brent A. Averill	Ministers Raymond E. Coffey Christopher P. Mitchell
Elders	Henry J. Lane Michael Howarth	Elders Ryan Goding
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Walter H. Vanderwerf Timothy Sheridan	Ministers Andrew E. Beunk Curtis D. Korver
Elders	Bill Van Triet John Franken	Elders John Van der Woude Aaltje Van Grootheest
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Joel C. DeMoor Michael J. VanderKwaak	Ministers Nathaniel Elgersma Sid Vander Woud
Elders	Peter Van Huizen Benjamin J. Petroelje	Elders Jake Groeneweg Alvin Beukema
California South		
Ministers	Ronald I. Chu Cornelius Pool	Ministers Steven J. Wunderink Joshua S. Nam
Elders	Robert R. Moore Dirk Jasperse	Elders José Balderas Gabriel Colangelo
Central California		
Ministers	Justin G. Carruthers Paul H. Vander Klay	Ministers Braden L. Kok Martin Sisneroz, Jr.
Elders	Gerald DeVries Maurice Roos	Elders Jerry Terpsma

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Central Plains		
Ministers	Ryan Faber	Ministers Josh Van Engen
	Matthew C. McClure	Sheldon Starkenburg
Elders	Gary Verhoef	Elders Tyler J. Humphrey
	Don Shippy	
Chatham		
Ministers	Jacob Kerkof	Ministers Philip A. Apoll
	Derek A. Bouma	Tim Luimes
Elders	Ralph De Jong	Elders Willy Nywenning
	Diane Plug	John Krale
Chicago South		
Ministers	Michael J. Kooy	Ministers Ronald D. Vanderwell
	Gregory S. Janke	Derek Buikema
Elders	Karen Reppman	Elders _____
	Alice Wisse	_____
Columbia		
Ministers	Joshua E. Van Til	Ministers Randall J. Simon
	Michael P. De Witt	James M. Kim
Elders	Herman te Velde	Elders _____
	_____	_____
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Kenneth M. Gehrels	Ministers John H. Noordhof
	Jacob M. Van de Hoef	Paul R. Vanderkooy
Elders	John Venema	Elders _____
	Katherine M. Vandergrift	_____
Georgetown		
Ministers	Joshua S. Van Drunen	Ministers Matthew A. Palsrok
	Jeffrey W. Scripps	Larry J. Doornbos
Elders	Carl Wiersum	Elders Harold Postma
	Robin Schreur	_____
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Douglas M. MacLeod	Ministers Jack Roeda
	David H. Kromminga	_____
Elders	Bettye Brown Higgins	Elders Darlene Meyering
	James Jones	Dick Oostenink
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Jerome Burton	Ministers John Mondt
	James D. Alblas	Darrin J.B. Compagner
Elders	Mack Randall	Elders Noah Kruis
	Christopher H. Meehan	Bruce Dehaan
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Henry John Schenkel, Jr.	Ministers Stephen A. De Wit
	Curtis A. Walters	Evan P. Heerema
Elders	Donald Jay Westhouse	Elders _____
	Sheryl L. Engbers	_____
Grandville		
Ministers	M. Dale Fopma	Ministers Douglas R. Fauble
	Jay R. Prium	_____
Elders	Robert A. Mulder	Elders Jim De Lange
	Brent Pollema	_____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Chris Choe	Ministers Matthew B. Ford
	Joel D. Van Soelen	Sam Lee
Elders	Julius Unawing	Elders Charles H. Ho
	Maged Fayeze	_____
Hackensack		
Ministers	Marco Avila	Ministers Margaret J. Jenista
	Douglas H. Bratt	Anton E. Brown
Elders	Samuel Boldenow	Elders _____
	Glenn Palmer	_____
Hamilton		
Ministers	Jeff Klingenberg	Ministers Christopher J. Schoon
	Kenneth F. Benjamins	Everett J. Vander Horst
Elders	Adrian Guldemon	Elders _____
	Andy Miedema	_____
Heartland		
Ministers	Roger A. Bouwman	Ministers Sam Keyzer
	Todd M. Zuidema	Kevin J. Muyskens
Elders	Henry Kramer	Elders _____
	Derrick W. Vander Waal	_____
Holland		
Ministers	Socheth Na	Ministers Stanley Scripps
	Christopher J. DeVos	Jonathan D. DePoy
Elders	Harold R. Vanden Berge	Elders Nancy E. Haveman
	Paula Triezenberg	_____
Hudson		
Ministers	Rod D. Gorter	Ministers Henry Cho
	Albert Sideco	Paul Ingeneri
Elders	Jeremy Mulder	Elders Peter Hagedoorn
	Ern Wiegers	Natalie Beattie
Huron		
Ministers	Darrell J. Bierman	Ministers A. Carel Geleynse
	Gary Van Leeuwen	Andrew Zantingh
Elders	William Elisen	Elders Richard Golby
	Murray Ritsema	Richard van der Wal
Iakota		
Ministers	Eric B. Verhulst	Ministers John P. Gorter
	Stephen D. Moerman	Mark Verbruggen
Elders	Gary J. Maas	Elders Ron De Weerd
	Nolan Van Gaalen	_____
Illiana		
Ministers	Laryn G. Zoerhof	Ministers Calvin J. Aardsma
	Kristin J. Vos	Richard T. Vanderwal
Elders	Tom Boomsma	Elders Wayne Anderson
	Donald Dykstra	Bernard Smit
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Dale L. Slings	Ministers Timothy L. Raakman
	Gregory P. Timmer	Daniel S. Sarkipato
Elders	Eddie Gray	Elders Phil Groendyk
	John Vander Ploeg	_____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Nathan D. Gritter	Ministers Hun Suk Bae
	John G. Groen	Christopher B. Lanham
Elders	David H. Lee	Elders _____
	Bob Wait	_____
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Archie L. Vander Hart	Ministers Anson Veenstra
	Joseph L. Hamilton	Donald G. Draayer
Elders	Andrew Vanbenthem	Elders Nicolaas D. Hogeveen
	Linda Ribbens	_____
Minnkota		
Ministers	Randall C. Raak	Ministers Jon R. Bushnell
	Adam T. Eisenga	C. James den Dulk
Elders	John Vander Bilt	Elders Ron Vander Roest
	David Brons	_____
Muskegon		
Ministers	Jeffrey Hough	Ministers James H. Kuiper
	Greg R. Dyk	Benjamin M. Oliveira
Elders	David Vander Goot	Elders David Kleis
	Michael Jackson	Steve Marotti
Niagara		
Ministers	André F. Basson	Ministers Wesley C. Collins
	Sidney Couperus	Christopher W. deWinter
Elders	Rick Roeda	Elders Janet R. deVries
	Michael Collins	Ben VanHoffen
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Kelly L. Vander Woude	Ministers Russell W. Boersma
	Thomas J. Vos	Thomas J. Niehof
Elders	Darrell Druvenga	Elders Duane VanderPloeg
	Nick Verbrugge	_____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Kyle E. Haack	Ministers Pedro Aviles
	Jon E. Hoekema	Gregg DeMey
Elders	Richard Brander	Elders Craig Buma
	Bruce Bielema	Jerry Frens
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Duane J. Timmermans	Ministers David G. Kroon
	Brian D. Seifert	Chris A. Kostelansky
Elders	Andy Liimatta	Elders _____
	Terry Huttenga	_____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Jonathan J. Kim	Ministers Jang Ho Park
	O Seog Seo	Hyung Joo Park
Elders	Jason Jun	Elders Edward W. Yoon
	Roger Ryu	Paul Im
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	David S. Van Berkel	Ministers Richard J. De Ruiter
	Robert Cumings	Randy A. Beumer
Elders	Herman Laninga	Elders _____
	Stan Vander Pol	_____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Jake Kuipers Kevin teBrake	Ministers Leonard T. Riemersma Kyle P. Kloostra
Elders	George Zekveld Syd VanderWilp	Elders Ewoud Delange Dianne Balchand
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Robert J. Byker Raymond Slim	Ministers William J. Kempkes John J. Greydanus
Elders	Donovan Carlisle Francis Nelson	Elders Harold Begay Max Benally
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Paul Jorden Michael S. Johnson	Ministers Todd H. Hilkemann Mark W. Hilbelink
Elders	Julie Walden Jane Pastoor	Elders Dale Mitchell
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Hector Garcia Stanley J. Workman	Ministers William Karshima Christopher N. Cassis
Elders	Jesus M. Bayona Juan P. Sierra	Elders James H. Kelley, Jr. John Eggebeen
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	R. Scott Greenway Paul R. DeVries	Ministers Bruce J. Vaandrager Heather Strooboscher
Elders	Bob Reitsma Chris Van Spronsen	Elders Jack Zomerlei Phyllis Moes
Toronto		
Ministers	John Tenyenhuis Nathaniel E. Van Denend	Ministers Adrian A. Helleman Richard F. Grift
Elders	Dickson Corro Theody Corton	Elders _____ _____
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Verlan G. Van Ee Daniel J. Roeda	Ministers Mark J. Pluimer Douglas L. Aldrink
Elders	Floyd Leo Norman Veldboom	Elders Dennis Mulder
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Bradley A. Meinders Jack Huttinga	Ministers Peter J. DeVries
Elders	George Den Hartigh David Douglas	Elders _____ _____
Zeeland		
Ministers	Steven J. Mulder Arthur J. Van Wolde	Ministers Ronald J. Meyer Aaron J. Vriesman
Elders	Mark Busscher	Elders _____ _____

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 2013 and Synod 2014.

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 2013 (September 2013 and February 2014) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2014. 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 Rev. Kenneth A. Baker (Region 10), Mr. Mark Charles (member-at-large), Mr. David DeRidder (Region 7), Rev. Peter J. DeVries (Region 5), Ms. Joan Flikkema (Region 11), Dr. R. Scott Greenway (Region 11), Rev. Sheila E. Holmes (Region 12), Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn (Region 8), Rev. Christian Y. Oh (member-at-large), Mr. Kyu Paek (Region 6), Mr. Peter Szto (member-at-large), Rev. Angela Taylor Perry (Region 10), Mr. Chris Van Spronsen (Region 11), and Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8).

The members of the Board from Canada are Mr. Wybe Bylsma (Quinte), Mr. Bruce Dykstra (member-at-large), Rev. Harold de Jong (Lake Superior), Mrs. Verney Kho (member-at-large), Rev. Dale Melenberg (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Chatham), Mr. Peter Noteboom (Toronto), Rev. Darren Roorda (Huron), Mr. Garry Sytsma (Classis Hamilton), Ms. Gavriel Tran (B.C. South-East), Ms. Katherine M. Vandergrift (Eastern Canada), Rev. Trevor Vanderveen (B.C. North-West), Rev. William C. Veenstra (member-at-large), Mr. Michael Wevers (Alberta North), and Mr. Bert Witvoet (Niagara).

The executive director (Rev. Joel R. Boot) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

Following are the officers of the Board and respective corporations for the 2013-2014 term:

1. Board officers: Rev. S.E. Holmes, president; Ms. K.M. Vandergrift, vice president; Rev. J.R. Boot, secretary; Rev. R.S. Greenway, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers
 - a. CRCNA-Canada Corporation: Ms. K.M. Vandergrift, president; Rev. D. Roorda, vice president; Rev. W.C. Veenstra, secretary.
 - b. CRCNA-Michigan Corporation: Rev. S.E. Holmes, president; Rev. R.S. Greenway, vice president; Rev. J.R. Boot, secretary; Mr. C. Van Spronsen, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Rev. R.S. Greenway; Rev. S.E. Holmes, chair; Rev. D. Roorda; Ms. K.M. Vandergrift; Mr. C. Van Spronsen; and Rev. W.C. Veenstra. Rev. J.R. Boot serves ex officio.

C. Current executive staff functions

Upon the appointment of Rev. Joel R. Boot as executive director in 2011, special arrangements were made in consultation with the executive committee of the Board of Trustees to quickly respond to the organizational need at that time. Dr. Peter Borgdorff was invited to serve as the deputy executive director for a term concurrent with the term of Rev. Boot and continues to serve the denomination in this role until a new executive director is appointed. While the position title "deputy executive director" is a new designation, it is meant to reflect that the functions of leadership are shared as needed. The responsibilities that consume most of the time and energies of these two positions include relating to the agencies and ministries of the denomination,

ecumenical relations, assisting synodical committees, providing general oversight of the denominational offices, and relating to the myriad of activities that involve classes and congregations. Rev. Boot and Dr. Borgdorff work in collaboration with other agency and denominational staff, and collectively this group of denominational appointees serves the church as a whole.

D. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Board reports the following salaries for senior denominational services staff directly employed by the Board of Trustees:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	1	3rd
19	2	4th
18	1	Currently part-time
17	4	2nd and 3rd

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
2013-2014 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$121,124	\$151,406	\$181,687			
19	\$109,196	\$136,495	\$163,793			
18	\$97,326	\$121,657	\$145,989	\$107,437	\$134,296	\$161,155
17	\$87,351	\$109,189	\$131,027	\$93,349	\$116,686	\$140,023
16	\$78,622	\$98,278	\$117,933	\$81,690	\$102,113	\$122,535
15	\$71,272	\$89,091	\$106,909	\$71,958	\$89,948	\$107,937
14	\$62,270	\$77,837	\$93,405	\$63,462	\$79,328	\$95,193
13	\$54,742	\$68,427	\$82,113	\$56,635	\$70,793	\$84,952

Each year synod considers the salary grid that is used for compensation of denominational personnel. Within that salary system each position is analyzed to determine precisely where it should be placed within the range for compensation purposes. The salary grid sets a range for each level relative to the position midpoint within a salary range of -20 percent up to +20 percent of midpoint. Each person is given an annual performance assessment that helps determine their position within the positional range.

The difficulty with the system currently in place is that performance increases are added to the salary base and therefore become perpetual increases. The Board of Trustees has approved an adjustment in how the salary system is administered.

Positions will still be rated, but within a more restricted range. What previously was called “midpoint” will now become the “target” salary. This means that a fully acclimated and functioning employee can expect to be paid the target salary within four years of employment in that position. For those employees who have achieved the “target” salary, performance adjustments will be paid in a lump sum but not added to the salary base for that position. The base will change only in relation to the “market” as that is reviewed annually.

This is not a major change, and it is not a change in compensation philosophy. It is a change in how salaries are administered. The change will take place in two steps, with the first step beginning September 1, 2014, and the second step beginning September 1, 2015. It is recommended that synod take note of the change and receive it as information.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Executive director of the CRCNA search

A reconstituted Executive Director Search Committee was appointed by the Board of Trustees in summer 2013 following withdrawal of a finalist during the 2012-2013 search process. The mandate remained the same: to present a candidate to the Board of Trustees, subsequently to be presented for interview and approval by Synod 2014. The following served on the search committee:

Dr. Mary Buteyn	Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr.
Rev. Sheila E. Holmes	Rev. Joel R. Boot, adviser
Mr. Peter Meerveld	Dr. Anthony Diekema, consultant
Rev. Paul VanderKlay	Ms. Dee Recker, staff
Mr. Loren Veldhuizen, chair	

The committee began its work in August 2013 and convened by both conference call and face-to-face meetings in the months that followed. Interviews were conducted in December 2013 and January 2014, followed by second interviews in February 2014. A recommendation for the next executive director of the CRCNA was presented to the Board of Trustees at its February meeting. It is with joy and gratitude to our Lord that the BOT recommends that synod, following a successful interview, appoint Dr. Steven R. Timmermans as executive director of the CRCNA, effective June 30, 2014. The curriculum vitae for Dr. Timmermans is attached in Appendix A.

2. Denominational leadership transition

The Board is giving further consideration to a succession and transition plan, in consultation with Dr. Timmermans, to take effect when he assumes the office of the executive director (ED).

3. Interim appointments

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

Appointment	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Greater Los Angeles		Rev. Paul A. Hansen	
	Holland		Rev. Christopher J. De Vos	
	Rocky Mountain	Rev. Robert L. Westenbroek	Rev. Thomas D. Draayer	2016(1)
	Southeast U.S.	Rev. Scott A. Vander Ploeg	Rev. Vernon G. Vander Zee	2016(1)
	Wisconsin		Rev. Daniel J. Roeda	
World Renew	Minnkota	Mrs. Mary Van Hulsen		2016(1)
	Pacific Northwest	Ms. Kendra Bengelink		2016(1)

4. 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, some classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis. A list of these classes may be obtained by contacting the office of the executive director.

5. Board nominations

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 Board recommends the following slates of nominees from various geographic regions for election to a first term:

Region 8

Mr. Richard (Rick) Droog is a member of Living Water Community CRC in Orange City, Iowa. He has served as a deacon and as treasurer of council and is currently serving as chairman of the ministry support team. Mr. Droog has a B.A. in business administration and is currently the executive director of the Siouxland Diaconal Conference. He previously served as the chairman of the Northwest Iowa Empowerment Board and as treasurer for the Orange City Christian School board. Mr. Droog currently serves as the cofounder/board chair for The Bridge Transitional Housing Facility for women and children in Orange City.

Dr. Socorro Woodbury is a member of Amistad Cristiana CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, and is currently serving her church as an elder and adult Sunday school teacher. She has a B.A. in theology, B.S. in Spanish education, M.A. in elementary administration, and Ed.D. in educational leadership. Dr. Woodbury is presently an adjunct professor of Spanish at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. She was a member of the public library board and a member of the arts and recreation board, both in Sioux Center. Dr. Woodbury currently serves as a member of the Sioux Center Community Schools District advisory committee.

Region 12

Mr. José Tagle is a member of Comunidad Cristiana de Palm Beach CRC of Lake Worth, Florida, and has served as an elder and a deacon. Mr. Tagle has been a delegate to synod twice and a delegate to the Multi-ethnic Conference three times. He has served on the Christian Reformed Home Missions board and on the board of the Synodical Committee on

Race Relations (SCORR). Mr. Tagle is currently the assistant to the mayor for the City of West Palm Beach.

Mr. John L. Steen is a member of Midland Park CRC in Midland Park, New Jersey, and has served his church as elder and vice president of council. Mr. Steen received a B.A. in textile engineering from Philadelphia University. He has also served as chair of his church's long-range planning committee and its outreach committee, and he is currently the chair of the small group ministry. He has served on several boards, including the Calvin College and Seminary Board of Directors, the Christian School International Foundation, the Eastern Christian School Association, the Atlantic Stewardship Bank, Holland Christian Home, and the Holland Christian Home Foundation. Mr. Steen currently serves as a director for the Atlantic Stewardship Bank and chair of the nominating and governance committee. He also is a member of the audit committee and compensation committee and a trustee of Franklin Lakes Republican Club. He serves as president of Steen Sales, Inc.

Classis Chatham

Rev. Peter A. Hoytema serves as the pastor of Westmount CRC in Strathroy, Ontario. He received a B.A. from Redeemer University College, an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Rev. Hoytema has served on the board of Christian Reformed Home Missions and on the board of the Christian Health Care Center in North Haledon, New Jersey. He has also served on the classical interim committees for classes Hamilton and Hudson and has served as stated clerk of Classis Hudson. Rev. Hoytema currently serves on the classis ministries committee and executive committee for Classis Chatham. In addition, he serves on the London Campus Ministry Committee, the Strathroy-Caradoc Ministerial (as president), and the Strathroy-Caradoc Police Services Chaplaincy.

Rev. Norman J. Visser serves as the pastor of Ingersoll CRC in Ingersoll, Ontario. He received a diploma in agriculture from the University of Guelph, a B.A. from Dordt College, and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Visser has served on various committees of classes Chatham and Minnesota South, has been a delegate to synod several times, and has served on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA from 2001-2003. He was the chair of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry in Halifax Society, and he served as the convener of Maritime Day of Encouragement Committee. Rev. Visser currently serves on the classical ministry committee.

Classis Quinte

Rev. Shawn R. Brix serves as the pastor of Living Hope CRC, Peterborough, Ontario. He received a B.A. from Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the board of governors for Redeemer University College and on its governor affairs committee. Rev. Brix has served on the classical Renewal and Visioning Task Force, the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, and on the Alternate Routes to Ministry Committee. He has been a synodical delegate several times and has served on the CCRCC

Interchurch Relations Committee as well as the classis interim committee. Rev. Brix currently serves on the classical ministry leadership team.

Rev. Jake Kuipers serves as the lead pastor of Ebenezer CRC, Trenton, Ontario. He previously served on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and on the Christian Reformed Home Missions board. Rev. Kuipers has also served on the CRC's Board of Pensions as well as on the People for Sunday Association. He currently serves as a synodical deputy.

The Board recommends the following nominees from various classes or geographic regions for election (ratification) to a second term: Mr. Kyu Paek (Region 6), Rev. Darren Roorda (Huron), Ms. Gavy Tran (B.C. South-East), Mr. Chris Van Spronsen (Region 11), and Mr. Michael Wevers (Alberta North).

The Board received and approved the resignation of Dr. Steven Timmermans (Region 11) from Board membership prior to his interview for the position of executive director of the CRCNA at the February meeting. The Board also received notice that Rev. Harold De Jong (Lake Superior) will not continue for a second term. His service on the Board will conclude on June 30, 2014. The Board hopes to present nominees for these positions by way of the Board of Trustees Supplement report.

6. Annual report on gender and ethnic diversity on denominational boards

We are pleased to report that the percentage of women on denominational boards again showed an increase over the past year after a decline two years in a row. In addition, there is continued progress in the ethnic diversity of board composition. There are presently 195 board members serving on seven denominational boards. Out of the 195 board members combined, 56 (28.9%) are women and 37 (19%) are persons of color. The 2013-2014 board terms show an increase of 7 women and an increase of 5 persons of color on the boards reporting over the previous year. *Note:* These statistics take into account the dissolution of the board of Faith Alive within the past year.

7. Annual report on denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice

Synod 2010 requested that the BOT report to synod each year on the status of denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice. In regard to further diversity efforts throughout the denomination, the information at this point is almost exclusively anecdotal. The Office of Race Relations has informed the ED of six or seven classes that have active race relations teams. The director of synodical services regularly encourages stated clerks and agency boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve. Such encouragement, however, is entirely without enforcement authority since, within the boundaries of our polity, nominations are at the discretion of the classes and boards involved. Following the decision of Synod 2013, efforts are now under way to proactively advance the diversity in leadership value. Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr., is serving as a consultant in this effort and regularly reports on his efforts to date. His recent update to the Board is included as Appendix B.

8. Deacon advisers to synod

New to Synod 2014 will be the inclusion of deacon advisers to synod. Synod 2013 adopted a recommendation of the Office of Deacons Task Force to include deacon advisers to synod until Synod 2015 considers proposed changes to the Church Order with regard to the appointment of deacons as delegates to synod. The BOT has appointed the following persons to serve as deacon advisers to Synod 2014:

Ms. Jenny Bakker	Ms. Valarie Dykstra McWilliams
Ms. Trena Boonstra	Ms. Mary Osinga
Mr. Bernard Feenstra	Mr. Dick Van Eck
Ms. Tamara Haveman	

9. Ethnic advisers to synod

The policy for the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod 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 to synod 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."

We are pleased to report at this writing the number of ethnic minority delegates appointed to Synod 2014 by classes is twenty-eight. Because the goal has been obtained, we will not have need for ethnic advisers to Synod 2014.

10. Young adult representatives to synod

In an effort to engage youth and young adults (18- to 26-year-olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and to help raise up leadership within the church from among our young adults, young adult representatives will participate in the deliberations of synod. These individuals bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering input on matters that arise in plenary. The BOT has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to Synod 2014 (* indicates service as a young adult representative in 2013):

* Mr. Nicholas Chuba	Mr. Corey Van Dyk
Mr. Daniel Gradert	* Ms. Nicole Veenkamp
Mr. Benjamin Li	Mr. Justin VerWoerd
Ms. Ivory Niewenhuis	

11. Role of advisers to synod

Synod 2013 referred the Role of Advisers to Synod Report back to the Board for edits in response to deliberations within the synod advisory committee, paying particular attention to distinguishing the role of faculty advisers in comparison to the role of other advisers who serve synod. Following a meeting with the seminary president and the dean of faculty, the report was revised and addressed by the Board at its February 2014 meeting. The revised report, an extensive outline of the history

of advisers, and recommendations to synod are attached and are recommended for approval by synod (Appendix C).

12. Process for appointment of synodical study committees

The Board mandated a small subcommittee to review and present recommendations regarding the process currently used for the appointment of study committees at synod. This was done in response to feedback following Synod 2013 in which several study committees were appointed in the final session of synod's deliberations. The time allotted and the process used to appoint study committee members can make it challenging to identify qualified and available persons to serve. The report of the subcommittee was addressed by the Board in February 2014 and is recommended to synod for adoption (Appendix D).

13. Overtures from Classis Minnkota

The Board of Trustees received and responded to two overtures from Classis Minnkota, requesting approval of the transfer of membership of Second CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, from Classis Kalamazoo and of Trinity CRC, Sparta, Michigan, from Classis Grand Rapids North to Classis Minnkota. Synod 2013 granted these congregations the option to move to the classis in closest proximity that is willing to receive them (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 619). The Board acceded to the overtures to permit the transfer and communicated the decision to Second CRC, Kalamazoo; Trinity CRC, Sparta; and Classis Minnkota.

14. 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 2014:

- Back to God Ministries International
- Christian Reformed Home Missions

15. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee hears appeals from a decision made by a council, a classis, or an agency of the Christian Reformed Church if it is alleged that an action violates the Church Order or the agency's mandate. 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, clergy, and nonclergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

One member of the Judicial Code Committee is completing a first term. It is recommended that synod reappoint Ms. Laura B. Bakker to a second three-year term on the committee.

Rev. Leslie Kuiper is completing his second term in 2014. The BOT, on behalf of the Judicial Code Committee, asks that synod appoint to a first term one new member from the following slate of nominees to begin a first term on July 1, 2014:

Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg serves as the pastor of Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ontario. He received a B.A. in psychology and an M.Div. and Th.M. in pastoral care and counseling. Rev. Kranenburg has served as a delegate to synod eight times. He has served on the boards of the Back

to God Hour, Dordt College, Youth for Christ, and Seaway Ministries (Classis Eastern Canada). He also served on the Regional Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy for Ontario, the classis renewal team, and on the classical interim committee in two classes. Rev. Kranenburg currently serves on the CRC Staff Ministries Team and is the chair of the Classis Hamilton classical interim committee.

Rev. Gordon H. Pols retired from the ministry in 2007 but continues to serve as associate pastor at West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. He received an A.B. from Calvin College and a B.D. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on synodical study committees on headship and denominational structure as pertains to Canada, and he has been a delegate to synod many times. Rev. Pols served on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA as well as on the CRC Board of Publications. Most recently he served on the editorial committee for the new *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal. He presently serves as a synodical deputy.

16. Judicial code process

The Board of Trustees decided that, to assist the Judicial Code Committee in the future for complex cases, a review be conducted of the Judicial Code as found in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. A task force appointed by the Board took into account the CRC-adopted abuse prevention and restorative justice statements and presented a report to the BOT for consideration in February to be forwarded to Synod 2014. The Board approved the report and its recommendations and now presents it to Synod 2014 for adoption (Appendix E).

17. Mandate for the CRCNA-Canada Corporation

The Constitution of the Board of Trustees mandates that the Board maintain and manage two corporate entities, one called the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the other called the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation. The members of the BOT that reside in Canada serve as the directors of the Canada Corporation. The members of the BOT that reside in the United States, and all of the Canadian members, serve as directors of the Michigan Corporation. The corporate entities are arranged this way primarily for director liability insurance reasons. The BOT recently clarified the parameters within which the corporate entities function and perform their due diligence, in compliance with the applicable regulations that govern registered charities in Canada and 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations in the State of Michigan. Perhaps, as important as the legal requirements that pertain, is the responsibility of both corporate entities individually and together to address the cultural appropriateness and contextualization of CRC ministries anywhere in North America. The clarification provided by the BOT came as a result of recent significant focus on what it means to be a binational denomination. The clarification provided did not alter the constitution and bylaws of the BOT and, therefore, no action by synod is required.

18. Canadian ministries director

Since September 2012, Mr. Ben Vandezande has been serving as interim director of Canadian ministries. The Board adopted a revised position description and a new position title and instructed the execu-

tive committee to appoint a search committee to identify a nominee for the next Canadian ministries director. The BOT anticipates making an appointment at its meeting in May 2014, and if so, will request synod's ratification of that appointment by way of the Board of Trustees Supplement report. The following persons have been appointed to serve on the search committee:

Rev. Neil De Koning	Ms. Katherine Vandergrift
Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn	Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr.
Mrs. Verney Kho	Rev. Joel Boot, staff adviser
Mr. Kyu Paek	Mr. Ben Vandezande, staff adviser
Mrs. Yvonne Schenk, chair	

19. Editor of *The Banner* and the *Banner* Editorial Council

The BOT engaged the editor of *The Banner* in significant conversation regarding his decisions to publish some articles that raised concerns among the readership and led to the receipt of several overtures and communications to the BOT questioning, for the most part, the propriety of such publication decisions. The BOT accepted the editor's apology and wrote a letter to the respondents to indicate the BOT's continuing appreciation for the editor's years of service, during which he has served with distinction. In addition, a letter to all churches was sent on behalf of the Board, describing the official actions taken by the BOT in September. Because this same matter is the subject of several overtures and communications to Synod 2014, we judge it best not to describe the issues in greater detail here but to leave the matter to be addressed by the appropriate synodical advisory committee.

As a result of the decision of the Board in September 2013, a task force of the BOT was appointed to review and propose a revised mandate for the *Banner* Editorial Council. The task force presented a revised mandate following consultation with the present *Banner* Editorial Council to the Board for adoption. The revised mandate retains the advisory character of the council rather than making the council supervisory in nature. Staff supervision for all denominational personnel is the responsibility of the appointed administration accountable to the BOT. The mandate for the *Banner* Advisory Council is included in Appendix F for synod's information.

20. Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

The task force mandated by synod to explore the Doctrine of Discovery has requested an extension for their time to prepare a report. Originally the task force was scheduled to report to Synod 2015. The BOT asks synod to take note that approval has been given to extend the task force's final report deadline to Synod 2016.

21. Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture

This task force is submitting its annual report for discussion by Synod 2014. However, because the task force has not directly engaged the BOT in discussion about the options for organizational change contained in the report, and because the options listed would substantially affect the role and function of the BOT, a discussion has been scheduled for the May 2014 BOT meeting. The BOT may decide to communicate its observations to synod by way of the Board of Trustees Supplement report.

22. Leadership Exchange

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the CRC, synod decided to approve a proposal for a Leadership Institute, the purpose of which was to provide a concentrated and coordinated leadership training resource for leadership development at all levels of congregational and denominational life. The proposal for such an institute was altered to become the Leadership Exchange, which, different from an institute, shifted the focus to more of a peer-learning model of leadership development. After an almost three-year pilot, that project was suspended in January 2012, primarily because the Leadership Exchange Governing Board, with the concurrence of the BOT, determined that the envisioned objectives were not being achieved. In the meantime the need for leadership training has captured the attention of a variety of denominational ministry offices, both in the CRC and in the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Dr. Duane Kelderman assisted in performing an audit of leadership training resources, and, consequently, these resources are now being integrated into revised denominational ministry channels. The BOT, at its meeting in February 2014, approved the dissolution of the Leadership Exchange Governing Board with gratitude for their service.

23. 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 provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

The *Yearbook* is published near the beginning of each calendar year and reflects denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

Among some of the statistics published 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 total number of members received from other CRCs, through evangelism, and from other denominations.

The core database that stores *Yearbook* data is used for many purposes, such as calculating ministry shares and pension assessments, mailing list requests, updating the list of churches and their pastors on the CRC website, and handling requests for information that is not published in the *Yearbook*.

b. *Church Order and Its Supplements and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

The *Church Order and Its Supplements 2013* reflects the updates adopted by Synod 2013. The latest version, published by the Office of Synodical Services, was made available to the churches in early fall 2013. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure* is published separately and is available only in electronic format on the Synod Resources web page at www.crcna.org/SynodResources.

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. From time to time some decisions need to be made by the ED about which material properly belongs in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seems more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in summer 2013 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2013. Anyone desiring to read a copy of this tool for the classes may download a copy from the stated clerk web page at www.crcna.org/StatedClerks.

B. *Program matters*

A large part of the Board of Trustees' work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix H to this Board of Trustees Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2014—Financial and Business Supplement* that is distributed at synod. The final budget and the ministry share request will be presented to synod by way of synod's 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. Serving within the office of the ED are the deputy executive director (DED), the Canadian ministries director (CMD), the director of finance and administration (DFA), and the director of synodical services (DSS).

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), convened by the executive director of the CRCNA, has responsibility for implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church, the collaboration of the ministries, and the review of program matters. The membership of the MLC is made up of senior leadership, directors of the agencies, presidents of the educational institutions (or their designees), and others representative of their offices and functions.

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

1. Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church

The Board of Trustees is mandated by synod to lead in developing and implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies; the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and the integration of the respective

missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

In May 2012 the Board initiated a review of the priorities that make up the current Ministry Plan—deciding to encourage a “fundamental reframing” of the plan. This process of developing a new strategic direction for the ministries has been the focus of the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team, working under the direction of the ED, with the assistance of consultants. The Board will review a first draft of the proposed plan in May 2014 and be given significant time to respond to the priorities identified. The feedback received by the Board will assist in preparation of the final draft to be presented to the Board in September 2014.

The current Ministry Plan focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry. The Appendix to the present Ministry Plan, the Identity Statement, is available in booklet form titled “What It Means to Be Reformed” and is available through Faith Alive Christian Resources (www.faithaliveresources.org).

2. Faith Alive Christian Resources

Synod 2013 faced the reality that the publishing world, of which the agency Faith Alive Christian Resources was a part, has radically changed over the past two decades, and the painful decision was made to dissolve Faith Alive as an agency. What is important to note is that Faith Alive products continue to be available for serving congregations with materials and resources that are needed for faith formation, member growth, and encouragement in their Christian walk (visit www.faithaliveresources.org). In fact, the provision of resources for congregational ministry has continued without interruption and will continue for years to come. The functions formerly contained within Faith Alive have been reassigned to other, and in some cases reorganized, ministry offices. Most of the former Faith Alive staff have also been reassigned and continue to work in alternate settings.

A notable exception to the staff reassignments is that in the process of realignment it became clear that a position for Mr. Mark Rice, the former director of Faith Alive from 2008-2013, did not emerge. Consequently, he began to search for a different place to serve, and we are grateful that an opportunity for employment came his way in March 2014. We are thankful for Mr. Rice's commitment to the ministry of the CRC and ask that synod express its appreciation by acknowledging his years of service.

3. Faith formation and other ministries

In the report to Synod 2013, the following was written and, we think, bears repeating:

Consistent with recent decisions of synod, a lot of attention has been given to the discussion of faith formation and especially to supporting congregations in that endeavor. The faith formation principle is deeply embedded in Reformed theology and, in recent years, the CRC has been giving renewed attention to its importance. What perhaps is “new” in the current discussion is the integrated way of thinking about faith formation and the role of the congregation in that process. Faith formation essentially involves all of the congregation's activities (e.g., Word and sacrament, discipling, teaching, leading, and serving). The denominational ministries need to become more responsive to the needs of faith communities everywhere and

to provide the resources that congregations need to serve God's people well. That is not congregationalism but rather "equipping the saints for ministry" in such a way that the kingdom of Christ is lived out in and among the fellowship of the church and the community in which a congregation serves. Fundamental to this emphasis is the engagement of congregations in the discussion about what resources are needed and the encouragement they need on their journey. To initiate this conversation in a more meaningful way, it is anticipated that an effort will be initiated for a pilot project (perhaps 100 congregations) to be very intentional about faith formation at the congregational level. It is expected that this pilot will be for a two-year period beginning later this year.

(Agenda for Synod 2013, pp. 37-38)

We are pleased to report that this pilot project was launched under the leadership of Dr. Syd Hielema, whose 20 percent of full-time services are being contracted in an agreement with Redeemer University College, where he serves as chaplain. Dr. Hielema has trained and serves with ten to twelve faith formation coaches who are in direct contact with congregations in their region. We are very encouraged by the initial responses to this "walking together" and trust that through both the expansion of this effort and other supplemental initiatives much fruit will be borne.

Allow us to place such initiatives in context. Denominational ministry offices have at times been more inclined to decide what is needed by the congregations rather than being responsive to what congregations say they need. There is a renewed emphasis on changing that paradigm. Ministry services of the denomination were historically organized to support the (mandate) ministry of that particular office. That history led to a "silo" type organizational behavior. Denominations in our current environment need to be reinvented and perhaps rediscover how to serve more effectively the congregations that sustain them. To achieve a more coordinated effort to serve effectively, the administration, with the assistance of a facilitation group, is in the process of realigning the critical functions that were part of Faith Alive with other offices in the denominational structure, realign the specialized ministries into a greater collaborative team effort, and develop a coordinated approach with the part of the Home Missions mandate dedicated to the revitalization of congregational life and missional renewal.

The pilot project mentioned above is only part of a much greater realignment in support of serving congregations more directly. During this past year some 140 staff and end-users of denominational services were involved in realigning our denominational services. The process was ably led by a Facilitation Group that made a number of recommendations to the administration. In summary, ministries were realigned to form (1) an office of worship and proclamation; (2) a collaboration group focusing on intergenerational faith formation; (3) a collaboration group focusing on new churches and strengthening churches; (4) a collaboration group focusing on leadership; (5) a collaboration group focusing on justice, mercy, and advocacy; and (6) a collaborative work group focusing on ministry support services. The principle that guided the realignment is "convergence." In other words, similar functions performed within the various ministry offices were grouped together to enhance support and performance, eliminate duplication, and serve in a more focused way.

Some staff now report to a different supervisor, but the primary focus is on team leadership with team conveners and leaders. It is virtually certain that further refinement will be needed, and some additional ministry areas may need to be added. It must also be noted that substantial portions of the realignment overlap with the work of Christian Reformed Home Missions and, therefore, that fact is still being addressed. Back to God Ministries International, World Renew, and Christian Reformed World Missions have not been part of the realignment, but there are likely areas for more collaboration with and among these agencies as well.

At the same time, every effort will be made to collaborate with partner organizations (e.g., Dynamic Youth Ministries, Friendship Ministries, Partners Worldwide, Timothy Leadership Training Institute, and so on) to be part of this faith formation emphasis.

4. CRC agency, institution, and specialized ministry reports

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a unified report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports portray the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. As you read the material, we invite you to praise God for ministry opportunities.

5. Office of Disability Concerns

The Office of Disability Concerns has been working in close cooperation with a similar office in the RCA. In many respects these offices function almost as one. The Board asks that synod take note of the following new mandate for the Office of Disability Concerns adopted by the BOT in February 2014:

The Office of Disability Concerns strives to promote and foster relationships, communities, and societies where everybody belongs and everybody serves by assisting churches, agencies, institutions, and leadership within the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America

- to think and act in keeping with the biblical call regarding people with disabilities.
- to break barriers of communication, architecture, and attitude.
- to establish ministries with, for, and by people with disabilities and their families.

The following grounds support this revised mandate for the office:

Grounds:

- a. The new mandate affirms our partnership with the office of Disability Concerns of the RCA, which began in September 2009. Although the RCA does not give mandates to their offices, the RCA Disability Concerns Advisory Team has affirmed this mandate as their own. By adopting this mandate for the CRCNA Office of Disability Concerns, we move another step closer to the stated goal of our CRC/

RCA partnership agreement: “that the ministries will share more deeply in ministry as we continue this relationship.”

- b. The new mandate highlights the importance of thinking biblically about disability—a priority not mentioned in the old mandate.
- c. The old mandate focused primarily on programmatic activities of the office. In contrast, the new mandate highlights the desired outcomes of the work of the office. This change of focus allows the office greater flexibility in means while giving clear direction for the purpose of our work.

The Board proposes that synod adopt the recommendations of the Office of Disability Concerns as found in Appendix G. Similarly, the Disability Concerns ministry of the Reformed Church in America has recommended adoption of the same to the RCA’s General Synod Council.

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 2014—Business and Financial Supplement* that will be made available to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015), and the recommended ministry-share amount for calendar year 2015. 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 World Renew (in lieu of ministry-share support), and a listing of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the Board of Trustees Supplement report due out in late May.

D. *Christian Reformed Church Foundation*

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation began in the early 1990s, when several Christian Reformed Church members and the CRCNA executive director of ministries began the Fellowship Fund to support uniquely denominational programs and needs. Synod 1996 approved a binational Christian Reformed Church Foundation, now a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization in the United States. Its counterpart is the tax-exempt registered charity Christian Reformed Church in North America–Canada Foundation.

Since the Foundation’s inception, it has distributed the funds received to various offices and agencies of the CRCNA and to closely affiliated organizations, including the Timothy Institute and Partners Worldwide.

The Foundation board of directors is committed to strengthening the ministries of the CRC. The Foundation seeks financial support for new ideas and programs that fall outside the mandates of the denominational agencies and are not funded through budgets of synod, classes, or agencies.

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation does not offer estate planning services but partners with Barnabas Foundation in the United States and with Christian Stewardship Services in Canada to help families make planned gifts and develop estate plans.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Sheila E. Holmes, chair of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod grant 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 2014.

C. That synod approve all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2014.

D. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board for synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies (II, A, 3), as well as to the agency and institution boards as needed.

E. That synod take note of the change in salary administration of CRCNA employees and receive it as information.

F. That synod, following a successful interview, appoint Dr. Steven R. Timmermans as Executive Director of the CRCNA, effective June 30, 2014.

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

H. That synod by way of the ballot reappoint to a second term members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 5).

I. That synod adopt the following recommendations as found in the Role of Advisers to Synod Report (Appendix C):

1. That synod acknowledge the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirm the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their area of knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. In the case of ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives, the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes.
2. That synod approve the following classifications of advisers:
 - a. *Faculty advisers* shall normally be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) The executive director shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select as many faculty members with particular expertise as are needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the executive director of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members

available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members.

- 2) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee by the Program Committee of synod as proposed by the executive director.
 - 3) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- b. *Ethnic advisers* are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such ethnic minority non-voting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005 (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, D). Seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.
- 1) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - 2) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- c. *Deacon advisers* are the representative voice of the office of deacon within the CRC, which is not represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven deacons may be appointed as advisers to synod.
- 1) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - 2) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- d. *Young adult representatives* are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, E).
- 1) Young adult representatives shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.

- 2) The parameter of service of the young adult representative, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- e. *Staff consultants* are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of the executive director and designated by the executive director, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the executive director or his/her designee.
 - 2) When the executive director assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then a faculty adviser may not need to be assigned to the same advisory committee.
 - 3) The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
- f. *Agency board representatives* (normally the agency board presidents and the agency directors) and *presidents of the educational institutions* shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
- g. *Board of Trustees of the CRCNA representation* shall consist of the chair of the BOT, one other member of the BOT Executive Committee, the executive director of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees. They shall have the privilege of meeting with the advisory committees that address Board of Trustees agenda matters as well as the privilege of the floor when Board of Trustees matters are addressed in plenary session.
3. That synod adopt regulations that apply to the role of all advisers to synod:
 - a. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
 - b. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
 - c. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the Program Committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.

- d. Faculty advisers shall participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session to give advice and theological expertise.
 - e. Ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives may participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session, representing the voice of their advisory group to the issue being addressed.
 - f. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committees but must do so in an advisory capacity and as a service to the delegates of synod in their deliberations.
 - g. Advisers are not allowed to vote in the advisory committees they serve nor in plenary sessions of synod.
4. That synod instruct the executive director's office to update the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding advisers to reflect these decisions, specifically replacing the responsibilities of advisers listed in sections III, D, 3 and III, E, 3, and any other sections affected, with these new regulations that apply to all advisers to synod.
- J. That synod adopt the following as an addition to the end of section VI, D, 1 of the Rules for Synodical Procedure, regarding the appointment of synodical study committees (see Appendix D):
- If additional time is necessary to complete the appointment of a study committee, a two-week extension will be granted and responsibility to do so will be entrusted to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional person chosen by the advisory committee from among its members.
- K. That synod by way of the ballot both elect to a first term and reappoint to a second term members for the Judicial Code Committee from the nominees presented (II, A, 15).
- L. That synod adopt the proposed revision of the Judicial Code (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c) as found in Appendix E.
- M. That synod take note of the newly adopted mandate of the *Banner* Advisory Council found in Appendix F.
- N. That synod take note that the deadline for the final report of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force has been extended to Synod 2016.
- O. That synod take note of the new mandate for the Office of Disability Concerns (II, B, 5), adopted by the BOT in February 2014.
- P. That synod adopt the recommendations of the Office of Disability Concerns as found in Appendix G.
- Q. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (see Appendix H).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Joel R. Boot, executive director

Appendix A
Curriculum Vitae: Steven R. Timmermans

Educational History

Undergraduate Education

Bachelor of Science degree from Calvin College, 1979
Program: Special Education (Emotionally Impaired; Mentally Impaired)

Graduate Education

Master of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Michigan, 1983.
Educational Specialist degree in Education and Psychology from the
University of Michigan, 1983.
Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education and Psychology from the
University of Michigan, 1985
(APA approved School Psychology).

Positions Held

INSTITUTION	POSITION	DATE
Trinity Christian College Palos Heights, Illinois	President	2003 to present
Calvin College Grand Rapids, Michigan	Executive Associate to the President Interim Director of the Service- Learning Center	2001 to 2002
Calvin College Grand Rapids, Michigan	Associate Dean/Dean for Instruction	1994 to 2000
Calvin College Grand Rapids, Michigan	Associate Professor/ Professor of Education	1991 to 2003
Calvin College Grand Rapids, Michigan	Director of Student Academic Services	1989 to 1994
Mary Free Bed Hospital & Rehabilitation Center Grand Rapids, Michigan	Director of Pediatric Programming & Research; Chief of Pediatric Psychology	1987 to 1989
Mary Free Bed Hospital & Rehabilitation Center Grand Rapids, Michigan	Staff Psychologist	1985 to 1987
Christian Learning Center	Teaching Principal	1979 to 1981

Church Involvement

Member of three CRC congregations: South Grandville CRC (Childhood and Youth); Neland Avenue CRC (25 years); Loop CRC (10 years; present church home). Also, while in graduate school, my wife and I were regular attendees of the Ann Arbor Campus Chapel and Rehoboth CRC.

Past deacon and elder at Neland Avenue CRC and former elder at Loop CRC. Urban youth leader, worship planner, and catechism instructor at Neland Avenue CRC; member of pastor-church relations, worship, and search committees and catechism instructor at Loop CRC.

Denominational Engagement and Related Publications

Member of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA September 2012 to February 2014.

Current member of the Chicago Area Disability Concerns Committee.

Past member and chairperson of the Leadership Exchange Governing Board.

Past director of a grant program with CRC churches in Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Red Mesa (as well as with Missionary Baptist, Church of God in Christ, and other urban churches).

Frequent visits to classis meetings (e.g., Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illiana, Grandville, California South, Red Mesa); frequent speaker at chapel services, convocations, and community events.

Publications in *The Banner*, *Christian Educators Journal*, *Christian Home and School*, and *Perspectives*:

Timmermans, S. & Vanden Berg, K. (2012). Learning through serving. *Christian Educators Journal*, 52(2), 13-15.

Timmermans, S. (2012). Forming adoption partnership. *Christian Home and School*, 90(3), 24-27.

Timmermans, S. (2012). [Review of *When Tolerance is No Virtue: Political Correctness, Multiculturalism, and the Future of Truth and Justice* by S.D. Gaede]. *Christian Educators Journal*. 51(4), 13-15.

Timmermans, S. (2010, February). Taking the pulse of our future. *The Banner*, p. 8.

Timmermans, B. & Timmermans, S. (1998). [Review of *Extraordinary Kids* by C. Fuller & L.T. Jones]. *Christian Home and School*, 76(3), 30.

Timmermans, S. (1998). [Review of *Uncommon Gifts* by James Evans]. *Christian Home and School*, 76(5), 30.

Timmermans, S. (1997). [Review of *The Abandoned Generation: Rethinking Higher Education* by William Willimon and Thomas Naylor]. *Perspectives*, 12(3), 21-22.

Timmermans, S. (1996). [Review of *Attention Deficit Disorder* by Elaine McEwan and *You & Your ADD Child* by Paul Warren and Jody Capehart]. *Christian Home and School*, 74(3), 29-30.

Timmermans, S. (1995). What Calvin College is doing with the bell curve controversy. *The Banner*, 131(2), 2.

Timmermans, S. (1994). Inclusion of students with special education needs in Christian schools. *Christian Educators Journal*, 34(1), 2-5.

Timmermans, B. & Timmermans, S. (1993). [Review of *Parenting a Child with Special Needs* by Rosemarie Cook] *Christian Home and School*, 71(2), 28.

Timmermans, S. (1992). [Review of *When your child needs testing: What parents, teachers, and other helpers need to know about psychological testing*]. *Christian Home and School*, 70(5), 28-29.

Timmermans, S. (1981, July). The disabled in the school program. *The Banner*, p. 16.

Timmermans, S. (1980, January). Towards a new direction in Christian special education. *Christian Home and School*, pp. 8-9.

Community Participation Local and National

Co-Leader, Trinity Christian College and Chicago-area Muslim organizations' participation in the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, 2011 to present.

Council Chair, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities' Advancing Intercultural Competencies, 2009 to 2013.

Co-Leader, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities' Leadership Development Institute, Summer 2012.

Board Member, Board President (2001-02), Grand Rapids Christian High School, 1999 to 2002.

Board Member of Heartside Ministries, 1995 to 1997.

Director/Co-Director of Camp Tall Turf's Single Parent Camp, 1985-86; 1989-91; 1993; 1999.

In addition, I have served on a number of boards in both the world of higher education and health care (e.g., Illinois Campus Compact, The Associated Colleges of Illinois, Federation of Illinois Independent Colleges and Universities, Priority Health, Advocate Christ Hospital).

International Experiences

Trips to South Korea (2006, 2011), meetings with Chongshin University officials (college of the Presbyterian Church in Korea-HapDong), lectures, and "preaching."

Trips to South Africa (1998, 2005, 2007), including serving as a visiting instructor at the former Potchefstroom University (Gereformeerde Kerke [GK]) and hosted by the now retired deputy stated clerk of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK).

Trip to the Netherlands (2012), consulting with the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede and meeting with the stated clerk of the (merged) Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN) in Utrecht.

In addition, I have traveled frequently to Ethiopia as well as to China, Nicaragua (hosted by the Nehemiah Center), Kenya (for a Partners World-wide conference), and other African and European countries.

Sample Grant Activity

Recipient of a grant (\$400,000) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2001-2003) for its Community Outreach Partnership Center program focused on multidisciplinary work in a focused neighborhood.

Recipient of a grant (\$700,000) from the Ford Foundation (January 2000 to December 2003) awarded for a project, *Faith-Based Institutions, High-Risk Youth, and Pre-College Programming*.

Recipient of a grant (\$611,000) from the Kellogg Foundation (December 1996), awarded to establish a collaborative between a network of inner-city churches and Calvin College to create precollege pathways.

Author of a Select Student Support Services Competitive Grant (\$41,370—State of Michigan, Department of Education; Office of Minority Equity) for 1996, awarded for the design and implementation of a living-learning community for ethnic minority and other college students.

Recipient of Select Student Support Services Competitive Grants (\$35,000; \$40,000; \$43,731—State of Michigan, Department of Education; Office of Minority Equity) for 1993-1995, awarded for the design and implementation of a retention program for disadvantaged ethnic minority college students.

Project Director for a Knight Foundation Pre-College Partnership grant (\$165,000—with Joy of Jesus and Church of the Messiah, Detroit, MI), for designing and implementing precollege activities so that at-risk youth develop aspirations for and gain entry to higher education.

Appendix B

Diversity in Leadership Planning Group (DLPG) Implementation of Synodical Directives¹

Status Update—February 2014

I. Introduction

On August 8, 2013, Bing Goei and Colin Watson were contracted by the executive director of the CRCNA to act as diversity agents in the implementation of the diversity goals mandated by Synod 2013. Since then, a DLPG steering and implementation team² consisting of Joel Boot, Peter Borgdorff, Bing Goei, Colin Watson, and Mark Rice have met several times to further plan and execute the directives of synod.

The roles and responsibilities agreed to are as follows. Joel Boot, Executive Director (ED), and Peter Borgdorff, Deputy Executive Director (DED), are the team leaders of the effort. Mark Rice serves as secretary and as assistant to the ED and the DED; Bing Goei serves as consultant responsible for managing the external stakeholders to be contacted as a part of the project; and Colin Watson is responsible for managing internal stakeholders and planning and executing the project plan.

The project plan is summarized in Addendum 1. While the plan covers all of the mandates given by synod (*Acts of Synod 2013*, Art. 85), it also adds activities which are critical to the effectiveness of the overall goal.

¹ *Acts of Synod 2013*, Article 85.

² The DLPG team currently is led by Joel Boot (ED) and includes Peter Borgdorff (DED) and the diversity agent (consultant) Colin Watson, Sr. Other CRCNA leaders will be invited to contribute to the effort as the various steps are implemented.

In particular, the project plan recognizes that a great deal of groundwork needs to be done to ensure that all stakeholders not only buy into the immediacy of the importance of the need, but are also committed to working together to ensure that synod's overall goal is met. That goal can best be described as achieving a Revelation 7:9-10 vision for the CRCNA. That vision is also well documented in *God's Diverse and Unified Family*, which has been in use in the denomination since 1996.

II. Summary of work done to date

The team met several times since the diversity consultants were engaged in August 2013. The following tasks have begun or have been completed:

- Reviewed synodical directives (*Acts of Synod 2013*, Art. 85) and used directives to develop a preliminary project plan (see Addendum 1)
- Sequenced work and assigned dependencies to tasks; created a timeline
- Conducted internal and external interviews of stakeholders, including agency directors and department heads of the CRCNA, ethnic directors and leaders of staff in the CRCNA, other influential ethnic leaders³
- Solicited, and have begun to receive departmental information bearing on the diversity issue (i.e., policy statements, practices, historical data, and statistics)
- Solicited input from stakeholders to name some effective approaches to reach the diversity vision
- Engaged the following teams for their input to this initiative: Race Relations Advisory Committee, Hispanic Catalyst Team, and members of Classis Toronto
- Began dialog with existing CRCNA strategic initiative teams—i.e., Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT), Collaborative Work Groups (CWG)

Information received is now being analyzed and will be used to refine the project plan, and to determine how to further engage key leaders of the denomination.

III. Project plan updates

Based on the project plan described in Addendum 1, the following describe subtending tasks under way and progress to date.

A. *Create a unified vision—October 2013 to December 2015*

1. Strategy and organizational alignment—develop a comprehensive strategy and organizational alignment.

Care will be taken to ensure that this task is well integrated with other ongoing strategic work within the denomination (e.g., Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team, Collaborative Work Groups, and the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture)—scheduled start: January 2014.

2. Create a unified vision of a diverse and inclusive CRCNA among all leaders in the denomination and the ethnic and minority communities

³ Leaders who have contributed to the development of diversity strategies in the past.

and their leaders—scheduled start: October 2013. The document *God's Diverse and Unified Family* (1996) can be used as a foundation for this vision. Interviews with stakeholders conducted to date do not reveal a great diversity of opinions regarding our desired vision, but there are many views regarding what roads to take to get us there.

3. Prepare ethnic minority communities to accept responsibility for the success of synod's decision—start date: November 1, 2013. This task is under way. Meetings have been held with ethnic leaders in the CRCNA as well as with Madison Square CRC, Latino Council, Eastern Avenue CRC, Classis Toronto, Classis Grand Rapids East, and Empowered Together, a multiethnic empowerment initiative in the CRC/RCA Great Lakes region. These discussions will continue.
4. Meet with director of Race Relations—start date: October 2013. Several meetings were held with the director of Race Relations to ensure that the diversity initiatives are aligned. These meetings will continue.
5. Consult (meet) with the Race Relations Advisory Committee—start date: November 1, 2013. Bing Goei met with members of this advisory committee on November 1-3, 2013.
6. Consult (meet) with CRCNA staff responsible for diversity and ethnic issues (request Home Missions ethnic ministries directors, Race Relations director, agency directors)—start date: October 2, 2013. Several meetings of key leaders have been held (see Addendum 3).
7. Identify and consult (meet) with key ethnic minority pastors and leaders in the CRCNA (travel to key regions)—start date: November 1, 2013. Initial work on this task has been limited to the Grand Rapids area (and a few in the New Jersey area) where the consultants are located. This work will continue in 2014. The focus will primarily be on those leaders who have had a history of working in and for the denomination.
8. Stakeholder lists of ethnic minorities—compile lists of ethnic minorities consisting of former synodical delegates, synodical ethnic advisers, current and former ethnic agency board members, elders and deacons (sources: Synodical Services office, churches, classes)—start date: January 2014. This task is just getting under way.
9. Database of ethnic and minority stakeholders—create (enhance) a database of all ethnic and minority stakeholders (see above). Supplement with SCORR scholars and other minority recommendations from current stakeholders—start date: April 2014.
10. Educational and informational workshop—develop content for educational and informational workshop to be presented in various regions of the CRCNA (workshop includes history, current opportunities, processes for engagement, and the diversity imperative)—start date: November 2013. The content for the workshop will be driven largely by input received from ethnic and other leaders in the CRCNA. It will be important to include an invitation to engage in current denominational issues as a part of the workshops (e.g., SPACT, TFRSC, CWGs, et al.). Work is under way.

11. Deliver workshops (see above) in at least four regions (e.g., Grand Rapids, Chicago, California, New York/New Jersey)—start date: August 2014. Though the start date for the task is given as August 2014, it is anticipated that most of the workshops will take place during calendar year 2015.
12. Consult (meet) with agency directors and presidents of educational institutions to secure their active involvement in implementing synod's diversity decision—start date: October 2013; end date: February 2014. This work (initial dialog with senior leaders) is almost complete (see Addendum 3).

B. Equal opportunity action plan—November 2013 - February 2015

Initial tasks are in process. The work is more involved than simply collecting information and integrating the goals. Though there is general agreement about the overall diversity vision for the CRCNA, there is a great variance in the approaches taken by each department and agency in selecting local goals and milestones. Directors are being engaged via ongoing interviews and dialog and are providing input regarding the shape of our overall goals.

1. Annual review of all Human Resources activity—reviews of all employment policies and practices related to recruitment, hiring, performance management, promotions, and demotions to ensure equitable treatment of all staff.
2. Recruitment policies: Review all current recruitment policies, procedures, and practices.
3. Receive and integrate SMART diversity goals for each agency and department in the CRCNA.

C. Nomination process for denominational leadership and boards—November 2013 – June 2016

1. Denominational boards: All CRC denominational boards and the Board of Trustees will adopt the goal of 25 percent multiethnic representation.
2. Nomination process: The nomination processes for agency boards, educational institution boards, specialized ministry advisory committees, and the BOT shall ensure that the goal of 25 percent multiethnic representation on boards is actively pursued.
3. Selection of multiethnic nominees: Identification and selection of potential multiethnic nominees who primarily have a heart for God and for his people and a passion for the CRC.
4. Solicit multiethnic nominees: Inform and educate CRC members regarding the need to solicit multiethnic nominees at the congregational and classical levels.
5. Pastors to solicit multiethnic nominees: Encourage pastors to solicit multiethnic members to participate.
6. Classical involvement: Encourage classes to be intentional about nominating diverse people to CRC denominational boards.
7. Synod to mandate the use of at-large positions as a tool to increase multiethnic representation on boards.

Synod has acted—need to send letters to agency board presidents and classes to affirm that this is the direction we are all taking. Suggest that this be a letter from the BOT (1-22-2014). Also, consider asking synod to allow classes to nominate a single representative for agency and other boards (at the option of the classis) if this will serve to hasten the achievement of our diversity goals.

D. Major tasks not yet fully active (will begin in 2014)

Detailed plans for the tasks are shown in Addendum 2.

- Develop and execute recruitment plan
- Training—training review will begin in 2014.
- Job postings and descriptions

IV. Initial observations, themes

A. Commitment, plans, and programs (strategy and organizational alignment)

1. All leaders committed to diversity.
2. Many current programs and plans addressing diversity.
3. Many initiatives do not cross agency borders—need to amplify and extend to be cross-agency and interdepartmental (e.g., add to/create new collaboration tables).
4. Limited or unclear accountability of program outcomes.
5. Wide range of detail contained in plans (*from* very formal with specific objectives *to* informal directional processes).
6. Programs need to be mainstreamed into current and future planning process (e.g., SPACT).
7. Need to align current agency/ department plans into a unified “strategic direction” document.

B. Training (diversity and general)

1. Diversity training exists – DORR/ Widening the Circle.
2. Antiracism training still overshadows current training.
3. Agencies making use of training but in an uneven way.
4. To be developed: Training for less-engaged potential minority leaders.

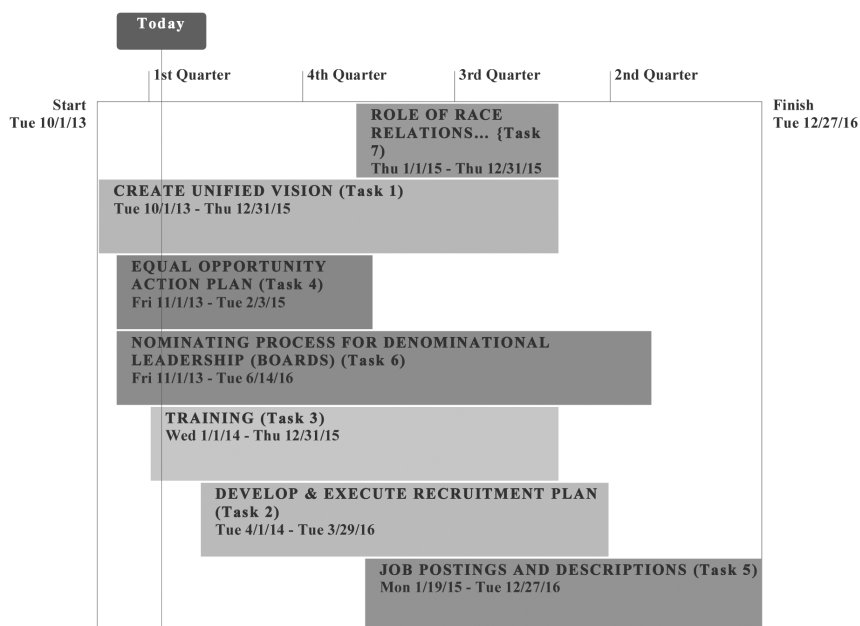
C. Communications: Potential action items

1. Coordinate and communicate the message of diversity in a way that unifies the CRCNA (Communications Plan).
2. Regional meetings led by leaders of color, focused on major CRCNA issues.
3. Refocus/ repurpose Multiethnic Conference so that more integration with synod is possible.
4. Meetings of selected diverse leaders (reconciliation).

D. Reconciliation

1. Some divisiveness exists—need for some reconciliation (across many groups).
2. Human Resources and infrastructure.
 - a. Begin to identify pools of candidates for various needs.
 - b. Consider options to create database—engage IT organization (possibly use Salesforce infrastructure).

Addendum 1



Addendum 2

I. Develop and execute recruitment plan: April 2014 – March 2016

- A. Develop recruitment plan: Identification and recruitment of multiethnic leadership in denominational positions with a strong focus on attracting, recruiting, and retaining multiethnic leaders; assign clear accountability for results.
- B. Review potential position descriptions and job openings over the next several years (meet with directors of agencies and of HR).
- C. Database of multiethnic candidates: Create a database of multiethnic candidates available for future positions.

D. Contacting potential candidates: A system for contacting potential candidates beyond the CRC by collaborative recruitment ventures with denominations and interdenominational groups.

E. Welcoming environment: Create a welcoming environment of hospitality in CRCNA ministry offices.

F. Develop an awareness of the compelling ministry opportunities and challenges available in the CRC.

G. Fund internships: Fund internships for the purpose of recruiting ethnic minority leaders and establishing a pool of ethnic minority candidates for future hires within our denomination and the broader Christian community.

H. Develop SMART diversity goals and timelines: Develop diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams.

II. Training: January 2014 – December 2015

A. Denominational training: Increase and improve denominational training efforts for all ethnic minority groups.

B. Review, enhance, and promote existing training: Review, enhance, and promote existing training materials and practices.

C. Provide training modules to churches.

D. Regional conferences, events, and workshops: Convene and conduct regional conferences, events, and workshops.

E. Continuing education: Promote continuing education and learning communities through mentoring and coaching.

F. Professional development: Enhance professional development for staff through ongoing in-service training and professional development opportunities in diversity education and cultural sensitivity.

III. Job postings and descriptions: January 2015 – December 2016

A. Job postings reviewed by the offices of Human Resources and Race Relations.

B. Develop internship position descriptions and actively recruit multiethnic candidates to fill these roles.

Addendum 3

Interviews to date with agency/office leaders

Agency/ministry leaders

Gary Bekker (Christian Reformed World Missions), Moses Chung (Christian Reformed Home Missions), Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo (World Renew – Canada), Ron Klimp (Chaplaincy and Care Ministry), David Koll (Candidacy), Michelle Loyd-Paige for Michael LeRoy (Calvin College),

Esteban Lugo (Race Relations), Jul Medenblik (Calvin Theological Seminary), Bonnie Nicholas (Safe Church Ministry), Andy Ryskamp (World Renew – U.S.), Kurt Selles (Back to God Ministries International), Norm Thomasma (Pastor-Church Relations), Mark Stevenson (Disability Concerns), and Peter Vander Meulen (Office of Social Justice).

Other denominational leaders

John Bolt (Finance and administration), Michelle De Bie (Human Resources), and Dee Recker (Synodical Services).

Other CRC leaders interviewed

Kafi Carasco, Laura Carpenter, Sam Cook, Viviana Cornejo, Tom Draayer, Hector Garcia, Emmett Harrison, Sheila Holmes, Stanley Jim, Gerry Muller, Eddy Olgun, Jan Ortiz, Alejandro Pimentel, Robert Price, Victoria Proctor, Ricardo Tavaréz, Charles Walker, Sandra Williams, and Jevon Willis.

Appendix C

Role of Advisers to Synod

I. Background and introduction

The Board of Trustees (BOT) held a discussion in fall 2011 regarding the role of advisers to synod and staff consultants, and decided to request the administration to prepare a report, with appropriate recommendations, to help clarify the role of each group of synod advisers.

A small task force composed of Rev. Kathy Smith, Ms. Dee Recker, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff was appointed by the executive director, Rev. Joel Boot, to prepare a report in response to questions raised by the BOT. Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), and Rev. Paul De Vries, CTS board chair, were consulted as the report was being prepared. The report, which included a recounting of the current process for selection of advisers and guidelines for their functioning (Addendum 1), a history of the various advisers to synod (Addendum 2), and recommendations for revision of the guidelines to be used regarding the selection, participation, and function of advisers to synod, was adopted by the Board of Trustees in February 2013 and forwarded to synod for adoption.

Synod 2013 reviewed the report and recommendations presented by the BOT and, at the recommendation of the advisory committee, took the following action:

That synod recommit to the BOT the recommendations contained in the Role of Advisers to Synod Report (II, A, 10; Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. The guidelines recommended do not adequately differentiate among the various types of advisers to synod.
2. The recommendations of the report fail to represent the unique role of faculty advisers.
3. The recommendations would unduly restrict the voice(s) of advisers and young adult representatives in the deliberations of synod.
4. The recommendations could benefit from more input from the various types of advisers.

(*Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 577-78)

Taking into account the desires of synod with respect to its advisers, revisions have been made to the 2013 report to reflect the diverse and unique roles of the groups of advisers to synod. Representatives of Calvin Theological Seminary were consulted regarding the revisions prior to submission to the Board of Trustees.

The participation of faculty advisers to synod is almost as old as synod itself. While there is no specific reference to the appointment of advisers prior to 1888, it is likely that the function precedes even that date. It is safe to say that the circumstances of synod in recent years, and the need for advisers to synod at the present time, have changed significantly since the late nineteenth century. Yet assumptions about who those advisers are, who appoints them, and what their particular function is at synod have remained essentially unchanged. The addition of other types of advisers has been more prevalent in recent years, including Synod 2013's decision that deacon advisers to synod be appointed in 2014 and 2015 until the proposed adoption in 2015 of recommended Church Order changes with respect to the role of deacons.

Over the years, several identifiable issues have developed in relation to synodical advisers, such as

- an increase in the number of advisers and types of advisers.
- variation in the role and function of advisers.
- lack of clarity about the roles and functions of advisers.
- concern about effective use of advisers in serving synod.
- concern about advisers understanding their advisory role and functioning accordingly.
- concern for strategic appointment of advisers to assist synod in accomplishing its work.
- lack of clarity regarding the difference between advisers and staff consultants.

The attached history section (Addendum 2) of this report shows the development of the use of advisers to synod through a survey of synodical actions related to advisers, outlining the various roles and purposes of these advisers. It also records some of the challenges to the practice of appointing advisers to synod, which further illuminates the understanding of these roles.

II. Observations

There are distinct differences between the types of advisers to synod. Faculty advisers are present to give advice related to issues and procedures that synod must address (e.g., theological, historical, polity, and procedure). The presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary advise synod on matters that relate to their specific institutions. The primary purpose of ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives at synodical meetings is to provide their perspective on behalf of a group that is not normally well represented at synod. Yet another distinction is the staff support role expected from senior denominational staff who are present to serve synod in various ways (e.g., giving financial, procedural, polity, and historical perspective). Such staff members are deeply involved in the work of synod, but their status at synod has not been clearly defined.

Priority should always be given to assist the delegated members of synod, with advisers and staff providing support, functioning to assist synodical delegates in doing their work and making sound decisions. All advisers to synod and some denominational staff are assigned to specific advisory committees to give advice without vote within the committees and in the plenary sessions of synod. Presently, all advisers and young adult representatives have the privilege of the floor and have the freedom to speak to any issues before synod. Senior denominational staff provide information as requested and do not normally participate in the discussions of synod except when requested to do so by the president of synod. Directors of the denominational agencies are normally given the privilege of the floor when matters related to the agency they represent are discussed, but they do not serve as advisers to synod.

Seminary faculty advisers presently serve synod as assigned by the seminary's academic dean in consideration of their availability with regard to current workload. The Program Committee of synod assigns them to specific advisory committees so that most committees have a faculty adviser present. Unlike in past years when all seminary faculty attended synod every year (a practice that was changed in 1968), current faculty in the rotation of assignment may or may not be aware of, and knowledgeable about, all the issues that come before synod, and are not necessarily chosen on the basis of their area of expertise.

Ethnic and deacon adviser nominations and young adult representative nominations are requested from the classes and churches, and appointments are made by the Board of Trustees.

III. Recommendations

The Board of Trustees submits the following recommendations to Synod 2014 for approval:

A. That synod acknowledge the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirm the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their area of knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. In the case of ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives, the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes.

B. That synod approve the following classifications of advisers:

1. *Faculty advisers* shall normally be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - a. The executive director shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select as many faculty members with particular expertise as are needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the executive director of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve

as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members.

- b. Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee by the Program Committee of synod as proposed by the executive director.
 - c. The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
2. *Ethnic advisers* are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such ethnic minority non-voting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005 (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, D). Seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.
 - a. Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - b. The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
3. *Deacon advisers* are the representative voice of the office of deacon within the CRC, which is not represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven deacons may be appointed as advisers to synod.
 - a. Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - b. The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
4. *Young adult representatives* are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section III, E).
 - a. Young adult representatives shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the executive director and approved by the Program Committee of synod.

- b. The parameter of service of the young adult representative, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- 5. *Staff consultants* are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of the executive director and designated by the executive director, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
 - a. Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the executive director or his/her designee.
 - b. When the executive director assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then a faculty adviser may not need to be assigned to the same advisory committee.
 - c. The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
- 6. *Agency board representatives* (normally the agency board presidents and the agency directors) and *presidents of the educational institutions* shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
- 7. *Board of Trustees of the CRCNA representation* shall consist of the chair of the BOT, one other member of the BOT Executive Committee, the executive director of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees. They shall have the privilege of meeting with the advisory committees that address Board of Trustees agenda matters as well as the privilege of the floor when Board of Trustees matters are addressed in plenary session.
- C. That synod adopt regulations that apply to the role of all advisers to synod:
 - 1. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
 - 2. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
 - 3. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the Program Committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.
 - 4. Faculty advisers shall participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session to give advice and theological expertise.

5. Ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives may participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session, representing the voice of their advisory group to the issue being addressed.
6. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committees but must do so in an advisory capacity and as a service to the delegates of synod in their deliberations.
7. Advisers are not allowed to vote in the advisory committees they serve nor in plenary sessions of synod.

D. That synod instruct the executive director's office to update the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding advisers to reflect these decisions, specifically replacing the responsibilities of advisers listed in sections III, D, 3 and III, E, 3, and any other sections affected, with these new regulations that apply to all advisers to synod.

Addendum 1

Selection of and Guidelines for Advisers to Synod

As outlined in the history section of this report, guidelines have been adopted by synod over the years for the appointment and function of the various advisers to synod. The following sections provide an outline of the present practices in place for soliciting and appointing the nominees, the follow-up to the appointments, and consideration of the adopted guidelines for the functioning of advisers at synod. Included in this advisory grouping are ethnic advisers, deacon advisers, young adult representatives (formerly young adult advisers), and the seminary faculty advisers.

A. Selection process of advisers

The annual process for selection of ethnic advisers and young adult representatives to synod begins in the fall by sending a solicitation to all CRC churches and classes with a special request for nominees to serve as advisers to synod. Such nominations are due to the Synodical Services office by mid-January for the upcoming synod. It has been the practice to request nominees every two years because the request to the churches at times generated a large number of nominations. In more recent years, however, the number of nominations received for ethnic advisers has decreased significantly. The Office of Race Relations supplements the list of ethnic adviser nominations received by the churches and classes.

Two forms for each ethnic adviser and young adult representative nominee are completed and returned—one by the clerk of council or stated clerk of classis and one by the nominee. By the end of January, the nominations are reviewed, and a recommendation for appointment is formulated for consideration by the Board of Trustees at its February meeting. In addition to the requirement that advisers to synod be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities, the following criteria are considered as recommendations for appointment are prepared for the Board:

1. Ethnic advisers (up to seven total)

- List of advisers to previous year's synod to provide continuity
- Diversity of ethnicities
- Diversity of geographic regions in which nominees are members
- Gender (for equal representation, if possible)

2. Young adult representatives (seven total)

- List of representatives to previous year's synod to provide continuity
- Diversity in age range (18-26 years)
- Response to the question *why* they wish to serve as a representative to synod
- Diversity of geographic regions in which nominees are members
- Gender (for equal representation, if possible)
- Ethnic diversity, as much as possible

3. Deacon advisers (seven total)

Synod 2013 mandated that the Board of Trustees shall appoint seven deacon advisers, following the present guidelines for selection criteria of other advisers to synod. Such appointments will follow a solicitation of nominees by the churches and classes for consideration by the Board of Trustees at its February meeting.

In late February, following the appointment of ethnic and deacon advisers and young adult representatives by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to synod (as well as alternates), the office of Synodical Services sends a formal letter of invitation on behalf of the Board to each appointee and tracks their responses. In the event that one of the appointees is unable to serve, an alternate is contacted.

Also serving synod in an advisory capacity are faculty members of Calvin Theological Seminary. The selection process of faculty has traditionally been handled by the seminary administration and is based on faculty members' current workload and their availability the week of synod. Included in the appointment by the seminary is a Church Order and polity expert as well as the seminary president. Up to eight faculty advisers are appointed each year.

B. Unique formula for ethnic advisers

One of the present challenges in the process set out by synod for the appointment of ethnic advisers is that the number of advisers required varies from year to year, depending on the number of delegates to synod who are people of color. As noted in the history section of this report, Synod 2005 adopted a "formula" for determining the number of ethnic advisers needed. Synod has requested that each of the forty-seven classes send one ethnic minority delegate as part of their delegation of four. At this point in time this goal has not yet been realized.

At each synod up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as ethnic advisers to synod. Per the decision of Synod 2005, the position of ethnic adviser will continue as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five. The Board of Trustees is tasked with appointing as many ethnic advisers *as are needed* to reach twenty-five (combined total of ethnic minority delegates and ethnic

advisers), except that no more than seven ethnic advisers (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed.

However, because synod delegate information is not received until mid-March or later, the data required for determining the number of ethnic advisers to synod is not available until that time. Meanwhile, ethnic adviser appointees are informed of their appointment and are told that in late March they will be notified as to whether they will be needed at synod. The synodical office has considered the option of not sending the ethnic adviser appointment letter until late March, but it seems that if we did that, it would be inconsiderate to give such late notice to those who would then need to plan to take a week away from families and jobs to attend synod.

In past years when fewer than seven ethnic advisers were needed, some graciously offered to withdraw from the list if not needed. But in other years it was necessary to decide who should be on the final list of attendees. So, in the absence of criteria or guidelines from synod for this process, the synodical office has made such decisions on the bases of continuity (appointment to the previous year's synod), diversity of ethnicities, and diversity of regions in which ethnic adviser nominees were CRC members.

C. *Guidelines for function of advisers*

Ethnic advisers are appointed to serve synod with advice regarding how decisions or conversations are shaped by the ethnic diversity within the Christian Reformed Church. It was decided to invite *young adult representatives* in order to learn from their unique and valuable perspective—so that the church can better understand the future needs of the Christian Reformed Church. *Deacon advisers*, implemented in 2014, will provide a unique voice to the deliberations of synod, bringing the perspective of the role of deacon within the church.

Ethnic advisers, deacon advisers, and young adult representatives serve alongside delegates on the advisory committees of synod (in which the agenda for synod is deliberately reviewed for recommendations to the full synod assembly). Each has the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote in advisory committee proceedings.

Ethnic advisers, deacon advisers, and young adult representatives are expected to be present at the public plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

Each year, select seminary faculty advisers serve synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the seminary president, who must be present at every synod. Seminary faculty advisers are members of the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary who serve as advisers to the committees and to synod. In addition, the faculty advisers are given the privilege of the floor at synod to serve and to advise the leaders and officers of synod as they do their work, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of synod, may request their advice. They also have opportunity to speak to particular issues, especially those in areas of their theological expertise.

Because the limited number of advisers within each group is fewer than the total number of synod advisory committees, the Program Committee (officers of the previous year's synod) may appoint some advisers to two committees if needed, or may decide that an adviser from a particular advisory group is not needed.

D. Closed sessions of synod

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, if synod enters into *executive session* to address unusual or delicate situations, the seminary advisers, ethnic advisers, deacon advisers, and young adult representatives shall be present (as well as the staff consultants) along with the delegates. If delegates from fully recognized churches in ecclesiastical fellowship are present at synod, they also may remain in an executive session.

Likewise, if synod enters into *strict executive session* (in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honor or for the welfare of the church), the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary faculty advisers, the ethnic advisers, the deacon advisers, and the young adult representatives shall be present. If any of the above-mentioned persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.

E. Presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College

The presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and of Calvin College attend synod and have the privilege of the floor as advisers to synod in matters pertaining to their respective institutions.

Addendum 2

History of Role of Advisers to Synod

I. Seminary faculty advisers

1888

Synod 1888 makes a reference to seminary professors with advisory vote, and such is mentioned as a regular practice in the following years.

1959

In 1959 synod received an overture proposing that seminary professors emeriti be present at synod in a limited advisory capacity, and not be on advisory committees except by request, because with an increase in seminary professors (from 6 to 11), there would be an increase of men with a permanent voice at synod who were not delegates to synod. The concern was "the danger of one group of office-bearers in the Church having an undue measure of influence in the major assembly of the Church" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 511). Synod did not accede to this overture on the grounds that the danger was not substantiated, and because it was "to the advantage of Synod to use the wisdom of emeritated professors . . . gained by years of experience" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 10).

1960

In 1960 there were five more overtures on this matter. Two asked for reconsideration of the 1959 overture and challenged the validity of the grounds for

rejecting it; one asked that no professors emeriti be official advisers in any sense; and two broadened the issue by questioning the present rules covering the functions of the active professors as well as those emeritated. Concerns raised in these overtures were that professors emeriti give advice “limited to the field of theology in which they last served the church,” to “avoid the suspicion that the seminary faculty as a whole [had] too much influence at Synod,” and that they had “the privilege of the floor to the disadvantage of the regular members” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 418). The desire was to have the wisdom of emeritated professors available, but in a limited capacity because of the concern that if seminary professors had a permanent voice at synod, they would have “an unwarranted and unproportional amount of influence.” Further, one overture stated, “The present rule is not in harmony with the general and basic principle that Synod is a delegated body of office-bearers from the churches. Emeriti professors are not delegated nor are they active office-bearers” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 441). The concern was “to eliminate as much as possible, those factors which tend to burden the deliberative processes of Synod as a delegated body of office-bearers” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 442).

Synod 1960 granted the request for reconsideration and amended the Rules for Synodical Procedure to read as follows: “The emeriti professors shall have a limited advisory capacity, their advice to be given upon the request of the chairman or the Synod. They shall function as advisers to advisory committees upon the request of the Synod or an advisory committee” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 26). This, in effect, was exactly what the overture to Synod 1959 had asked for. The grounds were that “the increase in the numbers of seminary professors . . . has greatly increased the number of men who are not delegates but who have a permanent voice at synod,” and “emeriti professors are not active office-bearers in the church” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). Synod 1960 did not accede to the overture to eliminate the practice of having emeriti professors at synod, stating, “It is to the advantage of Synod to use the wisdom of the emeritated professors, which has been gained by years of experience” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27).

Synod 1960 also received a recommendation to amend the rule governing all seminary professors—active and emeritated—as follows: “They shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising Synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of Synod, may request their advice” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). The grounds were that “the advisory status of the professors is not adequately defined in the present rule” and “the judicious observance of this advisory status by the professors and the Synod will obviate the need for more detailed rules.” Synod withheld action on this recommendation (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 27). Later that day, Synod returned to the matter and adopted a motion to “appoint a study committee to re-evaluate our present rules for synodical procedure regarding the place and function of the professors of Calvin Seminary as synodical advisers.” The grounds were “the increased number of theological professors and emeriti professors” and “the increasing role of the professors in the deliberations of Synod” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 28).

1961

The study committee on Seminary Professors as Synodical Advisers reported to Synod 1961 (*Acts of Synod 1961*, pp. 354-58), having looked at the constituency of synod, the principles of equality enunciated in Article 84 of the Church Order, and the meaning of advisory members, which is that the seminary professors are not members of synod, but advisers to it. They noted that “the professors are present at Synod for advice only and are not present as regular delegates who are charged with the responsibility of deliberation and debate and decision.” Further, “the seminary professors are not members of Synod because they are not delegated by the church. However, the professors, because of their specialized knowledge and wide experience, should function at Synod as advisers and synod ought to avail itself of the special talents of those who serve our church as seminary professors” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 357).

The study committee recommended revising the rules for synodical procedure to reflect this—that seminary professors would serve on advisory committees of synod and be present or available to synod for advice, upon the request of the chair or members of synod. Professors emeriti would serve on advisory committees when requested by synod and would be available to synod for advice upon the request of the chair or members of synod. The presidents of the seminary and the college would advise synod in matters pertaining to their institutions only, a rule that was not changed.

The advisory committee did not agree with the study committee in all respects. Synod 1961 adopted a recommendation that seminary professors serve on the advisory committees of synod. Synod 1961 also adopted this recommendation: “That the seminary professors be present at Synod where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising Synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of Synod, may request their advice.” The grounds were that the study committee’s recommendation “would curb the activity of our seminary professors unduly” and that “the former rule gave the seminary professors the same privilege of the floor as that given delegated members of Synod, while this reading emphasizes the fact that they are *advisers*” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 52). This language adopted by Synod 1961 continues in the Rules for Synodical Procedure to the present day.

Synod 1961 also decided that professors emeriti would serve on advisory committees when requested by synod, and be available to synod for “advice, which is to be given upon the request of the chair or members” (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 53). So their role was limited as first proposed in the overture to Synod 1959. Synod 1961 also reinforced that the presidents of the seminary and the college were allowed to advise synod in matters pertaining to their respective institutions (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 53).

1965

Synod 1965 received a communication from the seminary faculty requesting that half of the faculty serve as advisers to synod per year on a system of rotation, rather than having all the faculty serve (referring to active faculty, not professors emeriti) (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 488). The recommendation was rejected by synod with no grounds given (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 19).

1968

Synod 1968 responded to a second communication from the seminary faculty with the same request as that of 1965 (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p. 617) by adopting this recommendation: “that only one-half of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity except the president who shall be present each year.” The ground: “The size of the faculty permits synod to have ample representation if only one-half are present” (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p. 68).

1980

Synod 1980 received an overture to restrict the role of seminary professors at synod, arguing that the actions of Synod 1961 in not adopting the study committee’s recommendation were inadequate and that the intent of the synod—that seminary professors are “*advisers* who do not have the same privilege of the floor as that given the delegated members of synod”—had not been achieved. The overture observed (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 577),

The current status for seminary professors at synod is that “they shall have the privilege of the floor *for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it*, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any member of synod may request their advice.”

- This, as it stands, can be understood to say that seminary professors have the full privilege of the floor to advise synod on *all* matters before it without their advice being requested. This puts them on an equal basis with the delegates of synod re the privilege of participating in discussion.
- However, *Ground b* of Synod’s 1961 decision indicates that this was not the intent of synod since it states explicitly that this is supposed to be an improvement over the former rule “which gave the seminary professors the same privilege of the floor as that given delegated members of synod, while this reading emphasizes the fact that they are *advisers*.”
- It has been the observation of many past delegates that the seminary professors, in line with a long tradition, feel that they have the freedom to become freely involved in the discussion of all the issues before synod, and that not merely in an advisory capacity.

Synod 1980 did not accede to the overture, not wanting to “unduly restrict the seminary professors in their advisory role at synod,” noting that the study committee’s advice on this matter in 1961 was never adopted, and that the classis “had not shown that the present policy is inadequate” (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 19-20).

2006

The Rules for Synodical Procedure were changed in 2006 to say, “At each synod selected members of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the president, who shall be present at every synod” (section III, B, 1),

The wording “selected members of the seminary faculty” appeared in 2006, after having been “one-half of the seminary faculty” for all the years from

1968 to 2005. In 1968 synod had decided that the seminary only needed to send half of the faculty rather than all of them.

2010

Since 2006, seminary faculty advisers were assigned by the seminary's vice president for academic affairs first on a rotating basis and then on the basis of their availability as a portion of their teaching loads. The Program Committee of synod assigns them to advisory committees so that most committees have a faculty adviser present. In 2010 the seminary faculty decided that faculty advisers are required to be present at synod as long as their advisory committees are reporting, but not for the entire synodical session.

II. Staff consultants

1994

It appears that the matter of advisers did not come up again until Synod 1994, when the Board of Trustees requested that the general secretary and the executive director of ministries serve as advisers to synodical advisory committees, but synod did not accede to this request. Instead, synod adopted a recommendation that they serve as staff consultants as needed. The grounds stated, "There is a potential conflict of interest if their status is changed," and, "Advisers to synodical advisory committees are assigned to assist committees to do their work and have the right to have input on all discussions, whereas a consultant is called upon to respond to questions on specific matters" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 433). This decision informs the nature of the advisers who did serve on advisory committees.

III. Ethnic advisers

1995

Synod 1995 received an overture to include ten ethnic advisers at synod, based on the precedent of Scripture regarding a similar situation in Acts 6, the stated desire of several boards to include minorities, the desire of several minority members of the CRC to be at the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level, the need for a biblically compelling way and not "a quota system guaranteeing proportionate representation," and the belief that "attendance and participation at synod and on its advisory committees [would] be an effective training ground for persons from the nations to become so conversant with CRC policies and practices that delegation to synod and/or appointment to boards will be quickly forthcoming" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 395-96).

Synod 1995 adopted a recommendation that it accede to the overture "by including up to seven members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod and that the Board of Trustees be asked to implement this practice for a period of five years," based on the following grounds (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 694-95):

Grounds:

- a. The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.

- b. Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of polity and decision making at the synodical level.
- c. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
- d. The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.
- e. Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.
- f. This practice affirms a sense of CRC 'ownership' by various ethnic communities.
- g. Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

1996

Synod 1996 received a recommendation from the Board of Trustees regarding Guidelines for Ethnic Advisers to Synod, which they had used in appointing the advisers who came to serve at Synod 1996 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 26-28). Synod approved those guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 454-55), including the following qualifications and responsibilities, which were identical to those regarding seminary advisers:

Qualifications:

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities:

1. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Ethnic advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

2000

Synod 2000 received a recommendation from the Board of Trustees noting that the five-year practice of appointing ethnic advisers was completed but that "no provision was made in 1995 to review this practice at the end of five years." The Board also observed that it did not seem to be "presupposed that the practice would automatically continue." The Board noted that a ground to the decision of Synod 1995 suggested "that under certain circumstances it can be discontinued but doesn't identify what criteria might be employed to determine whether to continue the practice." The Board then asserted, "Ethnic advisers have been a positive force at synod and have helped to prepare ethnic-minority leaders for broader roles in the life of the CRC, including being chosen as delegates to synod in the years following their service as advisers. All of the positive hoped-for results identified in the original

overture and in the grounds quoted above have been realized.” So the Board recommended “that synod continue the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod for an additional five-year period with the expectation that Synod 2003 will appoint a committee to conduct a review of this practice and report back to Synod 2005. *Ground:* The positive results of this practice warrant a five-year continuation, after which there will be more evidence and experience by which to judge the practice” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 520-21). This recommendation was adopted by Synod 2000 (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 634).

2003

The Board of Trustees reminded Synod 2003 of the instruction of Synod 2000 to appoint a committee to review the practice of appointing ethnic advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, p. 30-31). Synod 2003 adopted a recommendation to appoint a committee of nine members reflecting the ethnic diversity within the denomination to review the practice of appointing up to seven ethnic advisers to serve at synod each year. They were instructed “1) to evaluate this practice according to the original grounds as stated by Synod 1995; 2) to determine whether the practice encourages mutual enrichment, that is, that it is not only for the benefit of advisers and the communities they represent but is also, and perhaps more importantly, for the benefit of the whole church; 3) to gather information from at least the following respondents: past ethnic advisers, synod officers, advisory committee chairpersons and other delegates, minority and other appropriate churches, classes, and denominational officers; and 4) to recommend to Synod 2005 whether to continue the practice of appointing ethnic advisers and/or to suggest any modification of that practice (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 622). A committee of nine members was appointed by synod (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 681).

2005

Synod 2005 received the report of the Committee to Review the Practice of Appointing Ethnic Advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 333-51). The study committee had conducted a survey regarding ethnic advisers and found that the percentage of ethnic delegates to synod had grown equal to the percentage of ethnic members in the CRC, but the committee wondered if that level of representation was acceptable, or if they should be considering the percentage of ethnic minorities in society, or the number of congregations that identify themselves as ethnic minorities (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 336). They also noted that the 1996 “Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God” recommended that classes recruit and assist ethnic minority persons to participate in classical and denominational ministries.

The study committee noted that the position of ethnic adviser had not become “the stepping stone envisioned by Synod 1995” but added that, “as one ethnic minority council said, ‘It is better than having no voice at all’” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 342). They did note that the position is one stream among many through which the denomination has attempted to incorporate ethnic minorities, and that progress is being made slowly in some significant ways on denominational boards and also at synod, with an ethnic minority officer elected in 2004 (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 343). The committee believed that

the position of ethnic adviser “should be phased out as something more significant replaces it, something that flows naturally from the congregations and classes and something that is directly responsible to the classes” (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, p. 343). They recommended greater involvement of ethnic minorities in classes and recommended that the position of ethnic adviser to synod be continued as long as the number of ethnic delegates was less than twenty-five, and then discontinue it. They also recommended that synod encourage all classes to include at least one ethnic minority in their delegations, with the goal that all would do so by 2011. Further, they recommended that by way of exception, classes be allowed to send ethnic minority deacon delegates to synod.

Synod 2005 received four overtures to reject some or all of the recommendations of the committee, especially the goal for all classes to send one minority delegate to synod each year by 2011, and three communications of concern about the recommendations (*Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 596-601, 603-04; *Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 681-84).

Synod adopted the following recommendations (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 755-56):

- 1) That synod encourage each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006 (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748).
- 2) That synod request all classes to develop a strategy to intentionally incorporate ethnic minorities into the life and government of the local church and broader assemblies and submit their plan to the BOT by March 15, 2007.
- 3) That synod encourage ethnic minority members of the denomination to participate in the meetings and activities of their classes.
- 4) That synod encourage classes to specifically invite ethnic minorities to participate in the meetings and activities of classis.
- 5) That synod remind councils and classes that the CRC Office of Race Relations is available to assist with leadership development and other services to incorporate ethnic minorities into the ongoing work of the church.
- 6) That synod continue the position of ethnic adviser as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which time it shall be discontinued. The Board of Trustees 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.
- 7) That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to report in the annual Agenda for Synod, and to make recommendations if necessary, on the denomination’s progress in attaining its goal of at least one ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis and on the denomination’s progress in incorporating ethnic minorities on denominational boards.

The practice approved in 2005 regarding ethnic advisers (recommendation 6 above) has been followed to the present, since the number of ethnic minority delegates has not reached 25, although there were 24 in 2009.

IV. Women advisers

2000

Synod 2000 received the report of the Committee to Review the Decision Re Women in Office, which included the recommendation that until another review slated for 2005, “synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod.” The grounds: “1. Women can make a valuable contribution to the work of synod. 2. The presence and input of ethnic advisers have been beneficial to synod and the churches.” (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 387). That recommendation was adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 699). In effect, synod copied the practice of appointing ethnic advisers to synod, except that, unlike ethnic minority persons, women were not yet allowed as delegates to synod. It is interesting that until this decision was made, no female ethnic advisers were appointed to serve synod.

2001

Following the procedure for ethnic advisers in 1996, Synod 2001 received recommended guidelines for women advisers from the Board of Trustees which had been used in appointing the first set of women advisers to that synod (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 30-31). The qualifications and responsibilities were identical to those for ethnic advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 31):

Qualifications:

Women advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities:

1. Women advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Women advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Women advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

One overture and one communication opposed this action (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 333-34, 339-41), but synod did not accede to the overture (*Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 486-87). Synod adopted the guidelines as recommended by the BOT (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 493). So the guidelines worked out in the early 1960s with regard to seminary faculty advisers were repeated with ethnic and women advisers in the 1990s and 2000s.

2008

In 2008 the Board of Trustees' report noted (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 24),

Given the decision of Synod 2007 to allow for the representation of women as delegates to synod, the Board of Trustees recommends the following: That beginning with Synod 2009, women advisers no longer be appointed to serve synod.

Grounds:

- 1) Synod 2007 approved the appointment of women delegates to synod.
- 2) The number of women delegates now exceeds the number of women appointed to serve synod as advisers.

Synod's advisory committee made the following recommendation (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 479):

That synod, rejoicing in the steps we have taken on the path toward full participation, thankful for the women delegates present this year, and trusting that congregations and classes will continue along this path, discontinue the appointment of women advisers beginning in 2009.

Ground: Women advisers are no longer needed when we have women delegates who can fully participate instead of only advising.

The motion was defeated, and then a delegate presented the following motion (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 479):

That beginning with Synod 2009, women advisers to synod no longer be appointed.

Ground: Synod 2007 approved the appointment of women delegates.

This motion was adopted.

V. Youth observers, young adult advisers, young adult representatives

2009

Synod 2009 received a report from the BOT that it had "engaged in a conversation about the increased awareness of engaging our youth (18-26 year olds) in the denomination." The Board went on to say, "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. Appointment to the youth observer positions will be made by the Board of Trustees in May" (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 27). Six youth observers were present at Synod 2009, appointed by the BOT (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 563).

2010

Synod 2010 received a report from the BOT noting that youth observers brought "a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination" and appointed seven persons to serve as youth observers. The BOT also recommended "that Synod 2010 adopt the practice of appointing seven youth *advisers* to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011" (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 27) They provided guidelines for such advisers that were identical to those used for ethnic and women advisers (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 42-43):

Qualifications

Youth advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

Responsibilities

1. Youth advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Youth advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Youth advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

Synod 2010 changed “the title *youth adviser* to *young adult adviser* to reflect the age category (between the ages of 18-26) in the guidelines presented to synod” and then adopted “the practice of appointing seven young adult advisers to each meeting of synod beginning in 2011.” Synod also instructed the Board of Trustees “to dialogue with a number of ethnic minorities to reconsider the use of the term *adviser* as it relates to the title *young adult adviser*” because “the term *young adult adviser* can be misunderstood in some cultures such as the Native American culture” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 830).

2011

Synod 2011 had four young adult advisers present (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 27) and received a recommendation from the BOT for a “Young Adult Summit for the purpose of engaging the young adults of our denomination in matters that are before the church” (p. 30), an idea proposed by a forum for young adults hosted by the Leadership Exchange (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, pp. 50-54).

Synod also received a report from the BOT on the instruction of Synod 2010 to “explore the implications of the term *young adult adviser* in response to concerns expressed by the Native American community” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 702, 712-13). In response to the findings of its study, the BOT recommended “that synod use the term *young adult delegate* to synod in place of the term *young adult adviser* to synod, and that the role clearly be defined as *non-voting* at meetings of synod,” because “in some cultures, it is inappropriate for young adults to be perceived as advising their elders or leaders” (p. 709). According to the report, this new title was acceptable to the ethnic communities concerned (p. 713).

However, Synod 2011 adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee: “that synod use the *young adult representative* in place of the term *young adult adviser*,” because “these invited young adults represent the interests of youth at synod,” “the word *representative* is a more neutral term that respects cultural concerns,” and “the term *young adult representative* describes their role at synod as distinct from that of the delegates” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 816).

VI. Deacon advisers

2013

Synod 2013 received the report of the synodical Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force, which recommended by way of a proposed change to Church Order Article 45 the addition of deacons to the synod delegation appointed by the classes. Synod adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee to propose the Church Order change to Synod 2015, which, if adopted, would mean that the synod delegation of each classis would include one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer, beginning in 2016.

Because of the interim period before deacons might be seated as delegates, synod instructed “the BOT to appoint up to seven deacons in the CRC during the interim years of Synod 2014 and Synod 2015 to represent the interests of deacons at synod, using the same guidelines for ethnic advisers and young adult representatives” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 626).

Appendix D

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee re Appointment of Synodical Study Committees

I. Present regulations for appointing study committees

Occasionally an overture requests that synod appoint a new study committee to accomplish a particular task. Advisory committees need to be aware of the regulations governing the appointment of study committees.

The Rules for Synodical Procedure state (VI, D, 1):

All study committees shall be appointed by synod from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod. Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended. The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod.

(*Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 15; *1980*, p. 21; *1997*, p. 634)

In addition, regarding “the need for diversity on committees and boards,” Synod 1995 moved to

encourage boards, agencies, and itself and future synods to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination and, where applicable, the range of opinion that exists in our denomination on a particular matter to be studied.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656)

II. Issues and concerns with the current regulations

The ad hoc committee notes that the compact schedule for synod makes it very challenging to finalize appointments of new study committees. In addition, honoring the guidelines makes it prudent to adopt a provision that grants time beyond the closing of synod to complete the task of appointing a synodical study committee.

Given these issues surrounding the present regulations for the appointment of study committees by synod, the ad hoc committee proposes the following:

That the Board of Trustees recommend that synod adopt the following as an addition to the end of rule VI, D, 1 of the Rules for Synodical Procedure:

If additional time is necessary to complete the appointment of a study committee, a two-week extension will be granted and responsibility to do so will be entrusted to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional person chosen by the advisory committee from among its members.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Baker, Convener/Reporter
Cal Hoogendoorn
William Veenstra

Appendix E

Report of the Task Force to Review the Judicial Code

I. Background

The above-mentioned task force was appointed at the request of the Board of Trustees, meeting on September 27-29, 2012 (BOT Minute 5064). The mandate given was as follows:

Review the Judicial Code (Church Order Supplement 30-b, Part B and 30-c) rules, regulations, and prescribed procedures of the Judicial Code in the light of the commitment of the CRC to the principles of restorative justice and safe church. Furthermore, the committee is requested to suggest such revisions (both substantial and procedural) as will enhance the use of the Judicial Code in addressing grievances brought forward by members of the CRC.

At our first meeting we gladly welcomed the Rev. Joel Boot, executive director, who elucidated this mandate for us.

The first two areas referenced in the mandate (in light of which the Judicial Code is to be reviewed) are clear and specific: restorative justice and safe church. Synod 2005 adopted several recommendations on restorative justice procedures. The task force took special note of two synodical decisions (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 761-62) that seemed especially pertinent to our work:

4. That synod encourage the active participation of churches and church members in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible, and to effect, as far as possible, the establishment of justice for all members of our societies.

9. That synod urge congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices.

The second area referenced in the mandate, safe church, concerns a denominational ministry begun well after the Judicial Code was adopted in 1977. We focused especially on the current Procedures for Advisory Panels.

The third area referenced is less clear and specific. In his explanation, the executive director referred to the sudden prominence of the Judicial Code as it functioned in the recent Maranatha CRC, Belleville, Ontario, case involving an original hearing before synod's Judicial Code Committee. He pointed to unreasonable expectations of the judicial process, disappointment with respect to its outcome, differences of opinion regarding the definition of "evidence," and lack of procedural guidance on matters of confidentiality as well as the prevention of possible revictimization. The task force was privileged to have Judge Joel Hoekstra as its chair, since he had extensive involvement in this particular case as a member of the Judicial Code Committee. His recollections of it were invaluable. He also met with the past chair and the current chair of the Judicial Code Committee, Mr. Christian Meyer and Rev. Leslie Kuiper, who were both given opportunity to provide the task force with input.

The additional language in the mandate regarding unnamed "revisions (both substantial and procedural)" led the task force to examine whether improvements could be made that would benefit any future cases. As part of this exercise, we took note of the judicial codes employed in the Presbyterian Church in America and in the Reformed Church in America.

The task force met on five occasions, with email communications interspersed throughout. We almost immediately judged that the deadline imposed on us (BOT by May 2, 2013; synod by June 2013) was not workable if good quality work was to be done. Hence, we requested an extension, and the Board of Trustees, meeting in February 2013, graciously granted it. The Board then also added one more item to the mandate:

that the Judicial Code Review Task Force consider the membership make up of the Judicial Code Committee, specifically as it relates to the balance of clergy and non-clergy and legal expertise, and recommend the ideal balance of membership for the JCC. Presently, synod only asks that there be *some* clergy and *some* lay persons on the committee.

The final result of the task force's review of the Judicial Code is now attached to this report. When you read what we propose, you may wish to refer to the current Judicial Code found in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c for purposes of comparison.

II. Proposed changes

A. *Necessary minor changes*

The task force proposes that the grounds offered for Synod 1977's initial adoption of the Judicial Code placed at the end of the current Code should be paraphrased and become the first paragraph of the Preamble that introduces the Code.

The task force proposes that the Code's outline be changed from *Articles* to *Sections*. This will end the confusion of having "Article 1" through "Article 27" within the Church Order's Supplement, Article 30-c.

Since Church Order Articles 30-a and 30-b deal with *appeals*, we propose that the Judicial Code refer only to *written charges*. That way the word *appeal* in the Code will no longer refer to what a complainant alleges (which may or may not be dealt with under the provisions of the Code) but only to appeals from decisions of original hearings submitted to broader assemblies (classis

or synod) that must be dealt with under the provisions of the Code. This too will end significant confusion.

Finally, there are numerous suggested improvements in language and in the ordering of materials for the sake of clarity and consistency throughout the proposed document.

B. Revisions (substantial and procedural)

Unreasonable expectations of the Judicial Code process are now addressed in the second paragraph of the proposed new reading of the Preamble. It is now even clearer than before that the Judicial Code process is a “dispute-resolution mechanism of the last resort.”

The task force proposes the deletion of what was Article 1, b. This section addressed “appeals from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church, excluding employee termination decisions.” Beyond such employee termination decisions, also excluded as legitimate appeals, were those that challenged decisions regarding policy that affected the appellant “either materially or personally, and as an individual apart from other members of the Church” (Article 1, b, 6). Research into our history has demonstrated that from 1977 until the present time no appeals have been dealt with that are not excluded by these two provisions. The task force judges that retaining this section is confusing and unnecessary. The exclusion of employee termination decisions is retained, however, in Section 1, c, ii). Also, Section 3, i outlines procedures to be followed if written charges are filed against an agency, board, or committee.

To avoid confusion in future cases, the task force now presents clearer language with respect to the definition of evidence as well as the procedure to follow when parties wish to propose the exclusion of evidence or exhibits (Section 5, a).

Matters of confidentiality have been addressed in the proposed Sections 2, f; 3, b, i; and 4, g and h. The Code will now insist that alleged abuse on the part of a church leader first be dealt with by the CRC’s Safe Church Ministry’s Advisory Panel Process “with the procedures and standards of confidentiality outlined therein” (Section 3, b, i and 3, c). This insistence addresses not only the matter of confidentiality but also that of possible revictimization. The proposed Code requires that an assembly’s determination as to “whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing” must be “conducted in a confidential manner to protect the reputations of the people involved and to protect the impartiality of the judicial assembly if the charge moves forward” (Section 4, g). In addition, of course, the task force assumes that assemblies of the church will make responsible decisions with respect to moving into executive or strict executive sessions.

C. Revisions in membership of synod’s Judicial Code Committee

In response to the “additional mandate” given us in February 2013, the task force proposes a new composition of this synodical committee that clearly addresses concerns regarding clergy and non-clergy balance as well as legal expertise. As can be seen in Section 8, b, this involves an increase from nine members to twelve members and new regulations regarding balance and diversity. At the same time, it also retains a measure of freedom in the nomination process.

D. Revisions in light of restorative justice

The task force proposes a specific reference to restorative justice practices in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble. Included are the exact decisions of Synod 2005 in this regard.

E. Revisions in light of Safe Church Ministry procedures

The task force has also addressed the matter of how the Judicial Code and the Advisory Panel Process of Safe Church Ministry can be more clearly aligned. The first reference to that alignment is made in the fifth paragraph of the Preamble; additional references are found in Sections 3, b, i; 3, c, i and ii; and 7, a.

III. Concluding matters

Finally, the task force has determined that there are no conflicts between our proposed revision of the Code and the current Rules for Synodical Procedure. In section VI, F, 6, c, 1 of the Rules, however, the reference to Article 10 of the Code will need to be changed to "Section 5."

Members of the task force sincerely hope that these revisions will be beneficial to the church as it handles written charges in a way that involves not only justice but also a "considerate and Christian manner" in conducting judicial hearings.

Task Force to Review the Judicial Code
Laura Bakker
Henry DeMoor, reporter
Susan Hoekema
Joel Hoekstra, chair
Jack Kooreman

JUDICIAL CODE OF RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES

Preamble to the Judicial Code

Synod 1977 adopted the first edition of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures. It did so to "encourage greater uniformity of procedure throughout our denomination when charges must be adjudicated." The belief is that this Code "will help to insure just treatment of those who are involved in the judgment and decisions of the church" and that providing "impartial judgments among God's people" is required by Scripture (Deut. 1:16-17; Deut. 16:18-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21). "Procedural guidelines" are needed to deal with substantive issues in an appropriate and "ecclesiastical manner" (Church Order, Article 28), and, according to synod, the Judicial Code provides this "procedural pattern within which the law of love may be fulfilled" (James 2:1, 8-9).

However, the Judicial Code should not be considered as providing a means of broad applicability for resolving disputes. Rather, the Judicial Code is intended to be a dispute-resolution mechanism of last resort because judicial hearings and subsequent decisions of assemblies will likely never fully satisfy the parties involved. Thus, complete reconciliation may not be achieved. Rather, the focus of Judicial Code hearings and of the resultant decisions made by the assemblies is not primarily on reconciliation but on some kind of final resolution. While the Judicial Code does provide rights for

all parties and a fair process toward resolution, it does not purport to restore the mutual trust that may have been lost as any given dispute may have raged and festered.

Before invoking the rights afforded under the Judicial Code, brothers and sisters in Christ should make every effort to resolve issues between them amicably, according to the teachings of Scripture. If they require external assistance to reach agreement, they should, where appropriate, seek trained facilitators or mediators to help them reach agreement. A process of mediation led by neutral parties may facilitate a more satisfactory resolution.

One of the ways in which issues can be resolved more amicably is to use restorative justice practices. Synod 2005 encouraged “the active participation of churches and church members in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible, and to effect, as far as possible, the establishment of justice for all members of our societies.” It also urged “congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 761-62). These practices bring with them greater potential for true reconciliation.

On the other hand, mediation or restorative justice practices are not necessarily appropriate for charges involving physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Such charges should be dealt with in the first instance by way of the Advisory Panel Process approved by synod and associated with the denomination’s Safe Church Ministry.

Thus, even if written charges have been filed and a formal hearing has been requested, the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not sufficient means for resolution, formal or informal, have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further efforts are undertaken. Only after the assembly determines that sufficient means have been exhausted or that such means do not resolve the matter, should the assembly proceed to conduct a judicial hearing as set forth below.

Section 1: Scope of the Judicial Code

- a. Disputes arising from allegations of offenses against the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order are subject to resolution under the Judicial Code. In particular, the Judicial Code governs the procedure for filing written charges and conducting judicial hearings before a council, classis, or synod, and appeals from judicial hearing.
- b. Matters of admonition and discipline do not prompt a judicial hearing unless there are written charges that either party or the assembly determines require a judicial hearing. The Judicial Code recognizes the fundamental and primary role of pastoral means in all matters of admonition and discipline; it assumes that these matters are best handled by counseling and entreaty; and if sanctions are required, it leaves the determination of them to the church under the Church Order.
- c. The Judicial Code deals with the following matters:
 - i) Disputes involving members and/or assemblies of the church and, in some limited instances, nonmembers (see Section 3-a).

- ii) Disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and members or assemblies of the church on the other side, excluding challenges to termination of employment (see Section 3-a).
- d. With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only
 - i) when written charges are filed; and
 - ii) when either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a formal hearing.

Section 2: Judicial Rights

- a. Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be represented or counseled by a member of the CRC in any judicial hearing. The requirement of church membership may be waived at the discretion of the assembly that is hearing the case.
- b. Except when the assembly withdraws to decide the issues raised in the judicial hearing, the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be present at the judicial hearing and at the judicial hearing considering an appeal from a judicial hearing.
- c. Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to have witnesses examined in their presence.
- d. Both the complainant and the respondent may appeal by right the decision of the assembly to the assembly next in order.
- e. The provisions of the Judicial Code shall apply to all appeals from decisions resulting from the judicial hearing on a complaint.
- f. No member or group of the CRC, nor any person connected with the matter, shall circulate, or cause to be circulated, any written or printed arguments or briefs upon any complaints before the final disposition of same, including appeals, if any.
- g. Assuring due process shall be the guiding principle in the interpretation and application of the Judicial Code.
- h. All judicial hearings shall be conducted in a considerate and Christian manner.

Section 3: Procedures for Filing Written Charges

- a. Written charges may be filed by
 - i) a member of the CRC against another member or against an assembly;
 - ii) an assembly against another assembly or against a member;
 - iii) a person who is not a member of the CRC against a member or assembly of the CRC, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense;
 - iv) a member of the CRC against an agency, board, or committee;
 - v) an assembly against an agency, board, or committee;
 - vi) an employee of an agency, board, or committee against an agency, board, or committee, excluding challenges to termination of employment.

b. Prerequisites:

- i) If the allegation is abuse on the part of a church leader as defined by the CRC's Safe Church Ministry's Advisory Panel Process, the complainant shall first have exhausted that process in accordance with the procedures and standards of confidentiality outlined therein and in lieu of the procedures under Sections 2-5 of this Code, to the point of obtaining a decision by the council of the church leader. Both parties have the right of appeal to classis as provided in Sections 6-7.
- ii) No written charges against an agency, board, or committee may be filed until the complainant shall first have exhausted all reasonable and direct efforts according to procedures prescribed by such agency, board, or committee to resolve the appellant's complaint or grievance internally.

c. Time limits:

- i) There is no time limit for filing a written charge of sexual abuse. Allegations of sexual abuse against a church leader shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
 - ii) An allegation of non-sexual abuse of a minor may be filed at any time before the complainant reaches age twenty-five (25). However, allegations of non-sexual abuse of a minor shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
 - iii) All other written charges must be filed within three (3) years of the date on which the offense is alleged to have occurred.
- d. A person or an assembly filing a written charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the written charge is filed shall be called the respondent.
- e. A written charge must be filed with an assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, must specify the facts relied upon to support the written charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the offense, and must state whether a judicial hearing is requested.
- f. A written charge shall not allege more than one offense. Several written charges against the same respondent may be presented and decided jointly, but a decision on each written charge must be made separately.
- g. The complainant shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy of the written charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.
- h. Within sixty (60) days after the written charge is filed, the respondent shall file an answer with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant. If the complainant did not request a judicial hearing, the respondent shall indicate in the answer whether a judicial hearing is requested.
- i. Jurisdiction of assemblies
- i) A written charge against a member of the CRC shall be filed by the complainant with the council of the local church of which the respondent is a member.
 - ii) A written charge against an assembly shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly next in order (the order being council, classis, and synod).

- iii) A written charge against an agency, board, or committee, including its agent or employees, shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly to which the agency, board, or committee is responsible.
- iv) If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.
- v) If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.

Section 4: Pre-hearing Procedures

- a. Except for good cause, the judicial hearing shall commence within six (6) months of the filing of written charges.
- b. After consulting with the complainant and the respondent, the assembly shall set the time and place for the judicial hearing on the written charge. At least forty-five (45) days before the judicial hearing, the date must be fixed and the parties notified.
- c. No later than thirty (30) days before the judicial hearing, the parties shall cause to be delivered to the other party and the assembly a list of witnesses to be called to testify and a copy of the exhibits to be offered at the judicial hearing. At the judicial hearing, each party shall be limited to the witnesses and the exhibits disclosed, unless the party can establish that the witness or exhibit was not discovered until after the deadline.
- d. The assembly may, in its discretion, require further advance disclosures by the parties concerning the witnesses, documents, evidence, and arguments that they intend to present at the hearing.
- e. When a written charge is filed with a council or classis, that council or classis shall serve as the judicial body, which shall include all members of the assembly except those who have a conflict of interest. Any members having a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves.
- f. Either the complainant or the respondent may challenge the impartiality of a member on grounds of self-interest or that member's relationship with or responsibility to a participant in the judicial hearing. If the assembly decides by majority vote that the challenge has merit, the member shall be recused from the judicial hearing.
- g. Before the hearing, the assembly shall determine whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but after receiving a report from the committee, the assembly must make the determination. This determination shall be conducted in a confidential manner to protect the reputations of the people involved and to protect the impartiality of the judicial assembly if the charge moves forward. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.

- h. If requested by either the complainant or the respondent, or in the discretion of the assembly, the assembly may direct that the proceeding shall not be published by any participant. All participants shall be notified on the record of the no-publication directive.

Section 5: Judicial Hearing Procedures

- a. A judicial hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:
 - i) Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.
 - ii) The complainant shall proceed first with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits, and may be permitted by the assembly in its discretion to present rebuttal proofs.
 - iii) The respondent shall then proceed with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
 - iv) The receipt of evidence shall not be controlled by formal rules of evidence. The administration of oaths shall not be required.
 - v) At the request of either party, the presiding officer may exclude any evidence if the presiding officer determines that admitting such evidence would be irrelevant, untrustworthy, or fundamentally unfair.
 - vi) Both parties are permitted to question witnesses that testify at a judicial hearing unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to admit a written statement of a witness.
 - vii) After all evidence has been presented to the assembly, the complainant and the respondent shall summarize their cases either orally or in writing. The complainant may be afforded the opportunity for rebuttal.
 - viii) If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered into the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.
- b. The testimony shall be recorded verbatim.
- c. The complainant has the burden to prove the written charge. Written charges must be proven with a high degree of probability.
- d. If a complainant other than an employee or an assembly has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, and as an individual apart from other members of the church.
- e. If a complainant is an employee who has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, in his or her capacity as an employee.

- f. If a respondent fails to appear and the assembly determines that the respondent has been notified of the time and place of the judicial hearing and has had sufficient time to appear, the assembly may proceed in the respondent's absence.
- g. During the hearing, the presiding officer shall not comment on the merits of the case. This restriction does not apply when the assembly enters its final deliberations.
- h. The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the assembly of the members hearing the case. Any member that has not attended all the sessions or heard the case in its entirety may not vote unless that member reads or listens to the record before a vote is taken.
- i. The record of all proceedings including the testimony, the exhibits, papers, evidence, and findings in the case shall be certified by the presiding officer and shall be the basis of any appeal. The parties may have reasonable access to the record.

Section 6: Appeals

- a. Appeals shall be filed with the assembly next in order.
- b. The grounds for an appeal include irregularities in the proceedings of the lower assembly; decisions on the admission or exclusion of evidence; bias or prejudice in the case; manifest injustice in the judgment; or incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order; and shall be based on the record of the judicial hearing.
- c. No decision resulting from a judicial hearing shall be amended or overturned except on a showing that the procedures were manifestly unfair; that the evidence obviously did not support the decision; or that an incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order was made.
- d. The reviewing assembly shall not reassess the credibility of the witnesses that testified at the hearing.
- e. Appeals to synod from decisions of assemblies of the CRC acting in their judicial capacity and appeals from a board, agency, or committee of synod when the Judicial Code has been invoked shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee.
- f. Persons that have voted on a matter in an assembly shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal.
- g. A losing party that failed to appear at the judicial hearing either personally or by a representative shall not be permitted to file a claim of appeal.

Section 7: Appeal Procedures before a Classis following a Judicial Hearing before a Council

- a. Within ninety (90) days of the certification of the record, the losing party from a decision of a council following a judicial hearing, including a decision in a Safe Church proceeding, may file a written claim of appeal that states the grounds for the appeal with the stated clerk of classis. A copy of the claim of appeal shall also be delivered to the opposing party, the opposing party's representative, if any, and the

clerk of the council that decided the case. Upon receipt of the claim of appeal, the clerk of council shall forthwith transfer the certified record to classis. If the appeal is from a Safe Church proceeding, the record referenced in step 12 of the Advisory Panel Process shall be the record on appeal.

- b. The appeal hearing in classis shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the claim of appeal.
- c. With the claim of appeal, the losing party may file a written submission in support of the claim of appeal. Portions of certified record and any other authority that supports the grounds of appeal must be clearly cited. A copy of the submission shall also be delivered to the opposing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.
- d. Within sixty (60) days, the opposing party may file a written response to the claim of appeal with the stated clerk of classis and also a written submission that cites from the record and any authority that supports the response. Copies of the response and submission shall also be delivered to the losing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.
- e. In the event of the appellant's death, the assembly may proceed with and decide the appeal if it is deemed significant for the denomination, or if the appellant's representative provides proof of reasonable necessity for deciding the appeal.
- f. Classis shall schedule an appellate hearing no sooner than ninety (90) days and no later than one hundred and eighty (180) days after the date the appeal was filed and send notice of the time and date of the hearing to the parties.
- g. At the appellate hearing, each party shall have the opportunity to address classis to explain their position and to answer questions of classis. The losing party shall proceed first and may reserve time to respond after the prevailing party addresses classis. Unless permission is granted, the oral presentation for each party shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes.
- h. After the parties' presentations are concluded, classis shall go into strict executive session and shall immediately consider and decide the issues of the case. The final decision on any appeal shall be by majority vote of the classis as constituted.
- i. Classis may affirm or reverse in whole or in part the decision of the council, or it may return the case to the council with instructions for a new partial or complete rehearing. A decision of classis that amends or overturns the decision of the council shall be written, shall state the grounds for amending or overturning, and shall be delivered to the parties. Written decisions should be sent to the parties no later than forty-five (45) days after the appellate hearing.
- j. Within ninety (90) days of the issuance of the written decision, claims of appeal from a decision of classis may be filed with synod according to procedures for filing claims of appeal with classis.

Section 8: The Judicial Code Committee of Synod

- a. Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing. Although there are some separate regulations regarding this committee in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.
- b. The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of twelve (12) members and shall reflect the diversity of the denomination. Each year four (4) persons shall be elected for terms of three (3) years. At least one (1) of these four (4) persons shall be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor; at least one (1) shall be a person trained in the law; at least one (1) shall not be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor nor one trained in the law. Synod shall elect members from nominations presented by the Board of Trustees of the CRC. The Judicial Code Committee may recommend nominees to the Board of Trustees of the CRC. The terms of members shall commence July 1 following their election by synod. In the event of a vacancy on the committee because of resignation or death, the Board of Trustees of the CRC shall appoint a person to fill the balance of that term. Members may be reelected but shall not serve more than six consecutive years. A former member who has been off the committee for two or more years shall be eligible for election to the committee as a new member. The Judicial Code Committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from among its membership. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

Section 9: Hearing and Appeal Procedures before the Synod Acting in Its Judicial Capacity

- a. Written charges filed with synod shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the executive director of the CRC to conduct an original hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- b. Claims of appeal from decisions of classis following a judicial hearing shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the executive director of the CRC to conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- c. Written charges brought against an agency, board, or committee of synod and any other matters requiring formal adjudication that synod undertakes shall also be referred by the executive director of the CRC to the Judicial Code Committee for conducting a judicial hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- d. Claims of appeal filed with synod following an appeal hearing before classis shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the executive director of the CRC. The Judicial Code Committee shall review the claim of appeal and make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees whether the application has sufficient merit to warrant further review. No further appeal proceedings shall be conducted unless the Board of Trustees approves. If approved, the Judicial Code Committee

shall conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.

- e. The Judicial Code Committee shall present its findings of fact and recommendations, along with grounds for its recommendations to synod in writing, and they shall be openly discussed in a plenary session of synod. These written findings of fact and recommendations shall omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.
- f. Either party to the dispute may request the opportunity to address synod. Such request shall be made through the Judicial Code Committee, which shall make recommendation concerning the request to synod.
- g. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
- h. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - i) by deciding the matter;
 - ii) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
 - iii) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council; or
 - iv) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
- i. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, pp. 48-54)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 499)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 484-88)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 688-91)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 549)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. ???-??)

Appendix F

***Banner* Advisory Council**

February 2014

Appointment

The *Banner* Advisory Council (BAC) is established by the Board of Trustees to provide advice and counsel in the manner described below to the editor of *The Banner*. The advisory council shall meet as needed but not less than two times per year. The BAC members shall be selected and appointed by the Board of Trustees from a list of nominees submitted by the executive director of the CRCNA and the editor of *The Banner*.

Membership

The membership of the council shall be composed of six members: three (3) members of the BOT and three (3) members at large. The editor of *The Banner* and the deputy executive director functioning in the United States shall serve as advisers ex officio without vote.

Mandate

The primary function of the BAC is to advise the editor of *The Banner* on editorial policy and content. The BAC may also advise the editor of *The Banner* on matters the council believes affect the publishing of a denominational magazine. The advice given shall be recorded in official minutes with copies of the minutes distributed to the ED and the editor of *The Banner*. The BAC will, in addition, function as a “conflict resolution committee” in the event there is an unresolved conflict between the editor of *The Banner* and the executive director of the CRCNA about matters related to material to be published in *The Banner*.

Conflict Resolution Procedure

In the event that a conflict about materials to be published develops between the editor of *The Banner* and the executive director, every effort shall be made to seek a resolution at the administrative and staff level. If a resolution is not achieved, and the matter is brought to the attention of the BAC by either the editor of *The Banner* or the executive director, the BAC may decide a resolution that will be binding on all parties for publishing purposes.

Appendix G

Office of Disability Concerns Recommendations 2014

I. Background

The Advisory Committee of CRC Disability Concerns brings the following to the CRC Board of Trustees with the request that they become recommendations to Synod 2014. In addition, the Advisory Committee requests that if the BOT approves these recommendations, they be submitted to the RCA General Synod Council (which meets March 25-27) with the request that they forward the recommendations to the RCA General Synod 2014.

In establishing their Disability Concerns offices, the CRC and RCA affirmed that God’s people, though different in many ways, together are one body in Christ. Since our Lord Jesus calls all in the church to ministry, it is important that the body of Christ make every effort to include the participation of people with disabilities in that ministry. This includes ministries involving children and youth, since 13 percent of our children and youth are among those living with disabilities.

Given that most teenagers with disabilities do not go on to college or participate in typical rites of passage experienced by many nondisabled youth, the church’s youth ministry can play a critical role in the faith formation of these young adults. A vibrant youth ministry can help these members of God’s family transition to adult roles within the congregation and in the community. In addition, when children and youth with and without disabilities are given the opportunity to interact with peers who are different from themselves, they gain a deeper understanding of the broadness of God’s love. Consequently, including children and youth with disabilities is not simply a ministry that benefits only those individuals and their families; such ministry benefits the entire congregation, particularly children and youth without disabilities.

II. Recommendations

Therefore, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the General Synod Council of the Reformed Church in America recommend the following to their respective synods:

A. That synod encourage the inclusion of, and engagement with, children and youth who have disabilities as an important part of congregational ministry and denominational youth ministry programs. Specifically, that synod encourage the following strategies:

- Identify and prioritize the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities in youth programs and ministries.
- Minister with children and youth who have disabilities and their families because families with teenagers who have disabilities face an often-challenging transition to adulthood.
- Include peers with disabilities in their leadership, worship, youth gatherings, Bible studies, and event planning.
- Build awareness and changing attitudes about physical, intellectual, behavioral, and other disabilities, and mental illnesses, throughout their youth programs and especially within their leadership structures.

Grounds/Reasons:

1. All people are made in God's image; therefore, all people deserve respect and dignity.
2. Baptized children and youth are members of the covenant; therefore, all baptized children and youth need to be nurtured in faith by the church and engaged in the ministry of the church.
3. Jesus' body, the church, has many parts but is one in Christ; therefore, each member of Christ's body (including each with a disability) is essential for the church to function in a healthy way (1 Cor. 12:12, 22).
4. All believers are called by God; therefore, each believer has a God-given mission to fulfill (Eph. 2:10).
5. All believers have spiritual gifts; therefore, each believer receives gifts to accomplish God's mission, and each fulfills an essential function in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).
6. Inviting children and youth who have disabilities to engage in ministry reflects the welcome our Lord gives to all people (Luke 14:15-24).
7. In healthy churches and ministries, everybody belongs and everybody serves (1 Pet. 4:8-10).

B. That synod encourage CRC and RCA churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Awareness Week, October 13-19, 2014, and Disability Awareness Sunday on October 19.

Grounds/Reasons:

1. 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).

2. This date coincides with the CRC denominational schedule for offerings, which assigns the third Sunday in October to Disability Concerns.
3. The RCA General Synod in 2006 designated the first Sunday in March as Disability Awareness Sunday. Moving this designation to the third Sunday in October would facilitate and enhance deeper collaboration between the Disability Concerns offices of the RCA and CRC. Further, moving the RCA date from March to October would eliminate a frequent conflict with the season of Lent while aligning with numerous organizations and agencies that highlight disability awareness in October.
4. The Bible calls God's people to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. In 1985, the CRC committed itself 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 our Lord Jesus calls all of his people to ministry in his church, the church has not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully and sometimes has isolated them and their families.

Appendix H

Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,190		203		1,393
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	3,937	-	811	99	4,847
Receivables & Advances	210	-	-	-	210
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	584	-	-	-	584
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,921	-	1,014	99	7,034
Accounts Payable	617	-	-	-	617
Notes/Loans Payable	331	-	-	-	331
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	617	-	-	-	617
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,565	-	-	-	1,565
Net Assets	\$ 4,356	-	1,014	99	5,469
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Isaac Jen endowment fund and Media Reach Fund.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

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

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,603	\$	3,548
% of Total Income		36.0%		37.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	4,224	\$	4,021
Estate Gifts	\$	1,944	\$	1,262
Total Gift Income		6,168		5,283
% of Total Income		61.7%		56.1%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	226	\$	594
Total Other Income		226		594
% of Total Income		2.3%		6.3%
TOTAL INCOME		9,997		9,425
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,428	\$	2,471
FTEs		14		15
International	\$	4,633	\$	4,708
FTEs		17		17
Education	\$	151	\$	129
FTEs		2		2
Total Program Service \$	\$	7,212	\$	7,308
Total Program Service FTEs		33		34
% of Total \$		74.9%		74.2%
% of Total FTEs		76.7%		77.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	731	\$	826
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,684	\$	1,718
FTEs		6		6
Total Support Service \$		2,415		2,544
Total Support Service FTEs		10		10
% of Total \$		25.1%		25.8%
% of Total FTEs		23.3%		22.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,627	\$	9,852
TOTAL FTEs		43		44
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	370	\$	(427)

Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 26,712		-		26,712
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	18,372	-	-	-	18,372
Inventory	622	-	-	-	622
Prepays & Advances	1,118	-	-	-	1,118
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	15,337		8,412	23,999	47,748
Equities	36,564		20,055	57,216	113,834
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	3,667		2,012	5,739	11,418
PP & E	231,085	-	-	-	231,085
Other	2,283	-	-	-	2,283
Total Assets	335,760	-	30,478	86,954	453,192
Accounts Payable	2,519	-	-	-	2,519
Notes/Loans Payable	131,327	-	-	-	131,327
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	5,970	-	-	-	5,970
Deferred Income	2,542	-	-	-	2,542
Other	51,463	-	-	-	51,463
Total Liabilities	193,821	-	-	-	193,821
Net Assets	141,939	-	30,478	86,954	259,371
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Over 1,298 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 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual	
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,653	\$	2,571
% of Total Income		2.1%		1.9%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	2,950	\$	3,190
Estate Gifts	\$	23	\$	21
Total Gift Income		2,973		3,211
% of Total Income		2.4%		2.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	118,035	\$	126,226
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	1,146	\$	5,214
Total Other Income		119,181		131,440
% of Total Income		95.5%		95.8%
TOTAL INCOME		124,807		137,222
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Education	\$	108,119	\$	118,960
FTEs		605		597
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	108,119	\$	118,960
Total Program Service FTEs		605		597
% of Total \$		85.0%		86.7%
% of Total FTEs		77.0%		77.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	7,720	\$	7,605
FTEs		68		63
Plant Operations	\$	8,023	\$	7,419
FTEs		73		73
Fund-raising	\$	3,300	\$	3,238
FTEs		40		39
Total Support Service \$		19,043		18,262
Total Support Service FTEs		181		175
% of Total \$		15.0%		13.3%
% of Total FTEs		23.0%		22.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	127,162	\$	137,222
TOTAL FTEs		786		772
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(2,355)	\$	-

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

	June 30, 2013				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 3,482	-	1	-	3,483
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	247	-	1,953	-	2,200
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	13	-	-	-	13
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	4,003	-	4,003
Equities	-	-	17,095	12,874	29,969
Partnerships	-	-	-	1,906	1,906
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	1,152	1,152
PP & E	11,041	-	-	-	11,041
Other	867	-	-	-	867
Total Assets	15,650	-	23,052	15,932	54,634
Accounts Payable	3,021	-	-	-	3,021
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	89	-	-	-	89
Annuities Payable	-	-	167	-	167
Deferred Income	167	-	-	-	167
Other	164	-	624	-	788
Total Liabilities	3,441	-	791	-	4,232
Net Assets	\$ 12,209	-	22,261	15,932	50,402
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Office building in endowment - investment income.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Accounts payable: Early retirement and post retirement liabilities. Notes/Loans Payable: Net 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 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,923	\$	2,864
% of Total Income		42.6%		37.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	805	\$	976
Estate Gifts	\$	85	\$	277
Total Gift Income		890		1,253
% of Total Income		13.0%		16.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,284	\$	2,420
Grants	\$	747	\$	1,020
Miscellaneous	\$	22	\$	59
Total Other Income		3,053		3,499
% of Total Income		44.5%		45.9%
TOTAL INCOME		6,866		7,616
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,867	\$	2,844
FTEs		29		30
Public Service	\$	38	\$	101
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	\$	552	\$	1,134
FTEs		4		5
Student Services	\$	574	\$	577
FTEs		4		5
Student Aid	\$	385	\$	346
FTEs		2		1
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,416	\$	5,002
Total Program Service FTEs		40		42
% of Total \$		65.7%		66.6%
% of Total FTEs		72.7%		71.2%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,153	\$	995
FTEs		9		9
Plant Operations	\$	574	\$	717
FTEs		2		2
Fund-raising	\$	574	\$	793
FTEs		4		6
Total Support Service \$		2,301		2,505
Total Support Service FTEs		15		17
% of Total \$		34.3%		33.4%
% of Total FTEs		27.3%		28.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,717	\$	7,507
TOTAL FTEs		55		59
Post-retirement benefit costs >		(352)		
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(203)	\$	109

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

	December 31, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,800	-	-	-	1,800
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	511	-	-	-	511
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	258	-	-	-	258
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,619	-	-	-	2,619
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,188	-	-	-	5,188
Accounts Payable	82	-	-	-	82
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	6	-	-	-	6
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	88	-	-	-	88
Net Assets	\$ 5,100	-	-	-	5,100
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)**

		2012 Actual		2013 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	\$	10,851	\$	10,248
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Investment Earnings	\$	64	\$	21
Total Other Income		10,915		10,269
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		10,915		10,269
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Claims Expense	\$	7,913	\$	6,165
FTEs		-		-
Insurance Premiums	\$	1,656	\$	1,566
FTEs		-		-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$	239	\$	431
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	9,808	\$	8,162
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		96.6%		95.2%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	345	\$	415
FTEs		3		3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		345		415
Total Support Service FTEs		3		3
% of Total \$		4.3%		4.3%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	10,153	\$	8,577
TOTAL FTEs		3		3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	762	\$	1,692

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

	December 31, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 212	-	-	-	212
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	430	-	-	-	430
Equities	3,206	-	-	-	3,206
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	226	-	-	-	226
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	4,074	-	-	-	4,074
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 4,074	-	-	-	4,074
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)

		2012 Actual	2013 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	\$	375 \$	371
Participant Contributions	\$	32 \$	35
Investment Earnings	\$	233 \$	418
Total Other Income		640	824
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		640	824
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	195 \$	174
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	195 \$	174
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		98.5%	97.8%
% of Total FTEs			
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	3 \$	4
FTEs		-	-
Plant Operations	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	- \$	-
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		3	4
Total Support Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		1.5%	2.2%
% of Total FTEs			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	198 \$	178
TOTAL FTEs		-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	442 \$	646

Employees' Savings Plan - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	4,388	-	-	-	4,388
Equities	18,517	-	-	-	18,517
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	2,168	-	-	-	2,168
Diversified	3,524	-	-	-	3,524
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	28,597	-	-	-	28,597
Accounts Payable	8	-	-	-	8
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	8	-	-	-	8
Net Assets	\$ 28,589	-	-	-	28,589
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' Savings Plan - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		2012 Actual	2013 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:			
Contributions	\$	2,059	\$ 2,112
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	2,975	\$ 4,490
Total Other Income		5,034	6,602
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		5,034	6,602
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	1,326	\$ 3,018
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,326	\$ 3,018
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		89.9%	95.7%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	149	\$ 137
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		149	137
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		10.1%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	1,475	\$ 3,155
TOTAL FTEs		1	1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	3,559	\$ 3,447

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2013				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 387	-	48	-	435
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	444	-	-	-	444
Inventory	1,632	-	-	-	1,632
Prepays & Advances	70	-	-	-	70
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	14	-	-	-	14
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	154	-	-	-	154
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,701	-	48	-	2,749
Accounts Payable	1,609	-	-	-	1,609
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	36	-	-	-	36
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,645	-	-	-	1,645
Net Assets	\$ 1,056	-	48	-	1,104
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.					

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,017	\$	1,173
% of Total Income		20.3%		22.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	317	\$	303
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		317		303
% of Total Income		6.3%		5.8%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	3,363	\$	3,473
Grants	\$	235	\$	270
Miscellaneous	\$	69	\$	41
Total Other Income		3,667		3,784
% of Total Income		73.3%		71.9%
TOTAL INCOME		5,001		5,260
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,322	\$	1,303
FTEs		4		4
Education	\$	3,843	\$	3,723
FTEs		19		19
World Literature	\$	465	\$	507
FTEs		3		2
Teacher Training	\$	145	\$	-
FTEs		1		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,775	\$	5,533
Total Program Service FTEs		26		24
% of Total \$		87.7%		87.0%
% of Total FTEs		92.9%		92.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	808	\$	828
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		808		828
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		12.3%		13.0%
% of Total FTEs		7.1%		7.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,583	\$	6,361
TOTAL FTEs		28		26
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(1,582)	\$	(1,101)

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

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 720	1,036	192	-	1,948
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities			-		-
Receivables & Advances	442	-	36	-	478
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	2	-	-	-	2
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	657	-	-	657
Equities	25	361	746	150	1,282
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	257	-	-	-	257
PP & E	13	-	-	-	13
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,459	2,054	974	150	4,637
Accounts Payable	432	-	-	-	432
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	211	-	-	-	211
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	643	-	-	-	643
Net Assets	\$ 816	2,054	974	150	3,994
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Mission Trg Fund: \$393; Hawaii: \$1,405; Estate special proj: \$226				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: 40; Can Legacy: \$41; Short term loan: \$483; CMI: \$304				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Emerging Leader Trust: \$150				

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

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,792	\$	3,757
% of Total Income		51.8%		58.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,677	\$	1,856
Estate Gifts	\$	1,213	\$	234
Total Gift Income		2,890		2,090
% of Total Income		39.5%		32.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	522	\$	309
Miscellaneous	\$	111	\$	234
Total Other Income		633		543
% of Total Income		8.7%		8.5%
TOTAL INCOME		7,315		6,390
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Ministry Teams	\$	4,308	\$	3,795
FTEs		22		21
Ministry Devel & Planning	\$	733	\$	939
FTEs		5		7
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,041	\$	4,734
Total Program Service FTEs		27		28
% of Total \$		78.8%		75.2%
% of Total FTEs		77.1%		75.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	668	\$	807
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	688	\$	751
FTEs		6		7
Total Support Service \$		1,356		1,558
Total Support Service FTEs		8		9
% of Total \$		21.2%		24.8%
% of Total FTEs		22.9%		24.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,397	\$	6,292
TOTAL FTEs		35		37
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	918	\$	98

Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 9,607	-	-	-	9,607
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	23,208	-	-	-	23,208
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	32,815	-	-	-	32,815
Accounts Payable	81	-	-	-	81
Notes/Loans Payable	25,585	-	-	-	25,585
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	25,666	-	-	-	25,666
Net Assets	\$ 7,149	-	-	-	7,149
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 11-12 Actual	Fiscal 12-13 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	\$	1,190	\$ 1,107
Total Other Income		1,190	1,107
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,190	1,107
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	561	\$ 527
FTEs		1	1
Provision for loan losses	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	561	\$ 527
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		65.9%	63.0%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	33.3%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	290	\$ 310
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		290	310
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		34.1%	37.0%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	66.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	851	\$ 837
TOTAL FTEs		2	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	339	\$ 270

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

	-----December 31, 2013-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 1,454	195	-	-	1,649
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	84	1	-	-	85
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	7,767	-	-	-	7,767
Equities	34,064	-	-	-	34,064
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	43,369	196	-	-	43,565
Accounts Payable	123	-	-	-	123
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	123	-	-	-	123
Net Assets	\$ 43,246	196	-	-	43,442
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 2012 Actual	MPF 2013 Actual	SAF 2012 Actual	SAF 2013 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11	\$ 13
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	78.6%	86.7%
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	\$ 3,196	\$ 3,650	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings/(Losses)	\$ 3,287	\$ 7,252	\$ 3	\$ 2
Total Other Income	6,483	10,902	3	2
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	21.4%	13.3%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	6,483	10,902	14	15
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 2,444	\$ 2,478	\$ 121	\$ 28
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 2,444	\$ 2,478	\$ 121	\$ 28
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	79.1%	78.7%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 644	\$ 671	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	644	671	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	20.9%	21.3%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 3,088	\$ 3,149	\$ 121	\$ 28
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 3,395	\$ 7,753	\$ (107)	\$ (13)

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

	December 31, 2013				
	Pension	S.A.F		Total	
Cash	\$ 2,154	9	-	-	2,163
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	139	-	-	-	139
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	15,979	-	-	-	15,979
Equities	79,606	-	-	-	79,606
Diversified / Alternative	8,024	-	-	-	8,024
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	29	-	-	-	29
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	\$ 105,931	9	-	-	105,940
Accounts Payable	46	13	-	-	59
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	46	13	-	-	59
Net Assets	\$ 105,885	(4)	-	-	105,881
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 2012 Actual	MPF 2012 Actual	SAF 2012 Actual	SAF 2012 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 21	\$ 18
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	100.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 5,222	\$ 5,401	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 200	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 12,036	\$ 17,553	\$ 1	\$ -
Total Other Income	17,258	22,954	201	-
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	90.5%	0.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	17,258	22,954	222	18
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,890	\$ 161	\$ 139
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 9,947	\$ 9,890	\$ 161	\$ 139
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	90.1%	90.1%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 1,091	\$ 1,087	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	1,091	1,087	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	-	-
% of Total \$	9.9%	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 11,038	\$ 10,977	\$ 161	\$ 139
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 6,220	\$ 11,977	\$ 61	\$ (121)

INCLUDED IN SYNODICAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,614	\$	3,879
% of Total Income		76.5%		84.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	580	\$	483
Estate Gifts	\$	4	\$	4
Total Gift Income		584		487
% of Total Income		12.4%		10.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	239	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	289	\$	241
Total Other Income		528		241
% of Total Income		11.2%		5.2%
TOTAL INCOME		4,726		4,607
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	209	\$	254
FTEs		1		2
Race Relations	\$	449	\$	488
FTEs		3		4
Pastor-Church Relations/SCE/SPE	\$	1,327	\$	1,127
FTEs		5		6
Safe Church Ministry	\$	187	\$	210
FTEs		1		2
Disability Concerns	\$	280	\$	284
FTEs		2		2
Social & Restorative Justice	\$	540	\$	510
FTEs		4		5
Ministries in Canada	\$	1,251	\$	1,231
FTEs		4		5
Volunteer Services	\$	246	\$	179
FTEs		3		2
Network/Healthy Church	\$	265	\$	127
FTEs		1		1
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,754	\$	4,410
Total Program Service FTEs		24		29
% of Total \$		97.9%		99.0%
% of Total FTEs		96.0%		96.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	102	\$	43
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		102		43
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		2.1%		1.0%
% of Total FTEs		4.0%		3.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	4,856	\$	4,453
TOTAL FTEs		25		30
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(130)	\$	154

**Synodical Administrative Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2013				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 4,151	-	988	-	5,139
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,214	-	-	-	2,214
Inventory	193	-	-	-	193
Prepays & Advances	72	-	-	-	72
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	22,215	-	-	-	22,215
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	8,512	-	-	-	8,512
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	37,357	-	988	-	38,345
Accounts Payable	5,848	-	-	-	5,848
Notes/Loans Payable	23,026	-	-	-	23,026
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	28,874	-	-	-	28,874
Net Assets	\$ 8,483	-	988	-	9,471
Footnotes:	<p>Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.</p> <p>Includes: \$833,000 of Sea to Sea, \$49,000 of AOYC, and \$106,000 other.</p>				
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of restrictions.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Synodical Administrative Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,337	\$	2,862
% of Total Income		82.7%		66.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	24	\$	31
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	23
Total Gift Income		24		54
% of Total Income		0.6%		1.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	672	\$	1,391
Total Other Income		672		1,391
% of Total Income		16.7%		32.3%
TOTAL INCOME		4,033		4,307
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	2,883	\$	2,719
FTEs		5		5
Communications	\$	547	\$	677
FTEs		3		4
CRC Plan	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Sea to Sea payout	\$	-	\$	580
FTEs		-		-
Leadership Programs	\$	174	\$	18
FTEs		1		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,604	\$	3,994
Total Program Service FTEs		9		9
% of Total \$		71.9%		77.7%
% of Total FTEs		60.0%		56.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	993	\$	856
FTEs		4		4
D.D.M.	\$	188	\$	244
FTEs		1		2
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$	228	\$	48
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,409		1,148
Total Support Service FTEs		6		7
% of Total \$		28.1%		22.3%
% of Total FTEs		40.0%		43.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,013	\$	5,142
TOTAL FTEs		15		16
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(980)	\$	(835)

Synodical Administrative Services (Agency Services)
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 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	\$	3,956	\$	4,004
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	5,885	\$	6,087
Total Other Income		9,841		10,091
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,841		10,091
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Advancement	\$	702	\$	680
FTEs		9		9
Finance & Payroll	\$	2,093	\$	2,197
FTEs		23		22
IT and Phones	\$	1,351	\$	1,498
FTEs		9		7
Human Resources	\$	314	\$	332
FTEs		3		2
Coordinated Services	\$	244	\$	227
FTEs		2		2
Proservices	\$	4,007	\$	4,038
FTEs		15		15
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,711	\$	8,972
Total Program Service FTEs		61		57
% of Total \$		88.5%		88.9%
% of Total FTEs		95.3%		96.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General				
FTEs				
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	1,130	\$	1,119
FTEs		3		2
Fund-raising (Foundation)				
FTEs				
Total Support Service \$		1,130		1,119
Total Support Service FTEs		3		2
% of Total \$		11.5%		11.1%
% of Total FTEs		4.7%		3.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,841	\$	10,091
TOTAL FTEs		64		59
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	-	\$	-

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

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,812	475	19	-	2,306
CDs, Time Deposits					-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	448	448
Receivables & Advances	167		-	-	167
Inventory	12	-	-	-	12
Prepays & Advances	427	-	-	-	427
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	133	832	466	385	1,816
Equities	133	832	466	385	1,816
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	459	-	-	-	459
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,143	2,139	951	1,218	7,451
Accounts Payable	1,095	222	-	-	1,317
Notes/Loans Payable	33	-	-	-	33
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	166	-	-	-	166
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,319	-	-	-	1,319
Total Liabilities	2,613	222	-	-	2,835
Net Assets	\$ 530	1,917	951	1,218	4,616
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	None.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Board Designated Reserve \$1,500 - Legacy fund \$99 - Endowment/annuities \$165 - Other \$132.				
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 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	4,946	\$	4,848
% of Total Income		33.6%		34.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	7,565	\$	7,828
Estate Gifts	\$	1,726	\$	519
Total Gift Income		9,291		8,347
% of Total Income		63.1%		59.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	493	\$	808
Total Other Income		493		808
% of Total Income		3.3%		5.8%
TOTAL INCOME		14,730		14,003
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$	3,643	\$	3,515
FTEs		24		24
Eurasia	\$	2,966	\$	3,008
FTEs		17		17
Latin America	\$	4,022	\$	4,396
FTEs		22		21
Global/other Int'l program	\$	1,240	\$	1,360
FTEs		19		11
Education	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,871	\$	12,279
Total Program Service FTEs		82		73
% of Total \$		84.8%		84.1%
% of Total FTEs		82.8%		83.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,036	\$	1,144
FTEs		5		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,085	\$	1,174
FTEs		12		10
Total Support Service \$		2,121		2,318
Total Support Service FTEs		17		14
% of Total \$		15.2%		15.9%
% of Total FTEs		17.2%		16.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	13,992	\$	14,597
TOTAL FTEs		99		87
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	738	\$	(594)

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

	June 30, 2013				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 5,061	881	5,942	-	11,884
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,741	2,000	-	-	3,741
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	1,405	-	-	-	1,405
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	25	-	-	25
Equities	525	2,775	1,450	23	4,773
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	35	-	-	-	35
PP & E	268	-	110	-	378
Other		-	-	-	-
Total Assets	9,035	5,681	7,502	23	22,241
Accounts Payable	1,510	-	-	-	1,510
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	247	-	-	-	247
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,757	-	-	-	1,757
Net Assets	\$ 7,278	5,681	7,502	23	20,484
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 = \$4,130; Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$1,361, CIDA reserve \$190				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$110; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$6,727; 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$665				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23				

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

		Fiscal 11-12 Actual		Fiscal 12-13 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		-		-
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	20,343	\$	18,352
Estate Gifts	\$	2,524	\$	1,308
Total Gift Income		22,867		19,660
% of Total Income		51.4%		54.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	21,234	\$	15,672
Miscellaneous	\$	394	\$	632
Total Other Income		21,628		16,304
% of Total Income		48.6%		45.3%
TOTAL INCOME		44,495		35,964
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	10,053	\$	10,974
FTEs		28		35
North America programs	\$	1,090	\$	752
FTEs		9		10
Disaster relief programs	\$	1,656	\$	1,578
FTEs		16		16
Above-budget relief costs	\$	25,178	\$	19,987
FTEs		-		-
Education	\$	1,074	\$	1,138
FTEs		6		8
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$		39,051		34,429
Total Program Service FTEs		59		69
% of Total \$		92.2%		89.7%
% of Total FTEs		78.7%		75.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General		1,255		1,793
FTEs		5		5
Plant Operations		-		-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising		2,030		2,156
FTEs		11		18
Total Support Service \$		3,285		3,949
Total Support Service FTEs		16		23
% of Total \$		7.8%		10.3%
% of Total FTEs		21.3%		25.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		42,336		38,378
TOTAL FTEs		75		92
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		2,159		(2,414)

REPORT OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order by agency, educational institution, or ministry name. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, prior to the time 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 and guiding our ministry through the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. As you read the material, we invite you to join us in thanksgiving for wonderful ministry opportunities.

Joel R. Boot
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Introduction

Since 1939, Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has served as the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Through this Spirit-led, faithfully supported, Reformed media ministry God's people are strengthened for the mission of Jesus Christ around the world. To accomplish this, following the Spirit, we pledge to lead the CRCNA and the broader church in producing, delivering, and using excellent media in major languages that clearly proclaim the gospel and strengthen disciples to serve the church toward transforming lives and communities.

As we celebrate our 75th anniversary in December 2014, Back to God Ministries International asks the churches to give thanks to God with us for his faithfulness as we continue to use every media tool available to share God's Word throughout the world.

II. Ministries of Back to God Ministries International

BTGMI proclaims the gospel through media within and across diverse cultures, clearly and efficiently communicating in cultural contexts to ensure the gospel is truly heard. Because we are a witness to the unity of Christ's body, and because we value stewardship of resources, we work in partnership with like-minded organizations.

As an agency charged by the CRCNA to serve the church, we commit to working with and through local gatherings of Christ's body and denominations. We see churches as both sending and receiving, serving and being served. We commit to the prayerful, thoughtful, and wise allocation of resources.

Under the direction of Rev. Kurt Selles, BTGMI is blessed to work with excellent international ministry team leaders and staff who provide direction in the production of culturally relevant programs and related ministry for gospel proclamation. We pray that God will be glorified through our work and that God's kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven.

Operating in ten major world languages, during the past year BTGMI has provided evangelism and discipleship resources to people in nearly every country of the world through media outreach. BTGMI is active in 134 countries through ministry opportunities such as radio and television broadcasts, resource distribution, and discipleship centers. In addition, through 35 websites and social media venues in ten languages, we reach people in at least 181 countries.

And people are responding! During 2013, BTGMI logged as many as 30 million interactions with people through letters, email, phone, face-to-face contact, and web visits. That's an average of 82,000 interactions *every day* with people seeking to know more about the Christian faith. All of this is possible through media ministry.

Thanks to your support of BTGMI media outreach, people are hearing about Jesus and coming to faith in him, some in places where they would have no other way to hear God's Word. When those who respond ask for personal spiritual guidance, more than 1,650 volunteers worldwide work with our ministry teams to offer discipleship, mentoring, and prayer and to help connect seekers

to local churches. Networks of prayer partners in North America and throughout the world pray regularly for people who respond to our media outreach.

A comprehensive website, BackToGod.net, helps the church and individuals engage in our worldwide witness. Web visitors also find information about BTGMI outreach and links to all ten language ministries.

A. *Arabic ministry*

Now in our 55th year of ministry to Arabic-speaking people, BTGMI continues to see God at work as we share his Word through media. For many Muslims in the Middle East, this is the only way to hear God's Word. For outreach among Arabic-speaking people, we partner with Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) and Words of Hope (the media ministry associated with the Reformed Church in America [RCA]).

Thousands of Muslims in the Middle East are hearing the truth of the Christian faith through our radio and internet audio outreach. Our team of 29 Arabic staff members produces programming with studios and discipleship centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. Using social media, Skype, and text messaging, this team engages in conversations with all who respond to our programs, especially those seeking more information about the Christian faith.

Our new Arabic online radio program, *Sarahat*, features devotional conversation and music designed to reach young adults. Some of the songs used on the program were written by a recent Muslim convert who came to know Christ through our ministry. We are seeking to enhance *Sarahat* by increasing the amount of new content each day. We are also developing a Facebook page for the program.

B. *Chinese ministry*

With a variety of media tools—radio, internet, printed materials, CDs and DVDs, and social media—we are able to share the gospel with people in mainland China who might have no other access to biblical discipleship resources. Nearly one-fourth of the world's population lives in China, yet fewer than 7 percent call themselves Christian. With 564 million internet users, we have many opportunities to share the gospel with Chinese-speaking people.

Now in our 39th year of Chinese outreach, our ten-person ministry team points people to the Savior with seven audio programs and coordinating websites. We praise God for our many volunteers inside mainland China who distribute booklets; record daily readings; and promote our print, online, and radio programs.

Bible and Women, the ministry's newest program, has helped many female listeners in China with their spiritual development. In August 2013, members of our Chinese team visited listeners of this program along with other seekers and believers in mainland China. The trip served as a great opportunity to distribute devotional booklets, CDs, DVDs, flash drives, and other samples of ministry programs.

C. *English ministry*

ReFrame Media, our English-language ministry, reaches believers at every level of their faith. Through nine unique ministries, the ReFrame team helps seekers come to faith and believers grow in their walk with God—in all parts

of the world. Churches and individuals are encouraged to use these resources for personal spiritual growth and as tools for outreach.

1. *Today*—daily devotions that provide both evangelistic and discipleship content. BTGMI has produced the *Today* devotional booklet for more than 60 years. We continue to print and distribute 210,000 bimonthly devotional booklets, and we have increased the more cost-effective electronic distribution of *Today* through email, podcast at ThisIsToday.net, Facebook, and RSS feed. With the launch of *Today* apps for smart phones, *Today* devotions are read by an average of 3.6 million people each month. Churches can place an automatic daily link from ThisIsToday.net on their own websites.
2. *Kids Corner*—an audio program now heard on approximately 300 stations in North America and other countries. KidsCorner.net reaches many children, who listen to programs and can request music CDs, bookmarks, and other kid-friendly disciple-making tools. The website offers resources to help parents with their children's spiritual growth. Families and church education leaders are encouraged to send for information about our children's Bible study correspondence program—a tool for helping children become lifelong disciples of Jesus.
3. *Spotlight*—a simplified English program developed to reach an international audience of people who wish to learn the English language. BTGMI partners with Words of Hope and Reach Beyond (formerly HCJB Global) in the production of *Spotlight*. Listeners also connect to the program through SpotlightRadio.net and facebook.com/spotlightradio. Several areas of significant traffic occur in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. We have established more than 55 *Spotlight* English Clubs in 12 countries. This year we have 14 clubs that meet through Skype, including participants from 10 countries, some of whom live in places where the gospel is forbidden. Churches with a heart for reaching out to international neighbors may visit SpotlightEnglishClubs.com for information about establishing a *Spotlight* English Club. We offer practical tools to help teach English-language learners, serving as a bridge for interacting with immigrants in their local communities.
4. *Walk the Way*—a weekly five-minute video blog and daily 60-second audio feature broadcast on more than 1,000 media outlets throughout North America. Host Jeff Klein asks thought-provoking questions and challenges Christ followers to turn belief into action. *Walk the Way* ignites and guides meaningful, faith-shaping conversations for personal devotions, small groups, youth ministries, and full worship services.
5. *Groundwork*—a half-hour audio program that proclaims the Christian faith, produced in collaboration with Words of Hope (RCA). *Groundwork* explores Scripture in-depth from a Reformed perspective. CRC pastor and seminary professor, Rev. Scott Hoezee, cohosts the program along with Rev. David Bast from Words of Hope. An interactive website, GroundworkOnline.com, and a Facebook page for listeners invite comments and prayer requests. *Groundwork* is aired on 196 radio stations in 11 countries and can be heard via podcast on its website.

6. *Family Fire*—a Facebook-based ministry to strengthen families, launched in 2011. Instructional and inspirational posts and conversations lead people to Family Fire.com, a website that provides resources to explore God’s design for marriage, parenting, and other relationships. The *Family Fire* team also offers retreats and teaching events. This year the team led workshops in four cities across North America.
7. *Think Christian*—a digital magazine that seeks to engage people in conversations about the intersection of the Christian faith and culture. A team of writers posts articles to guide a discussion that helps visitors “think Christian” from a Reformed perspective in their daily lives. Through the website ThinkChristian.net, plus Facebook and Twitter, *Think Christian* receives an average of 10,400 interactions each month from people engaged in issues such as world events, the church, science, art, and more.
8. *Church Juice*—a web-based ministry to assist congregations in developing effective church communications. The goal is to empower local churches for using media to minister within their congregation and to reach out to their communities. In the past year, *Church Juice* staff led four workshops for pastors and church leaders in Canada and the United States, and one via webinar. For information about how *Church Juice* can assist your congregation, visit ChurchJuice.com. In addition, *Church Juice* offers financial grants to churches. See thejuicys.org to find out how your church could win a Juicys grant.
9. *Under the Radar*—a music-based program that combines the best “undiscovered” and underplayed music from Christian artists, along with interviews and stories. Those who visit RadarRadio.net are linked to our other discipleship programs. *Under the Radar* airs on 225 broadcast outlets, which often leads to free air time for our other programs. Stations welcome the program because it provides a unique niche in Christian programming. Its Facebook page has more than 24,000 followers, many of whom actively carry on conversations about the impact of this program on their lives. Last July, *Under the Radar* hosted its first “Escape to the Lake” spiritual retreat, and a second one is scheduled for summer 2014.

D. French ministry

Perspectives Réformées, our French-language outreach, provides a positive message to people living in Africa, Haiti, and Europe. In spite of unique economic, political, and geographic challenges in these areas of the world, our French team sees a continued desire for the gospel and receives great response to daily radio broadcasts and a Bible study discipleship course.

Political challenges are especially evident in Central African Republic, where a rebel takeover brought the country into violent chaos in 2013. Still, over the past ten years, more than 100,000 people have participated in our Bible study ministry, and some graduates of this program have continued on to become mentors to other students seeking to learn more about God’s Word.

The French ministry, which began 45 years ago, continues to record new audio programs—one for a general audience and one designed to reach women. More than 1,000 volunteers help to mentor people who participate in our Bible study correspondence classes.

E. Ministry in Hindi and related languages

In northern India and the Himalayan region, BTGMI brings God's Word to people in two national languages and three tribal languages. Our 42 Hindi staff members have also helped develop 30 listener groups for our radio programs.

In this work BTGMI partners with Good Books Ministries, an indigenous partner in India, and Words of Hope (RCA). With these partners, we opened a new broadcast and ministry center in September 2013 that enables us to expand ministry in northern India. Our Hindi team hosted a three-day seekers event, reaching out to 70 people in Jammu who wanted to know more about Christ. Four people received baptism during this event. The Hindi website was also launched and is being further developed to provide resources for people seeking to know more about the ministry. We are seeking a new director of media ministry in northern India to replace our retiring director.

F. Indonesian ministry

Our Indonesian ministry team uses radio broadcasts, internet outreach, discipleship courses, and television to share the gospel in one of the world's most diverse nations. Our mission is to connect people to the gospel by allowing them to hear it in their own "heart language." In addition to six programs in the national language, we produce 18 radio programs in nine tribal languages. We have established more than 250 listener communities that minister to seekers and strengthen the faith of longtime believers.

Since we began outreach in Indonesia in 1969, God has continued to bless us with resources to bring the gospel to this vast island nation. Our 20-member team works with the Indonesian Christian Church and several mission agencies, including Words of Hope (RCA).

We recently expanded outreach in seven tribal languages through translations of our programs and discipleship ministries. We would still like to expand this further. We provided initial and advanced leadership training to increase the number of listener communities to more than 250.

G. Japanese ministry

Our ministry team in Japan produces audio and print materials that speak to the hearts of Japanese people. All of our programs are available on the web and via internet-accessible smart phones, bringing God's Word to Japanese people who generally have little opportunity to read the Bible or encounter the Christian faith. We also invite seekers and isolated Christians to listener gatherings twice each year for Christian fellowship and encouragement.

Our Japanese outreach team of four members is grateful to see how the Lord has worked through media ministry since we began outreach there in 1974. Our team now works in partnership with the Reformed Church in Japan to provide programming and materials that reach the hearts of people influenced by the predominant local religions Shintoism and Buddhism.

Recently the ministry team adapted their web-based programs for more effective smart phone delivery. Last year in Japan, 278,225 messages were downloaded from mobile devices, and 548,361 audio files were downloaded. With much prayer, ongoing discipleship through our social network site and summer camps brought several commitments to faith in Christ.

H. Portuguese ministry

Luz Para o Caminho (Light for the Way), our Portuguese-language ministry, provides gospel light for people throughout Brazil. Since beginning the outreach in 1969, God has continued blessing us with resources to bring the gospel to Portuguese-speaking people. Our Portuguese outreach team of 37 staff members works in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Brazil, local Christian universities, and several mission agencies.

We continue to develop new radio, TV, and print ministry programs and materials that introduce people to the Savior and strengthen their faith. We produced and distributed 195,000 copies of a new family devotional booklet and more than 900,000 copies of a special Christmas devotional. Five new Facebook pages reach thousands of daily program followers, and the numbers continue to increase as friends share devotional messages.

Letters, email, and Facebook messages give evidence that our two popular TV programs have an impact on a weekly audience of more than 2.5 million viewers. God encourages our ministry as thousands of program followers respond to the messages we produce. More than 16,000 readers receive our *Cada Dia* devotional booklets each month.

I. Russian ministry

Our Russian media ministry team proclaims the good news from a Reformed, biblical perspective through radio, internet, text messages, and print materials. BTGMI outreach in Russia, Vozvrashchenie k Bogu—meaning “Back to God”—began in 1980 and strives to bring people from all generations to faith in Christ. We have developed ministry centers in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and we work closely with partners in Ukraine. In addition, we are building an audience in Russian-speaking countries in Central Asia.

For many people in Russia, Ukraine, and emerging countries in Eastern Europe, faith and church membership are just traditions. Although many align themselves with Christianity, few people know the Bible. As we reach out through media ministry, we see God at work. In the past year we experienced substantial growth in our online audience through our websites and blogs. We are excited to see how God will continue to use this platform to expand outreach especially among youth.

J. Spanish ministry

For nearly 50 years, we have had a tremendous opportunity to make an impact throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Our Spanish ministry team, Ministerio Reforma, continues to develop a multimedia strategy for sharing the gospel with as many people as possible. With more than 500 radio stations and nearly 200 television stations that air our radio and television programs, we are reaching people in Central and South America, as well as Spain and other countries, with significant Latino populations.

Because very little Christian programming is available for children in Latin America, our Spanish and English teams are collaborating to produce a Spanish version of our popular *Kids Corner* audio program in order to fill this void. Printed discipleship materials are also a significant tool for sharing God’s Word. We produce and distribute *Cada Dia*, a daily devotional guide available online and in print. Staff and volunteers in five countries provide local follow-up and discipleship with people who respond to our ministry.

Our Spanish team continues to lead media seminars that help grow partnerships between our ministry and Latin American media outlets. We launched two new Facebook pages to help introduce people to our gospel programs and training events.

K. Korean ministry

BTGMI continues to partner with the Korean Council of CRC churches to produce and distribute 10,000 copies (every two months) of a bilingual Korean-English *Today*. This devotional booklet nurtures not only Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church but is also an effective evangelism tool in North America and beyond. The devotions are also available online at RiverParkChurch-kr.com.

L. Cooperative organizations

BTGMI global outreach is strengthened through crucial networks of North American and international partners. Strong collaborations create effective partnerships for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. BTGMI works cooperatively with the following organizations:

- Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM)—collaborative ministries in Haiti, Japan, Indonesia, Mexico, El Salvador, and Eastern Europe.
- Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) and Christian Reformed congregations—media outreach assistance for new church plants as well as established congregations seeking to use electronic media for ministry.
- CRWM and CRHM—Global Coffee Break outreach.
- World Renew—diaconal training for listener community leaders in Indonesia.
- Korean Council—publication of Korean-English *Today* devotions.
- CRC ministries such as Calvin Theological Seminary, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Timothy Leadership Training Institute, The Network, and World Literature Ministries.
- Words of Hope—partnership in Indonesian, Hindi, and Arabic ministries; additional partnerships in the production of two English-language programs: *Groundwork* and *Spotlight*.
- Reach Beyond (formerly HCJB Global) and HCJB UK—partnership in *Spotlight* production.
- Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF)—media outreach to the Arabic-speaking world.
- Reformed denominations worldwide—joint-ministry partnerships in Japan (Reformed Church in Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church). In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe and Africa and with house churches and Christian ministries in China.
- Christian universities in Russia and Brazil.
- Crossroad Bible Institute—discipleship ministry through a Bible study correspondence program.

III. The Back to God Ministries International 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 board officers of BTGMI are Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, president; Rev. Reginald Smith, vice president; Mrs. Cindi Veenstra, secretary; and Mr. John Vegt, treasurer.

C. Board member nominees

1. Board reappointments

Mr. John Vegt (Region 1), Mrs. Cindi Veenstra (Region 10), and Rev. Reginald Smith (Region 11) are completing a first term on the board and are eligible for reappointment. The board recommends that synod ratify these members for a second three-year term.

2. Nominees for board appointment

- a. The following slates of nominees from geographical regions were presented in the spring of 2014 to the respective classes for a vote. Synod will be asked to ratify the results of the elections.

Region 2

Mrs. Evelyn Bakker, a member of Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, is retired from a career as an accounting administrator with the Finance and Health Plan Administration of the government of Alberta. Mrs. Bakker has served on the board of Bible for Missions and has worked with Dorcas Aid International, a Dutch relief organization that works in Eastern Europe and Africa.

Mrs. Christine Vanderberg, a member of Maranatha CRC in Lethbridge, Alberta, is an RN working as a consultant for Alberta Health Services as a palliative care nurse. Mrs. Vanderberg has served her church in various ways—as a shepherding elder, as chair for the creative worship team, and on the evangelism committee. She has also served on the Classical Youth Committee for Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, as a Compass 21 facilitator for Youth Unlimited, and as a MOPS facilitator.

Region 7

Mr. Edward Schans, a member of First CRC in Denver, Colorado, owned his own food service company for forty years in the Denver area. Mr. Schans has served as an elder and deacon and has been a delegate to synod. He is currently serving on the board of Roundup Fellowship, as president of the Classical Interim Committee, and as a Kids Hope mentor.

Mrs. Xiuyn (Sherry) Shen, a member of Hillcrest CRC in Denver, Colorado, is an overseas purchase manager for Hebei TPCO Jianchang Copper Company. Mrs. Shen has served as the financial secretary of the Chinese Christian Assembly in Denver and is currently serving as accountant for the organization. She is on the finance committee

at Hillcrest CRC and works with the college ministry at the Denver School of Mines.

- b. The following single nominees from geographical regions are being presented to synod for ratification:

Region 5

Rev. Gregory Selmon, pastor of First CRC in Seattle, Washington, has served on many ecclesiastical boards, including the Classical Education Committee and the Church Planting and Church Development Committee.

Region 11

Mr. Edwin de Jong, a member of Neland Ave CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the producer/cinematographer/editor for Visual EdJ Productions. Mr. de Jong has served as a media producer for the CRCNA and as media director for Christian Reformed World Missions. He has previously served as secretary, vice president, and president for Media Communications Association International in Mid-Michigan. He is a cofounder of West Michigan Film and Video Alliance and has served as a board member for the organization.

- c. The following single nominee for an at-large position is being presented to synod for appointment to the board:

Mr. Mark Volkers, a member of Calvary CRC, Orange City, Iowa, is a professor of digital media at Dordt College. Mr. Volkers spent nine years as the communication director for Christian Reformed World Missions. He served as a delegate to synod for Classis Heartland, and he served for five years as a reporter for synod. He is currently serving as a board member for the Orange City Arts Council and for the Iowa Motion Picture Association (IMPA), and he is serving his second term as an elder.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
16	6	1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th
15	1	4th

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Kurt Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International, and Rev. Gary Bomhof, board president, be given the privilege of the floor when BTGMI matters are discussed.

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

C. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize the third Sunday in November and Ascension Day Sunday as significant opportunities to receive an offering for Back to God Ministries International.

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
Rev. Kurt Selles, director

The Calvin College Board of Trustees and college president Michael K. Le Roy present this report to Synod 2014 with gratitude to God for his many blessings on the college this past year. Calvin College has experienced God's providential care and provision and looks forward to the future with gratitude, confidence, and anticipation.

I. Report by the president

Since commissioned to do so by its Board of Trustees in October 2012, Calvin College has been engaged in a collaborative strategic planning process. At its January 2014 meetings, the trustees unanimously endorsed the new strategic plan. The planning process has been a rewarding exercise in which Calvin College's mission has been reaffirmed as articulated in critical documents such as the college's *Expanded Statement of Mission* (ESM). As the ESM notes, Calvin College's mission, as a Christian comprehensive liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition, is "to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lifelong Christian service, to produce substantial and challenging art and scholarship, and to perform all our tasks as a caring and diverse educational community."

The strategic plan provides the college with a strategy to clarify the college's vision and sharpen its program offerings and operations in order to provide a solid platform on which to do more ambitious and creative work. The plan is organized around six themes:

- Strengthen Calvin's Mission in Education
- Secure Calvin's Mission in Scholarship
- Support Calvin's Mission in Community
- Strengthen Calvin's Pursuit of Diversity and Inclusion
- Secure Calvin's Financial Future
- Support Calvin's Mission through External Partnerships

This plan guides the college as it uses the next five years to plan for the next twenty. It keeps the college anchored in its rich theological tradition and strengthens our commitment to academic excellence in a dynamic higher education context.

As indicated above, the fifth goal in the strategic plan is to secure Calvin College's financial future. In fall 2012, the Calvin College Board of Trustees commissioned the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) to review all programs and services at the college. This responsibility, and our commitment to candor about both our strengths and weaknesses, frames this evaluation and its underlying convictions, identified as follows:

- The college's ability to fulfill the mission and preserve academic quality depends on our ability to focus resources on the core activities of teaching, learning, and scholarship.
- A persistent pattern of annual operating deficits is unsustainable.
- Debt service payments of \$6.2 million, rising to \$9.5 million in 2017, must be built in to the annual operating budget.

The college's forthcoming strategic plan anticipates a goal of developing and implementing a sustainable operating model, of which this prioritization

plan is an essential element. To set the college on a financial footing that is sustainable, the plan proposed by the PPC and approved by the board relies on five primary strategies:

- Raise \$25 million by 2017 to prepay principal on the college's long-term debt.
- Sell noncore real estate assets over the next several years and use the proceeds to reduce principal of long-term debt.
- Refinance remaining long-term debt in 2017.
- Increase revenue through enrollment growth, new program growth, and differentiated tuition and fees for some higher cost programs.
- Reduce annual operating expenses \$4.5 million by June 30, 2017.

The overriding principle guiding the decisions of prioritization and the strategic plan has been the preservation of our mission and the quality in our academic programs. This review of programs and services has also led us to identify where more resources are needed to enhance quality and bring resource balance to the college as a whole. We are encouraged by the early response from our donors to support the direction outlined in both of these plans, and we believe the opportunities for fundraising to implement these changes will be similarly positive.

There are many other specific benefits for which Calvin College is grateful in the past year. The 2013-2014 academic year had a good first year enrollment, with very high levels of academic achievement and growing diversity and internationalization of the student body. The direct and transparent way in which the college has approached financial reforms has already begun to pay dividends as the college's financial performance improves.

Finally, the Appendix to this report is the college's response to the requests of Synods 2011 and 2012 that the college "study the limits of academic freedom within the bounds of confessional fidelity" (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 847; *Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 735). The document, titled *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College*, has been approved by the Faculty Senate and the Calvin College Board of Trustees and is provided to synod for information. The college hopes to convene an optional information and discussion session with delegates and advisers during the week of Synod 2014.

Calvin College continues to appreciate its unique and mutually beneficial relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, grateful that our denominational partner has understood the college's work as an academic expression of the cultural mandate to cultivate the earth and care for God's creation. In future years synod can look forward to learning about our progress on these goals and continuing its pattern of prayerful support.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael K. Le Roy, president

II. Board activities

A. October 2013 Board meeting highlights

The October 2013 meeting of the Calvin College Board of Trustees included new officers and a few new board members ratified by Synod 2013. College board officers for 2013-2014 are Mr. Scott Spoelhof, chair; Mr.

Craig Lubben, vice-chair; Ms. Christine Metzger, secretary; Ms. Sharolyn Christians, assistant secretary (executive assistant to the president); and Ms. Sally Vander Ploeg, treasurer (vice president for finance and administration). New trustees participating for the first time in October were alumni trustee Ms. Mary Bonnema from Walker, Michigan; regional trustee Mr. Michael K. Den Bleyker from Gilbert, Arizona; and at-large trustee Mr. David Schutt from Gibsonia, Pennsylvania. Highlights of the October 2013 meetings included the addition of nonvoting faculty advisors to key board committees, good collaborative work on key elements of the emerging strategic plan, and encouraging reports by the college's auditor on an already improving college financial picture.

B. January 2014 Board meeting highlights

The January 2014 meetings were also very productive. The strategic plan and its six themes received final approval after more than a year in process. The board also approved five key strategies developed by college leaders to close the college's current and forecasted operating deficits, and endorsed the goals of the four-year operating budget prioritization proposal. Together, the prioritization and strategic plans will help the college use well the next five years to prepare for and thrive in the upcoming twenty years.

The board approved the college's report to Synod 2014, *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College*, written in response to synodical requests (see Appendix). The board also approved 10 faculty members for reappointment with tenure (see Recommendations) and ratified 20 tenure track reappointments and one term reappointment. In addition, the board approved eight open faculty positions for academic year 2014-2015, 17 sabbatical proposals, 23 Calvin Research Fellowships, a new Chinese education major and minor, and a graphic design major. In other formal actions the board ratified several changes in college governance practices and policies, the most noteworthy being to ratify action by the Faculty Senate to change the college faculty handbook to require that covered faculty members¹ sign a new Covenant for Faculty Members (parallel to the new Covenant for Office-bearers, which replaced the Form of Subscription). In a break-out session, the board also received an update on a review of the college's diversity initiatives, a key theme of the new strategic plan.

III. Board membership

A. Reappointment of trustees

1. Regional trustee

The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends the following regional trustee eligible for a second three-year term: Ms. Margaret Verboon (Pan Zhang) (Regions 1 and 2).

¹ Covered faculty refers to faculty who do a significant amount of teaching and are likely to have tenure or be long-term faculty. Administrators who have faculty status (e.g., vice presidents) and who deal programmatically with the students must also sign the Covenant for Faculty Members.

2. Alumni trustee

The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends the following alumni trustee eligible for a second three-year term: Ms. Paula Wigboldy.

3. At-large trustees

The Calvin College Board of Trustees recommends the following at-large trustees eligible for the identified term:

- a. Dr. Dale J. Andringa, for a second three-year term
- b. Dr. Phillip J. Brondsema, for a second three-year term
- c. Mr. Craig H. Lubben, for a second three-year term
- d. Ms. Christine A. Metzger, for a third three-year term
- e. Dr. Jack Veltkamp, for a third three-year term

B. New regional trustees

Region 9

No names were submitted from the classes in Region 9 for this vacancy. The Trustee Committee will continue work on identifying potential nominees from the region.

Region 11

Mr. Thomas J. Nobel, Jr. is completing his second term on the board. The board presents the following slate of names to the classes in Region 11 for a vote to name the trustee to be presented to Synod 2014 for ratification:

Mr. William J. Boer, B.A. in economics, Calvin College; M.S. in higher education, Indiana University; M.B.A., University of Southern California

Mr. Boer is the president and founder of Grey Dunes. He is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, where he has served on the Cuba Committee for twelve years, including five trips to Cuba. He is involved in serving on the boards of Spectrum Health, Independent Bank, and West Michigan Aviation Academy. In addition, he serves on the Investment Committee of Calvin College and is chair of the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Committee. Mr. Boer served as vice president of administration and finance at Calvin College from 1987 to 1993, and has been a Cub Scout den leader for twelve years.

Mr. Ray Vander Kooi, B.S. in accountancy, Calvin College; Certified Public Accountant

Mr. Vander Kooi is the senior vice president of finance and administration at Irwin Seating Company. He is currently an at-large member of the Grand Rapids Christian Schools Operations and Finance Committee, where he has previously held positions as treasurer and Compensation Committee chair and has served as a member of the executive and education committees. Mr. Vander Kooi has previously served on the Wedgwood Christian Services Board of Directors as board president, treasurer, and as chair of the Finance and Operations Committee. He is a member of Seymour CRC, where he has served two terms on council as administrative deacon and treasurer and as administrative elder. He also served Seymour CRC as chair of the Christian Education Committee.

Region 12

Dr. Jack R. Van Der Slik is completing his second term on the board. The board presents the following slate of names to the classes in Region 12 for a vote to name the trustee to be presented to Synod 2014 for ratification:

Dr. David Cok, B.A. math and physics, Calvin College; M.A. and Ph.D. in physics, Harvard University

Dr. Cok is a scientist and research manager from Rochester, New York. He is vice president of technology at GrammaTech, Inc., and has been a member of the Industrial Advisory Boards for the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology for thirteen years. Dr. Cok is currently a technical consultant to the European Commission and previously worked for 28 years in the research lab of the Eastman Kodak Company. Dr. Cok attends Rochester CRC, where he has served as an elder for nine years, including four years as president, two years as vice president, and two as clerk. He also served as a deacon at Archer Avenue CRC in Chicago, Illinois, and has been a delegate to classis several times.

Dr. Maria Anderson, B.A. and masters of education at William Paterson University; Doctorate in education, Kean University

Dr. Anderson is a teacher in the Paterson School District in Prospect Park, New Jersey. She is also an adjunct professor at William Paterson University and co-coordinator of the Tutorship Ministry at New Hope Ministries. She has previously served as a Sunday school teacher, a hostess for a household Bible study, a member of her church evangelism committee, and on the New Hope Parent Support Group for parents of disabled children. Dr. Anderson is a member of Madison Avenue CRC, Paterson, New Jersey, where she serves as a deacon on the church council. She is a delegate to Classis Hackensack and a Disability Concerns regional advocate.

C. New at-large trustee

There is one at-large trustee vacancy on the board this year. The Trustee Committee will present names to the May board meeting and forward a nominee by way of the board's supplemental report for appointment by Synod 2014.

IV. Finances

Tuition, room, and board rates were approved by the board and will be included in the final 2014-2015 budget to be considered by the board in May. These financial details will be reported to synod by way of the supplemental report.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Scott A. Spoelhof, and to the president of Calvin College, Dr. Michael K. Le Roy, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.

B. That synod ratify the following faculty reappointments with tenure (promotion indicated in *italics*), effective September 1, 2014:

1. Adejoke B. Ayoola, Ph.D., *associate* professor of nursing
2. Randall J. DeJong, Ph.D., *associate* professor of biology
3. Herbert R. Fyneweever, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry
4. David J. Leugs, M.F.A., *associate* professor of communication arts and sciences
5. Christopher G. Moseley, Ph.D., associate professor of mathematics and statistics
6. David C. Noe, Ph.D., associate professor of classics
7. Blake M. Riek, Ph.D., *associate* professor of psychology
8. Jason E. VanHorn, Ph.D., *associate* professor of geography
9. John T. Wertz, Ph.D., *associate* professor of biology
10. Amy M. Wilstermann, Ph.D., *associate* professor of biology

C. That synod by way of the ballot elect new members, reappoint for subsequent terms, and ratify the results of elections held in classes for membership on the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

D. That synod receive for information and commend to the churches the document *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College* (see Appendix), submitted in response to the instructions of Synods 2011 and 2012, as being faithful to and honoring synod's own prior work on confessional subscription.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Christine A. Metzger, secretary

Appendix

Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College

Part I: Background Information

I. Introduction

This report comes to Synod 2014 as a follow-up to these recommendations adopted by Synods 2011 and 2012:

Since Calvin College has appointed a committee to study the limits of academic freedom within the bounds of confessional fidelity, that synod instruct Calvin College to report its findings upon the completion of the study.

(Acts of Synod 2011, p. 847)

That synod take note that Advisory Committee 3 received an update from representatives of Calvin College on the progress of their study on "the limits of academic freedom within the bounds of confessional fidelity" which Synod 2011 asked them to submit upon completion of the study (*cf. Acts of Synod 2011, p. 847*). They indicated that they will continue their conversation with further input from other Reformed colleagues and could, if requested, have a report

ready for Synod 2014. They have an interim report titled “Evolution, Human Origins, and Confessional Parameters” available on the Calvin website (<http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/seminars/human-origins.html>), which they encourage people to read and respond to.

That synod request Calvin College to submit to Synod 2014 a report on the study about academic freedom and the confessions referenced in the *Acts of Synod 2011* (Art. 49, D, 2; p. 847).

(*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 735)

The Board of Trustees is grateful for the opportunity to summarize to synod the college’s commitments and practices at the intersection of confessional commitments, academic freedom, and controversial issues such as human origins. This document responds to synod’s requests in 2011 and 2012 for an explanatory report about the college’s approach to confessional subscription and academic freedom. This document is not a position statement on issues related to origins and evolution in the context of confessional subscription, but rather an explanation of the context in which we continue our work. The college submits this report mindful that it is the church that makes a final determination about the meaning of confessional subscription on this and other challenging topics.

The college’s *Expanded Statement of Mission* (ESM), re-endorsed by the Calvin College Board of Trustees in October 2013, affirms the mutually beneficial, covenantal relationship between Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church that should be understood as “a mutual pledge of fidelity, service, and support between partners, in which the distinct activities of each work for the betterment of both” (p. 16). Although the tasks and responsibilities of the church and the college are different, they nevertheless need and nourish each other.¹ Of particular importance to this report is the relationship between the church and the college in terms of a scholarly mission carried out within a context of Reformed confessional commitments. The Christian Reformed Church has always had a strong commitment to Christian education, including Christian higher education, because education and scholarship have been understood by the church as a ministry, a means through which knowledge and culture can be understood, shaped, and redeemed. To do this work well, the church requires an academic community of gifted and dedicated faculty, scholars who build relationships with intellectual communities around the world and help form new generations of scholars and leaders. In turn, to do its work faithfully, Calvin College as an academic community needs the theological grounding of the Reformed tradition and a supportive community of faith that the Christian Reformed Church provides.

¹ A study committee of Synod 1957 articulated these distinct activities and tasks of the church and the college. The tasks of the church, for example, include “1) training of young people, 2) preparing members for Christian service, and 3) bringing the truth of Scripture to bear upon learning and Christian living. The tasks of the college are 1) to provide a liberal arts education, 2) to engage in Christian scholarship, and 3) to apply the truth to ‘the present situation,’ or the world at large” (Calvin College *Expanded Statement of Mission: Vision, Purpose, and Commitment*, p. 16).

II. Calvin College's mission

As a Christian comprehensive liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition, the purposes of Calvin College are "to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lifelong Christian service, to produce substantial and challenging art and scholarship, and to perform all our tasks as a caring and diverse educational community" (ESM, p. 27). To pursue these purposes, Calvin College commits itself to "develop knowledge, understanding, and critical inquiry; encourage insightful and creative participation in society; and foster thoughtful, passionate Christian commitments" (p. 27). The college also commits itself to "pursue intellectual efforts to explore our world's beauty, speak to its pain, uncover our own faithlessness, and proclaim the healing that God offers in Jesus Christ" (p. 40). This is an *academic* mission, carried out in an institution of higher learning that creates a forum for the strategic work of teaching, research, and other scholarly activities that are vitally important for faithful Christian discipleship. The vocation of Calvin College is an expression of the cultural mandate to cultivate the earth and care for the creation. The vocation is not limited to comfortable, familiar areas but may extend to include the discovery and investigation of the full range of God's creation. Calvin faculty similarly understand their work in various disciplines and professions as a vocational calling.

III. Confessional commitments and academic freedom at Calvin College

At its May 2010 meeting, the Calvin College Board of Trustees approved a document titled *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College* (see Part II of this appendix). The key ideas in this document are summarized as follows:

Section 1: Confessional commitments and academic freedom are indispensable and interdependent elements which shape our ecology for Christian teaching and learning at Calvin College.

Section 2: The confessions which bound our academic freedom arise out of and serve the lordship of Jesus Christ. They are subordinate to, and function to support, the authority of Scripture. They call us to exercise great care in the interpretation of Scripture and the confessions themselves.

Section 3: The confessions offer a set of both orienting convictions and boundaries in which academic freedom is exercised. While not every topic is addressed explicitly in the confessions, we commit to addressing every topic from a perspective grounded in the confessions. Topics that are not addressed explicitly in the confessions may well have positions associated with them that are "consistent with" or "inconsistent with" the confessions.

Section 4: Defining the precise limits of confessional boundaries is an organic and often informal process. When formal action is required, the meaning and implications of the confessions are determined by duly constituted deliberative bodies, rather than individual persons. While CRC synodical decisions are "settled and binding" with respect to pertinent aspects of institutional policy, they do not automatically limit academic freedom unless they are offered as "interpretations of the confessions." In fact, the CRC encourages ongoing debate and discussion about synodical decisions precisely to ensure that the church is always promoting biblical faithfulness and confessional integrity. This requires an appropriate level of tolerance of a range of ideas and practices under the overall umbrella of confessional subscription. At the same time, the existence of a confessional boundary does not depend on synod offering an explicit interpretation of the confessions. Such interpretations are only offered when necessary.

Section 5: Confessional commitment and academic freedom are nurtured by high-trust methods of communication and accountability. The most difficult decisions with respect to academic freedom involve the decision about how and when to enforce boundaries. For these decisions to be made well and have perceived legitimacy, they need to be made on the basis of the best possible information, through the due processes established in the faculty and board handbooks.

Section 6: Confessional commitment and academic freedom are of vital importance for our continuing work. Practicing these commitments together in mutually accountable and encouraging ways will help us become at once more firmly grounded and hospitable as we seek to serve together as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Synodical delegates are encouraged to read the *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College* (CCAF) document in its entirety. In addition to the content of the document, for the purposes of this report it is important also to note the following:

1. The CCAF document captures well the college's long-standing commitment to and fruitful efforts of pursuing its academic mission in the context of confessional commitments. Questions about confessional commitments and academic freedom are not new questions at Calvin College. Such questions are part and parcel of Calvin's history and are often revisited by the college and the CRC when difficult controversies arise.
2. The CCAF document is consistent with and honors synod's own work on confessional affirmation, including Synod 1975's decision (Church Order, Art. 29) on the status of synodical actions and continuing to the present with the Covenant for Officebearers. Synod's work on confessional subscription has benefited the college through the years in a number of ways, including helping students and faculty engage complex issues from a confessionally informed posture and in setting institutional policy.
3. Because the CCAF document was written prior to Synod 2012's adoption of the Covenant for Officebearers, the CCAF referred to the Form of Subscription in various places. Calvin staff and faculty with faculty status now sign the Covenant for Faculty Members, just as they formerly signed the Form of Subscription. The implications of the signature remain the same. Where appropriate, the CCAF document has now been edited to reflect this change in language.
4. The CCAF document reminds readers of the complex institutional governance and Reformed polity practices within the CRC that, while messy at times, serve to foster highly consultative, transparent, and deliberative processes based on accurate information between the church and the college.
5. The CCAF document also points to the college's internal processes for addressing controversial issues in ways that foster high-trust communication, confessional integrity, and mutual encouragement and accountability. These processes, both formal and informal, are part of the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, a document that has also been approved by the Board of Trustees. Sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.4 in the handbook speak most directly to these processes.²

² The *Handbook for Teaching Faculty* can be found online: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/>.

IV. Evolution and human origins

Evolution and origins are highly controversial topics. Many Christians are disturbed by the apparent incompatibility of modern scientific thinking with a literalistic reading of the opening chapters of Genesis. As a result, some Christians have simply dismissed the results of modern science. Other Christians, when confronted by the abundance of evidence that supports current scientific thinking, have found their faith shaken. They fear that if the opening chapters of Genesis cannot be understood literally, then the veracity of other passages becomes suspect as well. And some, tired of what can sometimes be rancorous debate in the church about Christianity and evolution or sensing that churches are antagonistic to science, simply leave.³ These issues then are not simply of academic interest but cut deeply into how Christians read Scripture, engage God's creation, and develop in their faith.

At a minimum, critical theological issues in the human origins discussion center on the historicity of Adam and Eve, the nature of the fall, the problem of sin, and the need for grace. There also are questions on how to read and understand the confessions today. Faculty and students at Calvin College, along with many other members of the Christian Reformed Church, could ignore these kinds of questions, but that would be un-Reformed. Such a posture goes against deeply held historic Reformed commitments to study all of God's creation, including the history of the natural world.⁴ And, as noted earlier, such a posture violates both the vocational calling of Calvin as an academic institution and the vocational calling of its faculty. So it is critically important for Reformed Christian faculty at Calvin—scientists, theologians, biblical scholars, historians, and others—to engage fully and deeply in the study of evolution and origins.

Of course, *how* Calvin faculty do this work is also important. It is our aim to do this work collaboratively, transparently, and with a spirit of humility, trust, and faithfulness. Both the CCAF document and the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty* describe the principles and processes that guide such work.

Such study, grounded in the principles and practices of the CCAF document and the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, happens in a variety of ways and places at Calvin College. Faculty engage in research and scholarship and in formal and informal discussion within the college and with colleagues at other colleges and universities.⁵ In addition, Calvin faculty have been invited to share their work in adult church education programs, with interested CRC classes throughout North America, and at a variety of workshops and conferences such as the Christian Educators Association conference. Calvin faculty have also collaborated with and been funded by other organizations with similar interests (e.g., BioLogos; the Colossian Forum on Faith, Science, and Culture; Issachar Fund). Faculty talks and writings appear on Calvin's

³ To this last point, see *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Baker Books, 2011) by David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group.

⁴ The 1991 report of the synodical Committee on Creation and Science says this: "Being Reformed means that we accept the problem in all its difficulty" (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 402).

⁵ See, for instance, the provost's human origins seminar series: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/seminars/human-origins.html>. The documents and recordings listed there have been given as public lectures and have been accompanied by discussion times that have been beneficial to both presenters and listeners.

website, in blogs, in academic journals, and in articles and books directed to lay audiences.⁶ All of these venues create opportunities for discussion and learning between Calvin faculty and other communities of believers, allowing all participants to better understand the concerns and positions of each other and to learn from each other.

The Calvin College Board of Trustees supports the ongoing work of Calvin College with respect to evolution and origins. The Calvin faculty who work in these areas are asking hard and important questions of themselves, each other, the college, and the church with a goal of promoting biblical faithfulness and confessional integrity as we together explore God's world. The board recognizes that it is challenging to reconcile questions related to human origins with confessional commitments. But that is what a Reformed Christian academic institution is called to do, while recognizing at the same time that any conclusions must always be tentative, subject to rigorous and well-established processes, and offered in a spirit of trust, humility, and mutual accountability. In doing this work, Calvin College covets the blessing of the Christian Reformed Church to support the vocational calling of Calvin as an academic community and the vocational calling of faculty who teach here, especially those who are called to investigate human origins.

V. Recommendation

Note: The following recommendation is also noted in the Calvin College Report to Synod 2014.

That synod receive for information and commend to the churches the document *Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College*, submitted in response to the instructions of Synods 2011 and 2012, as being faithful to and honoring synod's own prior work on confessional subscription.

Part II: Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom at Calvin College

"The matter of academic freedom, like that of political liberty, is still with us. From time to time it keeps bobbing up in some form or other. . . ."

—from an essay by Calvin Professor Jacob B. Vanden Bosch (May 1940)

SUMMARY OF KEY IDEAS

Section 1: Confessional commitments and academic freedom are indispensable and interdependent elements which shape our ecology for Christian teaching and learning at Calvin College.

Section 2: The confessions which bound our academic freedom arise out of and serve the lordship of Jesus Christ. They are subordinate to, and function

⁶ One of the best known of such writings in the CRC, *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Revised Edition, 2011; Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources), is written by Calvin faculty members Deborah and Loren Haarsma. The way in which the Haarsmas engaged their work was consistent with the practices described in the CCAF document (Part II of this appendix).

to support, the authority of Scripture. They call us to exercise great care in the interpretation of Scripture and the confessions themselves.

Section 3: The confessions offer a set of both orienting convictions and boundaries in which academic freedom is exercised. While not every topic is addressed explicitly in the confessions, we commit to addressing every topic from a perspective grounded in the confessions. Topics that are not addressed explicitly in the confessions may well have positions associated with them that are “consistent with” or “inconsistent with” the confessions.

Section 4: Defining the precise limits of confessional boundaries is an organic and often informal process. When formal action is required, the meaning and implications of the confessions are determined by duly constituted deliberative bodies, rather than individual persons. While CRC synodical decisions are “settled and binding” with respect to pertinent aspects of institutional policy, they do not automatically limit academic freedom unless they are offered as “interpretations of the confessions.” In fact, the CRC encourages ongoing debate and discussion about synodical decisions precisely to ensure that the church is always promoting biblical faithfulness and confessional integrity. This requires an appropriate level of tolerance of a range of ideas and practices under the overall umbrella of confessional subscription. At the same time, the existence of a confessional boundary does not depend on synod offering an explicit interpretation of the confessions. Such interpretations are only offered when necessary.

Section 5: Confessional commitment and academic freedom are nurtured by high-trust methods of communication and accountability. The most difficult decisions with respect to academic freedom involve the decision about how and when to enforce boundaries. For these decisions to be made well and have perceived legitimacy, they need to be made on the basis of the best possible information, through the due processes established in the faculty and board handbooks.

Section 6: Confessional commitment and academic freedom are of vital importance for our continuing work. Practicing these commitments together in mutually accountable and encouraging ways will help us become at once more firmly grounded and hospitable as we seek to serve together as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

I. The significance of confessional commitment and academic freedom for Calvin College

As a Christian comprehensive liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition, the purpose of Calvin College is “to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lifelong Christian service, to produce substantial and challenging art and scholarship, and to perform all our tasks as a caring and diverse educational community.” To pursue these purposes, we are committed to “develop knowledge, understanding, and critical inquiry; encourage insightful and creative participation in society; and foster thoughtful, passionate Christian commitments,” and “pursue intellectual efforts to explore our world’s beauty, speak to its pain, uncover our own faithlessness, and

proclaim the healing that God offers in Jesus Christ.”⁷ With the support and encouragement of the church, this is an academic mission, carried out in an institution of higher learning, which creates space for the strategic work of teaching, research, and other scholarly activities that are vitally important for faithful Christian discipleship.

Two interrelated themes create the conditions for this mission to flourish. First, our common confessional commitments are a testimony to our common worship of the triune God and our subservience to Christ’s lordship in every area of life. These common commitments allow us to move beyond least-common-denominator discussions about the nature of Christian belief and practice, and create the conditions for a culture of learning that delves deeply into the nature of the gospel and its implications for a faithful Christian way of life.

Second, an ethos of freedom allows both the institution and individual faculty members the space to pursue teaching and research that work out the implications of these fundamental Christian commitments for every area of life. This is an exercise in Christian freedom, the unique and unparalleled freedom of those who are bound to Christ (Gal. 5).⁸ In the academic community, this ethos is protected by what is known as academic freedom: the freedom of both an institution and individual faculty members to pursue truth without undue restraint.⁹ At Calvin College, a confessionally grounded academic freedom makes possible teaching and learning that challenges settled perspectives, explores formerly unexplored dimensions of God’s world and human experience, and allows passionate Christian commitments to develop without coercion. In a fast-paced society, with a complex web of interrelated and competing ideologies, worldviews, and political and economic interests, the Christian community needs safe space, under a confessional umbrella, to engage in intellectual, moral, and spiritual inquiry, to discern the shape of a faithful Christian way of life.

Just as the concepts of force and mass have interdependent definitions in Newtonian physics, so too at Calvin College confessional subscription and academic freedom have interdependent definitions. Neither can be defined without reference to the other. Just as interdependence of force and mass in Newtonian physics produces an internally consistent picture of causality in nature, so too the interdependence of confessional commitments and academic freedom at Calvin aims to produce a generative environment for faithful Christian scholarship and discipleship. As the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty* explains, “At Calvin College, we claim and enjoy an academic freedom that comes from the freedom we have in Jesus Christ as Lord of life and learning. Within our confessional terminology, academic freedom might better be understood as our God-given liberty in the academic profession to

⁷ Calvin College Mission, Vision, and Purpose Statement.

⁸ This means that Calvin College does not simply accept a secular definition of academic freedom rooted in modern notions of personal autonomy, any more than Christian believers should accept culturally pervasive definitions of “power” when imagining the nature of God’s power. At the same time, we gratefully study discussions and practices of academic freedom in all contexts, including secular ones, for the resources they offer in helping us practice Christian freedom more faithfully.

⁹ For extended definitions of institutional and individual academic freedom, see Diekema, *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship*, pp. 84–86.

which we are called. In our vocation, we have the right and responsibility to explore thoughts and confront theories not always comfortable to ourselves or members of our constituency. But we exercise this freedom with a view toward our largest obligation, ultimately to bring every thought captive in submission to Jesus Christ" (6.14).

Past commitments to both confessional subscription and academic freedom continue to bear rich fruit today. We can be grateful for courageous and patient work by Christians in many fields of study that make possible what many in the church once ardently resisted: clinical psychological counseling; freedom from philosophical foundationalism; engagement with evolutionary theory within a trinitarian, theistic context; discerning discussions about censorship and particular censored materials; frank discussions of anti-racism; ecumenical Christian engagement; and musical and artistic engagement with a wide spectrum of works by non-Christian artists, playwrights, and composers. The daily life of the Calvin College community as we know it has been made possible because of this freedom in the past. Our classrooms, co-curricular programming, and research agendas are each shaped by these possibilities, to say nothing of the Festival of Faith and Writing, the Festival of Faith and Music, The January Series, Worship Symposium, and a host of other lectures and seminars, which are both the result of and an expression of academic freedom.

Confessional commitments and academic freedom make possible critical engagement with the working commitments of the Christian community across the spectrum of opinion, addressing challenges and opportunities on both the "right" and the "left," and frequently questioning the false dichotomy implied by this or any number of other interpretative schemes. Confessionally grounded academic freedom in the past generation has made it possible for Christians to gratefully celebrate the authority of Scripture without being constrained by a modernist or positivist formulation of biblical inerrancy. This has made it possible to profess without reservation that God created the heavens and the earth, without being bound by a certain type of creationism or an approach to evolution that entails philosophical naturalism. Without confessionally grounded academic freedom, it is almost inevitable that institutions become beholden to particular political parties or social agendas, usually tied to economic interests (and it is important to note that academic freedom is not the only safeguard necessary to protect against this). These economic pressures may come from opposite or competing points of view: professional organizations, grant making entities, donors, and potential students. It is important to be aware of all of these implications but not to allow any of them to erode institutional mission and identity.

Given these values, it is no surprise that Calvin College has produced a procession of defenses of confessionally grounded academic freedom, including works by Henry Stob, W. Harry Jellema, Anthony Diekema, Ed Ericson, George Monsma, Lee Hardy, David Hoekema, and Joel Carpenter (see attached bibliography). These writings feature a firm defense of academic freedom in the context of confessional subscription, aware of threats to academic freedom from multiple sources. Over against the secular academy, these voices have defended the legitimacy of a bounded academic freedom at Christian colleges. Over against those who would want to further limit academic freedom, these voices have defended the importance of academic

freedom from ad hoc attacks, informal silencing procedures, or other threats to well-intentioned, conscientiously developed, confessionally grounded teaching and scholarship. In other words, these writings simultaneously affirm both the freedom of the institution to establish a particular academic freedom policy and the freedom of individual faculty members to fulfill their calling as teachers and scholars.¹⁰

As a result, Calvin College is a Christian community of learning that stands in contrast, on the one hand, to institutions with an atmosphere that is both authoritarian and compromised by populist suspicion of intellectual pursuits, and, on the other, to institutions with the kind of theological or religious pluralism that often leads to a lowest-common-denominator discourse. In theory, and often in practice, Calvin College has created an environment where professors and students can be free from both the often unquestioned “orthodoxies” of the secular academy and from the unquestioned extra-confessional “orthodoxies” of Christian communities. This is a fragile balance that requires ongoing attention.

II. Scriptural authority, the Reformed confessions, and the call to faithful interpretation

The faculty handbook at Calvin states that “Calvin College faculty members are required to sign a *Covenant for Faculty Members* in which they affirm the three historic Reformed forms of unity—the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*—and pledge to teach, speak, and write in harmony with the confessions” (3.6.1.1). Later, in discussing academic freedom, the handbook states that “the faculty member shall be judged only by the confessional standards of Calvin College, and by the professional standards appropriate to his or her role and discipline” (3.6.4). When challenges to academic freedom arise at Calvin, they often relate to the precise interpretation and function of these confessional standards.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Authority of God’s Word

The purpose of confessional subscription is to strengthen our witness to the lordship of Jesus and our life together as fellow disciples of Jesus. The confessions are a form of testimony and doxology, a means by which we testify together to our common faith in the triune God and our freedom both from the tyranny of personal autonomy and secular humanism, and from the effects of inadequate accounts of the Christian faith. They are a means by which we declare that we are professors of the Christian faith, announcing that our world belongs to God and that our only comfort is found in God’s hold on us through Jesus Christ.

Confessional affirmation is a means by which to uphold rather than displace scriptural authority. By signing the *Covenant for Faculty Members*, Calvin faculty confess that they submit to the authority of all of Scripture, and therefore that they accept the subordination of the confessions to the primary

¹⁰ The interplay of these two freedoms is discussed in James Gordon, “Individual and Institutional Academic Freedom at Religious Colleges and Universities,” *Journal of College and University Law* 30.1 (2003): 1-28; and in David M. Rabban, “A Functional Analysis of ‘Individual’ and ‘Institutional’ Academic Freedom under the First Amendment,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 53.3 (1990): 227-301.

normativity of Scripture. The Bible and the confessions should not be viewed as two independent entities which may vie for relative authority over against each other. The Bible is the ultimate authority. The confessions offer a summary of biblical teaching for the purpose of forming disciples, clarifying biblical teaching on a given point of doctrine, and helping the Christian community avoid misleading interpretations of biblical texts. Like the “rule of faith” in the early church, the confessions both emerge from the Bible and in turn guide the interpretation of the Bible.¹¹ They are a tool to help believers practice the hermeneutical rule that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” For this reason, many writings about the confessions refuse to speak about the “Scripture and the confessions” as two sources of authority, but instead speak of “the Bible as interpreted by the confessions.”¹² Importantly, the normativity of Scripture for us and our common work pertains to all scriptural teaching, not only to matters which the confessions state explicitly.

The authority of Scripture, in turn, is grounded in the work of the triune God. Both the inspiration and interpretation of the Bible are an exercise of the authority of Jesus Christ, made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Belgic Confession explains: “We believe without a doubt all things contained in them—not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God” (Belgic Confession, Art. 5). This means that “discerning the spirits” is one of the most significant ongoing tasks for disciples of Jesus in all walks of life. Scriptural authority is also not an end in itself. It is grounded in and points to the authority of Jesus Christ.

Interpreting the Bible and the Confessions

This vision calls us to exercise great care in our interpretation of the Bible, a challenging task given the diversity of biblical materials, the varying social and historical conditions in which the biblical texts were first written, the different assumptions and capacities that we each bring as interpreters, and the challenges of the interpretative task in a postmodern age.

Faithful interpretation arises out of communities of disciples. The Bible is authoritative for the body of Christ constituted by every member’s submission to the lordship of Christ. The Bible instructs us in the pathways of true liberty and freedom from the power of sin. As redeemed sinners, submitted to the lordship of Christ, we anticipate that God’s Word to us will typically challenge, subvert, and condemn many of the human assumptions and preunderstandings that characterize our comfort zones, convicting us as well

¹¹ As Todd Billings describes it, “the rule of faith emerges from Scripture” and “provides extra biblical guidance about the center and periphery of God’s story of salvation accessed through Scripture” (*The Word of God for the People of God* [Eerdmans, 2010], p. xiv; see also p. 22).

¹² For this reason, the confessions have not been considered a “Tradition” that stands next to or over against Scripture, but rather are understood as an articulation of scriptural authority. See Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, for a description of two approaches to the role of tradition in the reception of scriptural teaching. See also Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. John Bolt (Baker, 2003), pp. 489–494; and especially Jaroslav Pelikan, “Confessional Rules of Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *Credo* (Yale U. Press, 2003), 142–157.

as comforting us. Hearing and obeying God's Word entails the lifelong cultivation of certain moral, intellectual, and volitional capacities that are essential to a healthy Christian life. In sum, as confessional Christians, we interpret the Bible "in the context of the triune activity of God, the God who uses Scripture to reshape the church into Christ's image by the Spirit's power."¹³

While the confessions do not themselves include an extended discussion of biblical hermeneutics, they do commit us to interpret the Bible within the bounds of certain convictions. For example, the confessions commit us to a view of the inspiration of Scripture in which the agency of both the Holy Spirit and human writers is significant (Belgic Confession, Art. 3), and a view that the entire Scripture is authoritative (Belgic Confession, Art. 5). The confessions also commit us to understand the creation as God's revelation (Belgic Confession, Art. 2), giving us the challenge and privilege of drawing upon our knowledge of the Bible as we study creation and drawing upon our knowledge of creation as we interpret the Bible. The confessions also reflect a particular way of reading the Bible, offering an example of the fruit of a hermeneutic which is guided by these claims.

This vision also calls us to take great care as we interpret the confessions. The confessions are historical documents with emphases and vocabulary that reflect local circumstances. But this does not mean that we treat these documents as inaccessible to us or as mere historical artifacts. Indeed, we are communally committed—through the *Covenant for Faculty Members*—to affirm them as living documents, offering themes that we agree to teach diligently and at times presenting us with dilemmas that require careful and honest discussion.¹⁴ In this way, the confessions are as important for Calvin College as the Constitution or Bill of Rights is for jurisprudence in the United States. As Joel Carpenter explains, "Commitment to a particular way of thinking and seeing theologically does not foreclose fresh inquiry, but places it within a coherent and living theological and intellectual heritage. In that sense, it is much more like American constitutionalism than like a rigid doctrinal fundamentalism."¹⁵

This analogy does not solve every problem of confessional interpretation. Indeed, just as American jurisprudence is complicated by a multiplicity of judicial philosophies held by various judges and politicians, so too there are a range of approaches to the interpretation of the confessions. Some of the same questions that arise in judicial philosophy also arise in confessional interpretation: How does the intent of the writer shape interpretation? Are we bound not only to the claims of the text, but also to the assumptions made by the text?

The complexities of these questions can certainly create points of ambiguity and disagreement. This is one reason it is so important to interpret

¹³ J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God* (Eerdmans, 2010), p. xiii.

¹⁴ As, for example, when the CRC moved to alter the presentation of materials in the confessions regarding the Anabaptists and the Catholic mass.

¹⁵ Joel Carpenter, "Holding with Confessions," *Perspectives* (Oct. 1999): 18. For comparisons between constitutional interpretation and scriptural and confessional interpretations, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Interpreting the Bible and the Constitution* (Yale U. Press, 2004), and Ronald R. Garet, "Comparative Normative Hermeneutics: Scripture, Literature, Constitution," *Southern California Law Review* 58 (1985): 37-127.

the Bible and the confessions together as part of the body of Christ. When ambiguity and disagreement do arise, then we rely on a set of deliberative bodies and duly approved procedures that are consistent with a polity that is grounded in the confessions—a polity that allows for the exercise of authority and mutual accountability by duly constituted deliberative bodies.

We engage in such interpretive deliberations with great care, eager to avoid two extremes: a community that is so rootless that any interpretation is deemed acceptable, and one that is so authoritarian that interpretations are too firmly drawn.

Even if confessional affirmation is regarded as an imperfect system, it is what we have (and, as many have noted, it may well be one of the least problematic options available to Christian colleges and universities).

III. The function of the confessions as orienting center and boundary marker

The confessions have two primary functions with respect to academic freedom: a centering and a boundary function.¹⁶ These two functions are succinctly noted by a recent observer of Calvin College, Robert Benne, who comments that the *Form of Subscription* (recently replaced by the *Covenant for Faculty Members*) “not only sets dogmatic boundaries, but also delineates a particular way of thinking and seeing.”¹⁷ These functions are related but are distinct from the function of the documents during the time in which they were written. That is, while confessions may have been written in particular historical circumstances to combat particular heresies and testify to particular aspects of the gospel, they perform a different function once they are adopted by a denomination or a college as an ongoing doctrinal standard.

A. The Confessions as an Orienting Center or Common Point of View

The *Covenant for Faculty Members*, which all Calvin faculty sign, includes the following: “Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.” Over the course of Calvin’s history, one of the primary ways this has been worked out is through an integrative approach to teaching and learning. Confessional affirmation entails a commitment to approach all topics from a perspective or point of view articulated in the confessions. The convictions articulated in the confessions offer a robust biblical perspective which has implications for every area of human endeavor.

The adverbs in the statement (“heartily,” “faithfully”) are important. Signing entails an eagerness to pursue this perspectival learning. Signing the

¹⁶ There is a moderately large body of literature on the nature of the confessions and what it means to be a confessing church (e.g., *Calvin Seminary Forum*, Spring 2008). There are a few sources on the nature of confessional subscription (e.g., H. De Moor, *Equipping the Saints* [Kampen, 1986], 57-77, 309-313; Jaroslav Pelikan, “Confessional Subscription as Legal Compliance,” in *Credo* [Yale University Press, 2003], 264-273). There is far less literature on the relationship between confessional subscription and academic freedom, in part because very few Christian colleges link confessional subscription and academic freedom (e.g., Joel Carpenter, “Holding with Confessions,” *Perspectives* [Oct. 1999]: 17-18).

¹⁷ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premiere Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 102-103.

Covenant for Faculty Members as a grudging concession is a denial of the *Covenant for Faculty Members'* tone and language. So Calvin faculty, for example, honor Christ's lordship in all matters, honor the authority of Scripture, and promote human acts that "arise out of true faith, conform to God's law, and are done for God's glory" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 91). We might speak of this perspectival function using optical metaphors (e.g., "our vision needs to be sharpened," "astigmatisms need to be corrected") or through other images (e.g., "the confessions are a nourishing center of our communal life").¹⁸ Typically, the language here implies an outward orientation: we operate *from* or *through* a perspective or point of view grounded in the confessions as we turn our attention *toward* topics drawn from the full range of human learning. In exploring the full range of human experience, faculty will certainly acquaint students with many perspectives that are inconsistent with the confessions, but will do so from a perspective of affirmation of the confessions.

When we speak of the confessions in this way, it is not helpful to speak in categorical terms of a given topic as being confessional or not. Rather, it is better to ask how a point of view grounded in the confessions shapes our approach to any given topic. On some topics, the confessions will rather explicitly shape the conclusions we draw. On others, the connection will be much more indirect (e.g., on which arguments help us decide on the value of a given economic or philosophical theory).¹⁹ On many technical questions, a confessional perspective may make no noticeable difference (e.g., on the functions of a dominant chord in music) though it may shape how we would describe the significance of those questions and their relationship to other fields of knowledge. Indeed, the confessions do not dictate a specific outcome to many of the questions which faculty explore in their research and teaching. The confessions do not address every topic, but at Calvin, we address every topic from a scriptural Christ-centered point of view, which is articulated in the confessions.

For this reason, many faculty members develop a confessionally grounded perspective without frequent explicit reference to confessions, choosing instead to draw on the same biblical texts and themes that inspired the confessions in the first place, as well as on the contributions of theorists, artists, theologians, and others who work in ways that are consistent with the confessions. Many of these resources will, in fact, come from beyond the Reformed tradition. In this way, the confessions function as a kind of "fundamental" articulation of core commitments rather than a comprehensive statement of Christian responses to all topics. At the same time, given the particular status of the confessions in the *Covenant for Faculty Members*, it is important for Calvin faculty to be aware of which specific confessional claims are especially pertinent to their own work. In many cases, they may well offer faculty access to a rich vein of theological resources.

¹⁸ Kevin van Hoozer proposes an image from the world of theater, speaking of confessions as "dramaturgical traditions that preserve precious insights into the canonical script" (*The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* [Westminster John Knox Press, 2005], p. 253).

¹⁹ Indeed, on some questions, people taking opposite sides on a given debate may each make arguments that are based on Scripture and are consistent with the confessions. The Bible and the confessions do not provide a definitive approach to several contested economic and political claims in the Christian community.

There is also a danger that confessional affirmation can foster an unhealthy Reformed triumphalism. This is why it is important to remember that many confessional claims are not unique to the Reformed tradition, including a substantial number of the claims that most directly inform ongoing teaching and research. At the same time, there are instances where Reformed angularities can factor quite prominently in how we approach an issue. For example, the Reformed tradition's high view of the ascension has been a resource in recent faculty publications. Indeed, the Reformed tradition provides an especially strong context in which to pursue academic callings, and that strength is carried, in part, through confessional affirmation.

This confessional form of perspectival teaching and research does not emerge without care. It needs to be practiced.²⁰ This is, in part, why the college instituted the Kuiper Seminar, requires faith-and-learning statements, and funds perspectival scholarship through CCCS. The confessions are, of course, only one resource to help us hone this perspectival vision. We also have the Contemporary Testimony, commentaries on the confessions, publications in nearly all disciplines that arise out of Reformed confessional commitments, and statements and confessional documents from a variety of other Reformed bodies around the world.

It is important to stress that this process is an academic undertaking. It is a process driven by questions, pursuing topics that are often filled with ambiguity. The undertaking involves give-and-take, frank disagreement, and occasionally dramatic shifts in frameworks of understanding. In this process, some of us use technical argumentation, some write satire, others create poetry or novels or sculptures, still others write devotionally. We engage works that are both pious and blasphemous, deeply orthodox and subtly heterodox. Controversial topics may sometimes cause us to suspend judgment or speak prophetically, to empathize with opponents and be self-critical of friends. All of this work is spiritually dangerous, though no less dangerous than avoiding this kind of activity.

Calvin faculty members spend most days working at this task: pursuing teaching and learning in a way that exercises academic freedom from a Reformed point of view. We do so within an ethos of freedom: we freely choose to sign the *Covenant for Faculty Members*, and we freely work to address the world from a confessional perspective. We also do so as members of Reformed congregations, participating in communities who strive, however imperfectly, to live out these confessional commitments. All of this already happens, never perfectly, but often with great vigor. This positive, constructive mode of engagement with the living tradition should continue to be nurtured and strengthened.²¹

²⁰ Charles Taylor offers a fruitful set of categories to develop this, as he describes the interplay of "rules" and "practices." See "To Follow a Rule," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Harvard U. Press, 1995), pp. 178-180. As Taylor's essay probes the significance of unformulated background understanding, communal acts of interpretation, and formulated rules, it offers a particularly interesting framework in which to think about how confessional subscription, church membership requirements, the Christian schooling requirement, and faculty development programs promise to sustain the mission and ethos at Calvin College.

²¹ See Joel Carpenter, "The Perils of Prosperity: Neo-Calvinism and the Future of Religious Colleges," in Paul J. Dovre, ed., *The Future of Religious Colleges* (Eerdmans, 2002).

B. *The Confessions as Boundaries or Standards*

When necessary, confessional commitments function as a *boundary* to limit academic freedom.²² Apart from issuing a formal gravamen that expresses disagreement with the confessions, Calvin faculty are not free to argue, for example, that the resurrection of Jesus did not happen, or that God did not create the earth.²³ We often speak about this boundary function using metaphors of legal infringement: the boundaries need to be “enforced.” We might also speak of these boundaries in covenantal terms: to have made a covenantal commitment to one community means living within the boundaries established by that community.

When we speak of the confessions as boundaries, it is possible to speak of a given argument or position as being “consistent with the confessions” or “not consistent with the confessions” (a commonly used phrase in CRC synodical deliberations). For example, to assert that the resurrection of Jesus did not happen would be beyond the bounds of the confessions; it would be “not consistent with the confessions.” From this perspective, it would be better to speak of a *position* on an issue rather than an *issue* or *topic* itself as being confessional. Some topics are directly addressed by the confessions (e.g., the resurrection of Jesus). Others, though not explicitly addressed in the confessions, can still be approached from a confessional point of view (e.g., abortion, warfare, economic justice). Some positions on *each* of these topics may be judged to be “consistent with the confessions,” others may be judged to be “inconsistent with the confessions.” This is similar to the language of the faculty handbook, which speaks of Calvin faculty members teaching, speaking, and writing “in harmony with the confessions” (3.6.1.1).

It is true that there are many topics that are not associated with an explicit confessional boundary, and others that are. But given that we are committed to approach every topic from a confessionally grounded point of view and that many topics which are not explicitly named in the confessions nevertheless give rise to positions that may or not be consistent with the confessions, it is advisable to minimize, if not eliminate, the categorical use of the term “confessional.”²⁴

²² Lee Hardy, “The Value of Limitations,” *Academe Online* (Jan.-Feb., 2006).

²³ A “gravamen” is a kind of ecclesiastical communication regarding problems with confessional subscription. Even when they hold a position that appears to be clearly outside the boundaries, Calvin faculty members are free to state their position, but in a formal gravamen (see the Covenant for Officebearers and the Supplement to Church Order Article 5). There are two types of gravamina: “a *confessional-difficulty gravamen*: a gravamen in which a subscriber expresses personal difficulty with the confession but does not call for a revision of the confessions, and a *confessional-revision gravamen*: a gravamen in which a subscriber makes a specific recommendation for revision of the confessions.” A brief history of gravamina in the CRC includes those of D. H. Kromminga (1945) on premillennialism, Clarence Boersma (1952) on the Belgic Confession, Harry Boer (1977, resolved in 1980, 1981) on reprobation. For Harry Boer’s account, see *The Doctrine of Reprobation in the Christian Reformed Church* (Eerdmans, 1983).

²⁴ The categorical use of the term “confessional” is reinforced by the use of the term “*status confessionis*” to describe significant confessional moments. See, for example, Eugene Teselle, “How Do We Recognize a *Status Confessionis*?” *Theology Today* 45.1 (1988): 71-78; Joachim Guhrt, “*Status Confessionis*: The Witness of a Confessing Church,” *Reformed World* 37 (December 1983), 301-8; D. J. Smit, “What Does *Status Confessionis* Mean?” *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church*, ed. G. D. Cloete and D. J. Smit (Grand

In this view, it is problematic to assert that a topic like homosexuality is either confessional or not. This statement is understandable in that the topic is not explicitly addressed in the confessions. Yet some positions regarding homosexual relationships clearly fall outside the confessional boundaries (they are “inconsistent with the confessions”), some fall within the boundaries (they are “consistent with the confessions”), and some may be disputed. For example, some Christian proponents of gay marriage themselves point out that some Christian defenses of gay marriage violate scriptural teaching. Further, some proponents of gay marriage would repudiate the confessions, and build their case on very different doctrinal positions. To avoid the confusion caused by the categorical use of the term “confessional,” it would be best to avoid the categorical phrases “confessional” and “not confessional,” and ask instead, “In what way do the confessions bear on a given topic?” and “What positions may be consistent with or inconsistent with the confessions?”

There are several reasons why boundaries are important.²⁵ First, the confessions make claims about topics that are of central importance to the Christian faith. Several claims made by some Christians today (including some people who might identify with the broad Reformed tradition) either contradict or are inconsistent with the confessions and should be simply out-of-bounds at Calvin College: the claim that God is not sovereign, the claim that the Trinity is a fourth-century invention that offers a fundamentally distorted view of divine life, the idea that the resurrection of Jesus was not a historical fact in any sense. This does not mean that these ideas should not be studied, but it does mean that faculty members are not free to advance them apart from issuing a gravamen.

Second, stating boundaries explicitly serves the community by warning of possible danger, much like an ordinance which prevents people from swimming in riptides. Such a rule is not necessary if everyone always exercises good judgment and is an expert swimmer. Still, because our capacities vary and judgment is often clouded, articulating the rule is well-advised. It alerts swimmers that to persist in swimming entails risk of danger. So a confessional boundary regarding the significance of the resurrection, for example, functions to alert members of the community to pay special attention when discussing views that minimize its importance. The language about chastity (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 108-109) functions at minimum to make us very aware of any position we might take about sexual expression that erodes the link between sexuality and holiness.

Third, naming specific boundaries is necessary for the same reason that due process requirements are necessary: they are institutional processes for effectively responding to problems that inevitably arise. The reason we

Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 7-32; Milan Opocënsky, “Processus Confessionis,” in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, ed. Wallace M. Alston and Michael Welker (Eerdmans, 2003), 385-397. Many of these articles discuss the complications of this categorical use of the term. In the context of this document, the term “status confessionis” could be understood to mean that “a topic of great weight or significance promises to undermine confessional integrity, requiring institutional action to define confessional boundaries.”

²⁵ The history of Christianity attests to wise use of boundary language: (a) the famous Chalcedonian statement of Christology—that Jesus’ two natures are unified “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation”—is an instructive example of how theological language can protect against heresy while not claiming to define inexhaustible mystery; and (b) the term “Canons” of Dort means, literally, a “measuring stick.”

ultimately need them is because of our own imperfections and the ways that individual judgments can go awry. They are, in part, an institutional response to the effects of the fall. To deny that we need boundaries is to deny the limitations in knowledge and perspective that we all share. To choose a dramatic example, the declaration that the theological defense of apartheid was a heresy was a boundary-setting act that was necessary because of a profound error in judgment.

Fourth, care for boundaries can, under the right circumstances, establish and nurture trust. The confessions are a sign of unity and identity for a broader community. Confessional boundaries need care—whether we specify them, reinforce them, add to them, or adjust them—for the simple reason that church unity needs to be actively tended. When we think about any specific topic, our concern should be with addressing a constituency of 5,000 faculty, staff, and students on campus; 60,000 alumni; 260,000 people in the CRC; and several hundred thousand others around the world with whom we enjoy some kind of relationship. No one person, and no group of a hundred people, has the capacity to keep up with every contested issue. We trust each other to each be stewards of certain concerns and areas of discourse. We trust each other to work in an area, to test boundaries when necessary, and to call attention to boundaries that need to be reexamined. Tending boundaries transparently and forthrightly builds trust.

Fifth, boundaries function to protect faculty from restrictions on academic freedom that are imposed from points of view that fall outside the confessions. As Lee Hardy summarizes, boundaries “guarantee that positions formally consistent with those boundaries, and taken in good scholarly conscience, are not marginalized by political means. . . . The creeds may function as a tether, but they must also serve as a barricade.”²⁶ Charges of confessional unorthodoxy are only allowable on the basis of the confessions, and not on the basis of extraconfessional convictions or attitudes.

This concern for boundaries fits well with theological discussions of freedom, particularly in the Augustinian and Reformed tradition. This view contends that to be free is *not* to be unfettered and able to do or say whatever we want. Indeed, Augustine describes that scenario as the very essence of sinful brokenness. In contrast, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards, among others, articulate what is sometimes described as a “positive” account of freedom. On this account, we are free when we are enabled and empowered to do the good—that is, when we are “fettered” to true claims which orient us toward the good and when we are formed to be people disposed to that good.²⁷

In sum, the confessions articulate both the center and the boundaries of our common work as disciples of Jesus. Sometimes the two functions of the

²⁶ Hardy, p. 8.

²⁷ See Henry Stob, *The Christian Concept of Freedom* (Eerdmans, 1957): “Human freedom can never be described simply as exemption from restraint, but only adjectivally as exemption from ‘undue’ restraint. . . . The liberal notion of freedom is negative; it is freedom from. For the Calvinist it is positive; it is freedom for. For the secularist, freedom is an end. For the Calvinist it is a means. . . . We know, therefore, that the question of freedom is never rightly put until one asks, What Lord do you acknowledge? To what do you tie yourself?” (31-32). See also Henry Stob, “Academic Freedom at a Christian College,” in *Theological Reflections* (Eerdmans, 1981), 240-243; and William Cavanaugh, “Sailing under True Colors: Academic Freedom and the Ecclesially Based University” in *Conflicting Allegiances: The Church-Based University in a Liberal Democratic Society*, Michael J. Budde and John Wright, eds., (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004): 31-52.

confessions (the perspectival and the boundary functions) are overlaid with other metaphors associated with the ethos or communication style of a given community. The first is associated with a “truth seeking understanding” mode, the second with a “faith-defending” mode. While this is an apt sociological and historical description of two broad types of denominations and colleges in the recent past, it can quickly become a false dichotomy. It would be unfortunate if this sociology and history became determinative for us. A confessional perspective leads naturally to both kinds of discourse. Indeed, both modes are called for and modeled by biblical texts. The challenge is to create a culture in which there is a healthy mix of both modes of discourse.

IV. The organic nature of confessional boundaries

One of the largest challenges in creating such a culture concerns the definition of the boundaries. The exact nature of these boundaries is sometimes ambiguous and sometimes contested.²⁸ Sometimes this is because the confessions are not as precise as are current discussions of a given topic. Sometimes this is because the church community—wisely or unwisely, intentionally or unwittingly—tolerates or welcomes a certain range of opinion about a given topic. This is as it should be: the documents are “living documents,” much like the U.S. Constitution.²⁹ Ultimately, the operative confessional boundaries are those particular boundaries which a community chooses to enforce. Because they are the documents of the church, the church has the authority and responsibility to see that the documents are functioning in a healthy way and to make final judgments about boundaries when necessary. The CRC Church Order Supplement acknowledges this:

The signatory does not by affirming the confessions declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matters confessed. Nor does the signatory declare that every teaching of the Scriptures is set forth in our confessions, or that every heresy is rejected and refuted by them.

A signatory is bound only to those doctrines that are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines, nor to the theological deductions that some may draw from the doctrines set forth in the confessions. However, no one is free to decide for oneself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards. In the event that such a question should arise, the decision of the assemblies of the church shall be sought and acquiesced in.³⁰

²⁸ At times this point is made by the phrase “messy boundaries.” Yet this can convey to some the sense that the boundaries are unimportant, or that our confessional commitments are spineless. While there certainly are almost inevitable inconsistencies in a large community, it is important to remember that we are dealing with an organic body of diverse individuals. At other times we may speak of “gray areas.”

²⁹ The metaphor “organic” and the phrase “living document” convey (a) that the claims made by the confessions are understood to be true assertions today just as they were when the document was written, (b) that the resonances of particular claims inevitably change in light of a changing cultural context, (c) that this confessional tradition is amendable, through a range of possible synodical actions. These terms also resist two opposite errors: (a) the notion that we are today bound by every assumption of the original writers of the confessional documents (e.g., their views of science, race and ethnicity, gender), and (b) a view which suggests that the historical distance between when the documents were written and today makes their meaning inaccessible or passé.

³⁰ CRC Church Order Supplement, Article 5. For similar caveats among conservative Presbyterians, see Charles Hodge, “What Is Meant by Adopting the Westminster Confession?”

This paragraph confirms this organic understanding, affirming both an ongoing discussion about which references, allusions, and remarks are incidental to a given doctrine as well as the importance of submission to the assemblies of the church. This paragraph is a strong clue about the operative philosophy of confessional subscription in the CRC. There have been intense debates about the nature of confessional subscription in almost every generation since the Reformation.³¹ The CRC was, in fact, founded in the context of a dispute about the nature of confessional subscription.³²

On the spectrum of views about confessional subscription, the CRC has avoided two extremes: (a) the view that subscription binds us to the exact wording and inherent philosophical assumptions of each confessional article, and (b) the view that the confessions are merely “points of departure” or “reference points” for discussion. This approach assumes that confessional subscription entails a commitment to a set of convictions and to practices which are consistent with them, but also that signers are not bound by every assumption or implicit philosophical conviction of the sixteenth century, nor to incidental details or the exact wording of every article. So those who promote making the Belhar Confession a matter of subscription in the CRC do so out of the conviction that confessions matter, and this is the reason why they urge the church today to place its rejection of racism on a confessional footing. But the same people would not insist that confessional subscription binds us, for example to the assertion that Paul wrote Hebrews (Belgic Confession, Article 4).³³

This conversation about approaches to confessional subscription can be sustained at a level of detail that would rival typologies of theories about contemporary constitutional interpretation, literary criticism, or biblical hermeneutics. The subject has generated a surprisingly large bibliography in both Reformed and Lutheran circles, including a wide variety of terms to describe various positions. These terms can be charted on a spectrum that ranges from strict to lenient views of subscription.³⁴

in A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (1869, reprinted, *Banner of Truth*, 1992), 420–422. For further explanation, see Report 38, *Agenda for Synod 1976*, pp. 408–49.

³¹ See, for example, David W. Hall, ed., *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*, second ed. (Covenant Foundation, 2001).

³² See, for example, R. C. Janssen, *By This Our Subscription: Confessional Subscription in the Dutch Reformed Tradition since 1816* (Kampen, 2009); Donald Sinnema, “The Origin of the Form of Subscription in the Dutch Reformed Tradition,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 42 (2007): 256–282; John Van Engen, “The Problem of Tradition in the Christian Reformed Church,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 20 (1985): 69–89.

³³ Other matters that have been judged not to be weighty include the (1) judgment of Judas and Simon the Sorcerer described in Belgic Confession Article 35, (2) the specific division of the law in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 93, (3) the use of Gen. 1:26–27 as a proof text for the Trinity in Belgic Confession Article 9, (4) the selective use of certain biblical manuscripts or translations of 1 John 5:7 as a trinitarian proof text in Belgic Confession Article 9, and (5) whether the relationship of body and soul in a human person is an apt analogy for the relationship of Jesus’ divine and human nature (Athanasian Creed). See discussion in Janssen, 378, 380.

³⁴ This chart includes a wide variety of terms used in Presbyterian and Lutheran circles in several countries. The strongest debates emerge between proponents of various terms within a given column. For more, see Janssen, *By This Our Subscription*; Hall, *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*; and Erik T. R. Samuelson, “Roadmaps to Grace: Five Types of Lutheran Confessional Subscription,” *Dialog* 45.2 (Summer 2006): 157–172.

<div> <div>More strict</div> <div>More lenient</div> </div>					
Indifference	Strict Subscription	Subscription that is binding and plenary, but not reprinting ³⁵	Subscription that is "appropriating" but not "loose" or indeterminate	Lenient Subscription	Indifference
Anti-confessional biblicism	Verbatim subscription Reprintation Juridical confessionalism Strict constructionist "ipsissima verba" Closed confessionalism	"Substance or Substantial Subscription" ³⁶ ; "Differentiating Complete Subscription" ³⁷ ; "Constructive confessionalism" ³⁸ ; "quia" (because of) confessionalism ³⁹ ; "plenary confessionalism"	"Essential Tenet" subscription ⁴⁰ "Appropriating confessionalism" (as opposed to "binding confessionalism")	"Attitudinal Interpretation"; "Quatenus" (insofar as) confessionalism (see note below); "Floating" or "open" confessionalism; "Loose" or latitudinarian subscriptionists; Confessions as "points of reference" or "guideposts"	Liberal non-confessionalism Anti-subscriptionists
	The view that subscribers are bound to the exact words of the confession, as they were understood when they were written.	The view that subscribers are bound by (a) the entire confessional document because the documents offer faithful interpretation of Scripture, and (b) by the task of continuing to articulate and practice the Christian faith in different historical and cultural contexts. Subscribers are not bound to think that the confessions are the best possible articulation of specific themes for every time and place, and are bound to develop ever more faithful ways of speaking and practicing the faith, revising the confessions when necessary.	The view that subscribers are bound only to the essential tenets of a given confession, rather than to the entirety of the documents, and that subscribers only agree to "appropriate" the themes of the confessions, rather than be bound to them and to promote them actively.	The view that the confessions are only binding "insofar as" they agree with Scripture and that they primarily offer an instructive example of how to speak of God and the world, rather than offering any binding content.	

³⁵ The CRC would almost certainly be associated with this column, as suggested by the Church Order Supplement 5 material quoted earlier, and the CRC's past actions to alter the presentation of material in various confessional articles (e.g., re the Catholic mass, the Anabaptists, and role of the state). At the same time, many of these specific terms have not been used in CRC discussions.

It is important to note that this spectrum describes various positions within the Reformed tradition worldwide. The practice of confessional affirmation at Calvin College and in the CRC differentiates the community from either more strict or more lenient approaches.

This middle way also acknowledges that an implicit hierarchy of boundaries emerges over time. Some matters are “weightier” than others (cf. Matt. 23:23). The strongest boundaries are those concerning fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, articulated in the ecumenical creeds. Other boundaries remain around uniquely Reformed doctrines or approaches. Still, the *Covenant for Officebearers* binds us not only to the ecumenical creeds, but also to the Reformed confessions. Healthy boundaries with respect to Reformed doctrines need to be maintained not only with integrity and transparency, but also with humility and an abiding commitment to the catholicity of the church—which is, indeed, a primary Reformed confession. The middle way also means that there is an ongoing process of communal discernment around which boundaries to enforce and in what way—a process that is both necessary and complex.

This process of communal discernment is inevitably messy. It involves many people making judgments, often on the basis of different motives, assumptions, and goals. It involves the work of successive deliberative bodies (e.g., synods, boards of trustees) comprised of people with a range of sensibilities, institutional memory, ecumenical experience, and capacity for biblical exegesis. The process can also be instructive and even sanctifying. By working together to discern the meaning and implications of the Scriptures for our life together, we practice what it means to be bound together as part of the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, some despair that this process of communal enforcement and boundary determination will ultimately be arbitrary and political. Yet it would not be fair to dismiss this communal interpretation as entirely unworkable. When faced with prior discussion about the role of government, a posture toward Anabaptists, and a Reformed assessment of Roman Catholic eucharistic theology, the CRC has altered the presentation of the text of the confessions, placing certain passages in footnotes. When given an opportunity to add a confession related to an especially crucial topic (e.g., the Belhar Confession), the CRC has moved to actively consider that possibility. On other issues, such as the exact formulation of the doctrine of divine election or divine simplicity, the church welcomes or tolerates a range of opinion. On still other issues, the whole church can unwittingly move beyond the confes-

³⁶ The idea that one is bound by the substance of a confessional claim rather than to precise phrasing of every claim.

³⁷ This term refers to the idea that there are a range of confessional claims with varying degrees of weight, with little if any tolerance afforded around weighty or central matters, and greater tolerance around less weighty matters. The term is used to describe the confessional views of Groen van Prinsterer, one of Abraham Kuyper’s mentors. See R. Janssen, 383-386.

³⁸ A term coined by Lutheran theologian Carl Braaten.

³⁹ *Quia* subscription refers to the claim that confessions are binding “because they agree with Scripture.” *Quatenus* subscription refers to the claim that the confessions are binding “insofar as they agree with Scripture.” This distinction has been prominent in both Reformed and Lutheran discussions of subscription.

⁴⁰ The current practice of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

sions, and the confessions can be invoked as a way of bringing the church back to a common understanding or set of practices.⁴¹ Any individual, congregation, classis, or agency that believes that the boundaries are too unclear or that they have been too narrowly or laxly enforced can ask for a clarification. Thus, even though they have not always been perfectly utilized, we do have processes in place to address challenges that may arise.

Sometimes boundary setting is associated with unhealthy and destructive fear: fear of change or fear of the unknown. Indeed, some boundaries have been defined or enforced because of unhealthy fear. Yet boundary making or enforcing is not *necessarily* the result of unhealthy fear. Some fear may be healthy. It is healthy to fear losing something good, right, and true when there is a real danger that such loss may occur. Further, some boundary setting is driven not by fear but by moral courage. It was an act of moral courage when some South African denominations declared that the theological defense of apartheid crossed a confessional boundary. Often an act of boundary making or enforcement is the result of mixed motives, and often our attribution of motives is governed by our prior point of view. What seems like courage to some seems like fear to others, and vice versa.

Boundary Setting and Appropriate Degrees of Tolerance

At times there may be wisdom in tolerating a certain level of ambiguity or disagreement, times in which drawing a very clear boundary would be counterproductive. Engineers who design bridges, for example, specify dimensions for materials along with tolerances, indicating the amount of variation that is acceptable without compromising the design. At some point, the amount of variation will compromise the design (e.g., the truss is too long and will not fit in the bridge or the truss is too thin and will not support the weight it was designed for). The topic of divorce is one example with which the church has, in practice, chosen to live with some measure of ambiguity. Some discussions of creation and science have been strengthened by holding off a rush to judgment about the exact nature of a boundary. John Calvin himself called for tolerance for a certain range of views about the exact way Christians speak about what happens to the soul at the time of death.⁴²

An appropriate level of tolerance strengthens the common good. Lee Hardy explains that “by tolerating that which we disagree with, we seek to protect an end against inappropriate means for attaining it.” Further, some level of tolerance is absolutely necessary given the finite capacity of human beings, including the writers of the confessions, all faculty members, and any ecclesiastical or administrative unit. As Hardy explains, “If it is the duty of professors at a Reformed university to root out error in the Reformed tradition, then it is also the duty of the Reformed university to grant them the permission to do so. To suppress all critical discussion of the creeds at the institutional level would be to adopt means that work against the end of having true belief on matters religious. A church-related institution of higher learning should encourage reflection within certain religious boundaries

⁴¹ Several theologians, for example, have argued that the church over time set aside a confessional sacramental theology for a form of Zwinglian memorialism. In some cases, the confessions have been helpful in pulling the church back toward a confessional theology.

⁴² *Institutes* IV.1.10.

and reflection upon those religious boundaries.”⁴³ What is needed is what Presbyterian theologian Benjamin Warfield once described as “all reasonable liberty with all reasonable strictness.”⁴⁴

The urge to invoke a confessional boundary as a means of forcing a community to conform is tempting on both the left and right. How do we avoid the twin temptations: to fail to enforce boundaries on the one hand, and to set them too quickly on the other? We work together, over time, with the best available resources, according to duly established processes. Discerning when to articulate and defend a boundary is difficult at best. When a boundary question does arise, it is answered through duly established processes over time—a process that inevitably involves discussion, disagreement, and dialogue, and that must be transparent and widespread enough to generate significant buy-in over time.

Specific Boundaries at Calvin College and in the CRC

There are many examples of how more or less clear boundaries operate in the CRC at large, and also often at Calvin in particular, even on very divisive and challenging topics. For example,

- defending the idea that texts in the Bible are similar to other ancient documents does not cross a line, but advocating that the Bible is not uniquely inspired would cross a line;
- defending the idea that Jesus’ resurrection was different from a medical resuscitation would be common, but advocating that Jesus did not rise physically from the dead would cross a line;
- arguing that euthanasia on demand is morally acceptable would cross a (generally accepted) line, while calling for the withholding of life-preserving treatment in some circumstances does not, nor would wrestling with the way Christian moral claims should factor into civil policy in a pluralistic society;
- defending evolutionary theory in biology does not cross a line, while promoting philosophical naturalism or denying that God created the world crosses a line;
- defending pacifism does not cross a line, despite the CRC’s stated position endorsing a version of the just war theory;
- defending or opposing affirmative action may not cross a line, but defending arbitrary racial profiling practices would cross a line in light of the Bible’s clear teaching that human persons are created in God’s image;
- arguing that abortion on demand is morally acceptable would cross a line, while wrestling with how best to think about the beginning of life

⁴³ Hardy, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴ *Presbyterian Review*, 10.40 (Oct. 1889), 656-657, in a discussion of confessional subscription. The 1986 statement “The Confessional Nature of the Church,” by the Presbyterian Church (USA), concludes with these words: “Difficult as it is to find the way between church authority without personal freedom or personal freedom without church authority, a distinctive mark of the Reformed tradition is the belief that it is only by seeking this difficult way that the church can be a united community of Christians who are both ‘reformed and always being reformed’” (Section 29.154-155).

does not, nor would wrestling with the way Christian moral claims should factor into civil policy in a pluralistic society;

- arguing that a “social Darwinist” position regarding the poor and vulnerable is consistent with Christian moral claims would cross a line, but arguing for changes in welfare policy on the grounds that churches should do more for the poor voluntarily does not, nor would wrestling with the complexity of providing charity or defining justice in a secular society.

In each of these cases, it is not problematic for faculty to describe each of the positions and to engage students in vigorous debates about them. But in each of these cases, it would be problematic if faculty advocated a position that is not consistent with the confessions and their high view of scriptural authority. To be sure, this distinction can become complicated, especially because what is said in the classroom is not always what is heard. At times, the description of a position can be heard as advocacy of that position. This is an inevitable challenge of life together, and we must rigorously protect space for accurate presentations of various points of view, even as we work together for confessional integrity.

Further, each of these issues has a different history with respect to confessional affirmation. Some have been very controversial, some not. Some have been handled in ways that build trust, others not. Some of these issues have been discussed broadly, but without any discussion of whether certain positions cross a confessional boundary (e.g., euthanasia). In some cases, the community appears to be working with broad consensus without any need for articulating a precise definition. Some of these issues have been discussed very specifically in terms of a confessional boundary (e.g., creation and science).⁴⁵ While the CRC synods have not often rendered specific judgments about confessional boundaries, there are instances in which synod has specifically stated that some positions cross a confessional boundary,⁴⁶ and others in which synod has declared that competing positions on a contested issue are each consistent with the confessions and thus do not cross a confessional boundary (e.g., women’s ordination).⁴⁷ Taken together, these examples show that some positions on some issues can be contrary to the confessions even if synod has not specifically declared them to be contrary; some are known to be contrary without the need for synodical action. Some boundaries remain constant across cultures and historical periods, while others may shift because of changing contexts. At times, a particular boundary has been very clearly and painstakingly articulated (e.g., the Board of Trustees’ 1991

⁴⁵ Synod 1991 ruled that some formulations of the origins of the cosmos are inconsistent with the confessions, affirmed the need for continuing research, and offered pastoral guidelines for how that work could best be discussed (*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 762-68, 773-77). The *Acts of Synod* can be found in the Calvin library at BX6820.A3. An index of past synodical decisions can be found at BX6820.A32 2001. Electronic editions of all synodical materials can be found at www.crcna.org/SynodResources, including Rules for Synodical Procedure and the CRC Church Order.

⁴⁶ Synod 1974 declared that “anyone who holds the second-blessing teaching is thereby disqualified for office in the Christian Reformed Church.” The reference here is to those who hold the teaching that baptism in or with the Holy Spirit is a second blessing distinct from and usually received after conversion (*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 31).

⁴⁷ *Acts of Synod 1988*, 1989.

report on Howard Van Til's work on faith and science). More often, some ambiguity is tolerated. That ambiguity should not be viewed as the absence of a boundary, only the absence of an articulated boundary. The boundary may be unarticulated because it has never been questioned, or because it cannot be determined with confidence. Here we must be very careful to extend grace and hospitality particularly to new members of the community who may inadvertently step on these boundaries. This also points to a tension around the explicit naming of boundaries. On the one hand, it is unwise to state boundaries prematurely; on the other, unstated assumptions can easily lead to inhospitality.

Finally, it is important to note that there are implicit boundaries at stake with respect to a range of controversial topics and that these boundaries affect both the "right" and "left" of the political or ideological spectrum. This is why it is in everyone's best interest not to settle for either a general neglect of boundaries or for a culture of overly zealous boundary enforcement.

CRC Synodical Statements on Ethical and Doctrinal Issues

Over the past several decades, the CRC has issued several statements and reports on significant doctrinal and ethical issues (www.crcna.org/pages/positions.cfm). These statements do not automatically serve as boundary markers for academic freedom unless they are approved as an official interpretation of a confessional document.⁴⁸ Yet these statements are useful for the college in several ways. First, these reports are a resource for learning. They offer an interpretation of Scripture on the topic at hand, establishing a kind of benchmark for work on a given topic. Those who disagree with a given document, especially one which explains "the clear teaching of Scripture," need to demonstrate that an alternative position is based on an equally tenable interpretation of Scripture consistent with the confessions. Second, they are useful for helping faculty understand the constituency of the college. Third, they are case studies in approaching complex issues from a confessionally informed point of view. Calvin College's own expanded mission statement describes the role that these documents play as follows:

Over the years the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has enacted many such decisions that guide the teaching, scholarship, and daily living at the college. For example, Synod investigated and established a position on life issues well before the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case of 1973. Synod established decisive moral views on how we are to consider people of other cultures and racial backgrounds, and thereby has identified and condemned the racism prevalent in our culture. Synod adopted a resolution on pornography and sexuality that addresses a major moral concern in society. These positions grant a common reference point for the frequently more pluralistic views found at the college. Thereby Synod has established a structure for the college within which further debate may occur (*Expanded Mission Statement*, I.C.).

Third, these documents may help the college in determining institutional policy. This brings us to a complex decision issued by Synod 1975 about the status of synodical actions. This decision includes both of these assertions:

⁴⁸ *Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44. Synod 1926 did specifically say that certain statements about the Lord's Day "are to be regarded as an interpretation of our confessions" (*Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 191-92).

Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions, and they “shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order” (Church Order, Art. 29). All office-bearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances.

The confessions and synodical pronouncements have nuances of differences. They differ in the extent of their jurisdiction, in the nature of their authority, in the distinction of their purposes, in the measure of agreement expected, and in their use and function.

The use and function of synodical decisions are explicitly or implicitly indicated by the wording of the particular decision itself:

- 1) When a synodical pronouncement is set forth as an interpretation of the confession, this is its use and function.
- 2) When a synodical decision involves pronouncements that are related to the confessions or go beyond the confessions, the use and function of such decisions is to further express the faith of the church without such statements thereby becoming additions to the confessions.
- 3) When a synodical decision involves adjudication of a certain issue, this is its particular use and function although the decision may have doctrinal and ethical implications for the future.
- 4) When a synodical decision is expressed in the form of a testimony or letter, this is its use and function.
- 5) When a synodical decision is expressed as a guideline for further study or action, this is its use and function.
- 6) When a synodical decision is set forth as pastoral advice to churches or individuals, this is its use and function.

At the same time, while it is important to realize that synodical statements do not automatically become boundaries for academic freedom, it is also important to realize that the topics which they address may well have boundaries associated with them. Many of these are often unarticulated or untested, usually because there has been no need for them to become explicit. For example, the CRC statement on abortion does not explicitly state a boundary. Yet there would almost certainly be widespread consensus that defending the claim that abortion on demand is morally acceptable would cross a line. In other words, there is an operative, if unstated boundary.⁴⁹

Ecclesiastical Freedom in the CRC

Throughout the history of the CRC, there has been a strong tradition of what might be called “ecclesiastical freedom”—the freedom to disagree with positions of the CRC, and the freedom to challenge interpretations of the confessions, and even to challenge the confessions themselves. Such freedom was exercised by people, including Calvin faculty, who argued for the

⁴⁹ So while the CRC has not explicitly indicated that its position on homosexuality is “an interpretation of the confessions,” some positions on homosexual relationships are almost certainly “inconsistent with the confessions,” including some positions that various advocates for homosexual relationships themselves argue are not appropriate positions for Christians to hold.

alteration of how the confessional materials on the Roman Catholic mass, the Anabaptist tradition, and the role of church and state are presented in CRC publications (the CRC has moved some of the historic texts to footnotes and has provided explanatory notes with other materials).⁵⁰

Synod itself has noted this freedom by commenting, in response to an academic freedom case at Calvin College, that Article 29 of the CRC Church Order “does not preclude faculty discussion, debate, or disagreement with the substance of a synodical decision or position taken.”⁵¹ In practice, there is tension between this tradition of ecclesiastical freedom, even with respect to the confessions, and a *Form of Subscription* (c. 1934) that preceded the *Covenant for Faculty Members*, which said:

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which were condemned by the above-mentioned Synod [of Dordrecht, 1618-19], but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And, if, hereafter, any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, *we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by teaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Curatorium [the Board of Trustees], under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.*

Some Calvin faculty have expressed their “difficulties or different sentiments” when signing the *Covenant for Faculty Members*. But it is not a widely known practice for Calvin faculty to engage in this type of communication following their appointment. It may be constructive to imagine what kind of future practices would best ensure confessional integrity and make possible significant learning opportunities for our students and constituents.

At minimum, the *Covenant for Faculty Members* points us to an appropriate tone and strategy for expressions of ecclesiastical freedom. It suggests a strategy that begins by consulting with those in authority, and a tone of bold humility that cares enough about the confessions to raise difficult issues and, at the same time, is willing to submit to the judgment of the church.

V. Strengthening confessional commitments and academic freedom

A healthy culture of confessional affirmation and academic freedom is dependent on a climate of trust, transparency, mutual encouragement, and accountability. In our work together, our standard mode of operation should be with high-trust communication patterns that presume good motives and confessional integrity on the part of all parties: faculty, administrators,

⁵⁰ Indeed, this freedom for pastors has sometimes been invoked—by parties as disparate as Arminius and Herman Hoeksema—as *libertas prophetandi* (“the freedom of/for prophesying”). See, for example, Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 24; and Christoph Lüthy and Leen Spruit, “The Doctrine, Life, and Roman Trial of the Frisian Philosopher Henricus de Veno (1574?-1613),” *Renaissance Quarterly* 56 (Winter 2003): 1112-1151.

⁵¹ *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 528.

and the Board of Trustees.⁵² We need to honor each other by following due process scrupulously. We need to have sufficient processes in place not only for the large scale issues but also for dealing with what seem like minor disagreements. Calvin constituents should be assured that Calvin faculty members are teaching and writing in ways that are consistent with the confessions. Calvin faculty should be able to trust that those who may assess their work will be doing so on the basis of discerning biblical reasoning, using established processes, deeply aware of Calvin's policies on academic freedom.

This culture is, in turn, dependent on both informal and formal practices which strengthen vibrant confessionally grounded teaching and scholarship and which approach difficult issues at the boundaries with collegiality, wisdom, and discernment. As Nicholas Wolterstorff has suggested, "Almost always it is in the procedure, not in the qualifications [of academic freedom] as such, that the injustice lies [when there is an infringement of academic freedom]."⁵³ Great care must be taken to avoid both over- and under-responding to specific situations.

First, the college needs to promote awareness and understanding of these policies. It does so through a clear description of these policies in the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty and Board of Trustees Handbook*, through sessions in faculty orientation, Board of Trustees orientation, the Kuiper Seminar, the faculty-staff conference, and regularly scheduled board-faculty discussion sessions on academic freedom planned by the Academic Freedom Subcommittee of PSC.

Second, the college promotes a confessionally grounded perspectival approach to Christian teaching and learning through faculty faith and learning statements, the Kuiper seminar, faculty development opportunities, and the initiatives of Calvin's centers and institutes. In addition, some of the most generative work in encouraging vital confessionally grounded scholarship happens in departmental colloquia, peer learning groups, book study groups, and many informal discussions among colleagues. Faculty members ask colleagues to read scholarly work prior to publication. They present public seminars to faculty and students, conduct adult education classes, and submit work for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Further, when

⁵² See Adrianna Kezar, "What Is More Important to Effective Governance: Relationship, Trust, and Leadership, or Structures and Formal Processes," and Myron L. Pope, "A Conceptual Framework of Faculty Trust and Participation in Governance," in William G. Tierney and Vicente M. Lechuga, eds., *Restructuring Shared Governance in Higher Education* (Jossey Bass, 2004); D. Gambetta, *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1988); R. C. Mayer, J. H. Davis, and F. D. Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1995): 709-734; A. K. Misra, "Organizational Response to Crisis: The Centrality of Trust," in R. Kramer and T. Tyler, eds., *Trust in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996); D. Rousseau, S. B. Sitkin, R. Burt, and C. Camerer, "Not So Different After All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust," *Academy of Management Review* 23.2 (1998): 393-404; R. B. Shaw, *Trust in the Balance: Building Successful Organizations on Results, Integrity, and Concerns* (Jossey Bass, 1997); W. G. Tierney, "Organizational Culture in Higher Education," *Journal of Higher Education* 59.1 (1988) 2-21; and V. Braithwaite and M. Levi, eds., *Trust and Governance* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988).

⁵³ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Academic Freedom in Religiously Based Colleges and Universities," in *Educating for Shalom* (Eerdmans, 2004), p. 253.

students ask faculty members how their views square with Scripture, when faculty members discuss their work with colleagues or review peer-review comments, or when faculty hear from parents or constituents about their work, the process of accountability is in motion. The same process happens when a faculty member questions a commonly held opinion on a given subject. These encounters can be very challenging. But at their best they can be invigorating and instructive.⁵⁴

Third, the college also strengthens this centering function in its response to any difficult, controversial, or misunderstood topic. When controversial topics arise, the college encourages collegial work on a series of common questions (see the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*), including several questions related to biblical and theological faithfulness. The college welcomes those with questions or concerns about the implications of Calvin's policies of confessional affirmation and academic freedom for any specific topic or position to discuss the matter with their colleagues, department chair, and academic dean. When a topic warrants special consideration because of its prominence in cultural or church discussions, the frequency or quality of constituent complaints related to the topic, or substantive differences of approach to the topic in the Christian community, the college can initiate a process for proactive reflection and common learning through its regular governance channels.

Fourth, these commitments are strengthened by Calvin's approach to constituent complaints. Calvin has a long history of responding to constituent complaints in ways that both honor the legitimacy of such communication from supporters of the college and protect academic freedom. While some complaints are based on misinformation which can be easily corrected and others are based on ill will, many are well-meant expressions of genuine concern for the college, often about a topic that is of current and vital interest for the Christian community. Calvin faculty, staff, and administrators have long realized that a complaint is often a fertile opportunity for teaching and learning: an opportunity for the college to learn from constituent responses and questions, to communicate the nature of work at the college, and to hone understanding about challenging topics. There is a fairly strong, if unwritten, set of best practices around these communications, developed over time by deans, provosts, department chairs, and others. These best practices include responding to complaints only from identified, not anonymous, sources; consulting with those involved, and with experts on the topic of concern on a scale that is appropriate to the concern; looking for opportunities to explain the mission of the college; and initiating, when possible, face-to-face conversations, which are often best for strengthening mutual understanding. As a

⁵⁴ As Lee Hardy explains: "The real danger to academic freedom comes from the informal cultures of intolerance that can easily grow and embed themselves in any academic institution. They are sometimes subtle, and come in many forms: from a Board of Trustees that sees itself as an ideological agent of certain elements in the college's constituency; to a President with a pronounced authoritarian streak; to a donor with lots of money and a political agenda; to a department dominated by a rigid party line; to faculty members quick to impute ignoble motives to those who disagree with them; to well-intentioned administrators eager to enforce the latest social orthodoxy. The real constraints on the freedom of inquiry are for the most part unofficial and informal, not institutional" (p. 6).

result, college faculty members enjoy greater support than many colleagues at other institutions, secular or Christian.

Fifth, when difficult decisions do need to be made, particularly about the definition of confessional boundaries, the college is committed to a transparent set of procedures deeply grounded in both the best practices of institutional governance and Reformed polity. While individual persons are encouraged to engage with the confessions and discern how best to work in ways that are consistent with them, only duly constituted deliberative bodies may render authoritative judgments about the meaning of the confessions (*Church Order Supplement*, Article 5). The confessions are documents that belong to the church. For the ongoing life and work of the CRC and its agencies and educational institutions, the authority to make binding judgments about the meaning and implications of the confessions is assigned to synod. Under the authority of synod, the church delegates authority with respect to the functioning of the confessions for the life of the college to the Board of Trustees (as is made clear in the particular version of the *Covenant for Faculty Members* which faculty members sign). The Board of Trustees, in turn, delegates authority to the college's governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC) and in which Faculty Senate discusses, receives for information, endorses, or approves matters of collegewide significance depending on the nature of a specific action. Decisions of synod, the Board of Trustees, and the PSC are healthiest and have the strongest possibility for reception when they are generated through highly consultative, deliberative processes based on the most accurate information.

Sixth, healthy practices around academic freedom take into account the varying roles and functions of a faculty member beyond teaching and research. Many current discussions of academic freedom speak eloquently about protecting and enhancing rigorous, fair, balanced academic discourse. Yet many of the most challenging questions about faculty freedom relate to freedom for other kinds of activities. There may be very good arguments to protect freedoms for these other activities, but they often go unarticulated. There are several questions that warrant further attention. How does academic freedom apply to advising and informal relationships? What are the implications of academic freedom for the work of professional colleagues on campus, many of whom have faculty status, who do not teach or conduct research? What about political advocacy in areas beyond a faculty member's primary area of competence? How does academic freedom relate to family and church life? How should confessional commitments shape creative work in the visual, musical, and literary arts? This question is addressed in the faculty handbook this way:

The Calvin College teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and a representative of Calvin College. When speaking as a citizen, the teacher should be free from institutional censorship or discipline unless his or her Christian character is compromised or Christian witness impaired. However, a special position in the church and in the community imposes special obligations. The Calvin College staff member should remember that the public will tend to judge the profession and the institution by his or her utterances. Therefore, he or she should be accurate at all times, exercise proper restraint, and respect the rights of others to express their opinions. The faculty member shall

not attempt to politicize the institution in purely partisan matters, and shall dissociate the college from political activities. (3.6.4)

This paragraph signals the responsibility that faculty members have in exercising leadership in the Christian community.

Finally, in all matters related to confessional affirmation and academic freedom, the college is committed to promoting practices of mutual encouragement and accountability, and honoring the unique insights and gifts of each member of the community. While difficult and controversial issues have the potential to become deeply personal and painful, the college is committed to create the conditions in which disagreement—even about vitally important beliefs—does not generate personal animosity. The Heidelberg Catechism clearly and beautifully articulates this vision: “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” (Answer 112, from the version approved by Synod 1988).

Nurturing these practices over the years ahead will require forums for talking together about challenging issues, in which relationships can be developed, and through which our own discipleship can be sharpened. Indeed, one of the most important opportunities we have in the current situation is to imagine better, more transparent forms of high-trust communication—communication that is not clouded by worries over the motives of others.⁵⁵ If we do not do this, the college becomes vulnerable to manipulation by the culture at large, as well as by internal groups and constituencies and their rhetorical patterns, political ploys, and power plays.

VI. Continuing significance of confessional commitment and academic freedom for our common mission

Cultivating healthy practices around confessional commitment and academic freedom is a vitally important task for us, integrally related with Calvin’s Reformed identity. This work is especially crucial because of our goal to become a more multiethnic, multicultural community unified in our pursuit of Christian teaching and learning. Our commitment to become a multicultural community is a firm resolution not to let ethnicity be our source of unity. Rather, we are resolved to be a multiethnic community which joins together for a common mission, held together by shared practices of teaching

⁵⁵ Ed Ericson, Jr., offers an interesting comparison regarding this point: “In my observation, those institutions which show the greatest difficulty in handling issues of academic freedom are the ones which grow out of churches with a Congregationalist, as opposed to a Presbyterian, form of church government. (Or, if these terms are not to one’s taste, try ‘doctrinalist-statement’ college versus college in a confessional tradition). Though both lodge final authority in a Board of Trustees, in the ‘congregationalist’ institutions there is the established analogy that a church board can dismiss a pastor by its own internal decision. The ‘presbyterian’ institutions are more likely to seek communal decision-making and thus attend to the collective wisdom of the faculty” (p. 187).

and learning guided by common confessional commitments. This case is made clearly in *From Every Nation*:

What is the core of our institutional identity? . . . An answer . . . can be found in the *Expanded Statement of Mission*, which declares that our “identity as a Reformed Christian educational institution . . . means that our approach to education is set within a tradition of biblical interpretation, worship, and Christian practice expressed in the creeds of the Reformed-Presbyterian churches having their roots in the Protestant Reformation” (p. 14). Many college documents, including the *Expanded Statement of Mission*, describe the contours of the robust confessional vision that draws sustenance from this tradition—the familiar redemptive-historical pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and fulfillment that frames the Reformed community’s self-understanding and its terms of engagement with society and culture. . . .

What must be emphasized, in any case, is that the call to “ungrasp” an inherited institutional identity is by no means a call to compromise, let alone abandon, the Reformed character of Calvin College. Nor is it a call to create some undifferentiated, common-denominator identity unconnected to the lived experience of community members. Rather, it is a call to grapple honestly with the risks that may be entailed in attempting to distinguish between negotiable cultural expressions and the non-negotiable core identity in Christ testified to in the historic confessions—in the willingness, as the *Expanded Statement of Mission* puts it, to “live as the visible embodiment of [God’s] covenant promises . . . [manifesting] the universal scope of divine love” (p. 17). It is a call to discernment and a posture of imitation, a posture that grows out of a spirit of humility rather than of cultural superiority, whatever its source. The confessions themselves can point us toward such discernment and reexamination. As the *Expanded Statement of Mission* notes: “At their best, confessions provide a community of faith with a prophetic voice that the world can hear. Used appropriately, they are guides in a continuing common effort of reexamining the scriptures to hear God’s call. . . . The confessing community forms the principal witness to the awakening reign of God, and provides a vision of spiritual liberation that also requires liberation from injustice and bondage” (pp. 15, 18).⁵⁶

This reference to the appropriate use of the confessions in the heart of the *Expanded Statement of Mission* and *From Every Nation* calls for thoughtful consideration of how the confessions serve in the mission of the college and in the expression of academic freedom.

Finally, it is important to state that all of this is designed to protect the college as an academic institution: a place for teaching and learning, peer-reviewed research, and student apprenticeships. We do this work in close partnership with the institutional church. We do this work as a nonprofit organization in a competitive economic climate. But we do our work best when we function as an academic organization, making decisions through academically rigorous processes, in relationships of mutual accountability with the church and constituency we serve.

The challenge of academic freedom “even more than the problem of rising costs, is the dilemma of the church-related school. It is real and serious. In this situation the question remains: what *are* the rights and prerogatives of the supporting church community? Has it the right to

⁵⁶ *From Every Nation*, pp. 13-14.

impose any restrictions? . . . What is at stake is ultimately the role and survival of the church-related school. That question persists, no matter what the relation of school to church is. It persists as long as confidence, moral and financial support, and participation by the supporting community are essential to the church's operation. Improvement of regulations, integrity on the part of faculties, administrators and governing boards, and clearly formulated conditions for hiring and maintaining a staff all help toward a stable situation. But ultimately the resolution of the problem depends upon faith in the triumph of truth if freedom of inquiry is permitted. The development and exercise of such faith is a long and painful process. Until the day when, if ever, such faith matures, church-related academic institutions will continue to maintain a precarious existence."

— John H. Kromminga, *Calvin Theological Journal* 5 (1970): 215.

Addendum 1

Faculty Handbook on Signing the Covenant for Faculty Members

3.6.1.1 Signing the Covenant for Faculty Members

Calvin College faculty members are required to sign a *Covenant for Faculty Members* in which they affirm the three historic Reformed forms of unity—the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*—and pledge to teach, speak, and write in harmony with the confessions.

The current *Covenant for Faculty Members* reads as follows:

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Athanasian Creed*—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the Board of Trustees, according to the procedures prescribed by the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*. If the board asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the board's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This *Covenant for Faculty Members* is based on the *Covenant for Officebearers* in the Christian Reformed Church adopted by Synod 2012,¹ but clearly spells out that the college's Board of Trustees, rather than a faculty member's church council, is the body charged with confessional oversight for teaching, scholarly activities, and other college-related work.

Faculty members who are also church officebearers sign a slightly different covenant with respect to their service as officebearers, which names the church council as the oversight body. In this situation, the faculty member serves under the authority of two complementary oversight bodies: the college's Board of Trustees provides oversight for the teaching, scholarly activities, and other college-related work of the faculty member; the congregation's council provides oversight for service related to the life of the local congregation. At the same time, the college recognizes that while these functions may be distinguished, they are also difficult to separate. For this reason, the Board of Trustees requests that when a faculty member who is also an officebearer has "a difficulty with these doctrines or reaches views differing from them," this concern be disclosed both to the church council and to the Board of Trustees. The board commits to work with the church council to maintain the authority that is appropriate to each body.

For the work of the college, the meaning of affirming the confessions shall be determined according to the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church (e.g., *Church Order*, Article 5, and its Supplements), which currently reads:²

The person signing the *Covenant for Faculty Members* affirms without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God.

The signatory does not by affirming the confessions declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matters confessed. Nor does the signatory declare that every teaching of the Scriptures is set forth in our confessions, or that every heresy is rejected and refuted by them.

A signatory is bound only to those doctrines that are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines, nor to the theological deductions that some may draw from the doctrines set forth in the confessions. However, no one is free to decide for oneself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards. In the event that such a question should arise, the decision of the assemblies of the church shall be sought and acquiesced in.

The confessions are documents that belong to the church. For the ongoing life and work of the CRC and its agencies and educational institutions, the authority to make binding judgments about the meaning and implications of the confessions is assigned to synod. Under the authority of synod, the church assigns authority for the life of the college to the Board of Trustees.

¹ www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms-resources/ordination-installation/covenant-officebearers.

² Adapted from *Church Order and Its Supplements 2013* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2013), pp. 14-15, www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/2013_churchorder.pdf.

The Board of Trustees, in turn, assigns authority within the college's governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC).

When the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has issued a formal interpretation of the confessions, that interpretation shall be binding for Calvin College. When a disagreement about confessional interpretation arises, the PSC may, after reviewing prior synodical action on the topic and in consultation with experts in confessional interpretation, theology, and church polity, recommend to the Board of Trustees (a) that the board issue a judgment about the meaning and implications of the confessions for the work of the college on the topic in question, and (b) what that judgment should be. The PSC shall seek to make a recommendation that is consistent with the Christian Reformed Church's approach to affirming the confessions in general and to the issue at hand. Any judgment of the Board of Trustees is in turn subject to the judgment of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

Addendum 2

Faculty Handbook Academic Freedom Policy

3.6.4 Academic Freedom

Every faculty member, whether tenured or untenured, shall be entitled to the right of academic freedom in the performance of his or her duties. The faculty member shall be judged only by the confessional standards of Calvin College, and by the professional standards appropriate to his or her role and discipline. A faculty member shall not be expected or required to retract or modify his or her utterances merely because a complaint against them has been received. Only complaints which allege a violation of confessional or professional standards shall be considered, and then only when the evidence supporting the allegation is more substantial than rumor or hearsay. By making this commitment to its entire faculty, Calvin College seeks to implement the Christian principles of justice and charity in its own community.

The faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees at Calvin College work to promote a common understanding of confessional subscription and academic freedom through regularly scheduled board-faculty workshops on academic freedom led by the Professional Status Committee through its designated subcommittee.

A staff member is entitled to academic freedom as defined above. It extends to the discipline in the classroom, to research, writings, and other public utterances in the field of professional competence. It does not extend to the expression in the classroom of opinions on controversial and partisan issues which have no relationship to his or her discipline or teaching subject. The classroom may not serve the teacher as a platform for causes unrelated to his or her profession as a Christian teacher of a discipline.

The Calvin College teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and a representative of Calvin College. When speaking as a citizen, the teacher should be free from institutional censorship or discipline unless his or her Christian character is compromised or Christian witness impaired. However, a special position in the church and in the community imposes special obligations. The Calvin College staff member should remember that

the public will tend to judge the profession and the institution by his or her utterances. Therefore, he or she should be accurate at all times, exercise proper restraint, and respect the rights of others to express their opinions. The faculty member shall not attempt to politicize the institution in purely partisan matters, and shall dissociate the college from political activities.

Staff members are permitted and, normally, even encouraged to run for political office or hold memberships on civic commissions. Should staff members be elected or appointed to such positions which necessitate either partial reduction in or complete separation from service to Calvin College, they may retain their position on the staff, but then under the terms of the leave of absence policy.

Addendum 3

2004 Calvin College Self-Study Report

Academic Freedom at Calvin

The protection of academic freedom is vital to the survival of the Christian community of learning of which the college faculty is the center. Calvin College believes that religious communities should be free to work from a distinctively religious perspective, to work from a starting point of commonly held religious presuppositions. Hence, according to the *Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College (ESM)* and the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, academic freedom at Calvin is framed by commitments that flow from each faculty person's membership in the Calvin community. These prior commitments are essentially three: the confessional standards of the college, the professional standards of the scholarly discipline, and the public standards of keeping the classroom free from partisan political propaganda unrelated to a scholar's discipline or teaching subject.¹ Faculty members at Calvin submit to the limitations on academic freedom implied by their acceptance of the confessional standards of the college because their commitment to these standards forms the foundation and motivation for their scholarship and teaching. Their shared religious convictions are also common intellectual convictions about what is true. Their consensus becomes a positive asset for the Calvin faculty; it forms a community of scholars and teachers engaged with each other and with students in the pursuit of truth.²

This is a more generous notion of academic freedom than exists at many private, church-related colleges. At the same time, the practice of academic freedom at Calvin is not without occasional strains. These strains typically occur when academic investigation and comment bear on controversial issues under discussion in the broader communities serving and served by the college—the church, parents, alumni, and other constituencies. At the time of Calvin's 1994 self-study, these issues included the role of women in the church (specifically, their suitability for holding church office), the place of

¹ ESM, pp. 44-45; *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, section 3.6.4, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/>.

² Lee Hardy, "The Value of Limitations," a paper given at a conference on academic freedom at religiously affiliated institutions, sponsored by the American Association of University Professors and the University of San Diego, San Diego, California, March 15, 2003.

scientific theorizing in church life, and the meaning for readers of the Scriptures of the evidence for a very old earth and the theory of evolution. Topics of concern in 2004 include these, as well as homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, capitalism, and the outlook and methods associated with postmodernism. Structures of due process protect faculty members from alleged violations of confessional or professional standards and ensure that in the event of challenges to this right, the college is committed to the implementation of Christian principles of justice and charity in its community.³

At Calvin commitment to academic freedom for Christian scholars is rooted in Abraham Kuyper's insistence that the academy and the church constitute different spheres of human endeavor. Calvin College is the college of the CRC, but the college is not a church. As Anthony Diekema, president emeritus, put it, the college and the church "keep faith with each other by sharing a belief system and maintaining trust." The "church and its worldview deserve a distinctive place in the intellectual conversation of the campus."⁴ The college, in its mission statements, affirms its close relationship with the church; the church, in its synodical documents, supports the academic and intellectual mission of the college. Faculty members at Calvin take seriously the right and the responsibility to assess and critique the views of the church. There is very wide appreciation, moreover, for the enrichment of community and church life that results from careful protection of the principles of free inquiry at the college.⁵ Ambiguity arises, however, with regard to the extent to which specific church statements, such as acts of the denominational synod, are binding on faculty members at the college.

It is very likely that there will be social, ethical, and religious issues that challenge the college in the next decade. It is important to recall that in well-publicized cases in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the structures of due process at the college were found adequate, and the academic freedom of Calvin faculty members was vindicated.⁶

Addendum 4

Excerpt from Calvin College *Expanded Mission Statement* (pp. 37-38)

This time of growth and transition, during which Calvin College scholars have increasingly reached out to a larger audience, has also necessitated attention to issues of academic freedom. In its respect for scholarly and creative work, Calvin College follows a more generous definition of academic freedom than do many Christian colleges (see faculty handbook, section 3.6.4). Essentially faculty members are free to exercise their talents with only three restraints: the confessional standards of the college, the professional

³ See, for example, "Procedures for Handling Allegations of Confessional Orthodoxy," *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, section 6.3; and "Exploring God's Creation," *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, section 6.14, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/>.

⁴ Anthony J. Diekema, *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 115.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-122.

⁶ Diekema discusses these cases at length in *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship*, chapter 3, "Threats to Academic Freedom," pp. 11-43.

standards of the discipline, and the prohibition of propagandizing in the classroom for causes unrelated to their profession as Christian teachers of a discipline. These restraints are not without risk and may be enforced only via due process and by communally accepted standards. Still, they are and should continue to be required in order to maintain the confessional, professional, and educational integrity of Calvin as a college in the Reformed Christian tradition.

At the same time, this very integrity demands a positive, supportive, expansive vision of academic freedom. The integrity of any educational institution resides in a process of free postulation, inquiry, interpretation, and conclusion. While the task of scholars at any college is to keep alive, develop, and pass along the root ideas of a culture, and while the task of scholars at a Christian college is to engage those ideas, to examine them, and to challenge or affirm them as consequential for the Christian faith, the Reformed Christian academic especially feels obligated to engage alternative points of view in order to learn from them, to be challenged by them, and to bring a Reformed and Christian witness to bear upon them.

Addendum 5

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The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents their report to Synod 2014 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 2013 and via conference call in February 2014 and anticipates a plenary session in May 2014.

The board officers are Rev. Paul De Vries, chair; Rev. Andrew Vander Leek, vice-chair; and Ms. Susan Keesen, secretary.

Trustees Rev. Jeff Klingenberg (Region 4), Rev. Victor Ko (Region 2), Mr. Myles Kuperus (Region 10 at-large), and Rev. William Sytsma (Region 9) have all completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment. The board recommends that synod reappoint these four members to a second three-year term.

Completing terms on the board are Rev. Paul De Vries and Mr. Hyung Joon Kim. We are grateful for their wise service and counsel to the seminary and to the church.

The following nominees were submitted to classes in Region 11 for voting at the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be presented for ratification to Synod 2014.

Region 11

Rev. Thomas J. De Vries is the pastor of Middleville CRC in Middleville, Michigan, and has served in that ministry since 2002. He previously pastored First CRC in Salt Lake City, Utah, and served with Christian Reformed World Missions in Papua, New Guinea, and in the Philippines. Rev. De Vries has also had experience in the broader assemblies of the church, serving as a synodical delegate, a member of the ministry committee for Classis Thornapple Valley, and as a board member for Christian Reformed World Missions and the Utah Institute for Biblical Studies. He is a 1973 graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, where he received his M.Div. degree.

Rev. Curtis A. Walters graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1991. He previously served Hope CRC in Grandville, Michigan, for six years and has been the senior pastor of Covenant CRC in Cutlerville, Michigan, for the past sixteen years. Rev. Walters has served Classis Grand Rapids South as a counselor and church visitor and as chairman of the Spiritual Growth and Prayer Committee for the past twelve years. He presently is a faculty member of the Dunamis Fellowship sponsored by Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International (PRMI), leading and teaching at Dunamis conferences in Holland, Michigan, and at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Rev. Jul Medenblik, president; Ms. Jinny Bult DeJong, chief financial and operating officer; Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, academic dean; and Dr. Mary Vanden Berg, associate academic dean; as well as Rev. Al Gelder, director of mentored ministries; Mr. Robert

Knoor, director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Ms. Sarah Chun, associate dean of students.

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 be central to 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.

In view of the year-long sabbatical and reduced load request of Professor Michael J. Williams, the seminary community has conducted a search for a candidate for the position of assistant professor of Old Testament. At this time it is anticipated that the board will present a nominee to synod for appointment by way of its supplementary report, following a successful interview at the May meeting.

The seminary community is in the search process for two other faculty openings: professor of pastoral care and professor of the history of Christianity.

The board took note of the upcoming retirement of Professor Ronald J. Nydam, who began his service to the seminary in 1998, and that of Professor Carl J. Bosma, who began in 1990. With gratitude for their years of faithful service to Calvin Theological Seminary, the board conferred on Professor Nydam the title of professor of pastoral care, *emeritus*, and on Professor Bosma the title of associate professor of Old Testament, *emeritus*. The board recommends that Synod 2014 acknowledge these actions. Dr. Bosma will continue to serve as the director of the Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal.

IV. Program highlights

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has been involved in the training and teaching of students for ministry for 138 years.

This past academic year marked a celebration of twenty full years of ministry for the Ph.D. program at the seminary. The diversity, scope, and international flavor of this program has been widely appreciated. Four students graduated in May 2013, and the breadth of the Ph.D. student body was represented in these graduates. They are citizens of four different countries (Canada, Japan, Korea, and the United States) and are from four different Reformed denominations.

We continue to be blessed by strong support for our Distance Education Master of Divinity Degree program. In the fall of 2013 a new group of 15 students began the program, which allows students to remain where they are while receiving a CTS education through mentoring, cohorts (small groups), and distance classroom experiences. In the 2014 spring semester, four new students are expected to begin the program, bringing the total enrollment to 33. The launch of the distance M.Div. has created a great deal of interest in CTS, and we are exploring what additional degree programs might be suitable for this distance delivery format.

The seminary is grateful for strong overall enrollment numbers for the 2013-2014 academic year, with 93 new students, including 51 M.Div. students (34 residential and 17 in the distance education program).

This year we received two special grants. The Lilly Endowment awarded Calvin Theological Seminary a \$500,000, three-year grant to help improve the preaching skills of seminary students as well as preachers who are already working in churches. This grant to the seminary via its Center for Excellence in Preaching will be administered by the center’s director, Rev. Scott E. Hoezee. The seminary is one of eight seminaries that will begin a program consisting of two main components: first, the program will seek to enhance the education of M.Div. students through the seminary’s preaching curriculum and, second, the program will offer continuing education to pastors already serving congregations through the formation of focused peer-learning groups.

The following data for the Center for Excellence in Preaching compares the first full year of visits, pages viewed, and unique visitors in 2006, with the most recent years, 2012 and 2013, demonstrating the growth of this ministry and illustrating that it is one of the premier Reformed preaching websites:

Year	Total visits	Total pages viewed	Avg. unique visitors per month
2006	86,411	242,871	5,649
2012	177,361	534,960	9,556
2013	210,000	577,000	11,000

The second grant, also from the Lilly Endowment, was for \$250,000. The focus of this grant is to assist the seminary in developing approaches and programs that address financial issues facing its students.

Calvin Theological Seminary is one of 51 theological schools that have received this grant as part of Lilly’s Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Issues Facing Future Ministers. The seminary will use the grant for its three-year program proposal. In addition to the Lilly grant, a major individual donor gift of \$60,000 has been given to the seminary to particularly support the development of the “financial formation” curriculum proposed in the grant.

The following four goal areas were identified for the seminary in the proposal:

- Understand its current financial situation and that of students.
- Provide significant “financial formation” for students.
- Provide vocational development services for students.
- Develop new financial and scholarship resources for students whose financial needs we are currently least able to meet.

The seminary was blessed with a number of key appointments during the past year. We give thanks for the following new persons at Calvin Theological Seminary: Mr. David Bardolph (controller), Ms. Jinny Bult DeJong (chief financial and operating officer), Ms. Alena DeYoung (admissions counselor), and Ms. Amanda Smartt (admissions office assistant/receptionist).

The seminary has also been blessed to see the continued development of a new institute. Just as the Center for Excellence in Preaching continues to serve the church in providing preaching resources, the Institute for Global

Church Planting and Renewal (IGCPR), led by Dr. Carl J. Bosma, serves the church as a catalyst for conversations related to church planting and renewal. This past November the IGCPR hosted “A Missional Reading of Scripture” conference that had nearly 700 attendees. This major conference is just one element of the growing work of the IGCPR.

This past year the West Michigan Renewal Lab began with Rev. Keith Doornbos as the pilot project coordinator. The program uses focused learning intensives, peer groups, the assistance of seminary interns, and the involvement of local church leadership. Over ten churches are currently involved in cohort learning, and the initial results of this laboratory experiment are promising.

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Sixteen of our present 22 Mentored Ministries Group leaders are area pastors: Rev. Mike Abma, Rev. Dan Ackerman, Rev. Ruth Boven, Rev. Roze Bruins, Rev. Lynn Barger Elliott, Rev. Daniel Mouw, Rev. Kenneth Nydam, Rev. Allen Petroelje, Rev. William Renkema, Rev. Kent Rottman, Rev. Amy Schenkel, Rev. Henry Schenkel, Rev. David Struyk, Rev. Elizabeth VanderHaagen, Rev. Paula Vander Hoven, and Rev. Karl Westerhof. In this program another close tie to congregations and ministry leaders links each M.Div. and M.A. student with a vocational mentor.

We are also grateful to pastors and others for recommending great students for the Facing Your Future program. We celebrate 15 years of this opportunity to train young people and expose them to ministry. This past summer, 25 high school students experienced theological education at CTS, followed by ministry in either Austin, Texas; Portland, Oregon; or the Roseland area in Chicago, Illinois.

Two special opportunities for giving that continue to grow are The Presidents’ Legacy Society and Mission Builders. Both have proven fruitful in raising the level of financial support for Calvin Theological Seminary.

V. Students 2013-2014

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

Denominational affiliation

- Christian Reformed students: 156 (51%)
- Non-Christian Reformed students: 150 (49%)
- Other Reformed: 17 (5.6%)
- Presbyterian: 70 (23%)
- Baptist: 11 (3.6%)
- Other: 52 (17%)

Geographical information

- U.S. students: 170 (56%)
- Canadian students: 43 (14%)
- International students, other than Canadian: 93 (30%)
- Korean: 62 (20%)
- Indonesian: 6 (2%)
- Chinese: 5 (2%)
- Other: 20 (6%)

Student body

Male students: 245 (80%)

Female students: 61 (20%)

Programs and students enrolled

M.Div.: 131

M.A.: 16

M.T.S.: 19

* EPMC: 31

Th.M.: 61

Ph.D.: 31

Distance Learning: 33

Certificate/Diploma: 4

Unclassified: 13

*Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Paul De Vries, chair; and Rev. Jul Medenblik, president, when seminary matters are presented.

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

C. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (for the Facing Your Future program and the Distance Education program).

D. That synod, with gratitude to God, acknowledge the years of faithful service of Dr. Carl J. Bosma and note the new title conferred on him by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees: Associate Professor of Old Testament, *emeritus*, effective July 31, 2014.

E. That synod, with gratitude to God, acknowledge the years of faithful service of Dr. Ronald J. Nydam and note the new title conferred on him by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees: Professor of Pastoral Care, *emeritus*, effective August 31, 2014.

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
Susan Keesen, secretary

I. Introduction

This report represents the refreshed commitment of Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM) to live out a new day for a hope-filled future. We hope you will hear our strong desire to come alongside congregations and ministries in bringing the gospel to the people of North America. We are leading and partnering on a whole new level to face the massive challenges of the day so that we live into fuller participation in God's mission for the sake of the world.

Most of us know that practically everything has changed. The majority of congregations in the CRCNA are stuck and stagnant with decline around membership and income, and pastors and council leaders are struggling to know what to do. There is a strong desire to practice evangelism, but there is also a lack of clarity regarding how to do so in the changed and changing context of North America, which is rapidly becoming the largest mission field in the world. Our church leaders are experiencing a high level of anxiety. This anxiety is real, palpable, and rising. This surely is a moment of crisis, but also an opportunity.

Our new missionary context requires change in how we do our work as binational and regional mission agency leaders. The old models of center-based programs and providing answers for how to be church no longer work in this new space. We, as CRHM staff, know that something has to change in how we do our work. We will not assume we know what each congregation needs; rather, we want to discover together what the Spirit is doing already in the midst of all our congregations, neighborhoods, and the world in which we find ourselves. Therefore, over the past twelve months we have been busy not only carrying out our ministry with our partners but also trying to discern our way into how to engage this changing future as a mission organization of the CRCNA. Please continue to hold our board, staff, and partners in prayer as we seek to follow God's lead in his mission.

II. Ministry

Continuing on our journey of joining in God's mission, Home Missions has identified three areas of focus to enable us to fulfill our synodical mandate and to live into what it means to be God's church in the varied contexts and cultures in North America. These three areas are (1) Starting and Strengthening Churches; (2) Develop Disciples, Leaders, and Campus Ministries; and (3) Engage with Clusters, Classes, and Communities. As illustrated in our summary diagram (see below and at www.crhm.org/JourneyDiagram), these focus areas have significant overlap and work together with the aim of transforming lives and communities to extend God's name and renown throughout North America.



A. *Starting and strengthening churches*

Starting and strengthening churches remains the core work of Home Missions, and we continue to build on the faithful work of the past while working hard to adapt to challenges brought by changing North American contexts, including the issues that have been identified by the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT). Our initial work in this area resulted in the “Joining in God’s Journey” document released last year and is now guiding us as we move into the future. Here are a few of the ways in which Home Missions is working in partnership with the rest of the denomination to start and strengthen churches:

1. Church planting—The Home Missions church planting efforts are supported by the Church Multiplication Operations Team, an integrated team that serves both the CRCNA and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Integrating this work at the operational level has led to deeper collaboration throughout our mission agency, including the Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI) and other partnerships. In the past year, CRHM provided grants for 51 existing church plants, as well as for 12 new church plants.

- a. CRHM serves and resources current and potential church planters as well as parent church leaders. In our work to equip church planting candidates, we facilitate a church planting assessment process, connect candidates with regional leaders, and organize learning opportunities such as the biennial Thrive church planter training event. Home Missions cultivates relationships with church planters through active communication, using channels such as social media and a regular newsletter. In addition to the many tools and resources that Home Missions provides for church planters, we also offer coaching, connections, and consulting to church planters, church plants, and parent churches.
- b. Working from a generous grant, the Church Multiplication Initiative is expanding the Reformed witness in North America. The work began its focus with the establishment of Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZs), places where CRC and RCA leaders come together to create systems and structures in order to be missional together.

The first-generation KEZs (Florida; Phoenix, Ariz.; San Francisco/Sacramento, Calif.; Wyoming, Mich.) continue to flourish in the Transition Zone phase, which requires them to integrate their work and the financial support for their work into existing, local structures.

The leaders of the second generation of KEZs (Detroit, Mich.; Southwestern Michigan; Whatcom County, Wash.) and third generation (Seattle, Wash.) gathered in January for a shared learning retreat. These zones have the greatest access to catalytic funding, and we have seen energized activity in their requests centered on leadership training and community outreach. They have a vision for planting new churches within their region, and the relationships and structures they are building will help support this growth.

There are three KEZs that make up the fourth generation: Chicagoland; Lincoln, Neb.; and New York City. These KEZs have strong, missional leaders and their pre-KEZ gatherings showed them the value of developing collaborative relationships. During this Apprentice Zone phase they are focusing on expanding these collaborative relationships to include the churches and pastors in their region. We look forward to seeing how God will continue to work in these regions.

2. Strengthening existing congregations—Through our network of regional and ethnic leaders, along with regional resource staff and consultants, Home Missions continues to work with classes and local congregations. This year our work has included integrating the Healthy Church Index and Classical Renewal work. A key component of strengthening existing congregations is the training and provision of coaches who work with local congregations. Home Missions brings additional initiatives such as The Deeper Journey and The Ridder Initiative to our work of strengthening local congregations. In the past year, CRHM provided grants to four smaller churches in our work of strengthening churches.
3. Regional and Ethnic Leadership—An ongoing strength for the work of Home Missions is our regional and ethnic ministry leadership. Distributed across North America to work with regions as well as ethnic communities, these leaders are key connectors and coaches.

There have been several key changes for these leadership teams this year through retirement, departures, and additions. After many years of faithful service and effective leadership, Rev. Ben Becksvort retired from the position of Great Lakes' regional leader. Rev. Tong Park also retired this year as Korean ministries leader, having similarly served effectively and faithfully. In addition, Rev. Javier Torres left the role of Hispanic ministries leader to pursue a call to plant new ministries in Puerto Rico. Rev. Larry Doornbos left the role of Church Planting and Development Team Leader to serve as senior pastor of Evergreen Ministries, Hudsonville, Michigan. We are very thankful for the leadership they have provided. At the same time, we have been able to welcome Mr. Charles Kim as the new Korean ministries leader.

In appointments to vacant positions in the U.S. West Coast region and the Great Lakes region, we are trying new approaches. To facilitate the regional work on the U.S. West Coast, we have initiated a team of five part-time regional leaders, under the coordination of Rev. Sid Sybenga, who also serves as one of these part-time leaders. In the Great Lakes region we have set up an interim leadership team of Ms. Amy Schenkel, Ms. Sam Huizenga, and Rev. Al Mulder until June 2014. At the end of its term, this interim team will also make a recommendation on how best to provide regional leadership going forward.

Our current list of regional and ethnic leaders follows:

Eastern Canada Region – Adrian Van Giessen
 Western Canada Region – Martin Contant
 Central U.S. Region – Peter Kelder
 Eastern U.S. Region – Drew Angus
 Great Lakes U.S. Region – Interim Team
 West Coast U.S. Region – Sid Sybenga, regional coordinator
 West Central U.S. Region – Jerry Holleman
 Black Urban Ministries – Bob Price
 Hispanic Ministries – Vacant
 Korean Ministries – Charles Kim
 Native American/First Nation Ministries – Stanley Jim

More information on our regional and ethnic leadership is available at www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_ministryteams.cfm.

4. Stories to share

- a. The CRCNA is blessed to partner with church planters working throughout North America. They work in many different contexts, all with the same mission of pursuing the kingdom of God. Dwell, a church plant led by Peter Armstrong, is working in the Bowery in New York City to reach young professionals. Rick and Rose Admiraal are touching the lives of prisoners in Newton, Iowa, through the ministry of New Life Prison Church. Carl Van Voorst leads the Hope for Life Community Church plant to reach the people of Watertown, South Dakota. The list continues, as does the need to share the gospel.
- b. In western Canada, Home Missions has partnered with Forge Canada in training a small group of interested pastors to transform their

churches into engaged, missional churches with a focus on local neighborhoods. We sensed that while many pastors talked about wanting to change their churches into vibrant centers of missional activity, they did not know how to start or sustain such changes. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we decided to partner with Forge Canada, an organization developing this type of training in a way that includes biblical theology and missional ecclesiology. Those who are involved from our denomination appreciate the teaching and are busy implementing it in their local context. Three missional communities are being launched as a direct result of this partnership.

- c. Home Missions staff play a key role in catalyzing a grassroots prayer movement throughout North America. Churches are launching prayer groups; prayer coordinators are being recruited and trained; and God's mission is being carried forward in prayer. The movement started with the binational Prayer Summit in both 2012 and 2013, held at All Nations CRC in Los Angeles. Since then, regional and classis summits have been held in Arizona, Ontario, Alberta, New Mexico, Michigan, Illinois, and British Columbia. A prayer summit hosted by Classis Red Mesa and led by Rev. Stanley Jim featured keynote speakers, breakouts, dawn prayer, and an interactive prayer experience. The Great Lakes Regional team partnered with the RCA Great Lakes Synod to host a regional summit that was attended by more than 375 people, including 60 students. This movement will help us to discern both locally and as a denomination where God is calling us to join in his mission.

B. Develop disciples, leaders, and campus ministries

The development of disciples, leaders, and campus ministries is important work that both feeds and supports the vital work of starting and strengthening churches. Home Missions is committed to developing disciples and leaders at the local congregational level in order to transform lives and communities. Our campus ministries embody a faithful and loving presence in academic communities across North America, identifying, equipping, and sending out leaders into all walks of life. In the past year, CRHM funded twenty-nine continuing campus ministries, one new campus ministry, nine continuing leadership development networks, and one new leadership development network.

Key aspects of this area of focus include:

1. Discipleship—Home Missions provides a variety of resources for local church discipleship leaders, along with staff who are available to walk alongside, coach, and encourage these leaders in their work. Coffee Break leadership, networking, shared-learning events, and coaching are all part of Home Missions' focus on developing disciples. This work is accomplished not through a programmatic approach but through collaboration and networking—a tailoring of available resources to the specific needs of local congregations and classes. More information about this work is available at www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_smallgroups.cfm.
2. Campus ministries—For over 70 years Home Missions has established a presence in secular campuses across North America through the work of our campus ministries. Our campus ministries seek to work with all who

are involved in academic communities: students, faculty, and staff. These ministries are a key component of Home Missions' strategy to reach the next generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to fulfill our creational mandate as a denomination. Christian Reformed campus ministries invest heavily in developing the gifts and abilities of young adult leaders, sending out alumni into many walks of life. Continued support of and involvement in campus ministry is part of our commitment to Christian education at all levels. It is exciting to see thriving ministries on over thirty campuses throughout North America, and we continue to start new campus ministries and work with churches who are seeking to establish ministries with nearby academic institutions. We anticipate growth in the areas of expanding into community colleges and combining the establishment of campus ministries with new church plants. In addition to our work in campus ministries, Home Missions works with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association to support annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The agency also supports the CRCNA's ongoing work of developing and refining the vision and goals of CRCNA campus ministry across North America. Please see www2.crcna.org/pages/crhm_campusministry.cfm for much more information about our campus ministries.

3. Stories to share

- a. Intergenerational ministry is a staple in Black and urban churches. Pastors and leaders identify and select young leaders for mentoring with a view toward further theological training and ministry. For example, the campus ministries at Kennedy-King College, Chicago State University, and Northern Illinois University adhere to this philosophy and strategy. Mr. David and Ms. Lisa Seymour taught workshops at a recent Urban Youth Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, recruiting three students who did an excellent job as team leaders. Their workshops were effective and well received, and the students are already talking about coming next year and bringing their friends. Meanwhile, more and more young leaders show interest in the Black and Reformed world-and-life view.
- b. In partnership with Dunamis Fellowship Canada and Home Missions, over 125 people, including pastors and lay leaders, gathered last November in Guelph, Ontario, and Edmonton, Alberta, for the Growing the Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit conference. This conference explored practical ways for leaders to be nurtured and sustained in the process of cooperating with the Holy Spirit. It was a conference that highlighted the need for leaders to "come to the end of our own self-sufficiency" and recommit to allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them and their congregations. There was a tremendous sense of humility and surrender during this event. Many of the participants continue to meet weekly for coaching and encouragement as they bring what they have learned into their everyday ministry.
- c. Thanks to the generosity of the Kenneth and Jean Baker Emerging Leaders Scholarship Fund, Home Missions offers the Emerging

Leaders program, a key strategy for developing new leaders for the church. This year the program provided one-third of the funding for a full-time internship at Western University in Ontario; this student is a former emerging leader and will soon be going on to study at Calvin Theological Seminary. The program also provided part-time funding for seven student leaders to actively assist in leadership activities for a campus ministry. One of these students, Janelle, is a film studies major in her senior year at the University of Michigan. She writes, “Ever since I joined the Campus Chapel community, I’ve been captivated by the way the Christian Reformed Church seeks to bring God’s healing to a broken world. The CRC’s doctrinal focus on engaging culture in redemptive ways has taught me so much in my own role as an aspiring Christian filmmaker. During the past few months God began to teach and stretch me in the area of discipleship. I’m excited about the opportunity to partner with my campus minister and to explore in more depth what it means for me to disciple others in Christ.”

C. Engage with clusters, classes, and communities

In the challenging contexts and cultures that we find ourselves in, it is more and more necessary for an agency such as Home Missions not to work in isolation but to work fully in collaboration with clusters, classes, and communities to fulfill the mandates we have all been given by God. We are approaching all of the work mentioned in the above two sections from the perspective of partnership. Home Missions regional and ethnic leaders are actively working with local clusters and classes to determine needs, secure resources, and work together to start and strengthen ministries in North America. Classes are intentionally named in our three-foci strategy because we believe that classes can and should play a critical partner role in our missionary work with congregations. Further, the denominational, inter-agency Classis Renewal Ministry Team has been assigned to become a part of CRHM’s structure. The cluster strategy we developed over the past few years has proven to be an effective approach for collaborative ministry on the ground in a specific geographic area. Currently more than forty clusters are actively engaged in missional ministry across North America. They will play a key role in the development of experiments and learning communities for our missional focus.

1. Collaboration—In addition to working with classes and clusters in our regions to start and strengthen ministries, CRHM is more committed than ever to be a team player with all other CRCNA agencies, ministries, and institutions.
 - a. The Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) are one clear example. Significant leadership energy has been spent this year working with the CWGs initiated by the office of the Executive Director. These CWGs are an important denominational initiative to realign denominational ministries to better serve and partner with congregations.
 - b. CRHM has also been participating in the denominational Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team (SPACT) process. As a member of SPACT and the Ministry Leadership Council (MLC), Dr. Moses Chung has been fully involved in developing a “fundamentally

reframed” denominational ministries plan, a plan that increasingly gives evidence of paralleling many of the directions and initiatives that CRHM has been taking this past year.

- c. Coffee Break is a meaningful and effective small group Bible discovery ministry for evangelism and discipleship. This ministry is led by Mrs. Sam Huizenga and Mrs. Grace Paek, and our key partners include World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and the Faith Formation office. Coffee Break is now global. It has spread to Korea, China, Africa, and beyond. There is renewed interest in the ministry domestically, and the team is focused on “refreshing” the vision for North America by investing in new creative ways to develop material and train leaders.
 - d. Home Missions also remains committed to continuing existing partnerships with Calvin Theological Seminary (Church Renewal Lab, Facing Your Future), World Missions (Salaam), Diaconal Ministries and Classis Eastern Canada (Mission Montreal), World Renew (regional ministry teams), the Office for Social Justice (campus ministry initiatives), Pastor-Church Relations, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, Office of Race Relations, the Reformed Church in America, and many others.
 - e. The Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI) is one area of unique collaboration with classes. As Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZs) continue to flourish, CMI has thought carefully about how to capitalize on learnings, cultivate strong collaborative relationships that encourage missional growth, and make strategic moves toward being self-funded. With these aims in mind, we are focusing on developing collaborative relationships between CRCNA and RCA classes in ten different geographical areas. As the CMI Implementation Team meets with these classis leaders in 2014, we will share with them what we have learned through the KEZs and catalyze their collaborative, missional ideas with a small matching grant. We are eager to bring the benefits of collaborative relationships into locations that have not benefited from the presence of a KEZ, such as the Central Plains and Canada.
2. Stories to share
- a. Peter, a graduate of the missions track at Calvin Theological Seminary, approached the Great Lakes team and asked for consideration for grant support for a campus ministry that he envisioned. This ministry would serve students dealing with disabilities at Grand Rapids area campuses. This was an unexpected request, yet it became clear that this ministry was a passion for Peter and an area in which research showed great need. With the involvement of Home Missions Campus Ministries, the Great Lakes regional team, and the local congregations and classis, this new campus ministry has now begun. Peter has gained a significant level of support from the staff at Grand Rapids Community College, who recognize the great importance of his work to their student body. Though it is still early in the process, it appears that Peter’s work will almost surely be an important part of wider ministry to campuses in the Grand Rapids area. Peter’s story is an example of how the vision

and calling of a particular individual has resulted in Home Missions, classes, and congregations working together to start a new ministry while strengthening an existing campus ministry at the same time.

- b. Crosspoint Strategic Network in Chicago is morphing into a group that focuses not only on starting new ministries but also on strengthening ministries. The Reformed Church in America will be at the table when we meet, and other foci will be represented by individuals at the table. Crosspoint represents three classes (Chicago South, Illiana, and Northern Illinois), each with two representatives on the team. Crosspoint maintains good partnerships with Back to God Ministries International and Trinity Christian College while also seeking to partner in more ways to better communicate with and engage, serve, and support ministries.

III. Board matters

A. Board membership background

The board of Christian Reformed Home Missions is mandated by synod to guide and carry out the domestic mission of the CRCNA. The board includes one member from each of the twelve regions, serving in the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Seven at-large board members balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy and nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

1. The following single nominee from Region 3 was submitted to the respective classes for vote, and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a three-year term.

Region 3 (Mr. David Harlow is completing a second term.)

Ms. Jennifer Young from Halifax, Nova Scotia, is a registered nurse and stay-at-home mom. She is involved in Coffee Break and Little Lambs and coordinates meals for congregational members in need. Ms. Young is a member of the lay-preaching group being instructed and guided in the practice of preaching. Her pastor, Rev. Dave Vroege, shares that she has shown good leadership skills and brings a vital faith in Jesus Christ to her everyday life and involvement in her congregation.

2. 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 8 (Mr. Don Muilenberg resigned from the board due to medical concerns; Ms. Gaye Mellema, alternate delegate, was unable to complete the term.)

Rev. Kory L. Plockmeyer recently became pastor of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. Previously he was campus pastor at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. Rev. Plockmeyer has an M.A. from the University of Florida, an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary, and is in the process of earning a Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

Mr. Kevin Schutte is a commissioned pastor of Pathway Community CRC in Olathe, Kansas. He serves as a church planter and has a passion for mission in North America. Mr. Schutte is in tune with current

missional trends and applies them locally and in his work with the broader denomination.

Region 10 (Rev. Larry Baar is completing a second term.)

Rev. James Halstead is pastor of Community CRC in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He graduated from Columbia International University with an M.A. in Christian education. Rev. Halstead pastored for over twenty years with the Evangelical Free Church of America. He currently serves as a prayer coordinator for Classis Kalamazoo and is a national trainer of Sonlife Ministries. Rev. Halstead exhibits gifts in preaching, evangelism, discipleship, and prayer. He has written an evangelism seminar called *Go and Tell*, based on the Heidelberg Catechism.

Rev. Jeffrey Hough is pastor of Angel Community Church in Muskegon, Michigan. Rev. Hough is a church planter who has a deep love for God and a passion for bringing God’s gospel into a multicultural setting. He was a keynote speaker at the 2013 Prayer Summit in California. He is invited to minister to gangs in Muskegon and is committed to racial reconciliation.

Region 11 (Ms. Donna Meyer is completing her second term.)

Rev. Nicholas D. Hopkins, pastor of Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a graduate of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Dale Carnegie Course. He currently serves as the chair of the Classis Grand Rapids East Prayer and Worship Committee.

Rev. Dirk VanEyk, pastor of Encounter CRC, a church plant in Kentwood, Michigan, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He is currently in the Home Missions Great Lakes Region cluster and serves on the Great Lakes Regional Transition Team.

B. Board officers

The officers of the board of Home Missions for 2013-2014 are Rev. Harvey Roosma, president; Rev. Joy Engelsman, vice president; Mr. Adam Veenstra, secretary; Mr. David Harlow, treasurer; and Rev. James Jones, vice-all.

C. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
15	12	1st, 2nd, and 3rd

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Moses Chung, Christian Reformed Home Missions director, and Rev. Harvey Roosma, board president, when matters pertaining to Christian Reformed Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election of regional 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.

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
Moses Chung, director

I. Introduction

For over 125 years Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has been helping Christian Reformed churches fulfill the Great Commission primarily through planting churches and sending individual missionaries around the world. Over the past decade, we have intentionally shifted our focus. We understand that strategic partnerships and intentional networking are crucial to extending Christ's reign among the nations. From our work with unreached peoples to mobilizing local churches, strategic partnerships exponentially increase our ability to initiate and sustain transformational momentum in lives and communities. Together, partnering with each other and with God's Spirit, the good news is being preached around the world.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions

A. *Ministry that by God's grace and power is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

Christian Reformed World Missions has more than 200 missionaries serving in over 40 countries, and, through partnerships, our work extends to more than 50 countries. We focus our efforts around the world in the following ways:

- multiplying believers and churches
- equipping and connecting leaders
- reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview
- strengthening churches and organizations

We give thanks for what the Lord has accomplished through Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries and look forward to what he will bring about in the future. Here are some highlights from the past year:

- The Spirit moved more than 24,000 people to commit their lives to Christ through the work of CRWM missionaries and partners.
- Nearly 3,420 new worshipping communities were established.
- Over 18,500 people participated in CRWM-related leadership training programs.
- Over 200 local ministry leaders are partially supported through CRWM grants to partner organizations.
- 18 new partner missionaries were appointed by CRWM and served in countries such as Austria, Japan, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, and Slovenia.
- 67 teachers and administrators served in international schools through CRWM.
- 433 volunteers served through CRWM in various countries.

B. *Ministry to and with local congregations*

CRWM recognizes that much of the international mission work of the CRC happens through other agencies and directly by congregations. The Missions Education and Engagement Team helps Christian Reformed congregations understand and engage in international missions. The Salaam Project is an interagency effort that helps congregations reach out to Muslims

in their own communities. Through resources, educational events, and consultation, the team assists local church leaders in stimulating a deeper vision and involvement in missions. A description of their services and many of the resources are available on their website www.crw.org/meet.

C. Collaborative efforts

CRWM works with other ministries of the Christian Reformed Church to extend and expand the impact of our ministries beyond the sum of our individual efforts. A few examples of such efforts include

- Global Coffee Break ministries—working with Christian Reformed Home Missions, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Back to God Ministries International on a *global* expansion of the long-standing Coffee Break ministry of Home Missions and Faith Alive.
- Transformation networks—serving with Christian Reformed Home Missions and local organizations in Montreal, Quebec, to begin a transformational movement focused on Christ-centered renewal in the city.
- Salaam Project—serving with Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and World Renew to encourage, equip, and enable CRC congregations and members in ministry among Muslims in North America.
- Ministry based in Egypt—working with the Office of Social Justice in exploring ministry partnerships and possibilities based in Egypt.
- Working with Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) in Haiti called PRIHA, which involves follow-up with listeners responding to radio broadcasts.
- Working with BTGMI in Indonesia, training for leaders of listening groups.

CRWM is an integral part of Timothy Leadership Training Institute in a ministry of strengthening church leaders around the world who have received little formal training. Through these efforts, biblically trained leaders are being further equipped to serve their congregations and new believers. This type of collaboration results in more effective and longer lasting ministry.

D. Recognition of service

Each year, World Missions recognizes missionary employees and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In December 2013, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the Lord through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	Sheila Dykstra	Nigeria
	Caspar and Leanne Geisterfer	Honduras
	Sarah Lin	Burlington/USA office
10 years	Gil and Joyce Suh	Cambodia
	Jeffrey and Melissa Bos	Bangladesh
15 years	Gerard and Sarah deVuyst	Ukraine
	Wayne and Lynn Ten Harmse	Pastorate, China
20 years	Martina Ipema	Nigeria, Grand Rapids office
	Albert and Carolyn Strydhorst	Nigeria, Grand Rapids office
25 years	Howard and Ruth Van Dam	Haiti
	Jeong and Misook Gho	Pastorate, Japan
	Kathy Vanderkloet	Nigeria
30 years	Thomas and Cheryl Soerens	Honduras, Pastorate, Costa Rica
35 years	Alan and Jacie Persenaire	Nigeria
40 years	Marcea Holtrop	Grand Rapids office

E. Sharing stories

The following stories share some of the ways in which God has used his servants over the past year.

1. Multiplying believers and churches

a. Latin America: Church's outdoor services attract seekers—Mexico

The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Mexico (IPRM) has a vision to start 20 churches by 2020. Emmanuel Church in Tijuana is one of the churches that has invested in this vision. In 2012, after a year of praying about where to plant a church, Emmanuel Church began leading weekly outdoor services in a nearby community.

For the next several months, several Emmanuel Church members set up a tent, chairs, sound system, and generator every Sunday. They called their church plant "God With Us." About 25 people attended the service each week. Afterward, some of them would invite the church planters to their homes.

Christian Reformed World Missions missionary James Lee joined Emmanuel Church in its outreach efforts. He helped prepare the worship services, preached, and made weekday visits to people in the community. Soon he and two Emmanuel leaders, one of whom was Saul Marquez, were leading Bible studies in people's homes.

One Sunday, Saul was approached after the service by a young man named Alex. Alex had come to the service for the first time. Touched by what he had heard, he asked Saul to lead a Bible study with him.

Saul and James immediately started meeting with Alex. The next month, Alex invited two friends to join them, and they eagerly accepted. Alex and his friends appreciated James' and Saul's easygoing and relational yet sincere leadership style. The interactive, relaxed format put them at ease—unlike past experiences in which they were preached at and forbidden to ask questions during Bible studies. Now each week they understood a little more how to follow Christ.

Alex and his friends soon became part of the church community. They started sweeping the floors, cleaning tables, and setting up chairs for the Sunday services. They attended the services each week, eager to learn all they could about following God. When their Bible study finished in April, they quickly began a new one.

The larger church body, meanwhile, had entered a new chapter too. Emmanuel Church had been praying for land on which to build. In January, the church bought some land and set to work on a new church building. Members of Emmanuel Church and other IPRM churches poured concrete for the building's foundation. North American service and learning teams helped frame, insulate, and drywall the new building.

By April, the church building was ready. Shortly afterward, Saul and his wife, Mari, were installed to lead the church.

Although it has moved indoors, God With Us Church continues to reach beyond its walls to people like Alex and his friends. "Our hope," says James, "is that God With Us Church will be a place of compassion and acceptance instead of condemnation and isolation."

b. West Africa: Witnesses for Christ

In one predominantly Muslim West African country, a certain computer center serves as an avenue for people to hear the gospel.

Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries opened the center several years ago, seeing it as an opportunity for local Christians to interact with Muslims on everyday matters. The missionaries and Christians prayed that God would use the center to open doors for talking with people about Jesus.

Several young Christian men run the center. The center has ten secondhand laptops that people can use to access various computer programs and the internet. The men help people type, scan, photocopy, and print their documents. They also show Christian videos and teach people computer skills and English. However, their main purpose at the center is to witness about Christ.

The young men know that their actions speak volumes about their faith. So they treat the center's visitors with respect. They are honest with them and offer them quality service. And their visitors have noticed their integrity and commitment to following Jesus.

One Friday evening, several visitors pounded the young men with questions. They wanted to know why the young men, who were born and raised as Muslims, believe in and follow Jesus, say Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries in the area.

The young men stayed up until 2:30 the next morning, answering their visitors' questions. Although none of their visitors became believers that day, seeds were certainly planted in their hearts.

God has opened doors for sharing the gospel in this West African country. In faith, local believers are stepping forward to boldly proclaim his message with people who have yet to know him.

2. Equipping and connecting leaders

a. Asia: Timothy Leadership Training builds pastor's confidence—Japan

Rev. Park (*name changed*), a Korean pastor in Japan, was thinking about resigning. He and his largely Japanese congregation seemed to continually misunderstand each other. He wondered if he should quit before they kicked him out.

CRWM missionaries Jeong and Misook Gho met with Rev. Park at the height of his troubles. As fellow Koreans ministering in Japan, they understood some of the cultural differences he was experiencing. But they also urged him to consider training opportunities that could strengthen his ministry.

So Rev. Park started going to the Ghos' Bible study seminars. As he learned more about God's Word and Bible study practices, he was able to encourage and challenge his members afresh. Pleased with the changes, his congregation voted in May to extend his term.

Jeong and Misook Gho facilitate Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) seminars and Bible study training events for church leaders across Japan. Their goal is not only to build up local leaders but also to strengthen the wider Japanese church for evangelism.

TLT focuses on learning and applying biblical principles. "Some of the Japanese pastors are paying more than a quarter of their monthly

salary just to attend these three-day intensive trainings,” says Jeong. “This shows us how much they value the training.”

Over the past few years, the Ghos have led TLT events for Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) pastors and their wives living near Kobe Seminary. In April, the Ghos led the group through TLT’s fourth module, “Serving God in Work and Worship.”

Rev. Onishi is one of the TLT participants. He teaches part-time at Kobe Seminary and works full-time at a RCJ church. After the latest TLT workshop, Rev. Onishi decided his action plan would include helping Sunday school teachers prepare better children’s messages. So he wrote an article on preparing biblically based materials, basing much of it on what he learned through TLT. Then, since he’s part of the RCJ’s Sunday school curriculum committee, he circulated the article throughout the denomination. His article is now included in churches’ Sunday school teacher manuals.

“God has blessed TLT participants time after time,” says Jeong Gho. “Many of them have begun to witness the fruits of their labor—changed lives and achieved ministry goals. All of them are experiencing the joy of serving the Lord.”

b. Latin America: Creating lessons that touch children’s hearts—Honduras

Christian Reformed World Missions missionary Caspar Geisterfer has been leading education and biblical worldview training workshops for Sunday school teachers for the past two years. As a result, teachers in the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras are more effectively sharing God’s Word with children.

“The majority of the Sunday school education in these churches has been done by teachers who have little experience with Christian education,” says Caspar. “They have been asked by the pastor to teach Sunday school, so they find something to do each week. There is no real plan that guides them in the Christian education process.”

The Sunday school training curriculum has two goals. The first goal is to strengthen teachers for their roles. The second is to build up a group of people who can help the church create and use education materials from a biblical perspective.

The training is split into two levels. The first level focuses on teaching techniques and lesson preparation. Teachers attend a training event on these topics for three hours once a month. The second level is for teachers who have shown real teaching potential. Six teachers from each of the denomination’s six classes, thirty-six teachers in all, are involved in this training. These teachers learn in-depth biblical study practices for thoroughly sharing and explaining Bible passages. They attend intensive multiday workshops on this four times a year. As they are required to pass on what they learn, teachers in two of the classes hold similar training events in their regions.

Digna Velasquez de Irias, 39, is one of the training participants. She has been interested in Christian education ever since she attended her first Sunday school teacher training program as a teenager. Her subsequent role as a teacher’s aide has only deepened her interest. Today, as

a Sunday school superintendent and teacher, Digna wants to help other teachers give biblical meaningful lessons.

"The teacher is the first person to demonstrate the truth of the teaching," she says. "I have learned that if I want to be a forest, I first need to be a tree, with strong roots established in God's Word."

Caspar enjoys working with people like Digna who want to grow in following Christ. "I simply love studying how to make sense of what God has given us in his Word," he says. "My long-term hope is that the church will succeed in training their children to be people of faith, committed to an intimate relationship with God, and willing to live in a kingdom that is already, but not yet."

3. Strengthening churches and organizations

a. Asia: Equipping Nepali Christians for deeper discipleship—Nepal

Preeti (*all names have been changed*) used to argue against Christianity with anyone she could. Highly knowledgeable in science, she'd debate science and faith issues with Christians. But as she began to get to know some Christians better, she began rethinking her positions. Gradually she realized that Jesus had come for her too.

This fall, Preeti became one of 25 freshmen at Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary (EPTS) in Kathmandu, Nepal. Like many of her classmates, Preeti is eager to learn more about the Bible and evangelistic outreach. Her goal is to be a missionary among her own people and perhaps serve outside of Nepal.

A CRWM missionary has served at EPTS since 2011, helping to strengthen Nepali church leaders like Preeti. Among other things, he's teaching classes and helping the school develop an integrated curriculum for the Nepali context.

"Nepali leaders are strong in evangelism," the missionary notes. "Even remote and very poor churches are constantly going out to villages, doing evangelism programs, and using opportunities for evangelism in the family and community."

Yet Nepali leaders have had little training on other ministry aspects. For the church to continue growing solidly, its leaders need more training in such areas as discipling the next generation, interpreting the Bible, encouraging people in their spiritual gifts, and applying their faith to life.

Sarman is attending EPTS for that purpose. Like Preeti, he grew up in a non-Christian family and became a Christian later in life. Once he became involved in his local church, he realized the church needed more trained leaders and felt called to attend seminary. Now he and his classmates are learning more about ministry's theological and practical sides.

Many students come to EPTS unfamiliar with the biblical world-view perspective. "Students are often surprised that Christians can and should be involved in things like politics or other so-called 'secular' vocations," notes CRWM's career missionary in Nepal. "The sense is that these 'non-ministry' jobs are necessary evils and church ministry is where serving God is really at." Students are starting to recognize that the Christian faith addresses every part of life.

In-depth biblical study is also new for many students. While many of the students have been pastors or church leaders in their home churches, most of them have had little or no access to Christian resources, even Bibles. At EPTS they learn to examine the background of biblical passages, identify literary elements, and connect the passage to their lives and the Nepali context.

Gradually EPTS students are learning to see the wider picture of Christian leadership. Their new knowledge and skills are helping them disciple other believers to fuller life in Christ.

b. Europe: Envisioning a transformed Romania—Transformational Networks

Youth routinely gather in a little tea-house in Târgu Mureș, Romania, to talk and study. The tea-house is owned by Philothea Klub, a Christian Romanian nonprofit. As such, it is less a business than it is an avenue for ministering to Romanian youth.

Philothea Klub is one of CRWM's ministry partners in Romania. Begun in 1994, Philothea Klub focuses on teaching biblical values and training Romanian youth to serve their communities. In addition to its tea-house, Philothea Klub connects with youth by offering substance abuse talks, life coaching, and mentoring services at local schools. Philothea Klub also offers counseling services, workshops, clubs, and summer camps. Recently, Gabriella Belenyasi, Philothea Klub's director, joined CRWM's collaborative movement of leaders ministering to Romanian youth.

Much of Romanian society, and youth in particular, still live under the influence of Romania's communist past. Many youth are from nominally Christian families and are unfamiliar with the Bible. Some of them are orphans or from broken families. They have grown up in a society pulled apart by betrayal, distrust, and fear. They have seen corrupt leaders gain power and barely help the people they are meant to serve. With few examples to follow, Romanian youth know little about being persons of integrity and faith.

In response, CRWM is linking up with partners like Philothea Klub to reach Romanian youth. CRWM missionary Steve Michmerhuizen regularly organizes "Compass and Map" meetings for these ministry partners. Participants share their stories and challenges, offering each other encouragement and ideas. They also discuss ministry strategies. The partners are from different denominational backgrounds, yet they share a common vision of challenging and equipping Romanian youth to live for Christ. Gradually they're seeing how their individual strengths may be combined to minister to youth more widely.

"We are here to nurture the transformational network process," says Michmerhuizen. "This is a strategy that crosses denominational, ethnic, and class boundaries to identify, encourage, equip, and link grassroots Christian leaders for the transformation of lives, communities, and culture."

Eager for God to move powerfully in Romania, Romanian organizations and churches are joining together to strengthen existing leaders

and build up a new generation of faithful, Christ-focused, servant leaders.

4. Reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview

a. East Africa: Christian Schools by name and practice—Uganda

Two years ago CRWM wrote a teacher-training program, Educational Care, for Christian teachers in underserved areas who had little training on integrating their faith into their classrooms.

CRWM missionaries and others began using the program in Kenya, Nigeria, and West Africa. Now CRWM partners with Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) to distribute the learning program more widely. Educational Care is transforming Christian schools in Africa and Latin America from the inside out.

David Kiwanuka, a Christian school administrator in Uganda, has seen firsthand the difference a biblical perspective makes. He and his coadministrators used to introduce ideas without seeking their teachers' input. So the teachers distrusted them and their ideas. The teachers focused on teaching, doing little to connect with students and ignoring discipline problems. However, Kiwanuka reports, all this has changed since staff became involved in Educational Care a year ago.

Administrators and staff now treat each other with respect, recognizing each other's value in Christ. Administrators have started involving teachers in plans, making adjustments according to their feedback. Now that teachers trust their administrators, they are open to their ideas and critiques.

The teachers are also connecting better with other staff. Before, some teachers would ask the school cook to make them special lunches. Now the teachers eat whatever the cook serves everyone else. If they have free time during the day, they even help the cook get the meal ready.

Noticeable changes are happening in classrooms too, Kiwanuka reports. Teachers are taking time to get to know their students and share what it means to follow God. They are praying more humbly and genuinely. "It's no longer a daily routine and just praying for the sake of praying, but real prayers to God." Their students are following their example.

"Parents tell us that our children are different from their brothers and sisters who go to other schools," says Kiwanuka. "They behave well, reach home on time, help their parents, and love their brothers and sisters."

CRWM and WWCS have seen the changes Educational Care has ushered in. Now they're considering further possibilities. Already they're talking with the CRC's Office of Disability Concerns about creating an Educational Care manual on teaching children with disabilities.

Schools that are involved in Educational Care are no longer Christian in name only. Instead, they are places where administrators, teachers, and students are striving to serve God in every lesson, interaction, and moment.

b. Worldwide: Teachers point students to Christ

Kim Essenburg teaches high school English at Christian Academy in Japan. Though they attend a Christian school, her students are not

all Christians. In fact, some of them publicly admit that they do not believe in Jesus. Kim, however, sees her classroom as an opportunity to challenge students to consider the Bible seriously.

Kim is one of many CRWM missionaries serving in international schools. Through their words and actions, these teachers strive to point students to Christ.

"I can't teach love of God any more than I can teach love of reading or love of writing," Kim says. But, she notes, she can "provide knowledge, skills, understandings, modeling, and challenges—then step back to see what happens."

Books, plays, and poetry help Kim's students identify and analyze different worldviews. Students see characters' responses to challenging situations and the consequences of their actions. They notice how relationships build up and destroy. And they examine and dissect authors' main points. Their discoveries force them to reflect on their own beliefs. In doing so, several of Kim's students are rethinking their faith positions.

"One student had written at the beginning of the school year, 'I am an atheist and don't want people to make me become a Christian,'" says Kim. "Now he writes, 'Sometimes I feel like God is telling me that I belong to him. . . . When unbelievable things happen—things that I was sure wouldn't happen—I feel like God is telling me that he exists.'"

Other missionaries have seen students show similar interest in knowing Christ. One such teacher works in a region where the gospel cannot be freely proclaimed. However, her relationships with students have opened opportunities to share her faith.

One evening, she was heading home from an event when a student she had never met approached her. They chatted about odds and ends for a bit. Then the student asked, "How do you know he's always with you?"

The teacher had planned to take a taxi home, but she knew she could not let this opportunity slip away. So the teacher squished onto a bus with her to continue their conversation. Soon another passenger began asking questions too.

"I saw how even small things, like transportation choices," the teacher says, "allow searching hearts to seek him, and allow me to experience his hand at work."

Kim and other teachers may never know how their words or actions will affect students. But they go to school each day, praying that God will speak to students through their lessons plans or care. The glimpses they see of God's work make all their efforts worthwhile.

III. Placement, Learning, and Care

A. Placement

CRWM's Placement, Learning, and Care (PLC) department connects members of the CRC with mission opportunities around the world. Currently these opportunities include career appointments, short- and long-term volunteer assignments (individuals and groups), and positions with partner organizations. Partner missionaries are ordinarily appointed for a term of

up to one fiscal year. The appointment may be renewed annually by mutual agreement between the partner missionary and World Missions.

Through our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, we provide cross-cultural internships for several seminary students each summer. These internships place seminarians alongside our career missionaries and national ministry partners and provide a valuable learning experience to students with an interest in missions.

We also work with LEAP (Linked Engagement Action Programs) and Youth Unlimited (YU) to engage the youth of the CRC in missions. We participate in YU's biennial convention for high school students, and we work together to promote opportunities for young people.

In previous years CRWM has worked closely with ServiceLink in areas of recruitment, placement, and orientation of all volunteers. ServiceLink is still involved in the areas of promotion, referrals, and area-specific recruitment, but all the logistics of volunteer management, from the application to the debriefing, are now handled through CRWM's Volunteer Program Department.

B. Learning

The orientation program for our missionaries has been revamped. To better serve career missionaries, we outsource part of their training to organizations that specialize in missionary orientation and debriefing. This provides a more professional and comprehensive orientation that better meets the needs of our career missionaries.

CRWM-specific orientation in Grand Rapids and Burlington for career, volunteer, and partner missionaries has also been updated, focusing on CRWM-specific issues as well as orienting new missionaries to the role of CRWM personnel. Session topics include spiritual self-care/soul care, conflict management, healthy relationships, support-raising and finance, technology and communication, diversity and antiracism, and other topics relevant to cross-cultural living.

C. Care

The care component of PLC's ministry includes providing member care resources (opportunities for spiritual direction, retreats, trainings/workshops, crisis counseling, and so forth), logistical assistance (travel, visas, car rentals, and many other practical services), and pastoral and medical consultancy and support. CRWM maintains eight duplex units in Grand Rapids that are made available to missionaries on home service and to other visitors, based on availability.

In addition, PLC comes alongside sending churches to coach/provide training on how to improve care for their missionaries. In this regard, a part-time member care coordinator position has been approved, and the hiring process is under way.

IV. Board matters

A. Regional board nominations

Region 4

Rev. Carel Geleynse is a member of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario. He has an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently serving as director of pastoral care. Rev. Geleynse previously served on the CRWM

board in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s and served on the synodical Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. Currently he serves on the Classis Huron Safe Church Team. Because of earlier involvement with CRWM, he and his family spent a year in Haiti as an associate missionary. It was an exciting and life-changing year. He considers it a privilege to serve the broader denomination in various capacities and sees it as a way of giving back to a church that molded and shaped his life.

Rev. Benjamin Ponsen is a member of Fruitland CRC in Stoney Creek, Ontario, where he serves as pastor. He has a bachelor of Christian studies/business administration from Redeemer University and an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. Prior to 2011, he served First CRC in Kemptville, Ontario. He is a strong supporter of the Ministry to Seafarers, has 11 years' experience in ministry, and has strong leadership abilities. Rev. Ponsen feels that World Missions is an integral part of Jesus' call to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

Region 11

Mr. Timothy Bosscher is a member of South Grandville CRC in Grandville, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and has an M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. Mr. Bosscher is currently vice president and treasurer of Bissell, Inc. He has served two terms as deacon and council treasurer and three terms as an elder. Mr. Bosscher has also served as vice president of his church council. He is pleased to have this opportunity to support the CRC's response to the Great Commission. His grandparents served as missionaries for CRWM at Rehoboth.

Rev. Steven Elzinga is a member of Pathway CRC in Byron Center, Michigan, where he serves as pastor. He has a B.A. from Calvin College, an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary, and is currently president of Onyourgates.com. Previously Rev. Elzinga served on the board of Christian Leaders Institute Classical Committee. He has a keen sense of mission, the ability to ask insightful questions, and a wealth of experience through The Bible League.

Region 12

Rev. Dr. Ricardo E. Orellana is a member of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey. He graduated from Valparaiso Catholic University in Chile as a mechanical engineer. Rev. Orellana then earned a M.A. in missions from Calvin Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. in Hispanic ministries and discipleship from Drew University. He is a certified chaplain, serving over four years at Hospice of Saint John in Denver, Colorado, and has planned and supervised several projects of church planting both in Chile and in Classis Hackensack. Presently he is a cell group leader, helper with the Hispanic ministry group at Madison Avenue CRC, and preaches once a month. He has served on the Eastern Home Mission board, Apoyo Community Center, leadership development network, Calvin Theological Seminary board, and other synodical committees. Rev. Orellana also served on church councils at the Presbyterian Church of Chile and Good Shepherd CRC in Prospect Park, New Jersey.

Rev. Stanley J. Workman, retired since 2010, is a member of Oasis Community CRC in Winter Garden, Florida. He served forty-four years in ministry as a senior pastor. Rev. Workman graduated from Calvin College and Calvin

Theological Seminary and currently is serving as ministry coordinator for Classis Southeast U.S. and as point person for the Florida Kingdom Enterprise Zone (a joint RCA/CRC initiative). He has served on boards and committees with CRWM, Home Missions, and the Board of Trustees (CRCNA), in addition to numerous denominational task forces and study committees. He has also served on the classical Home Missions and interim committees, the Renewal Committee, and community boards for mental health and service centers. Currently he serves on the Classis Missions Committee. Missions has been the focus of his ministry, and he is ready to serve if appointed.

B. Reappointment to second term

The following nominee is being recommended for ratification to a second three-year term: Rev. Eduardo Gonzalez, U.S.A. member at-large.

C. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
Level 18	1	4th
Level 17	1	3rd
Level 16	2	2nd and 3rd

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. Derek Bouma; the president of World Mission-USA, Rev. Ron Meyer; and the director of World Missions, Dr. Gary J. Bekker, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to CRWM are addressed.

B. That synod elect by way of the printed ballot those slates of nominees presented for election or for ratification of a second term to the board of Christian Reformed World Missions.

C. That synod along with the Board of Trustees encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday and the fourth Sunday of September 2014 as a significant opportunity to pray for and to 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

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., was established by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States. The Board of Directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of loan interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for Investment Certificates sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the Christian Reformed Church.

II. Board of Directors

Loan Fund board members are eligible to serve two three-year terms. Ms. Andrea Karsten and Mr. Thomas Sinke are completing their first term on the board and are recommended for reappointment to a second term.

The remaining members of the Board of Directors are Ms. Chery De Boer (2016), Mr. Scott Ritsema (2015), Mr. Kenneth Stienstra (2016), and Mr. Jon Swets (2015).

III. Financial operations

A. The Loan Fund is eligible to sell Investment Certificates to investors in twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Additional states could be added as needed to benefit the Fund.

B. At the close of the 2013 fiscal year (June 30, 2013), a total of \$25,585,202 in interest-bearing Investment Certificates held by investors were outstanding. Interest rates vary from 1.30 percent to 3.50 percent, with a weighted average of 2.24 percent. The variance in interest rates reflect market conditions and the terms of the Certificates at the times they were issued.

C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated nearly two hundred loans totaling almost \$70 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2013, the Loan Fund had \$21,208,263 in loans outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are very infrequent. The Fund maintains a loan loss reserve to help cover potential losses. The Fund is blessed to have experienced no loan losses in its history.

D. Financial operations are also reflected in the following data:

	2013	2012	2011
Cash and equivalents	\$11,607,134	\$9,004,061	\$8,579,248
Net loans and interest receivable	\$21,208,263	\$22,413,193	\$23,540,717
Total assets	\$32,815,397	\$31,417,254	\$32,119,965
Certificates and interest payable	\$25,666,069	\$24,538,140	\$25,579,460
Net assets	\$7,149,328	\$6,879,114	\$6,540,505
Total liabilities and net assets	\$32,815,397	\$31,417,254	\$32,119,965

E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2013, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2014—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- A. The sale of Investment Certificates in those states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- B. Gifts and bequests made to the Fund.
- C. An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowing up to \$2 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Alice M. Damsteegt, customer service specialist; and Mr. David E. Veen, director.

V. 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 reappoint Ms. Andrea Karsten and Mr. Thomas Sinke to a second three-year term on the Board of Directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
David E. Veen, director

I. Introduction

World Renew is compelled by God's own deep passion for justice and mercy to respond to poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice around the world in Jesus' name. Thank you for making this ministry possible in 2013.

Through support from the Christian Reformed Church and beyond, God used World Renew to spread his love to 1.2 million people in need last year. This work was supported by World Renew's staff members around the world—and by 3,429 volunteers who contributed more than 288,000 hours of volunteer labor last year!

God was already working in communities of poverty, disaster, and injustice to restore well-being and wholeness before World Renew arrived. When World Renew partnered with communities in need, we joined in on this work, helping people recognize God's plan for them and working together to achieve it.

During the 2012-2013 ministry year, World Renew staff walked alongside Christian leaders from 78 local churches and community organizations in 24 of the world's poorest countries to equip them to recognize and respond to needs in their communities. As a result, 462,061 individuals and their families improved their lives through community-based programs and were able to work toward their God-given potential.

Take Lucia Sub, for example. The 58-year-old woman in Guatemala has known a life of great poverty and hardship. Through World Renew and its local partner, however, she has learned new agricultural skills and is now capable of meeting her family's needs.

"I now understand that we as children of God are capable of achieving great things," she said. "I never imagined that I would be selling my own produce in the market. Now I do, and I am an active member of my community, motivating other women to do the same."

World Renew also continued to respond to disasters and crisis situations as they arose. These included the horrific ongoing conflict in Syria, Superstorm Sandy on the East Coast of the United States, and severe flooding in High River, Alberta. Thankfully, every time a need arose, members of the CRC responded with generosity. Gifts were then leveraged through World Renew's international alliances, enabling it to reach 767,475 disaster survivors with food, water, shelter, and other emergency aid and rehabilitation programs.

World Renew fully recognizes that this ministry of justice and mercy would not be possible without the faithful support and prayers of many generous churches and individuals. Together we are "co-workers in God's service" (1 Cor. 3:9) encouraging those in poverty to live out their full potential as God's created imagebearers.

World Renew does not receive ministry shares and instead relies on the donations of individuals and church offerings to carry out its ministry. These generous donations have provided a steady resource base that supports long-term commitments for development programs with local church partners and Christian organizations. It has also enabled us to leverage significant resources from outside the CRCNA, especially for disaster response interventions.

As a result, over half of the giving to World Renew now comes from outside the CRCNA, including support from international Christian networks such as the ACT Alliance, Integral, Food Resources Bank and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). Government bodies, such as USAID and DFATD, also contribute a small percentage of World Renew's budget. This enables World Renew to expand programs without creating significant dependency on government support.

World Renew relies on your prayers. Please join us in praying for justice in the many places where evil is both pervasive and prevalent. Pray for the safety of our staff and volunteers who work around the world, often in situations of insecurity. Pray for our partners as they develop their leadership abilities and resources to move their communities into a better future. Pray for all communities who are in need of experiencing God's heart of love for them. Pray that we may all do what we can to help each other, recognize and develop our gifts, and work together to achieve the potential that God has placed within us.

II. Ministries of World Renew

A. *International community development*

One of World Renew's key ministries is known as "international community development." These programs aim to help people for the long term by first assessing their assets (e.g., their God-given talents and the resources in their communities) and then helping them to build on those assets to create positive change.

World Renew confronts people's greatest needs first—whether those are better health, increased nutrition, good hygiene, improved agricultural practices, literacy, civil rights training, leadership development, savings and loan groups, animal husbandry, or spiritual growth. As people begin to recognize their own capacity to address these issues, World Renew equips them to take on new and greater challenges. Last year, **World Renew carried out this vital ministry in 3,755 communities worldwide.**

An essential component of this ministry is partnership. In every community where it is present, World Renew seeks to come alongside a local church or community organization. It then equips these local leaders to become an enduring presence at the community level and trains them to strengthen their own organizations and carry out effective programs. **Last year, World Renew worked through 78 such partners.** The end result was that the witness of Christ's church was strengthened while entire communities lifted themselves out of poverty.

One of the program areas that World Renew and its partners focused on in the past year is **sustainable agriculture**. Most of the 1.4 billion people living on less than \$1.25 a day in our world live in rural areas and depend on small-scale farming for their livelihood. These farmers typically own less than two hectares of land and are especially vulnerable to erratic weather, insect infestation, and declining soil fertility. When their crops fail, their families go hungry.

Understanding the close relationship between food insecurity and small-scale farmers, World Renew has placed an emphasis on sustainable agriculture and food security programs. We also made small grants (up to \$10,000) available to projects and partners to foster greater innovation in this program area.

In India, for example, World Renew's partner, the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR), received a \$10,000 grant to work with 1,163 families from the Malto tribe in eastern India. The Malto depend on forests for their livelihood and live on hilltops, cultivating maize, cowpeas, and pigeon peas. They practice slash-and-burn agriculture, shifting their cultivation and cutting the forest vegetation every three to five years. These practices hurt soil fertility and make their crops vulnerable to lack of water, insect infestation, and widespread food insecurity.

With their \$10,000 grant, EFICOR staff asked communities to form farmer groups for mutual learning and support. They also set up demonstration gardens in each target community. EFICOR used these demonstration plots to train farmer groups on a farming method known as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). They also trained farmers in the use of organic fertilizer, pest control, integrated livestock management, and vegetable gardens for crop diversity.

Kable is one of the farmers whose life has changed dramatically since participating in EFICOR's program. Kable is from Sahara village—a tiny settlement of about eighteen families that can be reached only on foot. Before the training, he had been trying to make a living by growing rice on his small plot of land but was finding it difficult to meet his family's basic needs.

Kable began using SRI techniques to cultivate rice in his field, and this year he harvested 600 kg of rice while sowing only one kilogram of seed. This is more than twice the amount he harvested in previous years!

Kable is also working hard in the kitchen garden he planted after the training in vegetable gardening. He has grown vegetables for family consumption and has also been able to sell some of his produce.

Kable said, "Today my family and I have enough food to eat, and we are very happy about it! I will definitely continue using the SRI method in the coming years. I am so pleased with the positive effects that SRI and kitchen gardening have had on my family that I am now encouraging others in my village to try them as well. I am so grateful to the project for what it has done for my family."

This is just one of many examples of God's everyday work through World Renew and our local church partners that brings about lasting change.

Another highlight from World Renew's community development ministry in the past year has been the strong support we received from the Canadian government. The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (DFATD, which contains the development section formerly known as CIDA), has committed to providing more than \$8 million in funding for a variety of World Renew programs over the next three to five years. This includes programs submitted in the "over \$2 million," "under \$2 million," "youth internships," and "Muskoka child and maternal health" categories and is being used to support World Renew's ministry in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Honduras, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania. All of these projects are now under way.

B. HIV and AIDS response

Each year World Renew makes \$100,000 in grant funding available to its partners for innovation in HIV and AIDS response. The HIV and AIDS Innovation Fund allows World Renew to include novel approaches, alliances, or

strategies in our HIV and AIDS response that are then integrated into development programs. The innovation fund also offers World Renew's partners annual learning grants for continuing education and cross-training.

In 2013, World Renew funded four innovation projects in India, Nicaragua, and Kenya. Tushemereirwe Consolata from Kabale, Uganda, is an example of the participants' courage and determination. After building her own house when her husband abandoned her and their four daughters, Consolata sold charcoal, bananas, and potatoes to earn a living. When she began to feel sick in 2005, she was tested and learned that she is HIV-positive. That revelation was the low point of Consolata's life. In spite of her fear of AIDS, Consolata says that she "feared dying from poverty more."

When Consolata joined a community group through World Renew's partner, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Kabale, she received a US\$16 loan to help her grow her business. As a result, she was able to feed and support her family, pay her children's school fees, and save US\$2 a week. By 2010, she had saved an amazing US\$40 and is now helping her daughters finish secondary school and find work. World Renew's HIV and AIDS Innovation Fund is helping at-risk families like Consolata's support themselves and live productive, confident lives. Because these initiatives are being carried out with and through the local church, they also encourage spiritual growth.

In total, World Renew invested more than \$324,000 in HIV and AIDS programs last year in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania so that people whose lives have been affected by this disease could participate in life-changing projects. This included teens and young adults who joined youth groups for support and accountability, men and women who improved their livelihoods through income-generating activities, and families who improved their overall health and nutrition through food security projects. World Renew also worked with churches worldwide to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by people who live with this disease.

C. Church-based community transformation

1. In the United States

The World Renew Connections program links CRC congregations to World Renew's work through church and ministry partnerships, congregational and worship resources, classis delegates, and the Champion Network. In addition, World Renew is a founding member and funding partner of the Communities First Association (CFA), created in 2009 to support community development work in North America by building an asset-based community development movement among CRC and non-CRC churches and organizations. In 2013, CFA contributed to the long-term transformation of 279 impoverished neighborhoods in the United States. One hundred twenty-seven of those neighborhoods now report community-action teams that are working on projects their communities care about. This means that community residents are setting the agenda and are empowered to act together to respond to what concerns them. CFA also trained and coached 386 church and community leaders in neighborhood engagement and community transformation. This included 91 Christian Reformed Church leaders.

2. In Canada

World Renew's Church Relations team helps to facilitate a two-way dialogue of understanding and support between the work of World Renew in various parts of the world and congregations in Canada. This is done through correspondence, personal visits by staff, and ongoing learning. Integral to this dialogue are the deacons and "World Renew Champions" in each church, as well as the classical board delegates, who help to extend the work of World Renew into their churches and classes. Through these efforts, churches are encouraged to partner with World Renew in Canada and around the world. Churches are specifically encouraged to partner with programs in countries where World Renew works. The intent is to multiply kingdom work, not only internationally but also within North American churches as they learn about global poverty and hunger, and to help support World Renew's ministry through prayer and financial gifts.

D. Justice education and advocacy

1. In North America

World Renew's peace-building and justice work invites Christians in North America to support struggles for peace and justice around the world through education and advocacy. This effort is supported by the Congregational Justice Mobilization (CJM) program—a fully collaborative effort between World Renew and the CRC Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action. CJM focuses on congregations and campuses. It tracks involvement at two levels: a basic justice group from a congregation or campus that has engaged in CJM programming between one and three times, and an advanced justice group from a congregation or campus that has engaged with the CJM program four or more times. Participants work toward justice by considering specific issues in worship services, taking time to learn more about biblical justice or specific issues as a group, and by advocating with legislators for changes to laws that harm the most vulnerable in society.

2. Around the world

World Renew continues to place a high priority on justice and stresses that addressing unjust systems and structures is an essential part of sustainable, transformational development. With that in mind, peace-building (shalom) is considered a common goal of all World Renew activities. It is an integrating theme for justice, gender equity, disaster risk reduction, partnership growth and sustainability, community capacity-building and transformation, and environmental stewardship. World Renew acknowledges the strategic place of peace-building and justice in each area of its work and desires to be continually intentional in analysis and program planning in order to increase positive and cooperative relationships.

World Renew also has a small pool of funds available each year to provide small grants to projects and partners for specific justice activities. The Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic (ICCRD), for example, received a \$2,000 grant to address domestic violence in its communities. Women and girls in the Dominican Republic often suffer violence at the hands of people close to them. In fact, violence is the fourth most common cause of death among young women in the Dominican Republic. During seminars led by Christian Reformed World Missions,

pastors in the ICCRD reflected on how to build conflict transformation, counseling, and reconciliation into their pastoral-care roles. These pastors identified family violence as a major problem in their communities and decided to take action. Using a \$2,000 World Renew grant, the churches launched a “family violence” program to inspire their churches to become catalysts in ending violence in the larger community.

Their first step was to learn from other World Renew partner organizations that deal with this issue. Two leaders from the ICCRD traveled to Nicaragua to learn from World Renew’s partners at the Nehemiah Center and the Christian Center for Human Rights. There they participated in family violence seminars and learned how Nicaraguan churches have been responding to the issue. Upon their return, they helped ICCRD design and launch its program.

Today the ICCRD has received training from a nongovernment agency called Profamilia. They talk about family violence during church services and have connected their church program with the government’s counter-family-violence program. Churches have also started making plans about how they will prevent the escalation of family violence and also minister to victims.

E. Service learning

World Renew’s Global Volunteer Program offers collaborative learning opportunities for individuals with a heart to serve through international internships and long-term volunteer placements. Groups are also engaged in church partnership opportunities and discovery tours. Intergenerational church mission teams, such as work teams and youth and young adult service opportunities in North America and around the globe, are also available.

SWAP (Serve With A Purpose) continues to expand its efforts to engage youth and young adults interested in exploring international missions. This past year we came alongside youth and young adults to plan, learn, grow, and identify opportunities to serve in community development locally and internationally, and we met with representatives from twelve Ontario Christian schools who have a vested interest in providing international experiences for high school students.

In addition to expanding the SWAP program, World Renew’s Global Volunteer Program matched 265 nondisaster volunteers with opportunities to serve, learn, and grow last year. This included 29 intergenerational groups, 16 pastors, 73 young adults, and 26 youth. In total, these volunteers donated 23,633 hours of their time to World Renew’s ministry.

F. International disaster response

In 2012-2013 World Renew responded to numerous natural and human-caused disasters throughout Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. This included wrapping up a number of drought-response projects that have renewed hope in East and West Africa. It also included helping people who live in disaster-prone communities in eastern and southern Asia to improve their resilience as they rebuilt their homes and lives after yet another year of floods and earthquakes.

While many disaster response initiatives were completed in 2013, new disasters also occurred that warranted both large- and small-scale responses. Some disasters are high profile and garner extensive international attention, while other stories of devastation are too small to make it into the news.

One of the biggest disasters to which World Renew has been effectively responding has been to people affected by conflict in Syria and to Syrian refugees who fled to neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan.

Another large-scale disaster was Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines in November 2013. While this disaster happened during the 2013-2014 ministry year and is not included in the figures below, it has been a major response for World Renew. At the time of this writing, World Renew raised more than \$4 million for Typhoon Haiyan and committed to a multiyear effort to meet emergency needs, restore livelihoods, and rebuild communities for 3,973 families on three islands.

World Renew also responded to numerous small-scale and lower-profile disasters. For example, in Myanmar last year, ethnic conflict forced people to flee from their homes. World Renew supported cash-for-work programs and multistory gardens to help nearly 600 families meet their needs until they could return home.

World Renew's international disaster response work includes immediate disaster response (emergency food, water, nonfood items, shelter, and access to medical care and counseling) as well as recovery and rehabilitation activities such as distributing seeds, tools, and livestock, and providing small loans and training to enhance peoples' livelihoods. In 2013 these immediate and long-term disaster response activities totaled \$16,887,254 and served 683,865 people in 33 countries.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, World Renew responded to disasters in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti. In **Honduras**, World Renew helped communities learn about and carry out Disaster Risk Reduction activities. World Renew also continued its response to drought and chronic food insecurity in **Nicaragua**. In **Haiti**, World Renew concluded its response to the January 2010 earthquake. Since 2010, World Renew has carried out a \$19 million response in Haiti that included 21 wells, 1,400 toolkits, 3,500 tarps, 2 water filtration systems, 3,425 earthquake and hurricane-resistant homes, 800 latrines, 2,166 goats, 17 seed banks, 180,000 tree seedlings, and trauma counseling. In late 2013, World Renew concluded its Livelihoods for Earthquake-Affected People (LEAP) program that provided 4,400 families with agriculture-related assistance and 1,000 micro-entrepreneurs and 60 medium entrepreneurs with small business assistance. While World Renew's earthquake response in Haiti has ended, its long-term development with local partners and churches continues.

In the **Middle East**, World Renew provided food assistance, emergency supplies, and rent subsidies to 1,750 families displaced by conflict within **Syria**. In **Lebanon**, World Renew is providing food assistance and emergency supplies to 1,525 refugee families. In late 2013 and into 2014, World Renew began providing emergency assistance to refugees in **Jordan**.

In **Asia**, World Renew responded to droughts, earthquakes, floods, and conflict in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. When two massive earthquakes struck **Indonesia** this past year in an area that was severely affected by the 2004 South Asia tsunami, the communities knew how to respond, thanks to World Renew Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives. The communities safely evacuated along designated roads to higher ground, and when they returned to their homes, their earthquake-resistant houses were undamaged. World Renew

also wrapped up its response to the East Sumba famine in Indonesia, where food and livelihood assistance were provided. Because disaster response initiatives have concluded, World Renew closed its last office in Indonesia, but our partner organizations continue to implement small-response initiatives through World Renew.

In **Japan**, World Renew continues to assist families affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami with psycho-spiritual care and trauma counseling in partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions.

In 2012, **East Africa** experienced drought across much of the region. Activities in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda that began in 2012 in response to this crisis continued in 2013. In **Ethiopia**, World Renew supported successive projects in food assistance for 4,688 families in three districts. In **Kenya's** Eastern province and the Coastal region, water pans were rehabilitated as a food-for-work initiative, and more than 1,400 families benefited from access to safe water and sanitation facilities in the Turkana district. In **South Sudan**, in addition to providing agricultural tools and training to help enhance agricultural knowledge and food security for 980 families, World Renew partnered with the World Food Program to implement a food-for-assets project that helped 1,110 families. In **Somalia**, World Renew concluded its food voucher program that assisted 5,000 families.

In **Southern Africa**, World Renew implemented a goat restocking program in **Burundi** and longer-term food security initiatives in **Mozambique** and **Zambia**. World Renew also supported a CFGB member in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to provide food assistance to 6,000 households.

Throughout **West Africa**, droughts led to a poor harvest in early 2012. Insect infestations, floods, and rising food prices resulted in extreme food insecurity. World Renew has been active in Liberia, Mali, and Niger in response to drought, flooding, and conflict. In **Mali**, there was a food assistance initiative for displaced families as a result of conflict. In **Niger**, 900 refugee families who had fled Mali because of conflict received food and livelihood assistance. In the fall of 2012, World Renew also concluded its large-scale response called "Saving Lives in the Sahel" which provided 4,062 families with food assistance, seeds, and tools.

Through the CFGB, food assistance and food security projects were carried out by 15 CFGB members in 37 countries last year, reaching more than 2.1 million people with 122 projects. This included over \$9.5 million in programming for World Renew projects.

World Renew's International Disaster Response Team is blessed to have 27 International Relief Managers (IRMs) who manage a number of the disaster response initiatives worldwide. During 2012-2013, six IRMs gave 3,320 hours of their time to respond to emergencies in Kenya, Mozambique, and Niger.

World Renew is privileged and grateful to be part of the Lord's work in disaster-affected communities!

G. Refugee resettlement

World Renew has a long history of helping refugees adjust to life in North America. In the late 1970s, one of World Renew's primary outreaches was to help refugees from Vietnam resettle in the United States.

Today this ministry continues through a unique partnership between World Renew and Canadian churches. In Canada, World Renew is one of

about 80 organizations that have been granted a sponsorship agreement by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which allows it to work with churches to sponsor refugees.

The sponsoring churches agree to welcome a refugee or refugee family, provide them with housing and supplies, connect them with schools and language training, and support them as they find jobs and learn to navigate in their new Canadian life. Last year, 31 families (69 people) were welcomed to Canada through World Renew's refugee resettlement program.

H. Disaster Response Services (North America)

World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) has been responding to disasters across North America for more than 40 years. Each year, thousands of volunteers, from middle-schoolers to seniors, spend weeks and months serving as Jesus' hands and feet at disaster sites across the continent. We are grateful to each of the many volunteers and supporters who have given their time, talents, and finances to make this work possible for four decades.

In the 2012-2013 ministry year, more than 3,100 people volunteered with World Renew as part of the DRS ministry. Combined, they gave 255,963 hours of their time to World Renew. That is roughly the equivalent of 123 full-time employees for one year.

DRS engages volunteers in several ways, including rapid response, needs assessment, and construction estimating. Last year early response coordinators were deployed after Hurricane Isaac; Superstorm Sandy; flooding in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and the Oklahoma tornadoes. These volunteers surveyed the need for a rapid response effort, met with local officials, and gave support to disaster survivors immediately after the impact.

In rapid response work, our volunteers are ready to go on short notice and do hard, dirty work. Last year DRS sent out 43 volunteers in rapid response teams to help people affected by Hurricane Isaac, flooding in Grand Rapids, and Superstorm Sandy.

DRS volunteers who are involved in needs assessments interview survivors, listening to their experiences, taking note of their hopes and dreams, and documenting their unmet needs. More than 22,500 hours were donated by 188 volunteers to assess the needs of 27,303 disaster survivors in 12 communities.

Construction estimators are trained volunteers who go into a community to assist long-term recovery groups as they determine the appropriate materials, skills, and time required to complete home reconstruction after a disaster. Last year construction estimate volunteers served in Alabama and Michigan.

World Renew's primary focus in domestic disaster response is housing reconstruction, accomplished by a group of skilled volunteers who commit to spending an average of three weeks on a construction site. DRS typically makes a twelve-month commitment to a hurting community and then provides the volunteers who work there with housing, tools, food, and management. In 2012-2013, 900 DRS volunteers spent 125,873 hours rebuilding disaster-damaged homes in Birmingham, Cullman, and Walker counties in Alabama; Hyde County, North Carolina; and Schoharie County, New York. In total, they repaired or rebuilt 151 homes.

Short-term volunteers come from church groups (both youth groups and skilled adult groups) as well as colleges, businesses, and families. They typically work for one week, doing a variety of cleanup and reconstruction jobs, depending on the volunteer's skill level and the needs on a particular work site. In 2012-2013, short-term volunteers worked with 29 different partners in the United States and Canada, with 1,632 group volunteers providing 89,200 hours to help repair 325 homes. This response included returning groups from congregations in the Toronto and Chicago areas that committed to multiweek rebuilding projects.

World Renew DRS has regional project managers and area representatives across the United States and Canada. These volunteers monitor specific geographic areas, network with local disaster organizations, promote World Renew DRS, and make contact with churches and volunteers. They gave 12,808 hours of their time to this ministry in 2012-2013.

III. Human resources management

World Renew's human resources (HR) management function provides HR consultation and advice to teams, team leaders, and supervisors, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, performance management, employee relations, and HR systems.

The HR team continues to focus on achieving a balance of racial and gender diversity. World Renew is committed to the process of intentional inclusivity in creating a diverse workforce. As part of its plan, World Renew regularly tracks goals for the number of both men and women in leadership positions and the participation of men and women in organization decision-making. Related to this, 50 percent of World Renew's leadership positions (those with a job level of 14 or higher) are held by women and, of these leadership positions, 13.6 percent are racially diverse.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. Regular reviews give staff an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and critically review growth areas. World Renew is thankful for all of its human resources, who are a critical avenue through which we provide hope in communities in need around the globe.

IV. Board matters

An important support to World Renew's ministry is our board. The primary function of the board is to set World Renew's vision and mission and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew's governance structure is made up of delegates from each church classis and, in addition, up to 27 members-at-large, who constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew. The delegates serve as a vital communication link with classes and churches. They select seven-member national boards for both the United States and Canada. The two boards together form the fourteen-member Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

A. Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada

Mr. James Joosse, president

Mr. John DeGroot, vice president

Ms. Truusje Genesis, secretary

Mr. Nicholas Van Dyk, treasurer
Mr. Francisco Angulo
Mr. William John DeWilde
Rev. Rita Klein-Geltink, pastoral advisor

B. Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.

Mr. Roy Zuidema, president
Ms. Jodi Cole Meyer, vice president
Ms. Joy Anema, secretary
Mr. Steve Westra, treasurer
Mr. Paul Wassink
Mr. Lyman Howell
Rev. Thea Leunk, pastoral advisor

C. World Renew reappointments

1. Reappointment of U.S. classical members

The following U.S. delegates are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Rev. Dan Hutt (Central California), Rev. Roger Nelson (Chicago South), Ms. Jodi Cole Meyer (Georgetown), Mr. Harlan Vander Griend (Heartland), Rev. Carl Bruxvoort (Iakota), Mr. Jim Groen (Illiana), Mr. Dennis Anderson (Northern Michigan), Mr. Caleb Dickson (Red Mesa), and Mr. Donald Kloosterhouse (Zeeland).

2. U.S. members completing terms

The board of World Renew–U.S. would like to recognize and thank the following board members completing their service on the board: Mr. Paul Wassink (member-at-large), Mr. Roy Zuidema (Grand Rapids North), Rev. Dong-il Kim (Classis Pacific Hanmi, three terms), and Mr. Dirk Oudman (Youth Delegate from Dordt College, two years).

3. Reappointment of Canadian classical member

Ms. Sara Nicolai (Alberta North) is completing her first term on the board of World Renew. The board requests that synod reappoint her to a second three-year term.

4. Reappointment of Canada member-at-large

The following Canadian at-large delegate is completing his first term on the board and is being recommended for a second three-year term: Mr. James Joosse (Alberta North).

5. Canada members completing terms

The board of World Renew–Canada would like to recognize and thank the following board members completing their service on the board: Mr. Bert Hofland (Classis Hamilton) and Mr. Jose Francisco-Angulo (member-at-large).

V. Finance

A. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, World Renew reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd
16	4	1st

B. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2014—Financial and Business Supplement*.

VI. Resource development

Last year World Renew was blessed to receive a total of \$35,615,201 from all sources in the United States and Canada. \$19.4 million of this funding came from our churches and individual donors. This was then leveraged through grants, partnerships, and other collaborations. Just over \$1.2 million was received through government grants, and more than \$9.2 million came from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for emergency disaster response and food security programs. World Renew also received more than \$4.9 million in grants from organizations in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, and about \$626,000 from its investments.

World Renew directed \$10.8 million of its 2012 financial resources toward core international development programs, and more than \$21.3 million went to disaster response. About \$1.1 million went toward constituent education.

World Renew uses about 11 percent of its resources for general management and fundraising purposes—meaning that 89 percent or more of the money you entrust to World Renew helps those who experience poverty, injustice, and disaster with life-saving, life-changing programs that witness to the justice and mercy of Jesus Christ.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Roy Zuidema, president of World Renew–U.S.; Mr. James Joosse, president of World Renew–Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of World Renew–U.S.; and Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew–Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

C. That synod, by way of the ballot, appoint and reappoint members to the World Renew Board 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.

World Renew
Andrew Ryskamp, director, World Renew–U.S.
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew–Canada

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 in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and employees' retirement plans are governed by the boards of the U.S. and Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

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 insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2013, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column in which their interest is the greater.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	724	262	986
Ministers receiving benefit payments	585	129	714
Spouses and dependents	168	37	205
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	106	26	132
Total	1,583	454	2,037

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. The U.S. plan is required to have a valuation every three years, while the Canadian plan is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

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 the date of the plans' last valuation, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$117.3 million for the U.S. plan (as of December 31, 2011) and \$38.3 million for the Canadian plan (as of December 31, 2012). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2013	December 31, 2012
United States (U.S. \$)	\$105,528,000	\$93,402,000
Canada (Can. \$)	42,419,000	35,011,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While 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 contributions (the greater of participant or per-member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.

- 2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.

Approved rule VII for synodical procedure, requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised 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.

- 2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine benefit amounts from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2011.

Approved a change in the early retirement reduction factor to 0.5 percent from 0.3 percent per month, effective January 1, 2014.

- 2011 Increased the normal retirement from age 65 to age 66.

Advanced the implementation of the change to the early retirement factor (from 0.3% to 0.5% per month) from January 1, 2014, to July 1, 2011.

Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2010 level.

Changed the normal form of retirement benefit from joint and survivor to single life with five years certain. (Participants can still elect to receive a joint and survivor benefit at a slightly reduced level of payment.)

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by 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 2014 is \$42.96 per member in Canada and \$37.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$9,840 and \$7,704, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of monthly 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 monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

While circumstances could change, it is unlikely that there will be a need for an increase in the pension contribution costs for the next few years.

B. *Employees’ retirement plans*

The employees’ retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. 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. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal regulation. 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, 2013, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$28,553,000 in the United States and \$4,074,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 371 participants in the U.S. plan and 79 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	245	73
Inactive	126	6

C. *Nonretirement employee benefit programs*

Oversight of the denomination's nonretirement employee benefit programs is provided by the Board of Trustees.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 307 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 219 pastors and employees of local churches, 84 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 4 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, the denomination offers health, dental, and life coverage to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 853 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 361 pastors and employees of local churches, 230 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 262 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. The RBA was established as of July 2013 by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America to provide nonretirement benefit programs for both denominations.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are set by the RBA based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

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 Board of Pensions and 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 2015 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.

Pensions and Insurance
John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (Rev. Ronald A. Klimp, director)

I. Introduction

The mandate given by synod to the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry 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 and Care Ministry is “to implement and regulate the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual caregivers, 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.”

Our office refers to our chaplains informally as “the first responders of the spiritual world in secular settings” and summarizes the work of the ministry as “enlisting, endorsing, and encouraging.”

The second part of our title, *and Care*, was added by Synod 2009 to emphasize the importance of reconnecting chaplains and their gifts to the broader commitment of our churches to be caring communities. This aspect might be added to the alliteration above by calling it *enfolding*. A document called *Covenant of Joint Supervision* (an agreement for mutual accountability between a chaplain and his/her calling church) is now a prerequisite for endorsement or endorsement renewal.

II. Ministries of the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

A. *Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

Our chaplains have the unique opportunity to influence individual lives in crisis. They also influence the institutions in which they serve by calling the organizations to ethical standards of care and concern. This influence of our chaplains stretches literally “from the prison to the Pentagon.”

Currently we have four chaplains serving as clinical pastoral education supervisors. These four individuals are instrumental in training our future chaplains and those of other denominations as well. A number of other chaplains serve as directors of departments or independently manage counseling or chaplaincy ministries. Some of our chaplains serve in leadership roles in a variety of professional organizations, including American Association of Pastoral Counselors, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Association of Professional Chaplains, Canadian Association for Spiritual Care, C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago, College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Michigan Chaplains Association, and VISN 18 Chaplain Operational Board.

One of our naval military chaplains received a promotion this year, and one Army chaplain received the Army Ranger pin. One is currently serving as a chaplain in the Arlington Cemetery. Six of our military chaplains have filled positions in the Pentagon over the past twenty years.

We currently have two chaplains with the rank of Colonel (Captain in the Navy), two Lt. Colonel (Commander in the Navy), and six Major

(Lt. Commander in the Navy). Two chaplains serve in the Canadian Forces. None are deployed at this time, but three are serving overseas.

B. Ministry to and with local churches

All chaplains are called by, and their life and doctrine are overseen by, a local church. Most have filled the pulpit of their calling church or those of other area churches on numerous occasions. Some have served on the church council, at classis, or as delegates to synod. Some pastor local churches while serving the local hospice, prison, or Reserve military personnel part-time. Chaplains conduct adult education classes and workshops, and they help formally and informally with pastoral care in local congregations. We intend to encourage this interaction with the local church as part of the new emphasis reflected in the title of this ministry: *Chaplaincy and Care*.

In addition to the ministries mentioned above, we look for opportunities to communicate to local churches and classes, suggesting that they

- encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy.
- pray regularly for chaplains who walk daily with those in crisis situations, who have significant influence in secular institutions, and who serve in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations—especially those who are separated from home and family by military deployment.
- welcome chaplains at their regular meetings (some classes have appointed a “chaplain of the day” for each meeting) and explore with them how to use their training and gifts to benefit the care ministries of the local church.

We also urge that churches be particularly aware of the needs of deployed and returning military personnel and their families. For more information and/or ideas about resources that can help in addressing these needs, please contact us.

C. Endorsement renewals

Since the adoption of a significant report to Synod 2003, endorsement has been considered nonpermanent but renewable every five years. These renewal dates give us an opportunity to also require that the Covenant of Joint Supervision with a chaplain’s calling church be reviewed and renewed. This requirement has significantly increased the level of compliance with this important tool.

D. Collaborative efforts

1. The Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry has helped to initiate a discussion among a number of agencies and ministries within our denomination (e.g., Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, Pastor-Church Relations) on the subject of developing a process to better assess the gifts, competencies, and personality traits that would suggest the “best fit” for an individual interested in kingdom service. After two years of discussion, we hired a consultant to study current procedures and understandings related to career and leadership development in our denomination. Based on his recommendations and with his guidance, we have now completed a pilot project to explore a more coordinated assessment and career guidance

process across the spectrum of denominational ministries and institutions. Further developments in this process may be forthcoming.

2. We annually arrange for chaplaincy representatives to visit a number of Christian colleges and seminaries (six in the past year) to talk with students about the exciting ministry options that exist in the world of chaplaincy.
3. We have agreed with chaplaincy staff from the Reformed Church in America to convene our 2014 chaplains' conferences concurrently, with some joint activities (as we have done several times before). Since Central College in Pella, Iowa, was not able to accommodate the conference at the same time as Synod 2014, we will convene on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

E. Diversity and development of future ministry

Currently 25 of our 123 endorsed chaplains are female (19%). Nine of our current chaplains represent ethnic minorities. Most of these have been endorsed in the past decade. Based on current applicants and students showing an interest in chaplaincy, we expect this trend to continue. The future of chaplaincy depends on the growth or restriction of chaplaincy positions and on developing an interest among younger (and older) members of our denomination who feel drawn to full- or part-time ministry. We believe that we are expanding this interest by interacting with students at Christian colleges and seminaries throughout North America and by encouraging chaplains to tell their rich and moving stories of serving individuals in crisis situations. We are also attempting to interact with churches and classes to help create opportunities for these stories to be heard.

F. Current chaplaincy statistics

1. Total chaplains serving the CRCNA: 123 (full-time 97; part-time 20; endorsed-unemployed 6)
2. Chaplains in the United States: 104; Chaplains in Canada: 19
3. Active military chaplains: 18 in the United States; 2 in Canada; 3 in the National Guard and Reserves

4. Eleven new chaplains:

Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene

*Patrick Hennen

Joseph Kamphuis

Randy Meyers

Stephen Moerman

Sandra Nemecek

*Benjamin Schaefer

*Siemen Speelman

*Lloyd Wicker

*Valjean Wykstra

*Stephen Wolma

(*Provisional endorsement – still completing one or more prerequisites)

5. Six recently retired chaplains: Robert L. Bierenga, Gerald W. Frens, Janet A. Greidanus, Dennis A. Kamper, Lee R. Smits, and Richard VandenBerg.
6. Military chaplains who have served in the past year, or are currently serving, overseas are Peter Hofman, InSoon Hoagland, Cornelius Muasa, Timothy Rietkerk, Douglas Vrieland, and Timothy Won.

Note: These 123 chaplains interact daily with thousands of people, often in crisis situations, who may or may not have a faith commitment or a church connection. At a very nominal cost to the CRCNA, their employer's total ministry support has an estimated value \$8-10 million annually.

III. Recruitment and training

There seems to be a growing interest among educational institutions and students in "nontraditional" ministry options like chaplaincy. We currently are working with 34 students (up from 22 in the previous report), assisting them as needed in their education both financially and through mentoring. Funding for this in the future will come increasingly from the Chaplains Development Fund. We are encouraging many of our contributors to specify this fund with their gifts.

Every year (usually in late May or early June), CRC chaplains gather for a conference arranged and largely sponsored by our office (approx. \$30,000/year). We arrange for transportation, housing, speakers, music, chaplaincy resources, and food to make this event edifying and enjoyable. Since chaplains work at the margins of church and society, they relish the time they can spend with each other at the annual conference to renew friendships, learn together, and talk with fellow servants of the Lord who are living with the unique pressures, joys, and challenges that chaplaincy brings.

Committee for Contact with the Government/Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager)

The Committee for Contact with the Government, operating as the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, is a justice and reconciliation ministry of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada. The Centre for Public Dialogue cultivates passionate citizenship in Christian communities, studies critical issues facing Canadian society from a Reformed perspective, and interacts with legislators in a constructive manner.

The Centre for Public Dialogue Strategic Vision 2012-2015 is shaped by a belief that *acts of passionate citizenship* at the local level are integral to God's call to justice and reconciliation. We are, therefore, excited that the Justice and Faith research study is yielding new insights on CRC member perspectives on justice. This research project (thus far, specific to Canada) is a partnership between CRC offices; the Centre for Community Based Research; and the Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics at the Institute for Christian Studies. A first phase of Justice and Faith showed that CRC members understand *justice as ministry* when the work is shaped by biblical vision, when relationships with people struggling with injustice are present, and when leaders encourage exploration of and action on justice. The second

phase of the study, sponsored in part by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, is a fuller opportunity to explore God's call to justice with CRC members over the next two years. The insights of the Justice and Faith project will help all CRC justice and reconciliation ministries in our ongoing work to encourage passionate citizenship.

In the past year, the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice have enjoyed fruitful collaboration on a range of projects. We are particularly encouraged by the dynamic dialogue happening on our joint blog, Do Justice (www.crcna.org/dojustice). This great resource is facilitated by our creative binational justice communications team.

In 2014 the Centre for Public Dialogue continues a research, advocacy, and mobilization program on two priorities:

- Refugee justice—Our connections with front-line refugee support agencies (The Lighthouse, World Renew) tell a story of the deepening vulnerability of refugees in Canada and throughout the world. We are developing citizen advocacy resources that draw attention to the growing vulnerability of refugees.
- Indigenous education reform continues to be a matter of policy dialogue and controversy. While we maintain a watchful eye on legislative developments, we are working with a broad coalition of churches and indigenous organizations to encourage public awareness and action on the need for reconciliation, justice, and equity in indigenous education.

In all our work, we are blessed by partnerships with the Regional Synod of Canada - Reformed Church in America, Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee, Office of Race Relations, Office of Social Justice, and many ecumenical groups. We give thanks for these friends on the journey of justice and reconciliation.

Please connect with us at www.crcna.ca/PublicDialogue or www.facebook.com/crcpublicdialogue to learn more about our efforts to seek justice and speak hope.

Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

The mission of the Office of Disability Concerns (DC) is "to bring about the full participation of all people with disabilities in the life of the church and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities." Our mandate is "to gather and disseminate information on services available from and through the CRC and other denominations, to increase awareness among our constituency of the special needs of persons with disabilities, and to assist the churches in identifying and eliminating those barriers which hinder the full participation of persons who have disabilities in the life of the church." Since 2009, CRC Disability Concerns has been working in close cooperation with the Disability Concerns office of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Together, our vision can be summarized briefly: "In healthy churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves."

II. Ministries of Disability Concerns

A. *Ministry that is transforming*

We have been expanding our resources in the Korean and Spanish languages. Our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, is not only available in English but also has been available online in Spanish (*Rompiendo Barreras*) and in Korean (장애물 헐기) for several years, and our *Inclusion Handbook* is available in Spanish (*Manual de Inclusión*) and in Korean (통합 안내서). Over 21,000 unique visitors found resources on the DC website and CRC Network pages last year, and we note hundreds of visits each from countries such as South Africa, India, Australia, and the United Kingdom. With over 1,000 pages on our website and Network pages, we offer free worship resources, Bible studies, sample sermons, accessibility materials, personal stories, and ministry ideas, as well as a parent forum and discussion on contemporary issues related to disability. Our director serves on the board of Pathways to Promise, a parachurch organization that helps churches minister to people affected by mental illnesses.

B. *Ministry to and with the local churches*

Volunteers do the primary work of DC. We have regional disability advocates who serve in 33 CRC classes (out of 47), about 600 church disability advocates, 9 agency advocates, and 7 Disability Concerns Advisory Committee members. Besides the advisory committee, we have regional committees that serve in Ontario, Michigan, the U.S. Midwest, the U.S. Southwest, and Illinois/Indiana. In addition, we have one committee that focuses on ministry with people with mental illnesses: the Mental Health Task Force. Except for the Mental Health Task Force, all of these committees include volunteers from the CRC and the Reformed Church in America, and some include staff from other disability ministries as well. Our staff consists of our full-time director and two administrative assistants.

DC volunteers and staff speak regularly at churches, classis meetings, various conferences, and seminary classes and consult with many CRCs about engaging people with disabilities in church life. The latest resource created by the Mental Health Task Force is a speakers bureau—people who are qualified to present to congregations in eleven CRC classes on mental health issues. With the Reformed Church in America, each year we sponsor and participate in conferences and smaller gatherings to equip volunteers in Canada and in the United States.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

We have been blessed by a partnership with the Reformed Church in America Disability Concerns ministry for the past five years. Together we publish our newsletter for churches, *Breaking Barriers*, and we released a revised edition of our *Inclusion Handbook* for advocates. We jointly sponsor an annual DC leadership conference, attended by about 75 CRC and RCA volunteers this past August. Coaches trained by the RCA are available to coach regional advocates who request them. The coordinator of RCA Disability Concerns, Mr. Terry DeYoung, and Rev. Mark Stephenson serve on each partner's advisory committee, respectively. In addition, RCA Disability Concerns and CRC Disability Concerns are members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition, which works on public policy priorities in Washington, D.C.

In another fruitful partnership, Diaconal Ministries Canada and Disability Concerns have entered into an agreement because our ministries have many areas of overlap:

- identifying and engaging gifts/resources in church and community to provide the needed support for people affected by disability
- calling churches to engage and equip people with disabilities in congregational life so that their abilities are fully utilized in the church's ministry
- speaking and acting to break patterns of injustice in the church and in the community toward people with disabilities

The vision for this collaboration is that communities and churches will be enriched and strengthened by the inclusion, diversity, and gifts of people with disabilities, thus contributing to the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being of persons and families living with disabilities.

In addition, DC's Mental Health Task Force is a collaboration between Disability Concerns and Classis Quinte's Faith and Hope Ministry. Other collaborations include work with the CRC Office of Race Relations, Calvin Theological Seminary, Trinity Christian College, Friendship Ministries, Pathways to Promise, Hope Centre Ministries in Manitoba, Christian Horizons and Canadian Reformed Anchor Association in Ontario, and the CLC Network and Hope Network in Michigan.

D. Stories to share

Last fall our director, Rev. Mark Stephenson, led worship and adult Sunday school at Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ontario. The theme of his message was "Renewing Our Minds about Mental Illness," and the education hour began with a video called "Mental Illness and Families of Faith." After the video ended, several people shared openly about their experiences with mental illness—either their own or that of a family member. Providentially, Mountainview has a professional counselor on staff who invited those present to schedule an appointment with him.

With RCA Disability Concerns, we have led Dessert and Disability gatherings at various churches. Attendees at these gatherings include regional and church disability advocates as well as anyone interested in disability issues. At one of these gatherings last fall a young mother who has a five-month-old child with Down syndrome found a loving and sympathetic audience as she shared her concerns and joys and expressed her interest in helping her church to become more welcoming not only to her own child but also to all people who have disabilities.

Rehoboth CRC and Bethany CRC in New Mexico want to enhance their ministry with people who have disabilities. Last fall they gathered interested individuals from both churches for an evening meal and discussion. Rev. Stephenson joined that discussion by phone, and DC volunteers Mrs. Carol and Mr. Ralph Honderd joined in person. Through this consultation, both churches received many new ideas (most low cost or no cost) for ways to become healthier by engaging people with disabilities in church life.

E. Development of future ministry

With the new collaborative work groups in which the CRC's denominational ministries are working together, even more opportunities for col-

laboration will arise, and disability issues can be considered alongside other important issues of justice. The new collaboration with Diaconal Ministries Canada creates new avenues for increasing care within Canadian congregations, and this may provide new ideas for enhancing care in U.S. churches too. Please pray that we as a denomination will continue advancing justice and care for people with disabilities.

III. Recommendations

By way of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA Report (see *Agenda for Synod 2014*, pp. 37, 85-87) and the RCA General Synod Council, the CRC and RCA Disability Concerns offices present recommendations to Synod 2014 of the CRC and to General Synod 2014 of the RCA.

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

I. Introduction

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the thirty-two years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that while these functions remain basic, there are adjustments required because of changing culture, economic factors, and programs. One area to note is the “clustering” of ministries that has been happening over the past years with ministries such as PCR, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, and Safe Church Ministry.

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 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. To increase capacity, PCR has identified several skilled experienced practitioners who can assist with this work on a contract basis. PCR is also exploring innovative ways to work creatively with churches and pastors in crisis or transition. For example, through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program, PCR staff lead learning events for pastors and their spouses about thoughtfully responding to transitions in life and ministry.

B. PCR *extends* its work through *regional pastors* at the classis level who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses 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. In addition, PCR’s relationship with classical church visitors continues to grow through opportunities for collaboration and training.

C. PCR 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.

D. In response to the request of Synod 2013 and the Board of Trustees, PCR has convened an initiative called "Better Together." It is intended to enhance and strengthen denominational support for classis functionaries, such as church visitors, regional pastors, mentors, church counselors, and synodical deputies, as a key strategy for assisting congregations who are in the early stages of challenging situations. This initiative arises out of observing a growing number of pastor-congregation separations and the difficult dynamics that have contributed to this trend.

The "Better Together" initiative is being convened by Pastor-Church Relations and involves a delivery team of staff from various offices as well as an advisory team that will help guide this work.

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. Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs) are trained to help congregations deal with challenges and opportunities during the transition between pastors. At this time, there are 17 STMs endorsed by PCR. With a growing number of recently retired pastors, congregations are also using other pastors as *supply pastors*. Although these pastors are not working directly with PCR, a list of pastors available for this work is maintained in the PCR office.

G. Through the Staff Ministry Team, over 1,000 nonordained church professionals are being supported in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered and, increasingly, churches are requesting services pertaining to staffing concerns. Following a pilot phase for credentialing, the Board of Trustees in September 2013 endorsed the credentialing program for church ministry staff developed by the Staff Ministry Team. A total of 28 people were credentialed during the pilot stage.

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. Applicants access this information on the PCR website.

I. The Ministerial Information Service maintains a database of more than 800 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, recommends pastor candidates for search committees of congregations.

J. The use of a recently completed training tool for congregations who are facing a pastor vacancy, *More than a Search Committee*, has increased in the past year and is reported to be an important tool for councils in the pastor

search process. Copies are available on the PCR website or free of charge through Faith Alive Christian Resources.

K. Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) seek to foster health in pastors, pastors' spouses, and smaller congregations. A common thread of encouragement, support, and learning runs through all programming, which includes grant opportunities, learning events, and conferences. As of February 2014, almost 500 churches have participated in SCE, and nearly 800 pastors have participated in SPE.

L. Staff of Pastor-Church Relations have also been contributing in various ways to the internal realignment of various ministries. This work continues and will be stimulating new avenues of cooperation and collaboration within the various denominational functions associated with learning from and resourcing congregations of the CRCNA.

III. Considerations for the future

A. PCR is renewing the effort to develop a web-based approach to the Ministerial Information Service, an approach that may provide greater freedom for communication among churches looking for pastors, as well as among pastors and pastor candidates looking for churches. This effort will include a needed revision of the profile forms for both pastors and churches.

B. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. We meet with ministerial candidates prior to their graduation, whether enrolled in the M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary or enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy, familiarizing them with the work of our office. Given synod's decisions about commissioned pastors, PCR will need to find ways to better serve this expanding group among the churches.

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The Office of Race Relations continues to meet the challenges of assisting our denomination in living out our identity as God's diverse and unified family through partnerships by developing collaborations with denominational agencies, specialized ministries, the Reformed Church in America, and Christian Reformed institutions of higher learning, as well as organizations outside the CRC. Race Relations is privileged to be responsible for (1) antiracism and racial reconciliation initiatives that provide education and resources, (2) the Multiethnic Conference, (3) All Nations Heritage celebrations, and (4) a scholarship program that provides not only financial assistance but also training in antiracism and cultural awareness for students attending our institutions of higher education.

Within our antiracism and racial reconciliation mandate, we are called to provide education and resources to equip our denomination to combat not only the effects of the sin of racism but also to facilitate reconciliation through both workshops and materials. We have several workshops: Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR), Widening the Circle (WTC) in Canada,

Building Bridges, and Church Between Borders. In addition, we have a second-level antiracism workshop, the Dance of Racial Reconciliation: Level 2, ready to pilot. In partnership with the CRC Office of Social Justice and the Reformed Church in America, Church Between Borders: A Workshop on Immigration Reform has been developed and piloted. Cultural Intelligence Building, our newest workshop, focuses on four concrete skill areas—knowledge, motivation, interpretation, and behavior—to learn about and then to improve one’s ability to act and react in positive ways across cultural lines. A DVD, *Facing Racism*, takes participants through a series of six small-group studies that, in the end, enables them and their congregations to engage the issue of racism and reconciliation in a modern way. Leadership and Race, another Race Relations workshop, develops and supports leadership that contributes to racial justice. A small-group DORR curriculum, which covers twelve weeks, is available in both English and Spanish and is readily adaptable to an adult education Sunday morning time slot.

Our materials include the 1996 synodical study committee report, *God’s Diverse and Unified Family*, which provides the theological underpinnings for antiracism. It is available for purchase from Faith Alive Christian Resources in both English and Spanish. In addition to this resource, we provide bulletins and bulletin covers for All Nations Heritage celebrations on the first Sunday in October each year. The 2014 All Nations Heritage Sunday will be celebrated on October 5.

The Office of Race Relations also sponsors a Race Relations Scholarship Program. More information is available, including application forms, on our website at www.crcna.org/race/scholarships.

Finally, the Office of Race Relations supports the CRCNA Race Relations Team, which serves within the administrative offices in Grand Rapids, Burlington, and Palos Heights to encourage and work toward a racism-free environment within our workplaces.

The Office of Race Relations continues to assist CRC congregations in their efforts to become culturally intelligent regarding the work of antiracism and racial reconciliation through a new project called the Community Connect Initiative. The initiative entails identifying ten to twelve congregations and their leaders within the CRC’s twelve regions in North America to participate in six months to one year of training through workshops. The workshops involved are Cultural Intelligence Building, Church Between Borders, Dance of Racial Reconciliation/Widening the Circle, Leadership and Race, Partner 2 Partner (Timothy Leadership Institute Training), and Everybody Belongs; Everybody Serves (Office of Disability Concerns). The goal is for congregations and their leaders to increase their capacity for being culturally intelligent and to be identified as a resource for CRC leaders and congregations by encouraging and assisting them in equipping other congregations to do the same.

The Office of Race Relations, the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, and the Center for Public Dialogue are collaborating to provide resources to help our churches throughout North America engage issues of justice and reconciliation. The goal is to be intentional about disseminating justice and reconciliation information so that congregations are involved in their communities and the issues that affect them.

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 life together as a church, as well as on the integrity of that 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. We continue to attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry to the grace and goodness of God. To this end, we covet your prayers. Please visit our website at www.crcna.org/race and on Facebook at facebook.com/crcracrelations.

Safe Church Ministry (Ms. Bonnie Nicholas, director)

I. Introduction

Safe Church Ministry is a resource for churches in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. Our vision is

In all Christian Reformed churches, the infinite value of each person is honored; people are free to worship and grow in a safe place, free from any threat of abuse. And where abuse has occurred, the church always responds with compassionate justice that fosters healing.

II. Ministries of Safe Church Ministry

A. Ministry that transforms lives and communities worldwide

Misuse of power is at the heart of all abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional. Abuse stands in stark contrast to the way of Jesus, who came in humility, using his power for the sake of those he loved. We are called to follow his way (see Phil. 2). Therefore, we must not allow abuse in our churches, for when abuse is present, the church cannot reflect our Lord.

A recent study of clergy sexual abuse found that 90 to 95 percent of victims of clergy sexual misconduct are female congregants (Columbia Theological Seminary, Pamela Cooper-White). Safe Church Ministry works to increase awareness and find ways to prevent such abuse. The World Council of Churches' top three recommendations to prevent clergy sexual abuse are as follows: (1) education and training in clergy sexual abuse, identifying such abuse as "misconduct" and "abuse of power" rather than a consensual affair between equal parties, and identifying inappropriate behavior and early warning signs; (2) biblical education about the role of power and its use and abuse; and (3) adoption of a code of ethics, clear role expectations, and appropriate oversight and support for church leaders.

In addition, protecting children and those most vulnerable in our communities continues to be a challenge for Safe Church Ministry. Only about half of our churches have a written abuse prevention policy. In addition, people in our congregations suffer from domestic violence or other unresolved abuse issues. This affects faith development and fitness for ministry. Our church body is wounded; healing is needed within the church context. Safe Church works to equip churches by building awareness through information on our website, Network blogs and forums, webinars, newsletters, and direct communication.

B. *Ministry with the local church*

Safe Church works through nearly 300 classis Safe Church team members. Ideally, each church has a Safe Church representative on a classis team. Monthly newsletters and ongoing training events are available to Safe Church team members who, along with their team, provide needed assistance and resources to churches. In addition, the Safe Church office itself recorded 1,040 interactions with churches and individuals in 2013. These interactions range from simple questions and requests regarding policy information to complex discussions about how to respond in various abuse situations.

Safe Church continues to promote the *Circle of Grace* program, used by a growing number of churches. This program focuses on the next generation, equipping children and youth to be actively involved in a safe environment. It is one of the very best tools available for building respectful communities and preventing abuse. One teacher said, “I used the lesson on internet safety and found the material to be a good resource and pertinent to today’s students.”

Abuse Awareness Sunday, the fourth Sunday in September, is promoted with letters to churches and to Safe Church team members. The focus for Abuse Awareness Sunday 2013, criminal sexual history and involvement in church, was selected in response to a growing number of requests for information on this topic. A bulletin insert was created, a webinar was produced, and additional resources were added to our website. As of September 30, 2013, about 16,000 bulletin inserts were ordered by over 100 churches.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

Safe Church looks forward to new denominational structures and greater collaboration.

1. Office of Pastor-Church Relations—There is significant overlap in our work in congregations. We consult on a regular basis, believing a team approach will lead to better outcomes.
2. Calvin Theological Seminary—Safe Church facilitates two class sessions each fall.
3. Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action—A growing partnership is developing in promoting respect for all people and encouraging restorative practices in churches.
4. Safe Church is involved with an ecumenical team in developing curriculum and offering training about healthy boundaries for church leaders. A partnership with Sustaining Pastoral Excellence at St. Francis Retreat Center makes this work possible.
5. In planning our biennial Safe Church Ministry Conference (scheduled for April 2014), we collaborate with community agencies such as Integrative Health Consultants, Center for Women in Transition, Groundwork Counseling, Men’s Resource Center, Women at Risk, Dove’s Nest, Allegan County Circuit Court, and others. Safe Church team members are also encouraged to help churches connect with local agencies and community resources in understanding and responding to abuse.

D. Stories to share

Safe Church responds to expressed needs. A few churches sought guidance about how to respond when objectionable or inappropriate behavior was directed toward the pastor. Discussions with team members and with the Safe Church Advisory Committee led to our drafting sample guidelines, which are now posted as a resource. Our webinar sparked conversations with churches considering policies to address those with a criminal sexual offense. "This couldn't have come at a better time for us," said one grateful church member.

There are many stories to tell, more than this space allows. Some of the stories must remain private, some have positive endings, and some do not. Sometimes there is no way to measure outcomes. We will never know, for example, what harm has been prevented by a new policy, how a report of abuse may help a family get intervention that is needed, or how a burden may be lifted or a relationship deepened by the painful sharing of a story of abuse. Though we do not always see results, we remain faithful to our calling to bring our vision closer to reality.

E. Development of future ministry

Five goals continue to guide the work of Safe Church Ministry:

1. Each church has implemented a written Safe Church/abuse prevention policy.
2. Each church includes abuse prevention in its church school and youth education. Programs such as *Circle of Grace*, which teach positive respect in relationships, are recommended.
3. Each church has protocols in place for responding to misconduct and is aware of the recommended "Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Church Leader" approved by Synod 2010.
4. Abuse is acknowledged as an important issue and can be freely discussed.
5. Leadership at all levels is supportive of Safe Church Ministry, and each church is represented on a classis Safe Church team.

Our top priority is developing Safe Church teams, which can engage churches in working toward the above goals, with the focus on awareness and prevention.

III. Recruitment and training

Safe Church Ministry will continue to find people with a passion for this ministry and give them the tools they need to provide effective local leadership. In 2013 the director facilitated team training events in Alberta, Ontario, Florida, and Washington. Safe Church staff also made classis presentations in California, Colorado, and New Jersey. Other training events and classis presentations are facilitated by local Safe Church teams. The church owes a debt of gratitude to these faithful Safe Church volunteers.

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 (OSJ) to address these root causes.

Today the OSJ 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 OSJ works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJ is also occasionally involved in direct advocacy.

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

II. What is social justice?

Doing justice is about making things right. It is seeking restoration of our world and society through vocal, active, fearless love for others. It is being part of Jesus' incredible ministry of reconciliation, restoring broken relationships, and making all things new.

Justice is the work we are already doing—renewed, revamped, refocused on the needs of the marginalized. It is a lens that reframes our community outreach, coffee hour, missions, and worship. Seeking justice makes us question whether we are actually putting the last first and standing with the poor, oppressed, and powerless.

III. Our work

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

1. Our Advent devotional series, a joint effort from the OSJ and World Renew, was the most widely read and shared publication this year with over 2,000 subscribers, many of whom were not previously connected to the OSJ.
2. This year we launched *Do Justice*—a blog in partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue. *Do Justice* is an online space to find new ideas and perspectives, share better ways to engage in justice work, remember our motivation, and together grow our faith. Since September we have been amplifying the voices of CRC members across both countries as they wrestle with injustice globally and in their neighborhoods.

3. The OSJ has also partnered with the Centre for Public Dialogue, the Office of Race Relations, and Canadian Ministries in a shared justice communications initiative. This partnership has resulted in increased communications capacity for all of the ministries involved.
 4. The OSJ continues to partner with World Renew to equip churches to understand and seek justice. The Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project is well into its seventh year with a shared full-time coordinator. Some of the many initiatives coming out of CJM include presentations on various hot topics, an expanded resource collection for small groups, and growing relationships with over 400 congregations.
 5. We have expanded our newsletter options to meet an increasingly varied and engaged readership. We continue to offer *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly email list of the most pressing justice issues around the world with written prayers appropriate for individuals, small groups, and congregations. *OSJ News* is our bimonthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered electronically to over 600 recipients and supplies a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. Our newest offering is *OSJ Special Updates*, which are issue-specific updates tailored to the reader's preference. We offer special updates on poverty and hunger, immigration, creation care, peace and war, abortion and life issues, the Middle East, human trafficking, and restorative justice. Readers who sign up for *Special Updates* will receive periodic news on the issues they are most passionate about, including the newest resources and opportunities. To subscribe to any of our publications, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on "Newsletters."
 6. The OSJ website (www.crcjustice.org) serves more than 2,000 visitors each 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. The OSJ also engages with over 3,000 subscribers on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest who are eager to learn, speak, and act as agents of social justice.
- 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. With the merging of two part-time positions into one, we look forward to increased emphasis on developing restorative justice projects in the United States and Canada and to further development of those already in place. Particularly in Canada, there is increased emphasis on restorative practices in all areas of communal life. This increased focus on restorative justice stems from the actions of Synod 2005.
 2. In Canada we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. We also work with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

3. We were charged by Synod 2010 to help the Christian Reformed Church welcome the stranger in the midst of a broken immigration system. In light of that call and the broken immigration system in the United States, the OSJ has directed major resources to education and mobilization strategies designed to promote a comprehensive reform of the U.S. immigration system. At this writing the winds of change are blowing in the right direction.
4. In response to the Creation Stewardship report to Synod 2012, the OSJ has provided significant resources on the church's responsibility to the creation and to the people who are most affected by environmental degradation. After U.S. immigration reform, this will likely become our most pressing education and mobilization effort.
5. Once again the OSJ provided a Reformed and holistic approach to the issue of abortion in celebration of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. In keeping with our mandate from Synod 2010, we equipped congregations and individuals to lament the loss of life through abortion, understand the complex factors affecting abortion, and speak boldly in defense of all human life.
6. When appropriate for our areas of focus, the OSJ facilitates advocacy activities in Washington, D.C., and supports the work of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue to do the same in Ottawa, Canada. This year such advocacy included comprehensive immigration reform, working against budget cuts to humanitarian assistance, opposing state sanctioned torture, promoting new ways to fight human trafficking, and supporting adaptation funding to alleviate the effects of climate change.

The Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, especially the Centre for Public Dialogue in Canada, the Office of Race Relations, Disability Concerns, Christian Reformed World Missions, World Renew, Committee for Contact with the Government, and Urban Aboriginal Ministries, looks back with gratitude on a productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist members of the CRC to become salt and light in the service of God's justice and mercy.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The CRC's aboriginal ministries in Canada support healing, reconciliation, and restored relationships between aboriginal and nonaboriginal peoples in Canada. Through ministries of *compassionate community*, *awareness-raising*, and *advocacy*, the ministry with aboriginal persons in Canada continues to grow stronger.

The urban aboriginal ministry centres in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton, funded by the Christian Reformed Church, help to meet the spiritual and social needs of aboriginal Canadians to help them live dignified and harmonious lives. These ministry centres are highly regarded by the communities they serve. Ministry participants value the dignity and respect they experience as they attend and participate in the programs and community activities.

The Winnipeg Indigenous Family Centre is marking its 40th anniversary. It is deepening its work on counseling services, contextualization of ministry, and developing a social enterprise project to manufacture moccasins. The Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina provides a drop-in ministry and daily prayer circle. The ministry is known for its ability to contextualize the gospel and for growing a deeper understanding of what is meant by aboriginal spirituality. The Edmonton Native Healing Centre networks with local partners to carry out a variety of programs to help participants strengthen their capacities and build community.

Developing awareness and providing educational resources is the focus of the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee. For example, they helped to organize events around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Vancouver and Edmonton that included the significant participation of many CRC leaders. The Blanket Exercise is a workshop being carried out throughout Canada. It has provided many with an opportunity to understand the injustices faced by First Nations people in the history of Canada, especially with regard to land claims.

Advocacy for aboriginal rights is another important component of aboriginal ministry in Canada. The work on indigenous education reform carried out by the Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue involves working with a broad coalition of churches and indigenous organizations to encourage public awareness and action in indigenous education. (See also the report by the Committee for Contact with the Government.)

STANDING COMMITTEES

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee mandate is available in a document titled "Journey Toward Ordination," available on the Candidacy Committee website (www.crcna.org/candidacy). The members of the committee meet three times per year. As with other denominational committees, Candidacy Committee members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

The committee has been in existence for nearly eight years. For six of those years, we have had a full-time staff person. We are trying to be sensitive to the voice of the church as we review, implement, and suggest modifications for our pastoral ordination processes. It is our assessment that over the past eight years there has been growth in a spirit of collaboration between the classes and the denomination in the ordination discussions and policies, and for this we are very grateful. We are aware that our discussions and our adjustments will have to continue, and we are committed to the task.

II. Committee membership

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma (2016/2), Dr. Laverne Jordan (2016/1), Rev. Ken Koeman (2016/2), Rev. Fernando Valencia (2016/1), Rev. Melvin Jackson (2015/2), Rev. Joel Kok (2015/1), Ms. Kristen Pikaart (2015/2), Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen (2014/1), Rev. Peter Choi (2014/2), Rev. Jul Medenblik (*ex officio* as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), Rev. Joel Boot (*ex officio* as executive director), and Rev. David R. Koll (nonvoting staff).

Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen is willing to serve a second term. Rev. Peter Choi is completing a second term and is not eligible for reappointment. Thus, the committee presents to synod the following slate of nominees to fill the open position:

Rev. Chang Guk (Joseph) Byun is the founding pastor of East West Church of New York in Flushing, New York (Classis Hudson). He is also planting a campus ministry, Stony Brook University Campus Ministry, begun in 2009. Rev. Byun earned his M.Div. from Chong Shin Theological Seminary in Korea in 1988. He has served as a regional pastor in both Classis Hudson and the East Coast Korean Ministry Team of Home Missions. Rev. Byun has served a term as president of the Korean Council (2012-2013).

Rev. Hun Suk (Joseph) Bae is the senior pastor of Hope CRC in Ann Arbor, Michigan (Classis Lake Erie). He earned his M.Div. from Chong Shin Theological Seminary in Korea in 1990. Rev. Bae earned a Th.M. from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1996. His current congregation is in an area known for campus ministry and international ministry. Rev. Bae has served the Hope CRC congregation for seventeen years and helped the congregation affiliate with the CRC in 2006.

III. Review of the committee's work

A. Development of the nonresident Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy and candidacy process

One of the exciting developments of the candidacy work in the past three years has been the growth of the nonresident Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). The EPMC program is required of those who wish to become candidates for ministry after having earned a master of divinity degree at a seminary other than Calvin Theological Seminary. (Note that the Calvin Theological Seminary M.Div. program includes all the elements of the EPMC within the degree work.)

In the past, students were required to take up residency in West Michigan for at least one semester in order to complete this program. The nonresident EPMC option is now just three years old and has over forty participants, including nine who were candidates last year and fourteen who plan to be candidates this year. The nonresident program includes the same academic work as the resident program, using online technology for instruction. This nonresident program also connects each student to a local CRC ministry and a CRC mentor for a 24-month period, deepening their experience in the CRC and allowing the candidacy system to better know them and help them grow.

The Candidacy Committee is so pleased with the response and initial implementation of this program that we are looking for ways to let all EPMC students experience the mentoring and CRC ministry connections enjoyed by the nonresident students. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the mentors in this work. Over thirty-five CRC pastors have been oriented to the nonresident EPMC program and are currently engaged in mentor relationships; many classis leaders are also offering significant support to this initiative. We are moving toward the process envisioned in 2004 when the Candidacy Committee was created by synod—a process in which the classis and local church play a more active role in the formation of ministerial candidates.

In fact, with the positive response to the nonresident EPMC program, the Candidacy Committee is prompted to take an intentional look at the candidacy process in general and at the design of the EPMC program in particular. We would like to see all potential candidates experience connections to the regional church that are being enjoyed by the nonresident EPMC students. We wonder if the goals of the EPMC can be achieved as well or better with changes in the course design. We hope to address these and related questions in the coming year. Any significant changes would be presented to synod for approval.

B. Student fund survey

This past year the Candidacy Committee reviewed the minutes of classis meetings from 2012 and early 2013 in order to determine the level of support given to students preparing for ministry. This is the third time we have conducted such a survey. The “data trends” that are emerging as a result of the three surveys are displayed in the following chart:

Year of Survey	2008	2010	2012
# of classes with no data	11	7	6
# of classes with data	36	40	41
Average \$ support per family (range of lowest/highest)	\$5.73 (\$.31 lowest) (\$15.32 highest)	\$4.44 (\$.78 lowest) (\$9.73 highest)	\$5.94 (\$.12 lowest) (\$15.98 highest)
Total \$ support in data for all classes	\$475,000	\$607,000	\$726,309
Total # of students shown in data	113	133	145
Average \$ per student (range of lowest/highest)	\$4,525 (\$500 lowest) (\$15,000 highest)	\$4,566 (\$500 lowest) (\$15,500 highest)	\$5,009 (\$500 lowest) (\$15,299 highest)

It is both interesting and gratifying to note that the new data shows an increase in the following:

- The number of classes that are offering data in their minutes (all but six of our classes provide data).
- The average contribution per family (\$5.94 per family is the highest of our surveys over the past five years).
- The total dollars given by all classes combined (\$726,309 represents a considerable increase from the \$475,000 given in 2008).
- The number of students supported (145 as compared with 113 in 2008).
- The average support given per student (\$5,009 as compared with \$4,525 in 2008).

This data calls for sincere rejoicing. We can appropriately offer words of appreciation to our churches. Our financial gifts are being shared more and more with students preparing for ministry. This is an expression of our faith in God and our readiness to encourage and support those who feel called to serve the church in pastoral ministry.

Still, we need to recognize other realities:

- The average cost per year at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) is \$28,815, including tuition, books, and living expenses. This cost is consistent with the average cost for a student attending seminary in North America.
- The debt incurred by the average seminary student is significant: \$33,700 of student loan debt for the average CTS M.Div. graduate (data from 2011 CTS graduate profiles). This debt can be overwhelming and adversely affect quality of life. It is a burden higher than any of us would desire.
- The pay scales and benefit packages for those entering ordained ministry are more diverse and uneven than ever—this reality aggravates the burden of the debt load identified above.
- While some of our classes give very significant support, only a few provide the full cost of tuition. Most give grants that require employment and additional loans to meet life expenses. Note that the classis with the lowest average per family has a contribution of \$.12 per family, and the lowest student grant is \$500. Many of our classes offer aid that is inadequate, and most of our students privately wish their classis would do more than it is doing.

It is likely that if a prayerful, compassionate discussion were conducted within our Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams, student fund committees, or classis interim committees, there would be a consensus that financial support for seminary students preparing for ministry needs to be a higher priority. If you would like to see the data recently gathered, we would be happy to send it to you in a format that does not indicate the names of classes. If you want to know the data for your classis, we would be happy to send you that data as well. (Send an email request to the assistant to the Candidacy Office, Ms. Jill Stark, at jtstark@crcna.org.)

C. Guiding candidates and congregations through the call process

With our growing diversity as a denomination comes greater potential for candidates' unfamiliarity with our calling process. The Candidacy Committee accepts the responsibility to help create an environment in which candidates and congregations are treated fairly as candidates approach the time of being eligible for call. Our processes seek to keep students free to attend to their studies in their final year of seminary, at the same time keeping congregational search committees from competing with each other.

This past year the committee felt it would be wise to compose a statement of reminder to churches and candidates regarding the process. This reminder has been inserted into the "Journey Toward Ordination" document, will be announced to candidates each year in the process of orienting them to the call procedure, and will be placed on the committee's website when potential candidates are presented. The statement follows:

While conversations between potential candidates and calling churches are normal and expected, written promises regarding either intents to call or intents to accept calls are unwise and premature. No commitments are to be finalized prior to declaration of candidacy by synod. Persons on the list of potential candidates are not eligible for call until synod declares them to be candidates in June. Up to that time they may be in discussion with churches and search committees, they may visit and preach at inquiring churches and ministries, and they may even serve as short-term supply. They may not, however, make any commitment to accept a call from a ministry until synod declares them eligible for call, and until they have completed all the requirements for candidacy. Any request for an exception to this policy should be addressed to the denominational Candidacy Committee.

D. Progress in training others who are entering pastoral service

Synod 2013 approved a statement for addition to the Church Order Supplement that requires commissioned pastors who are preparing for solo pastor positions to complete a learning plan adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 557).

In the past year we have consulted with the Christian Reformed Home Missions ethnic ministry leaders and a number of classis functionaries in a variety of regions in order to implement this new requirement. A template for a learning plan has been developed that we believe provides both flexibility and consistency in articulating a plan for ministry preparation in a CRC context. The learning plan template and a variety of other commissioned pastor resources are available on the Candidacy Committee web page (www.crcna.org/candidacy).

Our other initiatives for orienting and welcoming pastors include (1) a one-week program called "Welcome to the CRC," (2) a Korean-language program called KIM (Korean Institute for Ministry)—now in its eighth year, and

(3) the development of Korean-, Spanish-, and Chinese-language resources for ministry leaders in North America (especially our creeds, confessions, and Church Order).

We are especially grateful for the collaboration and partnership of Christian Reformed Home Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary in developing a new pastor training program for ethnic minority pastors. A pilot offering of this program is planned for April 1-3, 2014, with more than twelve new pastors anticipated as participants. In this program the content of the learning plans are being developed for commissioned pastors and pastors entering ministry via Article 8.

E. Ordination trends and statistics

The Candidacy Committee seeks to be aware of trends in the CRC's ordination practices. The appendix to this report contains a chart that has been updated since presentation to synod in 2011. Besides the notes included at the end of the appendix, the committee makes the following observations:

1. Appreciation for Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) should be congratulated for producing a significant number of M.Div. candidates in the past decade (see Appendix, column 1). The average number over the past fifteen years shows an encouraging increase since the 1990s. The current new student residential M.Div. enrollment (44 first-year students) and the new distance learning M.Div. program enrollment (25 students) lead us to predict that this number will continue to grow.

2. Growth in use of EPMC program

The Candidacy Committee remains committed to working with CTS to offer a relevant and responsible EPMC program for candidates who attend seminaries other than CTS. The trend of an increasing number of potential candidates attending seminaries across North America is noteworthy (see Appendix, column 2). Whereas throughout the 1970s only 12 candidates attended seminaries other than CTS, the average number is now over 12 per year, and that number is on the increase.

3. Adjustments due to more diverse ministry

With the significant increase in the number of persons available for ordained ministry in the CRC (see Appendix, columns 6 and 8) comes an exciting opportunity to broaden our reach and influence. This requires adaptation in our ordination and calling systems that has already begun.

- Significantly more pastors are serving in endorsed chaplain positions.
- An increasing number of persons are serving in parachurch ministry and in denominationally endorsed and partner mission assignments (through use of Church Order Articles 12-b and c).
- An increasing number of CRC ordained pastors are being placed on loan to other denominations (through the use of Church Order Article 13).
- There is an increase in bivocational pastoral ministry, particularly among those serving in church planting.

- There is a change in culture, allowing pastors to leave ordained ministry without shame (through the use of Church Order Articles 14 and 17).
- There is a growing sense of responsibility at the classis and local church level toward living in purposeful relationship with persons serving in ministries beyond the local congregation. (Congregations and church councils have not always had an active relationship with sponsored missionaries, chaplains, church planters, and parachurch ministry pastors. As the number of such positions increases, the more congregations and church councils ought to engage with these pastors and recognize the important work they do.)

4. A need for focused pastoral continuing education

With the significant decrease in the percentage of our pastors who receive primary training in our denominational seminary comes the challenge and need for a purposeful Continuing Education (CE) strategy for pastors relative to denominational orientation and our core denominational values (see Appendix, column 7). In the 1970s over 90 percent of our denomination's new pastors were trained at CTS. For the past 15 years that number has been less than 50 percent, and it is much lower if we factor in the growing number of commissioned pastors, the majority of whom have not been trained at CTS. For many years, CTS has served the denomination well with a selection of CE opportunities. Both the Candidacy Committee and CTS can continue to serve the denomination well by advocating and implementing plans for more CE opportunities. Such opportunities include short-term course work at CTS, seminars offered by CTS in the regional church setting, continuing development of distance learning opportunities at CTS, the possible creation of a task force for a denominational pastoral CE strategy, and even the potential of some sort of "mandatory learning covenant" between all pastors and their congregations.

5. Related proposals

In light of the above four observations, the Candidacy Committee offers the following proposals for consideration by synod:

- a. That synod remind classes and local congregations of both the responsibilities and the opportunities implicit in the role of serving as the calling church for the growing number of pastors serving in nonparish ministries.
- b. That synod instruct the Candidacy Committee to work with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations in developing a plan for continuing education of pastors that includes opportunity for growth in familiarity with our denominational ministries, our confessional commitments, and our polity, and that this plan be presented to Synod 2016.

F. CRC candidates in the RCA and on loan to other denominations

The Candidacy Committee has discussed an "ambiguity" experienced by at least one of our classes in interpreting Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12 and Church Order Article 13-c as they apply to positions for

candidates. It seems that these articles could be used for contradictory decisions regarding candidates serving in Reformed Church in America settings. Following are the Church Order citations under review:

Supplement, Article 8, D, 12

Calling Ministers from the Reformed Church in America

It is important to the faithful and orderly exchange of ordained ministers that one who would serve in a congregation of another church first be formed and educated for ministry in one's own tradition and have experience in serving in that church's ordained ministry. Such experience and grounding in one's own tradition are seen to be essential prior to serving in a setting of another tradition; therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.

(Acts of Synod 2011, p. 824)

Article 13-c

A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside of the Christian Reformed Church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with the synodical regulations. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-c

Through significant discussion and deliberation within the Candidacy Committee, a few observations and statements of advice have been formulated. We believe these comments can be helpful for classes and synodical deputies as they address this matter in the future. Thus, the Candidacy Committee asks synod to instruct the ED to request that the Synodical Services Office insert the following comments in an appropriate place in the *Manual for Synodical Deputies*:

Observations and Advice from the Synodical Candidacy Committee

Upon review of recent situations and actions of CRC classes called to the attention of the Candidacy Committee, the committee offers the following advice to the classes and synodical deputies when candidates are being considered for call by other denominations. This advice is not intended to diminish the guidelines adopted by Synod 2011 as found in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12.

1. There is sound reasoning behind the statement in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12. The differences between RCA and CRC polity are more than minor, and it makes sense to have a "default practice" that requires gaining an acquaintance with the practices of one's "home denomination" before serving in a sister denomination.
2. There are also compelling reasons for the potential use of Church Order Article 13-c for candidates. These reasons include (1) a lack of opportunity within the CRCNA for waiting candidates of ethnic minority groups, (2) the desirability of allowing certain waiting candidates to participate in residency opportunities offered in the RCA and elsewhere, and (3) the significant number of candidates that are currently waiting for a call.

3. For all these reasons and more, it may be judged by a classis and the synodical deputies to be in the denomination's best interest, by way of exception to Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, to use Church Order Article 13-c in order to keep relationship with candidates who desire to be affiliated with the CRCNA while serving a denomination other than the CRCNA. Some of these uses of Article 13-c may appear to be contradictory to the statement of Church Article Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, but may, in fact, be wise.
4. In all cases of the use of Church Order Article 13-c, especially in cases involving candidates, it is wise for classes and calling congregations to establish a meaningful mechanism for active relationship with the person placed "on loan" so that they can both continue to learn about the CRCNA and its polity and contribute to the CRCNA as persons ordained within our denomination.
5. The ambiguity and challenges identified in this discussion are also present in cases in which candidates (and pastors) are called to parachurch, chaplaincy, and mission ministry under Church Order Articles 12-b and 12-c.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. David R. Koll, director of Candidacy, and to an additional member of the Candidacy Committee, if one is present, when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint one new member to the Candidacy Committee from the nominees as presented, and reappoint the member eligible for a second three-year term.
- C. That synod remind classes and local congregations of both the responsibilities and the opportunities implicit in the role of serving as the calling church for the growing number of pastors serving in nonparish ministries.
- D. That synod instruct the denominational Candidacy Committee to work with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Office of Pastor-Church Relations in developing a plan for continuing education of pastors that includes opportunity for growth in familiarity with our denominational ministries, our confessional commitments, and our polity, and that this plan be presented to Synod 2016.
- E. That synod instruct the ED to request that the Office of Synodical Services insert the following comments in an appropriate place in the *Manual for Synodical Deputies*:

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 3. For all these reasons and more, it may be judged by a classis and the synodical deputies to be in the denomination’s best interest, by way of exception to Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, to use Church Order Article 13-c in order to keep relationship with candidates who desire to be affiliated with the CRCNA while serving a denomination other than the CRCNA. Some of these uses of Article 13-c may appear to be contradictory to the statement of Church Article Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, but may, in fact, be wise.
 4. In all cases of the use of Church Order Article 13-c, especially in cases involving candidates, it is wise for classes and calling congregations to establish a meaningful mechanism for active relationship with the person placed “on loan” so that they can both continue to learn about the CRCNA and its polity and contribute to the CRCNA as persons ordained within our denomination.
 5. The ambiguity and challenges identified in this discussion are also present in cases in which candidates (and pastors) are called to parachurch, chaplaincy, and mission ministry under Church Order Articles 12-b and 12-c.
- F. That synod take note of the various initiatives and challenges identified by the Candidacy Committee as noted in this report.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Appendix

Statistics and Summary of CRC Ordination Trends (December 2013)

	Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5	Col. 6	Col. 7	Col. 8
	# of CTS candidates	# of non-CTS candidates	Total # of "fresh from seminary" candidates (Art. 6)	# of "exceptional gifts" admitted (Art. 7)	# of "ordained in another denom.," entering CRC (Art. 8)	Total # new into CRC minister of the Word	% of new ministers with CTS M.Div. (col. 1 divided by col. 6)	# of comm. pastor positions approved (Art. 23)
1970-1979	354 (yearly average = 35.4)	12 (yearly average = 1.2)	366 (yearly average = 36.6)	1	20 (yearly average = 2.0)	387 (yearly average = 38.7)	91%	
1980-1989	330 (yearly average = 33)	32 (yearly average = 3.2)	362 (yearly average = 36.2)	17	63 (yearly average = 6.3)	442 (yearly average = 44.2)	75%	
1990-1999	252 (yearly average = 25.2)	51 (yearly average = 5.1)	303 (yearly average = 30.3)	21	139 (yearly average = 13.9)	463 (yearly average = 46.3)	54%	
2000-2009	271 (yearly average = 27.1)	85 (yearly average = 8.5)	356 (yearly average = 35.6)	49	161 (yearly average = 16.1)	566 (yearly average = 56.6)	48%	202
2010	30	10	40	0	21	61	49%	40
2011	30	12	42	0	16	58	52%	28
2012	30	13	43	0	12	55	55%	28
2013	31	19	50	0	10	60	52%	28
2014 projected	25	29	54	0	14	68	37%	
Current decade yearly average	29.2	16.6	45.8	0	14.6	64	48%	

This chart is an expansion and update of data presented in the Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2011.

Notes:

1. Column 2 demonstrates a growing number of seminary students entering CRC ministry through seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary.
2. Column 4 demonstrates the trend in the past decade of ordaining ministers of the Word without prescribed theological education. This trend was addressed by Synod 2007 in a decision to "return to the historical use" of Article 7; data after 2007 reflects that decision.
3. Column 8 demonstrates the growing use of the office of commissioned pastor (formerly ministry associate). Statistics of positions approved by synod are available only beginning in 2002. The growing use can be explained in part as a response to the decision of Synod 2007 regarding returning "to the historical use" of Article 7. Synod 2007 approved a strategy of "more use, more status, and more support" for the office of ministry associate. It is clear that churches are making more use of this office.
4. Column 7 demonstrates a significant trend—the number of ministers of the Word in the CRC who receive a significant time of training at Calvin Theological Seminary, the preferred seminary of the CRC (cf. *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 617) is declining significantly (from 91% in the 1970s to 48% over the past decade). When the number of those serving as commissioned pastors is added (most of whom have not spent time at CTS), the trend is even more pronounced.

I. Introduction

After several very busy and intense years of facilitating the denomination's discussion of the Belhar Confession, followed by this year's engagement in the Ecumenical Faith Declaration discussion, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) had an eventful year since Synod 2013. The EIRC realizes that because the CRC is part of a global faith community, our ecumenical and interfaith relationships are ongoing and vital with many connections. The EIRC is privileged and honored to represent the CRC in these relationships. Some of the relationships are institutional and formal, and others are established and fostered through more casual encounters. But whatever the venues—major ecclesiastical assemblies, multilateral associations, worship halls, denominational offices, or coffee shops—"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) is experienced and celebrated.

The Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church is the foundational statement of the CRC that guides the EIRC in deciding with whom and how we nurture ecumenical relations. The relationships we maintain are not exclusively with denominations that are identical to the CRC. In fact, there is considerable diversity in our fellowship, not only in our church-to-church relationships but also through our affiliation in ecumenical organizations. When one considers our participation in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA), the Global Christian Forum (GCF), and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), one can sense that the reality of our relationships is more than a confessional expression. Followers of Jesus from a wide variety of traditions, languages, and polities can stand together in obedience and service. When we see the respect and appreciation that is given to the CRC and we show respect and appreciation for our brothers and sisters in other denominational families, we give thanks and praise to God for the way his Spirit continues to break down walls of division that have often marked the history of the church. For every expression of unity in Christ we give thanks.

The two-part name of this committee (ecumenical and interfaith) shows that there are two dimensions to the mandate given by synod. Both are significant and are clearly distinct. Ecumenical relationships exist between the CRC and other Christian traditions. Interfaith dialogue takes place between Christian churches and faith traditions that have a non-Christian tradition. The EIRC is careful to differentiate between the two dimensions, and it encourages the members and congregations of our denomination to do likewise.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2014, are Mr. Anthony Elenbaas (2016/1); Rev. Emmett Harrison (2016/1); Rev. Karen Norris (2015/1); Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vásquez (2016/2); Dr. James Payton (2015/1); Dr. Shirley Roels (2015/2); Dr. Jay Shim (2014/1); Rev. Peter Slofstra (2014/2+1 yr. extension), vice-chair; Dr. Robert Sweetman (2015/1); and Ms. Rebecca Warren (2014/2), chair.

Rev. Joel Boot and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as ex officio members of the EIRC. Dr. William Koopmans serves as an ecumenical officer in Canada until the Canadian ministries director is appointed.

The EIRC met in October 2013 and January 2014 and (at the time of this writing) plans to meet in early April 2014. Due to schedule conflicts, the on-site meeting location for two meetings was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and one was conducted as a conference call.

III. Nominations for membership

The first term of Dr. Jay Shim ends June 30, 2014, and he is eligible for a second term. The EIRC heartily recommends him to synod for reappointment to a second term.

Rev. Peter Slofstra and Ms. Rebecca Warren are completing their terms of service on the committee. They have faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. The EIRC recommends that synod express its gratitude for their service.

In keeping with the synodical guidelines and requirements for diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and ordination, the EIRC presents the following slates of nominees to synod to fill these positions, asking that synod appoint one nominee from the Canadian classes west of Winnipeg, and one from U.S. classes west of the Mississippi River.

Position 1: Western Canada

Rev. Andrew E. Beunk is the pastor of New Westminster CRC in Burnaby, British Columbia. Rev. Beunk graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2000, served as pastor of Fruitland CRC in Stoney Creek, Ontario, until 2009, and has served since then in British Columbia. Rev. Beunk also served two terms as a member of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and as a board member of the Greater Hamilton Christian Leaders Network, a city-wide clergy network. He has also served on classical committees and on the advisory committee for interdenominational matters at Synod 2006.

Rev. Henry Jonker is a retired pastor living in the Vancouver, British Columbia, area. Rev. Jonker graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1974 and served congregations in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. He served two terms on the Candidacy Committee, three years of which he served as chairperson. He has been a delegate to synod seven times and has served the classis as stated clerk, as a synodical deputy, and in various other capacities.

Position 2: Western United States

Ms. Sharon Jim lives in Ft. Wingate, New Mexico. She is a former employee of the denomination, working for CRC Publications while her husband studied to become a minister of the Word in the CRC. Ms. Jim has served her local church in Classis Red Mesa as clerk and treasurer. She has also participated at synod as an ethnic adviser and as a woman adviser.

Ms. Evelyn Bennally lives in Shiprock, New Mexico, and is an elementary school teacher. Ms. Bennally is a graduate of Kuyper College and has served her church in various capacities. In addition, she was a member of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR). She and her husband serve as members of the Sanostee (N. Mex.) CRC.

IV. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. *Fraternal delegates*

The EIRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches and ecumenical organizations with which the CRC has a relationship or has membership:

1. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) General Assembly, Rev. Jeong Gho.
2. To the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Rev. Joel R. Boot.
3. To the Korean Presbyterian Church (Hapdong), Rev. Joel R. Boot and Dr. Jay Shim.
4. To the regional meeting of the WCRC (CANAAC), Ms. Rebecca Warren and Dr. William T. Koopmans.

B. *Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations*

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the EIRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These gatherings often provide occasions to connect with representatives of churches with which the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship or dialogue, and members of the EIRC take every opportunity to make those connections.

1. Rev. Joel R. Boot serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Rev. Peter Slofstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the governing board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), but his term ends July 1, 2014. It is anticipated that the nominee for Canadian ministries director will represent the CRC in Canada upon appointment.
3. Rev. Joel R. Boot and Dr. Peter Borgdorff serve as the CRCNA's representatives to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).
4. Dr. William Koopmans represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). It is anticipated that Dr. Koopmans will be replaced by the soon-to-be-appointed Canadian ministries director.
5. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), and Dr. William T. Koopmans serves as an adviser.
6. Rev. Joel R. Boot serves as the CRCNA's representative to the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the North American Foundation of the GCF.
7. Dr. Peter Borgdorff serves as a member of the board of Sojourners. It is anticipated that the soon-to-be-appointed executive director of the CRCNA will replace Dr. Peter Borgdorff on this board.
8. Dr. James Payton serves as the ecumenical representative on the Commission for Christian Unity (RCA).

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations

A. *World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)*

The WCRC as a global ecumenical organization is composed of 230 denominations, all of which have roots in the Reformed tradition and subscribe to the historic Reformed confessions. Together these denominations have a membership of more than 80 million people. With offices in Hanover, Germany, the WCRC is dedicated to building “communion” and relationships among its member churches and to bearing witness to and for those in the world who suffer from all forms of oppression. The latter is summarized and designated in a “commitment to justice” that is deeply rooted in our biblical understanding of what it means to be God’s agents of mercy in his world. While the theological span of the WCRC member-churches is broad—and the cultural influences in the organization are very diverse—it is a privilege for the CRC to be engaged in such a global expression of the body of Christ.

By the time synod meets, it is expected that a new general secretary for the WCRC will have been chosen. The current general secretary, Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, will retire from the position after fourteen years of service. Synod may wish to express its appreciation for the years of service rendered by Dr. Nyomi. He will return to his native Ghana this fall. The name of the new general secretary will be announced at the time synod meets.

B. *Evangelical Fellowship of Canada*

The CRC is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is a national association of evangelical Christians in Canada and offers a constructive voice for biblical principles in life and society. The EFC focuses on bringing evangelical 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 and the courts on current issues of interest and concern.

C. *Canadian Council of Churches*

The CRC in Canada is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the largest ecumenical organization in Canada. The CCC works primarily through its commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has 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. The EIRC has appointed a number of CRC members to be our denomination’s representatives on a variety of commissions and committees of the CCC. Rev. Peter Slofstra serves on the board of the CCC.

D. *KAIROS – Canadian ecumenical justice initiatives*

While this is not officially classified as an “ecumenical” organization, it functions as one. KAIROS is dedicated to promoting human rights, justice and peace, viable human development, and solidarity. The CRC’s participation is currently funded through the Canadian Ministries Office. Together the members of KAIROS focus on the continuation of Christ’s ministry and mission in the world. Mr. Ben Vandezande, interim director of Canadian ministries, is continuing an assessment of the CRC’s future role in the KAIROS partnership.

E. National Association of Evangelicals (USA)

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) meets twice each year. During these meetings representatives of evangelical denominations, ministries, and congregations discuss matters of common interest and concern. In addition to these membership meetings, the CRC cooperates with the NAE in various commissions and current public policy discussions such as immigration reform and the incarceration of prisoners. The EIRC reviewed whether our involvement in the NAE continues to be the best use of our limited resources (time and money). A letter was sent to the president of the NAE raising that question directly with NAE leadership. Having received a response, and after further consideration, the EIRC decided to take no further action at this time.

F. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. and the Global Christian Forum

Since fall 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 global expression of this same ecumenical configuration, with perhaps even more diverse participation, is the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Both CCT-USA and the GCF represent an emerging trend in ecumenical formation. Because we live in a global village today and this world needs a more unified Christian witness, these expressions make for an exciting frontier in ecumenical engagement.

VI. Bilateral relationships

Relationships with other denominations are an important part of the CRC's witness in and to the body of Jesus Christ. The CRC is in regular contact with many denominations by means of their representatives who gather at a variety of ecumenical events throughout the year. Partnerships and ministry alliances of various kinds allow the CRC to be a participant—and to exercise its voice—in meaningful ways. Continuing contact and consistent interaction make these relationships meaningful and effective.

From time to time new relationships are suggested and formed. Such developments flow through several stages before a proposal is presented to synod for approval. We have recently been in conversation with the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) in the United States and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt (Synod of the Nile). Both of these churches are recommended to Synod 2014 for classification as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Several additional conversations are in earlier stages of development and may be presented to synod at a later time.

A. Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO)

One of the more painful developments recently in the Reformed-Presbyterian family in the United States is the struggle taking place in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA). The CRC is not in a bilateral relationship with the PCUSA, but we are closely connected as members of the WCRC and, from time to time, in various other discussions. As many churches in the Reformed family have experienced, the PCUSA is going

through a painful period of fragmentation. A number of congregations (around 140) have transferred their affiliation to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), with whom we have a formal relationship. There are also a number of PCUSA congregations who, for various reasons, have felt compelled to form a new denomination. The Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO) has been accepted as a member of the WCRC and wishes to be in fellowship with the CRC. The EIRC has familiarized itself with the basis of ECO and recommends that synod approve the designation of the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

B. Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt (Synod of the Nile)

The EIRC has been in conversation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt (EPCE) for a number of years. This church has experienced tremendous challenges during a period of persecution and political instability. The EPCE desires to be in fellowship with the CRC, and the CRC would be blessed by being in fellowship with a Middle East ministry—such a critical place in the world today. The EIRC is pleased to recommend that our relationship be formalized. Therefore we recommend that synod approve the designation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Egypt as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

C. Presbyterian Churches in Korea

There has also been some initial contact with several Presbyterian Churches in Korea. However, it has been difficult to engage in continuing conversation, in part because, as is customary in that context, leadership rotates on an annual basis. Further efforts will be made as opportunity becomes available.

D. Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)

The EIRC wishes to complete one matter that relates to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). Several years ago, following the decision in 1996 to change the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN; now the PCN) classification from “a church in ecclesiastical fellowship” to “a church in dialogue,” synod instructed the EIRC to arrange for a close and meaningful relationship with the PCN. It seemed that synod wanted a relationship similar to what we had with the GKN without calling it by the same name. The EIRC still prefers to simply restore the former classification, mainly because what synod asked for is difficult to define within the categories of the CRC’s ecumenical charter. The result is a “Memorandum of Understanding” that was agreed to in principle several years ago but that, for various reasons, did not make its way back to synod for approval. The EIRC now presents the memorandum (Appendix A) to Synod 2014 for approval. Therefore it is recommended that synod approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

VII. The United States Roman Catholic–Reformed Dialogue

The Christian Reformed Church is a participant in the United States Roman Catholic–Reformed Dialogue. Dr. Susan Rozeboom, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, and Dr. Peter Choi are the appointed representatives. The recent approval (by Synod 2011) of the Common Agreement on the Mutual Recogni-

nition of Baptism has now led to the next round of dialogue on issues that are ecclesiological in scope. The next round will likely not be completed before 2016.

VIII. Interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is a relatively new responsibility for the EIRC, and care continues to be taken to differentiate interfaith dialogue from ecumenical engagement. EIRC member Dr. James Payton serves on the National (Canada) Muslim-Christian Liaison Committee. Ms. Rebecca Warren is also personally engaged in many interfaith activities through her work at the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life at the University of Alberta. The committee hopes soon to have a consultation with Rev. Greg Sinclair to specifically focus on Christian-Muslim conversation and relationships. On the whole, it is fair to say that the EIRC is in the process of becoming more engaged in the field of interfaith dialogue. The EIRC has made some resources available that would assist congregations and/or individuals engaged in interfaith dialogue. These resources can be found by visiting www.crcna.org/EIRC.

IX. Ecumenical Faith Declaration

Synod 2012 adopted the Belhar Confession as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD). Synod 2013 followed up that decision by providing further guidance to the EIRC (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 573):

- Synod noted the observations provided by the EIRC (*Agenda for Synod 2013*, Appendix A, pp. 225-28) and the criteria contained in it and referred them back to the EIRC “for further discussion within the CRC and with our ecumenical partners before resubmitting the observations and criteria to synod.”
- Synod encouraged the executive director and the EIRC to “explore options for discussing the concept of and criteria for Ecumenical Faith Declarations with our ecumenical partners.”
- Synod gave as its ground that “many of our ecumenical partners have already expressed interest to the EIRC in the concept of Ecumenical Faith Declarations, and it’s important that the CRC continue this discussion with them.”

In the light of synod’s decision, the EIRC has continued to consider what an EFD really is. Synod 2012 did not define the category, and it seemed best to the EIRC (as well as to Synod 2013) that the definition of an EFD should be developed in consultation with ecumenical partners. Following the EIRC’s initial communications with selected partners, it was decided that a general conference should be held to engage in an in-depth discussion, not only about the merits of an EFD category but also about the meaning of confessions in the life of churches today. Much to the committee’s surprise, nearly fifty persons registered for the event that we hosted in Grand Rapids in February 2014. The conference was endorsed and cosponsored by the WCRC, and a broad range of representatives attended from more than a dozen countries around the world. The preliminary definition of an EFD that the EIRC had developed (Appendix B) served as the foundational document of the conference.

The conference began with formal presentations of the matters the EIRC had already considered relative to synod's decision. Dr. William Koopmans, Dr. James Payton, and Dr. Shirley Roels made these presentations, and small group discussions followed. The discussions generated a lot of energy in the conference, but when it came time to make some declarative affirmations about the potential of an EFD category, the conferees, by a significant majority, did not support the proposal as advanced by the CRC. The conference, however, did approve a statement that is attached to this report as Appendix C.

The EIRC (at the time of this writing) has not had opportunity to meet and discuss what it might do next. The lack of endorsement by the conferees does not, by itself, dictate our course of action. At the same time, it seems questionable to proceed with the creation of an EFD category when there is little or no support in the ecumenical community for naming it as such. The EIRC will explore options at its next meeting in April 2014 and may submit a supplementary report to Synod 2014.

X. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and ecumenical visitors at synod

A. Ecumenical visitors

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. Some churches are in a less formal relationship with the CRC; however, those relationships are no less important than others. In addition, the CRC participates in a number of multilateral associations. An exchange of ecumenical delegates at meetings of the broader assemblies is a common occurrence, usually on a rotating schedule, and Synod 2014 will again share in that experience in a unique way. The fact that Synod 2014 is meeting in both simultaneous and, at times, joint sessions with the General Synod of the RCA adds a truly ecumenical flavor this year. We have also invited three other ecumenical guests, but it appears that only one can make the trip this year. Dr. Carlos Malave, executive director of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., will visit both synods on Saturday and Sunday. The RCA will also have several guests present. All of these ecumenical partners will be introduced to both synods on Saturday evening, and together we will share in fellowship. Members of the EIRC present at synod, the officers of both synods, and members of the Commission on Christian Unity who are present will host these guests at a special dinner on Saturday, June 14, 2014. Delegates to synod are encouraged to welcome and interact with all ecumenical visitors.

B. Reformed Church in America (RCA)

1. Joint Resolution

The CRC's relationship with the RCA deserves synod's special mention. Not only do we share a common heritage—a fact that makes the RCA one of our closest ecumenical partners—but in addition the RCA and the CRC cooperate and collaborate in a variety of ministries and support services. Until now, these cooperative ventures have arisen and have been implemented on an ad hoc basis. The respective synods have on several occasions encouraged cooperation and joint ministry projects when feasible. As is evident in *The Reformed Collaborative* (Appendix E), these cooperative ventures

have been multiplied many times over. Such multiplication is, as is normal, accompanied by complexities to which both denominations have adapted. The executive director of the CRCNA and the general secretary of the RCA have appointed a Collaboration Team that will exercise general oversight for the cooperative ventures. This arrangement is judged to be an improved administrative matter to compensate for the ad hoc manner in which agreements have been made until now.

Interestingly, both synods last year recognized that, while appreciating these many areas of cooperation, neither synod has ever formally addressed the nature of the relationship of the CRC and the RCA. Synod 2013 authorized the appointment of a joint committee mandated to propose a resolution of cooperation and fellowship between the two denominations and to present such a resolution to both synods in 2014 (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 573). The rationale Synod 2013 provided was that, while the CRC and the RCA are closely allied in various ways, there is no formal agreement between the respective synods to guide these alliances. It is appropriate, at this point in our history, to describe more fully our commitments to each other. Consequently, a joint resolution committee was appointed, composed of the following persons: (from the RCA) Rev. Jeffrey Jappinga, co-chair, Rev. Greg Alderman, Rev. Abby Norton-Levering, and Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson; (from the CRC) Ms. Rebecca Warren, co-chair; Dr. Emily Brink, Rev. Marvin Hofman, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

The resolution is preceded by an introduction that, for the purposes of synod's consideration, is included with the Joint Resolution. It is recommended that synod adopt the following resolution as a testimony that, overriding all of our historical differences and divergent practices, the CRC and RCA truly are "one in the Spirit, . . . one in the Lord."

**An Introduction to the Joint Resolution
for consideration in joint session by
the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America
and
the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
convening in
Pella, Iowa, on June 14, 2014**

Background

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) traces its roots to the early part of the 17th century, when it was formed by Dutch immigrants who settled New Amsterdam (now New York City) and migrated up the Hudson River valley and westward into New Jersey. The spiritual heritage of the RCA traces back to the Reformed churches in the Netherlands established in the previous century as the Protestant Reformation made its way through the Low Countries of Europe. By forming themselves into a denomination so early in the history of the United States, the RCA is the oldest Protestant church in the country with a continuing ministry.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) traces its roots to the middle of the nineteenth century when yet another wave of Dutch immigrants reached the shores of the United States.

Many of these new arrivals moved inland to Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin. The spiritual heritage of the CRC is similarly traced to the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. Upon their initial arrival in the 1840s, these immigrants were significantly assisted and welcomed by representatives of the RCA. The common heritage of faith seemed at first to be a natural bonding reality even though the early settlers had been in the process of Americanization for more than two hundred years. Nevertheless, the assistance provided by the RCA at that time was substantial and significant.

It seemed at first that the new arrivals from the same family of faith would and should be assimilated into the life and polity of the RCA. For a variety of reasons, differences of opinion emerged, perhaps magnified by distance, which eventually led to the formation of the CRC in 1857. Some designate that development as a split, others designate it as a recognition that the cultural gap between the seventeenth-century and nineteenth-century immigrants was simply too great and their experiences too varied to be readily formed into one denomination. For more than one hundred years, the two denominations then followed independent paths and, for the most part, acknowledged each other's existence but had little contact and viewed each other with some measure of suspicion.

Climate Change

What a difference a century makes. The process of Americanization to which all are subject, the common experience of two world wars, the urbanization of North America, the secularization process in both society and in the lives of church members, as well as many other factors, combined to move both the RCA and the CRC closer together in common experiences. The two churches from the beginning shared a history of faith, theology, confessional grounding, and cultural similarities. On the surface it would seem that, even as separate denominations, we should be able to find a way to cooperate. The climate began to change with early signals in the 1950s—more formally recognized in the 1970s—with continued development to the present day. The contributing factors were many—such as intermarriage, relationships between neighboring congregations, growing fraternal relations among denominational staff persons, formal ecumenical relations, similar viewpoints on social and political issues, and the like. Beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, a much deeper connection has developed due to increasing mutual appreciation, common involvement in mission, shared partnerships in a number of areas, a growing awareness that what is common in our heritage is greater than our individual differences, and, even more important than any of the preceding factors, a conviction that Christ calls us to a unity that is more basic than the sum of our differences. On several occasions, the synods of both the CRC and the RCA have recognized this biblical perspective and have encouraged greater cooperation and mutual recognition of our common history and ministries. However,

such encouragement was without specificity until the Orderly Exchange of Ministers was adopted in 2005.

The Here and Now

Beginning with a formal agreement between Faith Alive Christian Resources and the RCA in December 2004, there presently are a number of cooperative ventures and partnerships involving various agencies, departments, and initiatives. A complete listing of current cooperative relationships is attached in Appendix E to the EIRC report.

However, despite these multiple cooperative ventures and relationships, no overarching statement has ever been adopted that might serve as a mutually supported agreement between the CRC and the RCA. It is judged that such a resolution could serve both churches well as we face the future. The agreement could serve as a reference point in the journey that longs for healing and reconciliation. It can also serve both as a boundary-setting clarification that this resolution is not intended to lay the groundwork for organic union but rather is a visionary agreement that together we desire to live by the “Lund Principle” (Faith and Order Commission – Lund Sweden, 1952) that commits both denominations to follow the principle that we will “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately.” To that end the following resolution is offered and proposed for adoption by the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Resolution on the Relationship between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America: Past, Present, and Future

For presentation to the General Synod of the RCA
and the Synod of the CRC, meeting in combined
session in Pella, Iowa, June 14, 2014

The Past

Recognizing that the history of our two denominations, since 1857, has been marked by division and often accompanied by mutual mistrust, judgmental attitudes toward one another, and an unholy distance in our fellowship; and

Acknowledging that our dispositions and actions toward one another often have been marred by sin and have fallen short of the mutual love and bonds of unity desired by God for the church of Jesus Christ; and

Realizing that the history of our broken relationship has caused pain and suffering throughout generations within families and

between others divided by this separation, and has presented a distorted witness within society;

Therefore, we encourage our churches to reflect on the costs of the lack of faithfulness that have marked the history of separation between our two denominations, and to prayerfully ask for the healing of memories and wounds endured by many over the past 157 years.

The Present

Noting the significant growth in partnership and programmatic cooperation between our denominations especially in the past two decades, encompassing a wide range of activities from starting new churches to combining health insurance programs; and

Affirming our relationship of full communion, the exchangeability of Ministers of Word and Sacrament between our congregations, and examples of new congregations belonging jointly to both our denominations; and

Welcoming the growth of trust and the greater effectiveness of ministry that has been the frequent result of our growing cooperation together;

Therefore, we celebrate the new realities being created through expanding initiatives of partnership between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and we give thanks to God for all those situations in which we are now working together for the sake of God's kingdom.

The Future

Believing that participation in God's mission calls all followers of Christ to deepen bonds of unity and to strengthen our common witness; and

Desiring to obey the persistent biblical call to seek the unity of Christ's body and the reconciliation of relationships with one another, even while we acknowledge long-standing differences remaining between us; and

Understanding that this particular relationship is part of the broader ecumenical journey which beckons us to make more manifest our unity in Christ, which is both God's gift and our obligation;

Therefore, as the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we declare that the principle that guides us, and the intention that motivates us, is to "act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately"; and, further,

We jointly instruct the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church and the General Synod Council of the Reformed

Church in America, in looking to the future relationship between our two denominations, to be guided by this principle.

2. Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers

The EIRC presents the following proposed amendment to the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers with the RCA to be reflected in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 7 (proposed change indicated by *italics*):

Approval for extended service must be done in consultation with and with the concurrence of the sending body. (In the CRC, the sending body is the calling church council; in the RCA, it is the classis holding the pastor's membership.) The minister remains accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status. *In the event of termination of a call, the polity of the calling church shall be followed, in consultation with the sending church.*

Grounds:

- a. There have been situations recently in which clarification of procedure for a separation of an RCA pastor from a CRC congregation was needed.
- b. The original 2005 Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers—Christian Reformed Church in North America and Reformed Church in America (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 741-42) did not include provisions for separation in the orderly exchange between the CRC and the RCA.

It is recommended that synod approve this amendment to Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 7.

XI. Recommendations

A. That Ms. Rebecca Warren (chair), Rev. Joel R. Boot, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Rev. Peter Slofstra and Ms. Rebecca Warren for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod by way of the ballot elect two new members to serve on the EIRC.

D. That synod approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

E. That synod adopt the Joint Resolution prepared for the CRC synod and the General Synod of the RCA.

F. That synod approve the following amendment to the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers with the RCA to be reflected in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 7 (proposed change indicated by *italics*):

Approval for extended service must be done in consultation with and with the concurrence of the sending body. (In the CRC, the sending body is the calling church council; in the RCA, it is the classis holding the pastor's membership.) The minister remains accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial

status. In the event of termination of a call, the polity of the calling church shall be followed, in consultation with the sending church.

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Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
Joel R. Boot, ecumenical officer
Peter Borgdorff, ecumenical officer
Rebecca Warren, chair

Appendix A

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA JUNE 2014

Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) have been blessed for many years with a deep and rich relationship. Because both churches share a common history and confessional heritage, and because both churches desire to minister as effectively as possible, and because both churches desire the encouragement of the other, this Memorandum of Understanding is adopted by authorized representatives of each church.

Relational context

Both the PCN and the CRCNA live in a society that is increasingly secularized and in desperate need of redemption. While both churches face similar challenges, each is able to bring a unique perspective to ministry questions and opportunities. While each church retains its own emphases and particular circumstances, this Memorandum of Understanding affirms that both churches are committed to walking the path of ministry together and to recognize in each other, as well as together, the God-given opportunities to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the message of hope and transformation for the peoples of the world.

To that end this Memorandum of Understanding will serve as a statement of cooperation, affirmation, consultation, and testimony that both churches will do the following:

1. Deal honestly and transparently with each other, seeking the “unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Such honest and transparent dealings can address both “faith and order” and “life and work”;
2. Consult each other on major issues that affect the global Christian church (especially those churches that are part of the Reformed family);
3. Collaborate concerning supportive relationships with churches and/or ministry partners that have relationships with both the CRCNA (or its agencies) and the PCN;
4. Encourage staff interaction and mutual learning in ministry areas focused on the following:
 - missions (both domestic and international)
 - faith formation and faith nurture
 - youth and intergenerational ministries
 - church planting
 - church revitalization
 - liturgy and worship resources
 - leadership training
 - theological education

Specific plans for such staff interaction shall be reported to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of each denomination on a biennial basis.

Ecclesiastical context

1. Each church agrees to the periodic exchange of a fraternal delegate to the meetings of synod on a schedule as mutually agreed upon.
2. Each church will provide the other with a copy of the respective synod’s agenda and acts.
3. Each church will keep the other informed of significant theological discussions, trends, and reports.
4. Each church will commit to collaboration concerning the shared fellowship in ecumenical organizations.

For the Protestant Church
in the Netherlands

For the Christian Reformed Church
in N.A.

Rev. Dr. Arie J. Plaisier,
general secretary

Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director

Appendix B

Ecumenical Faith Declaration (EFD): A Background Reading for the EFD Consultation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 2-5, 2014

The following paragraphs are intended to provide a background and context within which to understand the origin of the term *Ecumenical Faith Declaration* (EFD). This terminology first arose in 2012 at the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It was used there as a category for the adoption of the Belhar Confession that would set it apart from the older traditional confessions of the CRCNA. It was intended to

provide a designation appropriate for this important document and to give it a status that would encourage its influence within the life of the denomination's membership.

To trace the origin, context, and some possible implications of the term *EFD* is not to presume that this is an ideal categorization or that it should be assumed to be beneficial for other denominations as well. Nevertheless, initial correspondence with members of other denominations about the *EFD* designation has indicated a desire to delve into a deeper dialogue about dynamics and possible developments of such a category. This introduction provides an overview to what has transpired in the CRCNA leading up to the present consultation.

The historic role of three confessions in the CRC

Within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, historically there have been three confessions forming a standard of unity. In 2012, synod adopted a Covenant for Officebearers within the Christian Reformed Church. That document states

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.
(*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 761)

The expectation inherent in the Covenant for Officebearers is consistent with a policy of confessional identity for officebearers that was previously delineated in the CRC's Form of Subscription.

By adopting the Covenant for Officebearers, synod reaffirmed the special status of the three confessions noted above.

The gift of the Belhar and its reception in the CRC

The Belhar Confession entered into the life of the CRCNA in the mid 1980s via the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). In 1990 the CRCNA synod judged the Belhar to be in harmony with the historic Reformed confessions and concurred with a decision to include it in the list of Reformed confessions named in the constitution of the REC. In 1999 the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) challenged the CRCNA to formally adopt the Belhar (an invitation that was repeated in 2003). The topic of the Belhar became a central dialogue point in joint discussion of the CRCNA and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). In 2007, the CRCNA synod mandated the Interchurch Relations Committee (later renamed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee [EIRC]) to promote the study of the Belhar in the denomination in the interest of bringing a recommendation to synod regarding its adoption. Synod 2009 charged the EIRC with a mandate to continue to promote a study and discussion of the Belhar and to bring a recommendation to Synod 2012 proposing its adoption as a fourth confession. In 2012, synod declined to adopt the Belhar as a fourth confession but chose, rather, to accept it in a newly authorized category termed *Ecumenical Faith Declarations*. The same synod decided that future consideration of other documents possibly to be included in the *EFD* category should be processed

via the EIRC by means of a recommendation to and decision by synod. (The relevant decisions are included below in an addendum to this document.)

The need for ongoing discussion

Following the decisions of Synod 2012, the EIRC noted that while some implications of those developments were clear and straightforward, there are other aspects that warrant clarification. The complexity of confessional standards is increased within the CRC by the adoption of the new category called *Ecumenical Faith Declarations*. Like the CRC, some other denominations have a longstanding history of affirming a similar list of confessions as standards of unity, while other churches do not have comparable categories or assign the same role to the creeds and confessions. It would be helpful for the CRC, in consultation with ecumenical partners, to engage in a deeper reflection upon the nature and role of documents that are or could be adopted as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration. It is also necessary to clarify the criteria by which additional confessions might be evaluated for adoption and use. Since these documents are considered ecumenical in nature, the EIRC concluded that it would be beneficial to invite reactions and input from various ecumenical partners.

Accordingly, the EIRC made some preliminary observations (see the following section) aimed at promoting such discussion within the CRC while also inviting ecumenical input. The EIRC received written responses as well as verbal feedback through the ecumenical officers. The observations of the EIRC were included on the agenda of Synod 2013 but were subsequently tabled as synod was informed of the growing interest in this topic among ecumenical partners. Synod encouraged the EIRC to proceed with a wider dialogue and discussion before returning the matter to synod for action.

The EIRC's preliminary observations and proposals

The following paragraphs summarize the observations and proposals developed by the EIRC in 2012-2013 in the interest of promoting a discussion for further clarification of the EFD category (see *Agenda for Synod 2013*, pp. 226-27).

Synod's adoption of a confessional category called "Ecumenical Faith Declaration" established a nomenclature that is not in general usage in the ecclesiastical community. With that category, synod also provided an avenue by which, in addition to the Belhar, other confessions might be adopted. For these reasons, and in anticipation of future discussions on such issues, it will be of value for synod to establish guidelines and principles that will be operative for future deliberations in this area.

In recognizing a category called "Ecumenical Faith Declaration" it was not the intent of Synod 2012 to begin a comprehensive process to evaluate already existing confessional documents that might possibly be added to this category. Synod's action was a response to a specific request regarding the Belhar Confession. In the history of the Christian church, hundreds of confessions have been written (cf. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*. 3 vols. Baker Books, 1984). While synod's action provides a way to deal with specific future requests to consider formal adoption of other confessional documents that might arise from an ecumenical setting, it was not intended to create impetus to begin a proactive search for additional confessions for formal recognition by the CRCNA.

Synod 2012 implicitly indicated guidelines for delimiting future consideration of additional confessions by referring to such confessions or declarations

“that speak to global realities and uniquely enable the CRCNA to formally state its commitment to and live out key biblical principles.” This statement reflects a number of elements. To be considered for adoption as an EFD, a declaration or confession, which would come to the CRC in an ecumenical setting, should meet the criteria of addressing global rather than only local realities, should provide a biblically sound statement on an important issue or issues, and should meet the criteria of relevance for living out key biblical principles.

Synod also decided “that after Synod 2012 the formal adoption of an Ecumenical Faith Declaration require the recommendation of the EIRC to synod for approval.” In this decision, it was not the intention of Synod 2012 to give a “veto power” to the EIRC with respect to the adoption of additional documents in the category of EFD. Rather, the EIRC was assigned a central role in the consideration process in order to specify the route that normally would be followed.

In summary of the considerations outlined above, we may anticipate, therefore, that the EIRC would be entrusted with the responsibility to facilitate an assessment of a declaration or confession that would come to the CRCNA in an ecumenical setting with a request for adoption. The EIRC would make a recommendation to synod on a given confession based on the following criteria—that the confession would

1. be harmonious with biblical principles and previously adopted confessions.
2. address global rather than only local realities.
3. be relevant for living out key biblical principles.
4. extend the confessional witness of the denomination in an area not already adequately covered by confessions, testimonies, and declarations previously adopted.
5. be beneficial and reliable to the Christian life of the denomination and its ecumenical relations.

Addendum

Following are the decisions of Synod 2012 with respect to the Ecumenical Faith Declaration designation (*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 766-67).

3. That synod authorize a formal category called “Ecumenical Faith Declarations” (EFD).
 - a. This category identifies declarations and statements of faith that speak to global realities and uniquely enable the CRCNA to formally state its commitment to and live out key biblical principles.
 - b. Documents in this category, while important and contributing to the CRCNA’s worldwide witness and ministry, are not considered part of the confessional basis of the CRCNA and, therefore, will not be listed in the Covenant for Officebearers.
4. That after Synod 2012 the formal adoption of an Ecumenical Faith Declaration require the recommendation of the EIRC to synod for approval.
5. That synod adopt the Belhar Confession and its accompanying documents (the Accompanying Letter from the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa and the joint statement of the RCA and CRC) as an Ecumenical Faith Declaration and recommend it to the churches for study and for incorporation of its themes into their discipling and liturgical ministries.

Grounds:

- a. The central themes of unity, justice, and reconciliation in the Belhar Confession reflect biblical teaching and are consistent with the historic Reformed confessions.

- b. The Belhar Confession addresses important issues that are also pertinent to the CRCNA's own history and context in North America.
- c. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed a lack of consensus in support of adopting the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession on par with the historic confessions adopted by the CRCNA.
- d. The three-year discussion of the Belhar Confession revealed substantial support for the Belhar Confession to have an official status.

Note: This document was drafted by the Ecumenical Faith Declaration Consultation planning committee as a resource for participants at the February 2-5, 2014, consultation.

Peter Borgdorff
William T. Koopmans
James Payton
Shirley Roels

Appendix C

Faith Confessions in the Life of WCRC Member Denominations

Note: This document arose from the Ecumenical Faith Declaration Consultation held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 2-5, 2014.

I. Background goals and objectives

A delegation of approximately fifty representatives from various denominations associated with the WCRC met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from February 2-5, 2014, in an Ecumenical Faith Declaration Consultation. This consultation arose in the aftermath of the Christian Reformed Church's decision to adopt the Belhar Confession and designate it as a document in a new category titled *Ecumenical Faith Declarations*. The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, in conjunction with the WCRC, extended invitations to member denominations to consider in an open and transparent environment whether this new category could serve a broader purpose among Reformed churches.

II. Structure of the program

The consultation program was structured to focus initially on the broader role of creeds and confessions in church history. Then the consultation moved to a more targeted focus on the needs of this century and possibilities that might be envisioned regarding *ecumenical faith declarations*.

III. Recognizing the complexity of these issues

It became apparent that creeds and confessions function in a variety of ways in the life of the churches represented at this consultation. The early creeds were used symbolically and doxologically in the church catholic while the Reformed confessions filled a different role. It is generally true that while the creeds and confessions in the various faith communities have been used in teaching, in worship, and in church polity, there is great diversity in the degree to which the creeds and confessions have been employed as foundations for identity in particular church circles. It also became evident

that there are differences in the function of confessions in the churches of the WCRC and in the understanding of their authoritative nature in relation to expected subscription to them. Even terminology such as creeds, confessions, declarations, and statements evoked different understandings within this gathering. For some, expressions of faith that are valued are now less about boundary-setting and more about mission and public witness.

Historically some denominations may have sought to employ confessions to triumph in their endeavors to claim and rule the culture; others wanted simply to have confessions be a light on the hill to the surrounding culture.

Further, there was not a universally recognized need to expand the confessional basis of the WCRC churches to address contemporary issues. Some believed that decisions of churches about issues in their particular contexts are sufficient.

The category *Ecumenical Faith Declaration* did not convey a clearly understood meaning to those gathered. Some even wondered whether this category could implicitly discriminate among varied expressions of faith in ways that might contribute to an unhealthy hierarchical classification of the church's varied forms of witness. This matter is also complicated by diversity and divergences in church polity. In addition, the category did not commend itself to those gathered because it seemed inseparable from decisions of the CRC in addition to the perceptions and experiences of other conference participants with the appropriate role and place of the Belhar Confession.

IV. Themes that arose in the context of conversation

Several themes emerged as significant in understanding our twenty-first-century context and the challenge of the church to speak relevantly:

- dynamics of migration and immigration that impact the life of the church
- globalization and provincialism that occur simultaneously
- the challenge of multiple sources of identity
- a sense of decreasing denominational loyalty and continuity in experience
- the changing concepts of truth that create challenging diversity for the church
- more focus on the need for embodied experience than on disembodied rationality
- the necessity for the global north to hear and receive the confessional statements of the global south
- the challenge for the church to act with integrity in the context of global inequalities

V. Adjustment of the consultation focus

In the course of the discussions, it became evident that most of the participants in the consultation did not embrace the concept of a new category titled *Ecumenical Faith Declarations*. Nevertheless, the themes that had been identified were of such value that they warranted a response. So the consultation then explored possible alternative ways to address the identified complexities, challenges, and opportunities.

Despite the shift in course, or perhaps because of it, participants expressed confidence that the present consultation was fulfilling a significant

role in highlighting the need to seek further clarity and creative engagement on confessional issues.

VI. Next steps in process and possibilities

The consultation opened a vista of possibilities regarding next steps in the discussion of confessions and their role in the life of the churches in the WCRC. Participants envisioned the result of this consultation as a stimulant for further processes. They asked whether, in addition to having creeds and confessions, there might be a way to address the dynamics that were identified as contextual challenges related to the church's witness in the world.

This consultation demonstrated that there is a need to pursue further the issues that pertain to the role, purpose, and function of creeds and confessions (and other faith statements or declarations of the church) in the context of the church's life and witness. Can those purposes and goals be realized with the current corpus of confessions in their present form? Or does the church need to think creatively about a new *confessional paradigm*?

Some of the participants' suggestions include a vision that the WCRC may . . .

- create opportunities to discover what various churches are doing confessionally and to discover denominational decisions that flow from their confessions to address contemporary issues.
- foster a climate in which confessional resources can be offered as gifts to one another.
- facilitate confessional engagement in a collaborative but nonauthoritative capacity.
- assist the various churches in various parts of the world to embody a family model of interaction regarding confessional statements (family members function in a multidirectional partnership to learn from, support, and encourage each other).
- support endeavors to turn confessional materials into liturgical and teaching resources.
- initiate a study about confessions and confessionalism among the family of Reformed WCRC members.

These are not listed as definitive recommendations but as a record of ideas by those who participated in the consultation. The present document is referred to the WCRC executive committee as well as to member churches for further engagement and action.

The consultation was an example of how to engage a discussion of complex issues in transparent ways that welcomed the leading of the Spirit through the responses of the participants. Participants in the consultation expressed appreciation for the manner in which the consultation was coordinated and conducted. It is the hope and prayer of the participants in this consultation that it will continue to create momentum for a sustained focus on the role of creeds and confessions in the life of churches within the WCRC.

Respectfully submitted by the writing team,

Kobus Gerber
William T. Koopmans
Shirley Roels

Appendix D

Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Formal Dialogue, and Other Ecumenical Relationships

I. Provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship

- A. Encourage joint action in Christian endeavors, where possible, and a common Christian witness to the world.
- B. Explore whether the unity we share with such churches may include various forms of organizational expression. The shape of such organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
- C. Exchange fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
- D. Engage in pulpit and table fellowship.
- E. Exercise mutual concern and encouragement with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
- F. Communicate on major issues of common concern.
- G. Remain aware of current developments to assure that such fellowship continues to grow in vibrancy.

Degrees of ecclesiastical fellowship may involve fewer than all seven elements. At present the Christian Reformed Church is in full fellowship with the churches listed below, unless otherwise indicated.

II. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

Following is a list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, referencing 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. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) (1982)
- 6. Reformed Churches in South Africa (1974)
(Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
- 7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) (1989)
- 8. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (2003)
- 9. 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 Church of Myanmar (2011)
4. Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (1974)
5. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (1974)
6. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)

C. Europe

Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
(Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken)

D. North America

1. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) (1986)
2. 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)

III. 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 Haiti
- C. Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod) - Malawi
- D. Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
- E. Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi
- F. Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)
- G. Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)
- H. Reformed Church in Zambia
- I. Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya)

IV. Churches in other ecumenical relationships

- A. Mennonite Church Canada
- B. Pentecostal Church of Uganda
- C. Presbyterian Church of India – Mizoram Synod



THE REFORMED COLLABORATIVE

Working Together to Expand the Reformed Witness

February 2014

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) have worked closely together at the denominational level over the past few decades. For example, denominational staff members Allen Likkel of the CRC and Dick Welscott of the RCA collaborated in new church development through the '80s and '90s.

Encouraged by the synergistic relationships and committed to unity in Christ, denominational leaders Peter Borgdorff and Wes Granberg-Michaelson continued to move toward greater relationship and encouraged collaboration whenever practical and possible. In 2004 a more formal partnership was formed as Faith Alive became the print distributor for both the CRC and RCA and other partnerships continued to spring up. A complete list of current collaborations follows.

Building upon this foundation, in early 2010 Wes Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary of the RCA, and Jerry Dykstra, Executive Director of the CRCNA, invited a cross-section of RCA and CRC leaders and pastors to engage with them in an informal conversation about the future of our collaboration. Two areas with potential for further collaboration were identified by this group: equipping congregations for greater health and missional impact and developing a collaborative system for new church development. Two task forces were formed to work with the development staff of the RCA and CRC to explore the possibility of external grant funding in order to initiate a pilot project.

Work continued for much of 2010. In June, the Board of Trustees for the CRC and the General Synod Council of the RCA were informed about the possibility of external grant funding for a pilot. Late in 2010, the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation awarded a grant to develop the Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI) pilot under the leadership of Jul Medenblik and Tim Vink. Two new teams—a Leadership Team to manage the grant and oversee the work, and an Implementation Team to design and implement

the work—were formed. The work of the Leadership Team and the expertise of the Implementation Team proved fruitful. Two subsequent grants were awarded, and the work of the CMI grew through 2013.

The new General Secretary of the RCA, Tom DeVries, and the Interim Executive Director of the CRC, Joel Boot, continued the relationship. In 2013, World Renew and Reformed Church World Service formed a partnership. Recognizing the growing number of formal and informal collaborations between the two denominations, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America and Synod 2013 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America requested the formation of a joint task force to further define the growing relationship and to plot a course for the future. The task force will bring their report to the Synods of 2014 meeting together in Pella, Iowa.

In January 2014, the Leadership Team, which was initially formed to work exclusively with the CMI project, felt a broader leadership structure could better serve the growing collaboration. The team disbanded, and a new structure was formed with three distinct levels: executive team, vision team, and implementation teams specific to areas of collaboration. The newly formed Reformed Collaborative initiated a series of events in places where large numbers of Reformed and Christian Reformed congregations are located in order to inform and receive input from classes and congregations, to answer questions, and to note concerns. Because the two denominations do not agree on every issue, five shared values upon which current and future collaborations are built were identified:

By the grace of God, the RCA and CRC embrace a common commitment to the following:

- shared beliefs and convictions
- working together to equip the local church to engage in mission
- moving to a posture of lifelong learning as adaptive leaders
- innovation that is rooted in our traditions
- personal transformation in Christ that seeks the transformation of lives and communities

All for the glory of God!

Rooted in these shared values, the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) collaboration is being driven by our common desire to

Increase missional impact—when working together we are able to better equip leaders and churches that will expand the Reformed witness in the world.

Realize efficiencies—reducing redundancies within the two denominations results in greater financial resources available to equip churches for local and global mission.

Express a common witness—working together and with the larger Christian church expresses Christian unity and amplifies our prophetic voice.

Increase Missional Impact

Children in Worship

Children in Worship is a vibrant children's education program being used extensively in both CRC and RCA churches. It is a partnership between the RCA and the CRC involving shared trainers, training events, and joint decision making about resources and program direction. By working together to nurture the spiritual lives of children, we are creating more special places where children can encounter God.

Church Multiplication

In 2011 the collaboration currently referred to as the Church Multiplication Initiative (CMI) was awarded a significant grant from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation to expand the Reformed witness in North America. The CMI began the work by establishing Kingdom Enterprise Zones (KEZs), places where CRC and RCA leaders come together to create systems and structures in order to plant churches together. Since 2011, 20 new churches and over 100 new initiatives have launched.

The focus of CMI is now expanding to encourage 20 classes (10 CRC/10 RCA) to develop similar collaborative relationships. A single Operations Team composed of four RCA and CRC staff members and serving both denominations has enabled seamless collaboration on church planter assessments, communication, resources, *Thrive* church planter training, and the *Exponential Conference*. Integrating this work at the operational level has led to deeper collaboration throughout CRC and RCA agencies.

- The first generation KEZs in Florida; Phoenix, AZ; San Francisco/Sacramento, CA; and Wyoming, MI, continue to flourish as they move through the Transition Zone Phase, which requires them to integrate their work into existing local structures and become self-funding.
- The second and third generation KEZs are Detroit, MI; Southwest MI; Whatcom County, WA; and Seattle, WA. These Zones currently have the greatest access to grant funding for collaborative leadership training and community outreach that supports new church development.
- There are three KEZs that comprise the newly emerging fourth generation: Chicago, IL; Lincoln, NE; and New York City, NY. Regional leaders are laying groundwork by building collaborative relationships with CRC and RCA pastors, leaders, and churches in each Zone.

Congregational Revitalization and Leadership Development

The CRC and RCA have a vision to develop coordinated, collaborative, and shared resources for leaders and revitalizing congregations in order to increase the missional impact of all of our congregations.

A number of components are in place or in development that indicate growing potential for collaborative CRC and RCA regional networks for revitalizing congregations and resourcing leaders. RCA regional synods and the emerging Regional Resource Networks of the CRC are positioned to take additional steps to coordinate, collaborate, and share resources for training, coaching, supporting, and revitalizing congregations and leaders across both denominations.

Coaching is proving useful for general congregational leadership and is being integrated into small group and prayer leadership, cluster coaching, and church planting and development.

Disability Ministries

By sharing expertise and working collaboratively, North America's Reformed and Christian Reformed churches keep moving toward the biblical model in which everybody belongs and everybody serves.

The CRC has provided staff for Disability Concerns since 1982. In 2008, the CRC Board of Trustees responded favorably to a request from the RCA General Synod Council to share its expertise in disability ministry and work collaboratively with the RCA in launching a ministry to support RCA churches. Leaders and congregations in both denominations have affirmed the partnership and the shared ministry that's been done in the past four years.

Since September 2009, when the RCA hired a coordinator for Disability Concerns, the two offices have worked together to produce a quarterly newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, and have released two editions of an *Inclusion Handbook* for disability advocates and congregations. Since 2011, more than 6,000 copies of the *Inclusion Handbook* have been sold or provided to individual volunteers as well as congregations in the CRC, RCA and other denominations.

The two offices sponsor joint regional and denominational conferences and events, host a combined Disability Concerns Facebook page, and link to each other's websites. Together they have planned and led conferences in the U.S. and Canada that equip church leaders and disability advocates for engaging people with disabilities in church life and ministry. A growing number of regional committees of RCA and CRC disability volunteers meet three times a year for event planning and support. An annual two-day CRC/RCA Disability Leadership Conference brings together volunteer disability advocates from throughout the two denominations. The RCA coordinator for Disability Concerns and the CRC director of Disability Concerns serve on each other's advisory teams, and the two advisory groups meet jointly each August.

Leadership

Learning from each other and working together is shaping men and women who are better able to lead personally, lead productively, and lead in ways that reproduce others who can lead well.

Over the past several years, the RCA has emphasized the value of coaching for pastors and other church leaders. The RCA's coach training events have been attended by CRC participants, including a couple of sessions offered especially for CRC pastors in Classis Holland. This has led to a collaborative effort in the design of the CRC's coach training process.

The CRC has included a few RCA Revitalization leaders in the training of coaches for their Church Health Assessment and development process. The RCA is evaluating it for future use.

The Ridder Church Renewal process, a program that focuses on the momentum and leadership needed for sustainable change, is sponsored by the Journey at Western Theological Seminary, the RCA, and the CRC. An initial

group of CRC and RCA pastors and church leaders found the process so helpful that they extended the two-year program for two more years by adding a second module.

Currently the Ridder Church Renewal process is offered in New York, Canada, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan—through four separate groups and with 85 congregations involved. This process will be further expanded to other regions of North America in early 2015.

In 2005, the RCA and the CRC agreed to an orderly exchange of ordained ministers between the denominations. Further, the denominations exchange ministerial and church profiles to facilitate pastoral searches. The RCA's Ministerial Opportunity Listing includes openings at both RCA and CRC ministries, and the denominations are exploring full integration of denominational placement services.

Trained specialized interim ministers are also available to churches in either denomination conducting a search for a pastor during a vacancy.

The CRC and RCA, together with Calvin Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary, are collaborating on an emerging leadership development vision called The Reformed Leadership Initiative: a distributed network for leadership equipping and training providing collaborative resourcing from all four institutions as well as through local congregations. The current focus is on piloting this network with Hispanic leaders and congregations. The next phase of development will invite the contributions of all institutions and ministries, like New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Newbigin House of Studies, Church Leadership Center, Christian Leaders Institute, and others that are currently engaged in training lay and pastoral leaders for the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church.

Leadership Education

Western Theological Seminary (WTS) and Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) serve the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church respectively: students, alumni, and leaders.

Both CTS and WTS live with the awareness and appreciation of our deep affinities, shared history, and a growing sense that greater collaborative efforts would strengthen each school. The most consistent sharing over the past years has been through annual faculty gatherings over dinner and theological discussion, worship leadership exchanges in morning chapel, shared placements in theological education field work, and student leadership exchanges.

In addition, over the past several years the presidents of each school have looked to one another for encouragement and counsel. This is a collaborative instinct that we celebrate and long to expand, particularly calling forth the mission, history, and gifts of New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

Ministry to Chaplains

CRC and RCA leaders are better realizing their shared goal of providing support and resources for women and men serving in chaplaincy roles.

The RCA's Coordinator of Chaplain Support and Services and the CRC's Director of Chaplaincy and Care have a long history of collaborating to

support the ministry of military, prison, camp, college, developmental disability, federal law enforcement, hospice, hospital, nursing home, workplace/industrial, and residential treatment chaplains. Their intentional work together includes but is not limited to the following:

- holding their annual conferences simultaneously in 2012 and 2014 in Grand Rapids with some joint sessions and meals together
- hosting events on issues of concern for both denominations
- exchanging information about job openings
- hosting joint gatherings for RCA/CRC chaplains at the annual meetings of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education and the Association of Professional Chaplains
- sharing military installation services for military candidates going on active duty
- holding joint retreats for military chaplains
- mentoring military chaplain candidates
- working together as part of the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces
- participating in Presbyterian and Reformed evening get-togethers at the army chief of chaplains Senior Leadership Conference

Herman Keizer, now retired as the CRC's director of chaplaincy, has assisted in mentoring RCA chaplain candidates at Western Theological Seminary and has worked with RCA chaplains in leadership positions.

Mission, Relief, and Development Work

By reducing redundancies and pooling resources, our denominations are better able to facilitate and coordinate CRC and RCA responses to disasters and work in relief and development.

The RCA CARE Network has worked with World Renew Disaster Response Services for a number of years, which culminated in a memorandum of understanding in 2013 that establishes World Renew as the RCA's primary partner for domestic disaster response. This helps to expand the compassion ministry capacity for both the CRC and RCA.

The RCA has contributed substantial funds to CRC disaster relief projects in the Dominican Republic, in Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake, and in Japan following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. World Renew and the RCA work together on the placement of volunteers for long-term rebuilding projects after domestic disasters.

Both CRC World Renew and RCA Global Mission work collaboratively with the Church World Service Development and Humanitarian Affairs roundtable in disaster response. We are both members of the Foods Resource Bank as well, which funds agricultural development through domestic farmers growing projects.

Since 1990, the RCA has supported the CRC in Cuba, initially by sending ministry teams from the Council for Hispanic Ministries to Cuba to work in evangelism with local pastors, and more recently through a financial partnership that provides evangelistic resources to churches and pastors there. The RCA has also partnered with the CRC in the Dominican Republic as they respond to the sanitation and health care needs of Haitian communities.

The RCA has partnered with World Renew on the Sea to Sea bike tour since 2008, with increased involvement in the 2013 tour. They will continue to partner together in future years.

Realize Efficiencies

Benefits

The Christian Reformed Church Board of Trustees and RCA's Board of Benefits Services voted in the spring of 2013 to form the Reformed Benefits Association, an independent 501(c)(3) corporation governed by a six-member board appointed by the two denominations' organizing bodies. RBA was formed in response to changes in health care under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (health care reform) and the ability, starting in 2014, for ministers and other church workers to purchase insurance through federal and/or state marketplaces. The RCA's former medical plan was mandatory for ministers. Health care reform caused the RCA to re-evaluate that practice and permit its churches to consider plans offered through the marketplaces or by other carriers. The potential loss of a significant participant base initially caused the RCA to consider ending its plan. However, by forming RBA, the two denominations were able to bring together their current medical plan (for active workers, overseas mission personnel, and retirees) along with dental, vision, group life, accidental death/dismemberment, and long-term disability plans to ensure the continued viability and strengthening of these programs going forward.

RBA was established on July 1, 2013. Most of the current insurance plans of the RCA and the CRC were brought under the RBA umbrella starting January 1, 2014, with little or no change. However, RBA was able to offer a single retiree Medicare Advantage plan (the former CRC plan) and a single medical plan for overseas mission personnel (the former RCA plan). The CRC and the RCA merged their insurance staff teams effective January 1, 2014, with the primary office located at the CRC facilities in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a smaller regional office at the RCA facilities in New York City. In 2014, RBA retained 80 percent of the former RCA insurance plan participants and the vast majority of CRC participants.

The staff of RBA look forward to merging all of its insurance plans by January 1, 2015. RBA will also be able to provide insurance benefits to faith based and church affiliated organizations as well as other denominations beginning in 2015. A growth strategy is currently in development along with conversations with potential partner organizations.

By bringing together the very similar programs that were offered separately by the RCA and the CRC, we are confident in our ability to provide continued high quality group insurance benefits to our ministers, mission personnel, retirees, and other church workers at a fair and competitive cost while offering our participants and their families a level of personalized care and support unavailable through other providers.

Information Technology

In 2010 the RCA and CRC IT departments decided to approach their work in as collaborative a way as possible. The initial joint project was the shared purchase of hardware for use at synod events starting in 2011.

In May of 2013, a single team was formed to provide helpdesk and infrastructure support for the CRC and RCA offices. As of February 2014 the IT staff is fully integrated and is working as a single department that is responsible to both denominations. This single department was formed with the goal of more effectively leveraging technology to enhance the ministry and mission of the CRC and the RCA.

Joint Publications and Distribution

The CRC, under its Faith Alive imprint, is the distributor for printed resources for both the RCA and the CRC. It is also a publishing partner with the RCA and has recently released *Lift Up Your Hearts*, the new hymnal that has been developed by CRC and RCA leaders with expertise in worship arts. The CRC and the RCA regularly collaborate on numerous projects including Sunday school curriculum, children's worship, and discipleship materials.

Union Churches and Community Ministry

A few churches, particularly those in urban areas, have become union churches in order to expand ministry beyond social-economic boundaries, grow financially sustainable, and work toward greater community and life transformation.

Maple Avenue Ministries in Holland, MI; and Angel Community Church in Muskegon, MI; are "union churches," sharing membership in RCA and CRC classes. Additionally, Nardin Park Reformed Church in Detroit, MI, has a long-term relationship with a faith-based community outreach non-profit started by the CRC, housed in Nardin Park's facilities. Faith Chapel Reformed Church in Paterson, NJ, has had similar relationships with CRC congregations and outreach organizations in Paterson.

Websites

The RCA's website team and the CRC's web and e-communications manager have initiated deeper collaboration on a number of fronts. They are currently working together to create a Central Resources Database that will allow easy access to online resources on either the RCA or CRC website. The CRC's web manager has also been providing expertise in Drupal, a content management coding system that the CRC has implemented for their new site and that the RCA is considering for theirs. If the RCA decides to use Drupal (which is likely), there will be ongoing collaboration in the development of custom coding for use by both sites.

Express a Common Witness

Centre for Public Dialogue

The RCA participates in the CRC's Centre for Public Dialogue, which seeks to provide thoughtful support and constructive input for political leaders in Canada. Sourced and powered by faith in Jesus Christ, the Centre engages in an ongoing conversation with policy- and decision-makers about seeking justice, peace, and the good for all.

Ecumenical Partnerships

The RCA and the CRC are partners in a variety of ministries because we share a desire to deepen all expressions of Christian unity, to give expression to a common witness, and to amplify our prophetic voices on issues that relate to life, social justice, and peace initiatives. Together we support and are engaged in several national and international ecumenical organizations and endeavors. The ministries we support include the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA), the Global Christian Forum (GCF), the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and Sojourners. By these means we proclaim that God is concerned about the issues of our time.

General Synod

The RCA and the CRC also share a more intimate relationship. Our respective synods have met multiple times in simultaneous sessions, giving expression to and providing meaningful support and encouragement for the ministries we do together. Collaborating as much as possible allows both denominations to share resources, realize significant cost savings, be blessed by joint worship, and more effectively testify that in Christ we are one. Both synods will meet together in Pella, Iowa, in June 2014. At that time we will celebrate our relationship and explore our commitments to each other as collaboration grows and our together-service deepens. Together we will worship our Lord with praise and thanksgiving for the opportunities we share and the blessings of our fellowship. The cooperation of the RCA and the CRC, in all its various forms and ministries, has served as an encouragement to the Reformed community of churches and beyond.

International Gospel Ministries

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) and Words of Hope are collaborating in Arabic media ministry, media ministry in several languages throughout northern India, “Spotlight” (simplified English) broadcasting, and the new “Groundwork” broadcasts that have replaced both the historic “Back to God Hour” and “Words of Hope” English preaching programs. Indonesia is the newest field in which BTGMI and Words of Hope are working together. In 2012, Words of Hope joined the ministry partnership between BTGMI and the broadcast ministry affiliated with the Indonesian Christian Church. Words of Hope’s participation provides additional resources to enable the development of broadcasting and follow-up in a number of minority languages throughout Indonesia—work that complements the established broadcasts in the national language of Bahasa Indonesian.

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Dr. Lyle Bierma, chair (2014, first term); Dr. Paul Bremer (2016, first term); Dr. Kristin Kobes DuMez (2016, first term); Dr. Robert Schoone-Jongen (2015, first term); Dr. Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary.

II. Archives staff

Richard Harms is the curator of the archives, housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. He serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College as archivist. Other staff include Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Laurie Haan, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; and Ms. Anna Katharine Feltes, student assistant. They are assisted by volunteers Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Ralph Haan, Ms. Helen Meulink, Ms. Clarice Newhof, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Ms. Janet Sheeres, Ms. Jeannette Smith, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

After twenty years in Heritage Hall and five years prior to that in the Hekman Library, Ms. Wendy Blankespoor retired in January 2014. She was responsible for moving our cataloging data into digital formats and overseeing processing of manuscript collections and denominational records, in addition to providing reference service and other tasks too numerous to mention here. On behalf of the denomination, the committee thanks her for her years of dedicated service.

We report also the death last August of Mr. Fred (Feite) Greidanus of Brampton, Ontario. A Dutch immigrant to Canada, Mr. Greidanus spent countless hours in his retirement translating church minutes from Dutch into English for the archives.

III. Archival work during 2013

The papers (10 cu. ft., 1849-2005) of Dr. Walter Lagerwey (1918-2005), professor emeritus of Dutch language and literature at Calvin College, including extensive biographical information, correspondence, papers, articles, research materials, periodical clippings, theater programs in Dutch, manuscripts that detail various aspects of Dutch studies, and material on his textbook, *Speak Dutch*, were opened for research. Ten cubic feet were added to the Robert P. Swierenga papers, a collection that now totals 47.5 cubic feet. The Frank and Helen Verbrugge papers, 1894-1995 (12 cu. ft. in two collections), detail his work in physics and her extensive work on genealogy on the Roelof and Tromp families. The David De Heer collection, 1968-2009 (4 cu. ft.), includes correspondence, publications, reports, grant applications, proposals, and research materials detailing biological research in the areas of cell and molecular biology, immunology, inquiry-based pedagogy, and technology.

We added twenty-nine cubic feet of records to our holdings of World Missions files, containing extensive correspondence and reports from missionaries in the field. Eight cubic feet of records from Calvin College's

Office of the President, 2002-2012, were processed, as were the records from New Hope Church of Dunwoody, Georgia, a congregation that began in the Atlanta area in 1983 and closed in 2013. We also opened for research the records (4.5 cu. ft.) of the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism (GRACE), which began in 1947 as the Grand Rapids-Kent County Council of Churches and became increasingly focused on racial reconciliation and justice. In 2011 a new organization, Partners for a Racism-Free Community, took over the work of GRACE. Finally, the papers of Dr. Steve Van Der Weele, professor emeritus of English at Calvin College, now also detail his scholarship, particularly on Christian education, English literature, Hungarian literature, and the work of Czeslaw Milosz, and his many published book reviews.

We acquired the records of the Red Mesa Foundation, formed in 1999 to develop, manage, and distribute assets from land just east of Gallup, New Mexico, formerly owned by Christian Reformed Home Missions surrounding Rehoboth Christian School, as well as some commercial property along Route 66. The earnings from the endowment helped support the ministries of the local Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools. Once the assets were distributed, the foundation closed. We also received the records of Inner Compass, an award-winning television production on topics related to U.S. culture, international issues, faith, life-changers, and relationships; for more than a decade this television series was distributed nationally from Calvin College. Also added were the papers (1972-2011) of Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga and the extensive genealogical records on the Rozendal, Hospers, Tribbles, and Merrit families donated by Jean Rozendal. Quentin Schultze, professor of communication arts and sciences and scholar on Christians and communication, added thirteen cubic feet of records to his papers. The additional material, detailing St. Augustine on communication and the Old Testament on communications, appears to be the best collection of source material on the two topics.

IV. Publications

We have electronically published another year of *Origins* (2010) via our web page (www.calvin.edu/hh/origins/Origins_Main_Page.htm). We continue to publish the semiannual paper copies of *Origins* as well. *Origins*, which is self-funded, also contributed some financial support for the publication of *The Not-So-Promised Land: The Dutch in Amelia County, Virginia, 1868-1880* by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, ISBN 978-0-8028-7156-5).

V. Recognition

A. The committee acknowledges the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries during 2014 and 2015.

1. The Committee acknowledges the following individuals who have served a combined 4,197 years in ordained ministry and will celebrate significant anniversaries during 2014:

73 years, 1941-2014	Gysbert J. Rozenboom
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69 years, 1945-2014	George D. Vanderhill
	James W. Van Weelden

67 years, 1947-2014	Clarence Van Ens
66 years, 1948-2014	Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Howard B. Spaan
65 years, 1949-2014	Albert J. Vanden Pol
64 years, 1950-2014	Lugene A. Bazuin Martin D. Geleynse Dick C. Los Lammert Slofstra
63 years, 1951-2014	Gerard Bouma Willis P. De Boer Leonard J. Hofman Jacob Kuntz MyungJae Lee John T. Malestein Leonard Sweetman Clarence J. Vos Wilmer R. Witte
62 years, 1952-2014	Ralph D. Baker John M. Hofman Herman Leestma Chester M. Schemper Richard D. Sytsma Rits Tadema Samuel Vander Jagt Benjamin Ypma
61 years, 1953-2014	Harry G. Arnold Peter W. Brouwer William A. Huyser Bassam M. Madany Bernard J. Niemeyer Kenneth R. Slager John W. Van Stempvoort Theodore Verseput
60 years, 1954-2014	Alan A. Arkema Louis F. Baker Paul E. Bakker Marvin Beelen Ralph W. Bronkema Floyd R. De Boer Earl D. Dykema John L. Meppelink Neal Punt Sidney H. Rooy Martin Stegink Anthonie Vanden Ende

55 years, 1959-2014

Henry Bouma
Allen J. Bultman
John G. Groen
John J. Hoogland
Melvin D. Hugen
Jelle Nutma
Walter Swets
John (Jan) Timmer
Douglas R. Vander Wall

50 years, 1964-2014

Peter J. Boodt
Ramón C. Borrego
James E. De Vries
Vernon F. Geurkink
Morris N. Greidanus
Richard A. Hertel
Jerry J. Hoytema
John G. Klomps
Herman Salomons
Peter (Chung Ping) Tong
Harlan G. Vanden Einde
John Van Til
Julius Vigh
Peter Sing Sai Yang

2. Because synod meets in June when the year is almost half over, the committee has been asked also to acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries during 2015. These ministers will have served a combined 5,305 years in ordained ministry:

74 years, 1941-2015

Gysbert J. Rozenboom

70 years, 1945-2015

George D. Vanderhill
James W. Van Weelden

68 years, 1947-2015

Clarence Van Ens

67 years, 1948-2015

Carl G. Kromminga, Sr.
Howard B. Spaan

66 years, 1949-2015

Albert J. Vanden Pol

65 years, 1950-2015

Lugene A. Bazuin
Martin D. Geleynse
Dick C. Los
Lammert Slofstra

64 years, 1951-2015

Gerard Bouma
Willis P. De Boer
Leonard J. Hofman
Jacob Kuntz
MyungJae Lee
John T. Malestein
Leonard Sweetman

	Clarence J. Vos Wilmer R. Witte
63 years, 1952-2015	Ralph D. Baker John M. Hofman Herman Leestma Chester M. Schemper Richard D. Sytsma Rits Tadema Samuel Vander Jagt Benjamin Ypma
62 years, 1953-2015	Harry G. Arnold Peter W. Brouwer William A. Huyser Bassam M. Madany Bernard J. Niemeyer Kenneth R. Slager John W. Van Stempvoort Theodore Verseput
61 years, 1954-2015	Alan A. Arkema Louis F. Baker Paul E. Bakker Marvin Beelen Ralph W. Bronkema Floyd R. De Boer Earl D. Dykema John L. Meppelink Neal Punt Sidney H. Rooy Martin Stegink Anthonie Vanden Ende
60 years, 1955-2015	Andrew J. Bandstra Winston C. Boelkins Rodger J. Buining John Bylsma Ike Chang Michiel M. De Berdt Bert Den Herder John Hofman James C. Lont Earl C. Marlink Jack J. Matheis Jan D. Pereboom Carl J. Reitsma John C. Rickers Gerard Ringnalda William Kenneth Stob Jacob W. Uitvlugt

Wilbert M. Van Dyk
Gerard Van Groningen

55 years, 1960-2015

Alfred E. Mulder
Joel H. Nederhood
John H. Primus
Raymond C. Swierenga
Frederick J. Van Dyk
Theodore Wevers

50 years, 1965-2015

Josué Abreu
David R. Armstrong
Harold Tinus De Jong
Henry Dykema
Harvey A. Kiekoover
Roger G. Timmerman
Harry Andrew Van Dam
Mike Vander Pol
John Van Hemert
Anthony Van Zanten
Henry Wildeboer
David G. Zandstra
John M. Zinkand

3. In our report for 2013 Rev. Sidney De Waal was omitted from the list of those who had served 50 years. We apologize for the omission and include his name here.

B. We report the following anniversaries of ministries that will occur during 2014 and 2015:

25th Anniversary, 1989-2014

Ancaster, ON – Meadowlands Fellowship
Brinston, ON – Community
Jenison, MI – Fairway
Las Vegas, NV – Pilgrim Church
London, ON – Good News
Merced, CA – Gateway Community
Red Deer, AB – New Life Fellowship
Rockford, MI – Blythefield
Vanastra, ON – Vanastra Community
Winnipeg, MB – Good News Fellowship
Ministries

50th Anniversary, 1964-2014

Bowmanville, ON – Maranatha
East Islip, NY – Christ Community
Fresno, CA – Fresno
Grandville, MI – Ivanrest
Hudsonville, MI – Messiah
Miami, FL – Iglesia el Buen Samaritano
Quincy, WA – Quincy
Salem, OR – Sunnyslope
Salt Lake City, UT – Mountain Springs
Community

	Scottsdale, AZ – Palm Lane St. Catharines, ON – Trinity Winter Garden, FL – Oasis Community
75th Anniversary, 1939-2014	Brookfield, WI – Brookfield Grand Rapids, MI – Seymour Houston, BC – Houston Seattle, WA – First
100th Anniversary, 1914-2014	Fremont, MI – Second Grosse Pointe Park, MI – First Christian Reformed of Detroit Marion, MI – Highland Zeeland, MI – Third
125th Anniversary, 1889-2014	Grand Rapids, MI – West Leonard Muskegon, MI – Allen Avenue Sheboygan, WI – First
25th Anniversary, 1990-2015	Austin, TX – Sunrise Community Church Hagersville, ON – Hagersville Community Kincheloe, MI – New Hope Community Mill Creek, WA – Mill Creek Community Tacoma, WA – Tacoma Wyckoff, NJ – Cedar Hill
50th Anniversary, 1965-2015	Beaverton, OR – Oak Hills Brampton, ON – CrossPoint Chatham, ON – Grace Jenison, MI – Ridgewood Kalamazoo, MI – Northern Heights Mason City, IA – Rolling Acres Middleville, MI – Middleville Muskegon, MI – Calvin Omaha, NE – Prairie Lane South Holland, IL – Peace St. Joseph, MI – St. Joseph Strathroy, ON – Westmount Visalia, CA – First
75th Anniversary, 1940-2015	Holland, MI – Montello Park Saginaw, MI – Community
100th Anniversary, 1915-2015	Colton, SD – Faith Community Grand Rapids, MI – Creston Grand Rapids, MI – Neland Avenue Grandville, MI – Hope Ogilvie, MN – New Hope
125th Anniversary, 1890-2015	Grand Rapids, MI – Oakdale Park Reeman, MI – Reeman Renville, MN – Emden Sioux Center, IA – First

150th Anniversary, 1865-2015 Grand Haven, MI – First
Holland, MI – Central Avenue
Lafayette, IN – Lafayette
South Holland, IL – First

VI. Reminders

We again ask congregations that have observed anniversaries during 2013 or will observe anniversaries during 2014 to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video recordings, photographs, etc.) to the archives.

During 2013, official minutes of seventy-six Christian Reformed churches and two Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed, and the copies were stored in our vault. As always, original materials were returned to the respective churches. Official minutes were received from all forty-seven classes. Anniversary materials were received from fifteen Christian Reformed churches.

Of the 847 organized congregations that have existed for at least ten years, 672 (79%) have sent their minutes to the archives for microfilming. This includes records from one church that has never had their records duplicated. Due to frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the Historical Committee continues to urge congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy of their important records; backups that will be stored in a secure location, with access given only by permission of the church. In spite of our request to Synod 2013, we received bylaws and incorporation documents from only five churches during the year. We received requests for such items from eighteen churches in the past year, though none of them had sent us these materials. The following classes are to be commended for having the minutes of their churches over ten years old duplicated: Arizona, Eastern Canada, Grand Rapids East, Hamilton, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland.

VII. Regional representatives

The Historical Committee has a representative in each classis who acts as a liaison between the committee and the churches within that classis. During this past year communications have been sent to each of our representatives thanking them for their services throughout 2013 and requesting that they continue to serve another year.

VIII. Digital records

Increasingly the archives receive digital records, which must be converted to paper in order to be microfilmed. Because the availability of microfilm equipment and products is declining, the committee is investigating the cost of switching to storage of digital records.

IX. Recommendations

A. That synod permit Dr. Richard H. Harms, CRC archivist, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Historical Committee's mandate comes before synod.

B. That synod reappoint Dr. Lyle Bierma to an additional three-year term on the committee.

C. That synod instruct all churches and classes to send duplicates (photocopies, faxes, or email attachments) of their articles of incorporation and bylaws to the archives. Copies can be sent to Archives, Calvin College, 1855 Knollcrest Circle SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402; or by fax: 616 526-7689; or by email: crcarchives@calvin.edu.

D. That synod encourage the 40 classes whose 175 member churches more than ten years old that have not had their minutes duplicated to contact the archives to make such arrangements.

Historical Committee

Lyle Bierma, chair

Paul Bremer

Kristin Kobes Du Mez

Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary

Robert Schoone-Jongen

I. Brief overview

Email, personal conversation, and website traffic continue to show that the service provided by the Sermons for Reading Services Committee (available on the denominational website at www.crcna.org; search “reading sermons”) is used not only in Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States but also in many denominations and countries around the world. A “thank-you” email for one of our sermons came as far away as Colchester, England!

Our committee, also known as the Living Word Committee, is not without its challenges. Our goal is to process twenty-seven sermons every year; however, this year we processed only twenty-two. Part of our problem is trying to find ministers willing to submit sermons. It appears that many do not write manuscripts anymore—at least not manuscripts of 2,500 words. That is what the committee’s guidelines have always required until now. At our last annual meeting—held online in January—we began to question the viability of the Living Word Committee altogether. Although research indicates there is much traffic on our website, we are not altogether sure that the sermons are being used for *reading sermons* in vacant churches—which is why the committee was originally established. In an age when sermon resources are so readily available—especially on the internet—is it necessary for the CRC to invest time, money, and energy to maintain the ministry of the Living Word Committee? While we remain committed to this ministry (at least for the time being), it is important that synod be aware of our conversation. In the meantime, we have begun an active advertising campaign, especially on the CRC Network, to ensure that vacant churches and sermon authors are aware of our ministry. We have also changed our guidelines to meet the challenge. The committee still prefers sermons with 2,500 words, but we have agreed to accept sermons with as few as 2,000 words. We have also broadened our guidelines stating who may submit sermons. We now invite all ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors—whose calling it is to preach sermons—ordained in the CRC to submit sermons. We also accept sermons from persons licensed to exhort in the CRC.

Synod 2013 offered some observations for our committee. Synod’s advisory committee suggested that “it is time to offer sermons on video to be shown instead of supplying sermons to be read” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 560). Our committee has looked into this matter in the past. First, we have found few churches that offer a video ministry that we can use. Further, implementing a full video ministry would require a lot of time, web space, and funding. Since 2011, the committee has added links to the sites of CRC pastors / churches where video sermons are posted. We are reluctant to do more than this as there are also theological, pastoral, and liturgical issues involved. Does the CRC want to move in the direction of replacing the “living” proclamation of the gospel with something we simply watch? Replacing written sermons with videos is simply not part of our mandate.

Synod’s advisory committee also suggested that “more could be done to contextualize the sermons for the local setting. Of particular concern are sermons that can be used in multiethnic churches and settings” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 560). The committee struggled with what to do with this request.

Our mandate is not such that we *tell* pastors what to write for us; we simply receive what pastors are willing to submit. Further, our mandate is to provide *generic* sermons that can be used in all churches. We point out that our existing site allows people to “search” for any text, topic, or concern that they may have. We understand the concern to do more to reach out to multiethnic churches and communities. To serve that end, we are currently in conversation with Rev. Ramon Orostizaga, who ministers in a Hispanic community in New Jersey. He is working with us to provide Spanish sermons. He has also indicated an openness to join the Living Word Committee as a member in the future.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Ken Benjamins (2015), serving as chair and secretary; Rev. John Noordhof (2016); Rev. Lambert Sikkema (2015); and Rev. Mark Verbruggen, who retires from the committee this year. We thank Mark for his faithful service in the past three years. The committee recommends that synod appoint Rev. Kory Plockmeyer from Sioux Center, Iowa, to a first term of three years.

Rev. Kory Plockmeyer is originally from the Holland, Michigan, area. He first served in campus ministry in East Lansing, Michigan, and now serves as pastor of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. Rev. Plockmeyer is eager to serve on the committee.

We thank the Lord for the sermons received, posted, and used by churches within our denomination and worldwide. We also note with thanksgiving the great work of the denominational Proservices website staff on our behalf.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod recognize the challenges that the Living Word Committee faces, approve their work, and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the reading services provided on the CRC website.

B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint a new member to a three-year term on the Sermons for Reading Services Committee.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Kenneth F. Benjamins, chair/secretary
John H. Noordhof
Lambert J. Sikkema
Mark Verbruggen

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

To all delegates to Synod 2014, greetings from the Dordt College community. We're happy to share some of the things God has allowed us to accomplish this year as we work toward a common goal of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

In one sense, the year was like every other: we continue to look for new and better ways to prepare students for service after they graduate.

We have been blessed with students who want a Dordt education. Fall enrollment reached 1,430 students, which included 54 graduate students and 138 international students from over 20 countries—82 from Canada. This spring, enrollment increased to 1,523, due largely to more than 100 students who participated in dual enrollment courses in communication, English composition, literature, science, and mathematics.

On Dordt's campus, the developing science and technology building has been an unmistakable presence throughout the past year. The new structure provides state-of-the-art facilities and opportunities for Dordt's growing STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). Through these programs, Dordt is committed to training scientists who can bring shalom and restoration to our world.

A theme that underlies these programs is Colossians 1:16-17: "In him all things were created . . . in him all things hold together"—the starting point for the work Dr. Charles Adams did in founding Dordt's engineering program 35 years ago. The new engineering wing will bear his name.

Other opportunities to help students become a transforming presence in society have grown this year. A new community development major will prepare students for development work in a variety of settings. The program is based on the conviction that sustainable, healthy communities develop by caring about and for everything God has made, that alleviating hunger and providing housing are urgent needs that are best addressed by creating an environment in which people can grow and thrive.

Funded by a \$1.375 million gift, Dordt College this year set up the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education as an information hub and provider of consulting expertise to Christian schools (www.cace.org). The center will serve school boards, school leaders, teacher leaders, parents, and churches as a clearinghouse for Christian education innovation and advocacy.

While all of our programs help equip young Christians to participate in communities in a wide range of ways, our relatively new worship arts program is having a direct impact on Reformed churches. Last spring's first graduate was hired immediately as a worship director. Several students work part-time or in volunteer capacities at local churches; others participate in campus and traveling worship teams. One team already has summer dates lined up at SERVE sites and summer camps.

In conjunction with our annual Day of Encouragement, which offers resources and encouragement to area church members and leaders, Dordt College offered its first Youth Pastors Day this year. Its goal was to work together with congregations to walk alongside young people as they form their identity in Christ and live in the face of conflicting messages from the media, the church, and the world.

We're excited about the work we do to prepare young Christians to take their places in God's world, and we're encouraged by and grateful for the support of Christian Reformed congregations across the continent in helping us do so. May God bless all of us as we work together for his kingdom.

Dordt College
Erik Hoekstra, president

It is appropriate to begin this report by repeating a recent announcement regarding the departure of Rev. Dr. Thomas and Ms. Dawn Wolthuis from the office of President. This is an event we regret, and we expended much effort in trying to prevent it. We thank Tom and Dawn for answering the call to serve this past year and for their earnest efforts to further the vision and mission of the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS). Tom undertook a vigorous schedule of preaching in Christian Reformed churches and making other contacts with our supporting community. Dawn spearheaded an initiative leading to a concentration in urban ministry in our master of worldview studies program, serving students based in Central America and in partnership with institutions in that region, and played a major role in overseeing internal operations. We pray our Lord's blessing as he leads them into other avenues of service.

Twenty-six students are enrolled in degree programs (nine Ph.D., eleven M.A., six M.W.S.) and we look forward to the graduation in May of six master's degree students from last year's programs. We welcomed nine new students in September, who have embraced their studies enthusiastically. Three students subsequently enrolled in the urban ministry concentration by way of a special January intake. We are very pleased to be currently considering thirteen applicants for next year. We also serve students enrolling in single courses, particularly via distance education. The total number of course registrations this year is 123. We offered seventeen courses—a remarkable result, considering that two of our seven faculty members are on sabbatical and two others are on half-time appointments. Senate also appointed three associate faculty members to teach in Central America.

ICS's Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics (CPRSE) secured \$200,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to help fund its partnership with the CRCNA and the Centre for Community Based Research in a two-year project: Justice and Faith: Individual Spirituality and Social Responsibility in the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. \$80,000 of this grant supports CRCNA personnel who are involved. In May, we are holding a conference titled "Are We There Yet? Economic Justice and the Common Good" in Edmonton, Alberta, in partnership with The King's University College. This is not primarily an academic conference but includes participants from a range of other sectors. CPRSE continues its program of interfaculty colloquia, having hosted ARIHE lecturer Dr. Deborah Bowen (Redeemer University College) and planning another (now Association of Reformed Colleges and Universities) lecture in March by Dr. Ryan McIlhenny (Providence Christian College).

Senior members were once again quite productive in their research. They published eight scholarly articles and three books (*Truth Matters: Knowledge Politics, Ethics, Religion*; *Richard Rorty*; and *The Annihilation of Hell*), presented twenty papers at academic conferences, and made several presentations in church and community venues. Dr. Wolthuis wrote a regular column for *Christian Courier*, and other articles were published in magazines and on blogs.

It is important to note that the reduced appointments mentioned above were at the direction of the ICS's Board of Trustees (predominantly members

of the CRC) and are essential. We must decrease expenditure as we seek also to increase income. The latter remains steady, and we are truly thankful for the financial and prayer support of churches and individuals, the bulk of whom are also members of the CRC. ICS's ministry in the academy is approaching fifty years; none of these has been easy from a monetary point of view. Yet the Lord through his people has sustained us, and our current financial situation is stable. We continue to move forward in faith and hope, in service of Christ, in whom all things hold together.

Institute for Christian Studies
Doug Blomberg, acting president

Greetings from The King's University College! It is with gratitude to God and to our supporting community that we submit this report to Synod 2014 of the Christian Reformed Church. It has been a year of significant change for King's. In its 35th year, King's continues to live into the mission of "providing 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."

We have had a change in leadership in the past year. Dr. Harry Fernhout, who faithfully served as president for eight years, has retired. We welcomed our new president, Dr. Melanie Humphreys, this past July. Information about the presidential investiture and inaugural address of our fourth president, Dr. Humphreys, can be found on the King's website (www.kingsu.ca). We are encouraged with the promise and fresh vision that she brings to campus.

The past few years have been fiscally difficult for King's, with unmet enrollment targets. We are pleased to report that we have met our enrollment targets this year. Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment numbers last year were 626.5. This year FTE is 661, showing an increase of 34.5 FTE.

Thanks to two of the largest gifts in King's history, we will be launching a School of Business this year. The two record pledges from major donors, totaling \$8.5 million, will enable us to expand our commerce program. Our commerce program is highly regarded, but limited funding has restricted our ability to broaden our course offerings and deepen the expertise of our full-time faculty. The launch of the School of Business will take place in late September and coincide with our Board of Governors meetings and First Annual Homecoming Event.

King's has established a research centre that collects historical materials related to the Dutch-Canadian experience as well as materials associated with the traditions of Reformed Christianity in Canada (including German Reformed). The Heritage Collection's namesake, Mr. Gerry Segger, made the Gerry Segger Heritage Collection possible through a legacy gift. One of the first gifts to the research centre was a 1602 edition of *Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

King's was recognized by the Legislature of Alberta for the contribution of the King's Centre for Visualization in Science (KCVS) to the education and outreach efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The 2013 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the OPCW for its extensive efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons. The KCVS student and faculty research team produced a comprehensive set of interactive web materials to support a new and strong emphasis on education and outreach for OPCW. The interactive materials flow out of eight years of involvement with the OPCW by King's professor and 3M National Teaching Fellow, Dr. Peter Mahaffy.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council approved two research grant applications submitted by King's faculty for funding. Dr. Elizabeth Willson-Gordon (English) received a total of \$63,050 over a two-year period for her project titled *The Modernist Archives Publishing Project: The Hogarth Press in the Digital Age*. Dr. Will Van Arragon (History) received a total of \$74,020 over a two-year period for a project titled *Between the City and*

the River: A Digital Historical Atlas of Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley and Its Parks System. Dr. Michael Ferber (Geography and Environmental Studies) and Dr. Andrew Tappenden (Computing Science) were coapplicants on the latter grant application.

A Memorandum of Agreement between the Academic Senate of the Newman Theological College and The King's University College was signed in Spring 2013. The agreement will allow students enrolled in the B.Ed. program to take courses in religious education required by the Edmonton Catholic School District as part of their King's degree program, making them eligible for employment in the Catholic school system.

King's continued success in providing students with a transformational, Christian university education relies, in part, on the generous, faithful support of the community that created this university 35 years ago. Our partnership with the CRC community has played a significant role in the life of King's. We have been blessed by these relationships, and we trust that your communities have also been blessed by the work that God is doing through King's. We thank God for the ongoing support of Christian higher education at King's. May God bless your work on behalf of his church during Synod 2014.

The King's University College
Melanie J. Humphreys, president

Twenty fourteen is an exciting year for Kuyper College as it marks the institution's 75th anniversary since opening its doors as Reformed Bible Institute in 1939. Over these years, we have seen and appreciated the close, encouraging, and supportive relationship we have had with the Christian Reformed Church. Many members of the denomination have actively guided the implementation of our mission to serve Christ and his church through our praxis-oriented education and training. This partnership has been significant in our physical growth—allowing us to place increasing numbers of graduates in various fields of ministry and service around the world. The prayer support and encouragement you are extending our way are also deeply treasured as we seek to serve the Lord well in our unique calling.

Our 75 years have certainly been filled with challenges and blessings! When we reflect on our history, we readily see how deeply an attitude of dependence on the Lord is ingrained on the hearts and spirits of people associated with the college. Operating margins have always been very slim, and yet we have seen again and again how God has blessed the intents and efforts of our college community to bring us successfully from one year to the next. The acute sensitivity to dependence on God has certainly kept us on our knees (and that's not a bad place to be!) and humbly grateful for the support we receive from the many friends of the college.

A significant example of this support is the major gift received this year that will enable us to fully fund the chair of our Business Leadership program and provide funds to further develop the program and give significant scholarship support for our Business Leadership students. This program is designed to prepare students for business, church, parachurch, and nonprofit environments in which basic competence in business, finance, and organizational leadership is needed. In this context, students are equipped to function in traditional ministry settings, marketplace ministries, nonprofit organizations, or enterprise development.

The Accelerated Pre-Seminary Studies Program (APSS)—giving graduates one-year-advance standing at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)—has increasingly drawn the interest of students. We are grateful for our faculty who, over the years, have increased the quality and scope of our presemenary track so that today it is recognized by others for its excellence. We have special appreciation for the close relationship with CTS that has made the APSS program possible. Our mutual drive to engage more people with a vision toward ordained ministry is serving the church well.

Though Kuyper College has expanded the course offerings available to students and has consortium agreements with other institutions, we continue to emphasize our "core-mission" programs. This is evidenced by the fact that our most popular programs continue to be social work, presemenary, youth ministry, business leadership, music and worship, and intercultural studies—all developed and offered in entirety on our campus. Our focus in all of our instruction continues to be on training students to serve well in *any* calling as they honor God by being effective Christian leaders in the world.

We offer thanks and appreciation once again to the CRC for your sense of partnership with us.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Greetings from Redeemer University College to the delegates to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Our prayers are with you as you seek to respond faithfully and vigorously to the challenges facing the body of Christ in North America. May God guide you in your deliberations, and may your work bless Christ's body and coming kingdom.

Redeemer has seen both blessings and challenges this academic year (2013-14). Our enrollment is 866 FTE students, short of our goal of 923 students. This shortfall is partly due to a flat growth rate in the enrollment of university-age young adults across Canada, and we see a particular correlation in the unusually small 2012-13 graduating classes of Christian high schools in Ontario. Many young people also feel uncertainty about job prospects and are thus choosing specialized programs in large universities that seem to promise career certainty. The peculiar features of our enrollment trends—a small Year 1 class and a large Year 4 graduating class—also mean that we expect our enrollment for the next three years to remain in the 800s, growing slowly. Accordingly, we have made adjustments to this year's budget and in our planning for the next three years in order to continue our trend of strengthening Redeemer's financial position. A recent announcement that Redeemer students from Ontario now qualify for 30-percent Off Ontario Tuition (commonly called the Ontario Tuition Grant) is an added blessing that will help to keep Redeemer affordable.

In fact, our enrollment and budget needs have led us to focus sharply on advancing Redeemer's primary mission, and in this effort we have experienced many blessings. We are grateful that this year's first-year class of students came with strong academic gifts, including an average high school GPA of 81 percent, and that most new students qualified for academic merit scholarships. We have had a wonderful year of excellent learning and exciting public events, highlighted by two days of guest lectures by Andy Crouch on "The World and Our Calling."

In addition, we have added a new director to our Information Services Department and are upgrading our IT infrastructure, and we have appointed a new director of institutional research and scheduling. We continue to fill faculty positions, most recently with the appointments of Ms. Lindsey Short (psychology), Dr. David Beldman (religion and theology), and Dr. Terry Loerts (education). We are deeply grateful for God's provision of gifted and faithful faculty and staff, and we are excited to see a new generation of leaders emerging at Redeemer.

We also have been unusually blessed in having our chaplaincy team this year include five part-time people. Syd Hielema, our full-time chaplain, also leads our Youth Ministry certificate program, and for this year he has been seconded for 20 percent of his time to assist the CRCNA Faith Formation ministry. Our chaplaincy is assisted by a part-time associate chaplain, a part-time assistant chaplain, and two M.Div. students who are completing their ministry internships through our chaplaincy office.

Along with new faculty and staff, we have renewed our efforts to ensure the quality of our programs and the collaboration of our curricular and co-curricular programs to provide excellent whole-life education. This past summer we renewed our Quality Assurance review of programs, and this

fall we began an extensive review of our core curriculum, with the intention of having a new core program in place by fall 2016. Our Education Department is working closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers to develop our teacher education program to meet the requirements of the new provincial mandate of a 20-course B.Ed. degree. We have submitted application for accreditation of our business co-op program with the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education.

Mention of our co-op program also highlights our efforts to connect our programs and student learning with experiential and service learning, in partnership with our support community. In addition to our expanding co-op opportunities, we are building experiential and service-learning opportunities into growing numbers of programs, and we are strengthening our Career Services to help students identify how they will serve in the world after completing their studies at Redeemer. There are also new initiatives under way in student leadership development for our co-curricular student clubs. We are pleased that Redeemer's students have become well known for their participation in Hamilton's arts and community service—a wonderful demonstration of our partnership with area churches and social agencies, of our theme for the year of bearing fruit that blesses the nations (Rev. 21:1-2), and of our commitment to educating students for leadership and service in God's kingdom.

After 31 years, Redeemer's alumni now number over 4,000, and our students and alumni are providing leadership and impact throughout Christian organizations and our wider North American culture. In the coming months we will be planning many additional efforts to secure and expand Redeemer's aims to equip the next generation for this service.

We are grateful for the prayers and financial support we have received from the Christian Reformed community and for the partnership we share in developing our youth and our whole community from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective for building up Christ's body and equipping it to serve in his kingdom.

Redeemer University College
Hubert R. Krygsman, president

Trinity Christian College continues to value its partnership with the Christian Reformed Church, both in terms of the students it educates and the churches it serves.

Many students come to Trinity from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin, but we also attract students from around the nation and the world. While more than one-third of our students come from Reformed congregations, all students receive an education at Trinity that is founded on Reformed theology and framed by a Reformed perspective in all disciplines.

Located in the metropolitan Chicago area and with field experience required by all students in every major, Trinity seeks to lead competent young people into leadership in God's world, whether in business or biology, computer science or communication arts, physical education or political science—to name just a few of our more than 70 programs of study.

This spring, our new master's degree program in counseling psychology will see its first graduates at the 2014 commencement ceremony in May. The first graduates of the special education master's degree program celebrated the completion of their degrees at the December 2013 commencement.

The Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT) offers resources to church leaders and members through events held on Trinity's campus. In March, CCIT, Christ Community Church in Lemont, and Palos Heights CRC hosted "Singing the Whole Story: A Family Worship Service of Word and Song." This was a worship service of choir, congregational song, and Scripture, drawing from *Lift Up Your Hearts*, the new hymnal produced jointly by the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America.

Looking ahead to the fall season, the college will celebrate its 55th anniversary. To mark this great occasion, the annual *Jubilation!* fundraiser will be held at Chicago's Soldier Field on October 3. In 2009 the college held a similar gala at Chicago's Navy Pier to celebrate Trinity's 50th anniversary and welcomed more than 1,400 guests. We look forward to another year of God's faithfulness and the many blessings we have already experienced this year and will experience in the months ahead.

We are thankful for the financial support we receive from churches that take advantage of the policy that allows a portion of ministry shares for Christian higher education to be directed to their area college. During 2013, we gratefully accepted \$176,483.91 in funds from CRC churches and classes.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

I. New badges

As always, the Cadet program grows with the addition of new merit badges and areas of interest for boys to work on. The new achievement badges this year are Dutch Oven Cooking, History of the Bible, Food Preservation, Pipes and Fittings, and Wild Edible Plants. The last one is for seventh- and eighth-grade boys. The others are for boys in fourth grade through sixth grade.

II. International events

The primary counselor training in 2013 took place at the international convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on August 1-3. The convention's theme became the Cadet theme for the next year: *Work in Progress*, based on Philippians 1:4-6. There is no international convention in 2014 because it is the year of an international camporee. In a short time (July 23-30), we hope to see more than 1,200 men and boys gather in Lacombe, Alberta, for a week of wilderness camping and growing closer to God. The theme for the camporee—and for the following season—is *Branded with Christ*, based on Deuteronomy 6:5.

III. African expansion

At the urging of Christian Reformed World Missions, the Calvinist Cadet Corps has expanded its area of ministry in Kenya. Trainers from North America traveled to Kenya in October and led training sessions in Eldoret and in Nakuru. The Nakuru region was a new one for us. There, twenty-one men from a variety of denominations—mostly pastors and elders—eagerly learned how to build relationships with the boys in their congregations and communities, and to reach them for the Lord. One pastor said, “Five years ago I prayed that God would bring us a Christian alternative to scouts. Today that prayer has been answered.” That man went on to volunteer as one of three regional leaders for the new Cadet Corps involvement in the country.

Simply put, the Cadet Corps had thirty clubs in Kenya before, all in the western half of the country and all in congregations of the Reformed Church of East Africa. The new group is all from the eastern half of the country and all from congregations outside of the Reformed Church of East Africa. The Lord has begun a whole new ministry in Kenya, and we are able to coordinate it with the one already in progress.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

For 56 years GEMS Girls' Clubs has emphasized Micah 6:8 as a life-defining verse, seeking to equip women and girls to live radically faithful lives—*doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.*

Highlights from 2013:

1. Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior (GEMS) is experiencing growth across North America and the world. GEMS currently has 942 clubs, 24,000 girls, and 5,300 women participating in GEMS clubs. At GEMS, we believe that every girl deserves to know Jesus Christ, and we are bringing the message of salvation to them.
2. The *We Walk Tour* has been held across North America. The *We Walk Tour* is a dynamic, three-hour, mother-daughter event, specifically designed for girls in grades 2 through 8. The event encourages girls to recognize that God has created them with a voice and a purpose—not just when they are grown but also now.
3. Continuing to invest in training and equipping women in their mentoring roles as counselors. Approximately 1,600 counselors in North America and 100 in Africa participated in one or more training events.
4. GEMS' award-winning magazines (*SHINE brightly* and *Sparkle*) for girls continue to reach both believers and nonbelievers for Christ in North America.
5. Building, equipping, staffing, and operating *The Esther School* in Chongwe, Zambia. Currently we have 25 preschool, 25 kindergarten, and 25 first-grade children who are now receiving an outstanding Christian education at the school. The building and operation of the school has been made possible through the work of women and girls who are a part of GEMS.

Goals and new initiatives for 2014:

1. To inspire women to be passionate in their calling to mentor girls.
2. To inspire girls and women to greater acts of service and activism.
3. To expand the arms of GEMS to serve more girls and more clubs in North America and around the world.
4. To continue building and operating *The Esther School*, a Christian day school in Chongwe, Zambia, built by GEMS Girls' Clubs.

GEMS gives thanks to our great God, and we give thanks to the Christian Reformed Church for entrusting beautiful girls and women to our care and nurturing!

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Kathryn Miller, executive director

Youth Unlimited

As Youth Unlimited reflects back on 2013, we celebrate God's goodness, faithfulness, and many blessings. Through our partnership with Christian Reformed congregations, students were challenged to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform this world for him.

In total, 2,052 students and leaders from 197 congregations participated in either a *Serve, Live It*, or *The Chicago Project* experience in 2013. Twenty-

five Christian Reformed congregations hosted a *Serve* experience, and 146 Christian Reformed congregations brought students to a Youth Unlimited experience, totaling 41,874 hours of service to others in the name of Jesus Christ. Youth Unlimited distributed \$18,913 in scholarships to ensure that monetary costs kept no student from participating.

As we step into 2014, Youth Unlimited is inspired by God's exhortations to his people in Isaiah 58 and will therefore use this Scripture as our theme for the 2014 *Serve* faith-forming experiences. We will address issues of justice that "ordinary" people can do something about right away. "Normal" will be redefined in light of heavenly, and not earthly, standards, so that students will see just how radical everyday Christian life and love can be. The fundamental truth is that God exists and is engaged in creation and culture. Students will be encouraged to celebrate the gospel's call to be coworkers with Christ by bringing about restoration in the world. They will be challenged to add practical justice initiatives to their existing routines. By the end of the week, students and leaders will be encouraged to engage their congregations back home with a kingdom-impact project that will take place in fall or winter in order to keep the momentum from their summer experience moving toward a missional lifestyle.

This year Youth Unlimited, through its *Serve* program, is excited to partner with Live58 and World Renew to bring real stories of community impact and resources for continued service after the *Serve* week.

At every Youth Unlimited experience we are committed to having students: experience the love and grace found in relationship with Jesus Christ, see a broken world in need of Jesus, study God's Word, explore how to live every day for Christ, worship as a body of believers, and serve as a reflection of Christ's love.

Youth Unlimited continues to find it a blessing to partner with the Christian Reformed Church in raising up students to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Partners in sharing the gospel with students,

Youth Unlimited

Jeff Kruithof, executive director

Friendship Ministries is an international/interdenominational ministry committed to sharing God's love with people who have an intellectual disability and enabling them to be active members of God's family. We are in a year of transition, as our long-time director passed away last spring. Our board of directors has worked on a new strategic plan for this interim year, and we have confidence that our mission will continue and grow!

Friendship Ministries provides opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to be baptized and make profession of faith using our resource *Expressing Faith in Jesus*. Other Friendship members have found ways to serve and share with their congregations by ushering, helping to lead worship, and participating in service projects.

There are more than 300 Friendship programs in Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States, and many of these programs involve multiple CRC congregations. Many programs also collaborate with churches of other denominations, extending their outreach into the wider community.

We are a worldwide organization:

- There are more than 1,200 Friendship programs in 28 countries.
- Friendship groups are in more than 75 denominations.
- Friendship serves approximately 18,000 people who have an intellectual disability.
- Through *Ministerio Amistad*, the Spanish arm of Friendship Ministries, there are four programs in the Cuba CRC. There are almost 300 programs in Latin America.
- This past year 40 new programs were started. Our goal is to keep up this pace for the next year.

We collaborate with the CRC:

- We are currently in discussion with the CRC about future collaborations.
- Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) students in the pastoral care class are required to attend a Friendship group and write a one-page reflection paper. The Friendship executive director meets with the class to help process the experience.
- CTS students may participate in Friendship groups as a service-learning option.

We offer high-quality curriculum materials to help groups grow in faith:

- The Friendship Bible Studies used in our programs focus on three themes (*God, Our Father; Jesus, Our Savior; The Spirit, Our Helper*) for a total of 95 sessions.
- *Living God's Way* offers 13 sessions on the Ten Commandments.
- *Psalms: God Cares How I Feel* has 10 sessions.
- We also offer *God, Our Father; Jesus, Our Savior*; and *Compartiendo la Palabra de Dios con Personas con Discapacidad* in Spanish.

Additional services we provide:

- consultation on including children in church education programs
- consultation with parents on how to approach the congregation for inclusion of their sons and daughters who have an intellectual disability
- ideas for recruiting volunteers for programs

Friendship Ministries

Daniel Blauw, interim director

This year Partners Worldwide has equipped thousands of businesspeople and entrepreneurs around the world to end poverty, that all may have life and have it abundantly. We are both humbled and encouraged at the way God has molded and shaped our organization since our birth out of World Renew. To God be the glory!

Partners Worldwide mobilizes long-term, hands-on global relationships to form a Christian network that uses business as the way to create flourishing economic environments in all parts of the world. We create partnerships with community institutions to provide mentoring, training, access to capital and advocacy, building up permanent local capacity designed to catalyze entrepreneurs and job creators and to celebrate business as a calling to do God's work.

More than ever before, Christian businesspeople are being affirmed, encouraged, and commissioned as Christ's agents in their sphere of influence—their employees, customers, vendors, and suppliers. And we are seeing the impact of our partnership model around the world. Over 31,500 businesspeople in 25 countries are using their "business as ministry"—making an impact on the marketplace, creating jobs, and transforming lives.

We are constantly amazed by the entrepreneurial and resourceful nature of the businesspeople in our network. Often under very difficult business climates, they consider their business work as part of Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things—mentoring at-risk youth, starting schools and medical clinics, providing more nutritious and affordable food for their communities, encouraging earth-friendly alternatives to land use, starting community or economic development organizations, and employing people who otherwise couldn't find a job.

The 2013 results show that businesses created and sustained 51,406 jobs—a 50 percent increase from last year—making a direct impact on the lives of well over 250,000 people. A job changes everything for these families. No longer dependent on aid or handouts, they have a sustainable income to lift themselves out of poverty, providing food, a secure home, education, and medicine for their children and family members. These imagebearers of Christ are able to live out their calling to business!

We are also excited to announce that Mr. Derek Hoogland has been appointed as the director of Partners Worldwide Canada. Derek is connecting with individual businesspeople, businesses, and churches within Canada that want to join in our work around the world. His board members include Aaron Bennink, Burlington, Ontario; Tim Hollaar, Oakville, Ontario; and Ralph deVries, Cottam, Ontario. If you live in Canada, feel free to connect with any of them to learn more.

Finally, we look forward to our international business conference—Marketplace Revolution 2014—to be held October 30-31, 2014, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. If you are interested in connecting with people from all over the world who are using business as a way to create flourishing economic environments that help end poverty, please join us! Visit our website at PartnersWorldwide.org/events for more information.

Thank you to the Christian Reformed Church of North America for partnering in this vital ministry of Partners Worldwide! This movement of

people serving through business is gaining tremendous momentum as more people recognize the untapped potential that exists for kingdom transformation through business. The demand for the work of Partners Worldwide continues to increase, and we have many opportunities to engage in this work all around the world.

We look forward to partnering with more CRC churches and CRC businesspeople to continue creating jobs and transforming lives around the globe to fulfill a unique calling to “business as ministry for a world without poverty.”

Partners Worldwide
Douglas Seebeck, president

I. Organization and history

The mission of Timothy Leadership Training Institute is to train pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders worldwide for the purpose of building viable and healthy congregations and communities. In doing so, we follow the guidance of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things you have heard me teach before many witnesses, commit to faithful people, who shall be able to teach others also."

The Timothy Leadership Training Institute (TLTI) was created in 1997 by retired Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) professors and active missionaries whose vision was to train pastors who were without opportunities for formal religious education. The initiative was started in response to the growth of the church in the developing world and its need for leaders. Designed as an inter-denominational training institute, the program was first piloted in Africa and was then known as Project Africa. Thereafter, TLTI was an institute of CTS and became a separate organization in 2009. TLTI is headquartered in offices located at CTS.

II. Training programs

TLTI's primary training program consists of seven training manuals that cover the basic areas of ministry. The curriculum includes Caring for God's People, Christian Stewardship, Biblical Preaching, Teaching the Christian Faith, Serving God in Work and Worship, Violence in the Family, and God's Plan for Sustainable Development. Each manual takes about sixteen hours of training time. The training manuals incorporate the inductive style of teaching, which focuses on reading Scripture, asking questions, and discussing topics with peers. Action plans are created to put the learning into practice and to monitor the progress of the trainees. Since flexibility is often needed to accommodate the participants' availability, training can take place in weeklong event-based sessions, weekend or weekday sessions, or church-based weekly sessions. The participants are granted status as a basic trainer or master trainer to certify their completion of various training levels.

TLTI continues to explore new and different training programs to provide to pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders. TLTI also is revising and updating its existing materials to be used in new contexts and different cultural groups.

III. Training network

TLTI's trainings are conducted through more than forty area teams operating in nine regions around the world. The area teams are organized to provide local organization, support and guidance for the trainings, and sustain the work in the future. The basic and master trainers then go back to their home congregations to train their church leaders. The resources and presence of the area team in that region or country are intended to assist that continued effort. TLTI's largest and most developed areas are West and Central Africa, East and South Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.

IV. Partnerships

TLTI's training programs are used extensively in the field by Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and World Renew. In addition, TLTI works with the Reformed Church in America, Der

VerreNaasten (the mission sending agency of various Reformed denominations in the Netherlands) and other agencies or denominations. TLTI's trainees come from several hundred distinct church organizations—both large and small—around the world. Recently TLTI began training students in mission-sending agencies, Bible schools, seminaries, and other institutions to enable their pastoral work after completion of their studies.

V. Training outcomes

TLTI continues to grow significantly. For the year ending June 30, 2013, TLTI more than doubled the number of master trainer graduates worldwide to 112. We expect that number to more than double again this current fiscal year. In the past fiscal year, TLTI directly conducted 259 training sessions in 35 separate countries attended by 3,342 trainees. As more basic and master trainers are graduated, they in turn conduct additional trainings, which multiply the effect of TLTI's work substantially. The training program materials have been translated into more than 27 languages.

VI. Summary

TLTI's global training network and programs are effective tools to use for lay pastoral training around the world, aligning with the transformation network strategy. Within the context of integrating biblical worldview and mutual learning, TLTI again and again testifies to church and community transformation globally.

Timothy Leadership Training Institute
Stephen M. Tuuk, president and
chief executive officer

STUDY COMMITTEES

OUTLINE

- I. Background of task force**
- II. Mandate**
- III. Parity of office**
- IV. Resources for revitalizing the offices of elder and deacon**
- V. Proposed changes to Church Order**
- VI. Proposed changes to Rules for Synodical Procedure**
- VII. Proposed changes to Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons**
- VIII. Deacon/diaconate, elder/consistory, council, classis, and synod roles and responsibilities from the Church Order**
- IX. Recommendations**

I. Background of task force

The Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon was appointed by Synod 2013 to continue and expand on the work of the *Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force*. We submit the following progress report to Synod 2014, anticipating that it will help to provide feedback for our work before our task force submits final recommendations to Synod 2015.

The *Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force* report to Synod 2013 can be found in the *Agenda for Synod 2013*, pp. 263-98 (www.crcna.org/SynodResources). Synod 2013's response to the report can be found in the *Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 620-26 (also at www.crcna.org/SynodResources).

II. Mandate

The structure of this preliminary report is organized in response to the following mandate given to the task force by Synod 2013:

- 3. That synod appoint a revised task force to address the following areas for the consideration and approval of synod prior to the adoption of the proposed changes to Articles 40 and 45:
 - a. Questions
 - 1) Church Order Article 35 assigns "tasks which belong to the common administration of the church" to the council (pastors, elders, and deacons). What biblical and confessional basis exists for those tasks, which on the congregational level belong distinctively to the office of elder and to the office of deacon (Church Order Art. 35), to be assigned collectively to elder and deacon delegates on the classical and synodical levels?
 - 2) What is the unity that the offices share, and how are the "dignity and honor" of the offices distinguished from how they differ in "mandate and task" (Church Order Art. 2)? What does it mean to have parity of office?
 - 3) How do the distinctiveness of each office, the unique giftedness, the parity of offices, and yet the differences in "mandate and task" influence and shape the agendas of major assemblies that would have both elders and deacons seated?
 - 4) In what ways can the agendas of the major assemblies be shaped for meaningful inclusion and participation by deacons, without tying the hands of the individual classes and their local expression (minimal regulation for maximum engagement)?

- 5) What changes, highlights, or broadening of the mandate of synod would help make the seating of all officebearers at synod meaningful and beneficial?
- b. Development of a plan for resourcing and revitalizing both elders and deacons, including plans for its implementation.
- c. Recommendations for appropriate changes to the Church Order, including review of the proposed changes within the report of the 2013 Office of Deacon Task Force, considering further changes relating to the other offices, and clarifying a missional vision, all with a view to integrating such recommended changes.

Grounds:

- a. Persistent concerns have been raised about perceived blurring of the lines distinguishing the offices while at the same time highlighting the need for acknowledging the unique giftedness of each office.
 - b. There is a perceived difference in how the report of the Office of Deacon Task Force addresses parity of office and how Church Order Article 2 addresses it.
 - c. Addressing these questions and concerns will help the church integrate the seating of deacons with the intended agenda of the major assembly.
 - d. A plan for resourcing and revitalizing the offices will help ensure that we do not end up simply making changes in the composition of current structures, but make these changes for the purpose of revitalized offices.
 - e. The current Office of Deacon Task Force, as per their mandate, addressed only one of the offices. There is value in doing the same for all the offices, as may be appropriate, so that it is done in a complete and integrated manner rather than piecemeal.
4. That synod, in appointing a new task force, include two members of the current Office of Deacon Task Force, as well as others representing the offices and missional interests of the CRCNA, to address the matters identified in Recommendation 3 above. They will report their findings and recommendations to Synod 2015 and give a progress report of their work to Synod 2014.

Grounds:

- a. Having two members of the current task force will give continuity to the work they have done.
 - b. Adding those with expertise in the other offices, as well as those with expertise in the area of mission, will allow for a fuller and more integrated inclusion of the diaconal office at major assemblies and will help move the “mission” of assemblies in more missional directions. . . .
8. That synod refer the balance of the Office of Deacon Task Force Report, Recommendation G, to the new task force.

(Acts of Synod 2013, pp. 624-26)

III. Parity of office

The mandate given to this task force includes consideration of the five questions listed above (under 3, a in the quote from *Acts of Synod 2013*). Questions 1 through 4 seem to us to be closely related to one another. They are all concerned with parity of office—equal in dignity and honor but with distinctive mandates. This section provides the task force’s initial response to these issues—the biblical and confessional basis for the tasks of elders and deacons, the meaning of parity, and the distinctive roles at the broader assemblies.

"The church has existed from the beginning of the world," says the Belgic Confession, and throughout its history it has taken on various forms. It even, for a time, after all of its Old Covenant theocratic and monarchical forms, appeared very small, "as though it were snuffed out" (Art. 27). But the gospels then proclaim its New Testament re-formation as an act of abundant grace whereby one who denied being Jesus' disciple was declared to be the "rock" upon which the church would now be built (Matt. 16:18; John 21:15-17). The Belgic Confession then goes on to obligate all members of this church communally to "bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ" and "serving to build up one another, according to the gifts God has given" (Art. 28). Service and edification, in other words, lie at the heart of all that the church is called by Christ to do in its mission to the world (Matt. 20:25-28; Luke 22:27; John 13:14; 2 Cor. 4:5). Accordingly, the church's leaders are mandated continually to "equip his people for works of service" (Eph. 4:12). Equipping the saints—that will be their particular service to the believers as they, all together, "grow in the grace and knowledge" of their Lord (2 Pet. 3:18).

The New Testament does not present us with a normative and rigid pattern of church leadership—institutionalized offices that must be scrupulously maintained at all times and in all places. Instead, the service of leadership arose fairly spontaneously as called for in each new situation. Peter, the rock, stood up and preached his first sermon and, at his bidding, the number of apostles (eyewitnesses to the resurrection) was restored to twelve (Acts 1:15-26). With Christ's great commission (Matt. 28:19-20) still ringing in his ears, he then stood up once more to *preach* his Pentecost sermon, challenging all to repentance and promising the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). The rapidly growing Spirit-led community devoted itself not only to "the apostles' *teaching*" but also "to *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." Further, these believers "had everything in common" and "sold property and possessions to *give to anyone who had need*" (Acts 2:42-45, italics added). Preaching or teaching, fellowship and the sacraments, and giving to those in need as stewards of God's gifts—these already point to what *does* appear to be normative for the church of all times: the three dimensions of the church's mission. They are, to use the Greek terms, *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*, which we can describe today in English as gospel proclamation, shepherding in Christian fellowship, and the ministry of mercy and justice. Institutionalized offices have always been shaped around these three elements.

The New Testament reveals permanent dimensions of leadership, not precise and specific offices for all time. This means, for one thing, that we must reexamine our traditional assertion (especially in our liturgical forms) that Acts 6 presents us with the origin of an institutionalized office of deacon. It is possible, of course, that the "seven" were directly involved in "waiting on tables" in some ways, thus exercising a diaconal task. But the context suggests a systemic discrimination in the distribution of food whereby Hebraic Jews were favored over Hellenistic Jews. This injustice would require courageous leadership toward a drastic change of attitude and behavior within the Christian community. The apostles could have taken this on; it was not necessarily outside their "job description," but it was decided instead that the "seven" would do this so that the "twelve" would not be diverted from what their main task was discerned to be: prayer and the ministry of the Word. The situation is dynamic enough to caution us from concluding that

ministers are more important than deacons or that ministers may do the work of deacons, whereas deacons may not do the work of ministers.

So when daily food was not distributed fairly, the “seven” were appointed to make things right. Their office or service received no immediate or specific designation—the need arose and the community saw to it. Later, one of the “seven,” by the name of Stephen, preached a powerful sermon, sparing no words, and was thereupon stoned as a martyr (Acts 6:12-7:60). Another, named Philip, became a traveling preacher (see Acts 8:1, 5-6), later baptizing an Ethiopian eunuch and teaching him “the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35). There is nothing in this chapter or in the entire book of Acts that would compel us to believe that the “seven” served in distinctly diaconal roles. There are clear indications, on the other hand, that at least two of the “seven” preached, evangelized, and taught.

The early church was filled with *charismata*, gifts, in new leaders, wherever the Spirit saw fit to bestow them—the most noted, of course, in Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:17-20). Most of the remainder of the book of Acts speaks of this great missionary and teacher, “who was also called Paul” (Acts 13:9). But there was also Barnabas (Acts 9:27); Tabitha (or Dorcas) of Joppa (Acts 9:36); the prophets in Jerusalem sent to Antioch (“one of them, named Agabus,” Acts 11:27-28); “John, also called Mark” (Acts 12:25); “prophets and teachers” in Antioch (Acts 13:1); “elders” in various churches (Acts 14:23), including those in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2) and Ephesus (Acts 20:17); “Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets” (Acts 15:32); Apollos, the teacher from Alexandria (Acts 18:24-25); and “four unmarried daughters” of “Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven,” who “prophesied” (Acts 21:8-9). In his letters to churches, Paul mentions the *charismata* of prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy (Rom. 12:6-8), as well as the gifts instilled in persons he calls apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, guides, and tongue-speakers (1 Cor. 12:28-30). When he writes to the church of Ephesus, he refers to Christ’s *donata*, the gift of new leaders: “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,” who together “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).

All of these people with these particular *charismata* emerged at the prompting of the Spirit to provide the leadership required in the early church. There wasn’t some divinely authorized Church Order ready to spell out exactly who was who, and with what qualifications and requirements for service, and what, precisely, such a person was called upon to do. As Herman Ridderbos writes in his book *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, some of these leaders and their *charismata* tended only over much time to become institutionalized, at the point where the church became convinced that these and not others have “continual and not just incidental significance for the upbuilding of the community” (p. 445). We even see this happening in the Scriptures themselves, when instructions Paul gives much later to Timothy and Titus insist on appointing overseers, deacons, widows, and elders, all complete with requirements for office (1 Tim. 3:2-13, 5:9-21; Titus 1:5-9). And ever since, it appears, the church has been given the freedom to judge anew, in every age and circumstance, how the great commission is to be fulfilled.

Again, we are presented not so much with an exact number and description of the offices but, rather, with three dimensions to fulfilling the great commission. That is because there is One, the great Prophet, Priest, and King, who does all this ministry to the world through his people who are prophets, priests, and kings (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 12). So leadership or the equipping of the saints is not within the “job description” of one office, or two, or three, but is the shared task of all who are ordained. We wish to emphasize here that Christ does all *his* equipping ministry through these chosen vessels. There is a sacredness to being called to serve as officebearers, and all who respond to that calling are therefore ordained by the church as representatives of the risen Lord. Scripture directs believers to “have confidence in [their] leaders and submit to their authority” (Heb. 13:17). The assignment of specific tasks to distinct offices is for the church to sort out in its context in every new age. Whatever that configuration is, however, these leaders and equippers are all publicly ordained—they have been called by Christ through the congregation to govern “according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word” and they are to be “elders and deacons [who] along with the pastors . . . make up the council of the church” (Belgic Confession, Art. 30).

Especially after the Constantinian change, the church’s leadership structure took on more specific institutionalized forms that often took their cues from civil government as well as revelation: bishops, archbishops, a pope at the helm, and local deacons and acolytes and, down the road, a host of other offices, as time went on, hierarchically arranged. The Reformation took its cues especially from Scripture but also from its entirely new cultural climate. Luther held to one office—the preaching bishop alone with the remainder of ecclesiastical government deposited into the hands of civil princes. Calvin preferred the ministers of the Word supplemented by civil, then, later, ecclesiastical elders or overseers and two kinds of deacons—administrative as well as medical (the “*hospitaliers*”) (H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, Vol. I, pp. 528, 568). In their wake came the Continental Reformed traditions that featured the four offices of doctor, minister of the Word, elder, and deacon, and Presbyterian traditions that insisted on the priority of preaching and teaching elders. There is room to adapt and change as circumstances require. That explains some significant differences between Presbyterian and Reformed polity. It is also why the current Church Order of the CRCNA does not speak of Scripture *requiring* the existence of certain offices and those offices only, but states that at this time in the denomination’s history we *recognize* the offices of minister of the Word, commissioned pastor, elder, and deacon. And to avoid all hierarchy among them, the Church Order proceeds to assert that these offices “differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor” (Art. 2). All this points not only to three-dimensional leadership structures, but also to what all offices share—equipment of the saints. That is the scripturally given mandate of Ephesians 4 laid upon all leaders.

Equipment of the saints—that is the “unity that the offices share” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 625). It is, as previously noted, what leads the Belgic Confession to state that “there should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments” (the church lives by the Word proclaimed), and then to add that “there should also be elders and dea-

cons, along with the pastors, to make up the council of the church" (Belgic Confession, Art. 30). It is what drives the definition of the local assembly in the Church Order of the CRCNA: There "shall be a council" composed of all those ordained within the congregation. This council shall perform "those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as the calling of a pastor, the approval of nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern" (Church Order, Art. 35).

Along with this "common administration," the Church Order provides for distinctiveness or uniqueness of offices. "In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word" where "tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder" are dealt with, and there "shall be a diaconate composed of the deacons" where tasks peculiar to their office are exercised (Art. 35). Prior to this article of the Church Order, the mandates given to the four offices are spelled out for ministers of the Word (Art. 11-12), for commissioned pastors (Art. 23-24), and for elders and deacons (Art. 25). And later, in the sections on "The Task and Activities of the Church" as well as "The Admonition and Discipline of the Church," the Church Order carefully and deliberately assigns responsibilities to the consistory, the diaconate, or the council as a whole (Art. 51-84). For instance, the consistory must provide leadership in the areas of worship, faith nurture, and pastoral care. It must also exercise discipline of members of the congregation. On the other hand, when it comes to "mutual censure" or "special discipline" (suspension or deposition from office), the council as a whole must be involved (Supplement, Art. 82-84). That, like the approval of nomination for church office, is a matter that concerns common administration. Or again, when it comes to the subsection on "Missions" (Art. 73-77), to the church's exercise of the Great Commission, the Church Order insists that all four offices must play distinctive yet also shared or united roles as the entire congregation is equipped by its leaders for service to the world.

To the extent that ministers, elders, commissioned pastors, and deacons share in equipping the saints for ministry and partake in "common administration," there is parity of office and "dignity and honor" (Art. 2) in all of the offices—not *equality*, since they do not have completely identical functions or roles to play, but *parity*. The Reformation was decidedly anti-hierarchical in its church political focus. It may initially have employed a functional hierarchy, whereby the preaching of the Word was considered more vital for building up the community than, say, providing resources to the needy. Years later, Reformed churches might have insisted that teaching the tenets of newly recovered belief was absolutely a first priority, such that instruction in the confessions from both pulpit and classroom lectern were considered to be more important than supporting worthy Christian causes. That, in part, might explain why the polity of the Reformed churches sometimes spoke of the "consistory and the deacons" and why the parity of office was recognized within and not among the offices. But the polity of the CRCNA has definitely chosen to recognize parity of office. In this, the CRCNA has not necessarily rejected functional hierarchy. After another economic depression, another world war, or a significant spike in humanitarian crises and needs, it might even for a time place a higher priority on the work of the deacons than the preaching of the Word, be it temporarily.

But the heritage of the Reformation remains—the CRCNA rejects ontological hierarchy of office.

What is also clear is that the CRCNA currently structures local church government so as to distinguish between council, consistory, and diaconate but there is no such distinction when it defines the work of the broader assemblies, classis and synod (Art. 39-50). The distinctive tasks of the offices at the local level are not assigned to separate bodies at the regional or binational level. The reason for that, of course, is that the saints, the members of the congregation, are equipped for their ministry at the local level, but not directly at meetings of classis or synod. These are the soldiers fulfilling the Great Commission. Broader assemblies are designed to be like strategy sessions in the generals' quarters. They are there to deal with matters of common concern that arise from the churches or from reports on activities that are shared at a regional or binational level. It is, one could say, the common administration of the church at a supralocal level. It is all about equipping the saints for ministry.

As the previous Office of Deacon Task Force pointed out, the delegation of deacons to broader assemblies "is not about equal representation, as if there should be some balance of power"; rather, "it is about the *full* representation of the *whole* church which these offices represent. When deacons are missing from major assemblies, the full voice of the church is not heard, nor is the full ministry of the church under discussion. The purpose of the major assemblies is not simply governance and adjudication but deliberation about the church's character and ministry, a deliberation in which the deacons ought surely to participate" (*Agenda for Synod 2013*, p. 279).

The delegation of deacons to major assemblies is "neither prohibited nor demanded by Scripture and the Reformed confessions," said Synod 1967 (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 93), but "practical considerations" led it and subsequent synods away from implementing the idea. What needs to be understood more clearly is that more than just "practical considerations" are at stake. We are bound by our creed to three-dimensional office structures, and by denying access to broader assemblies to any one of them we can only impoverish our shared leadership at the denominational level. This is what led Synod 1997 to recommend the delegation of deacons to classis and what led Synod 2013 to propose the delegation of deacons to synod. These assemblies explained:

Integrated word and deed ministry presents a more effective witness to the world. A number of classes are restructuring to accomplish this goal. The delegation of deacons to their meetings will enable them to do so more fully.
(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 621)

Numerous requests over the years have asked that the major assemblies seat deacons in order to have full representation and participation in carrying out the mission of the church.

(*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 624)

While it is true that some issues on the agenda of classis or synod are heavily weighted toward one distinctive office, it is also true that in almost every issue all dimensions are present. Sorting out which issues are to be dealt with at different times by elders alone or deacons alone is an impossible task. This is why separate "consistorial" and "diaconal" sessions

at classis or synod are not advisable. Instead, delegates in joint session who are aware of their own distinctive calling can exercise due deference in the deliberation and decision-making (see proposed change to Church Order, Art. 34, below). But all delegates jointly can use their distinctive competencies as they share in the common administration of the church within their region or throughout North America and the world. It is only when common administration is not acknowledged, when deacons are excluded, for example, from sessions of classis or synod, that other supralocal entities like diaconal conferences spring into being. Such entities are useful and may well continue to be useful, even if deacons are delegated to classes. But history has borne out that deacons can be far more effective when they too are delegated to broader assemblies, joining the ministers of the Word, commissioned pastors, and elders in strategizing for the church's mission in the world.

IV. Resources for revitalizing the offices of elder and deacon

The ultimate purpose of our task force is to propose a revitalization of practice in the offices of deacon and elder within local congregations. Essential to this task of revitalization is the provision of recommended resources and training for churches as they seek to cultivate these areas of ministry. The task force has developed a preliminary recommendation of resources and training for the office of deacon. We are still gathering resources regarding the office of elder, which will be included in our final report.

The 2013 Office of Deacon Task Force (Diakonia Remixed) catalogued a significant list of resources that deacons can use. The following resources assist deacons serving in a more traditional capacity as well as deacons engaged in overseeing significant transformational ministry.

1. Diaconal Ministries of Canada's network of diaconal developers.
2. Strong deacon conferences in many classes, especially in Canada, or regional organizations like Volunteers in Service and Volunteers in Action.
3. Christian Reformed Home Missions' collaboration with community transformation resources in church planting efforts and developing coaches that facilitate the creation of missional communities.
4. Communities First Association's network of community transformation coaching.
5. The 2009 Power of With conference, facilitated by World Renew, demonstrated how churches can work with their community's resources to work for the physical and spiritual transformation of that community.
6. Numerous training events and resources that come from many of the above organizations.
7. The CRC Network site (network.crcna.org/deacons).

The decision of Synod 2013 to recommend that deacons be seated at classes is a major encouragement for the CRC to engage in ministry from a fresh perspective. At a community level, it means placing new leadership expectations on the local diaconate. At a binational level, it means assuming deacons have input into the diaconal dimension of the CRCNA's ministry

planning. While pointing deacons to current resources may be helpful for training and dialogue, the task force would like to see a fresh level of coordination and planning between the appropriate agencies and institutions of the CRC so that they connect with churches and classes to facilitate dialogue on how to develop this fresh perspective.

In order for deacons to lead ministry in new and fresh ways, it is critical that we not only seat them at our assemblies and integrate their role into our Church Order but also prepare leadership at all levels so that ministry can be carried out with a reenergized perspective. The most critical place for this to be carried out is at the local community and church level.

Numerous college programs today develop skills to prepare people for what can most readily be called *community transformation*. People with this training would be ideal staff to lead or develop the diaconal nature of the church's mission. Making sure these positions are well grounded theologically is important. Surveying our educational institutions on how they can tie the training they are doing into the role of diaconal ministry would serve the church well.

The regional structure and the mandate of Christian Reformed Home Missions makes it an ideal agency to coordinate with community development organizations like Communities First Association and Diaconal Ministries of Canada's Operation Community SCAN. The power that can come from such collaboration has been demonstrated in the 2009 "Power of With" conference mentioned earlier.

At an international level, World Renew has sponsored three assemblies that brought diaconal partners together from around the world. This created a rich learning environment for all involved.

The time seems ripe to pull these multiple pieces together to take on the challenge of learning and growing into the new reality of a revitalized and empowered diaconate. The task force recommends that World Renew and Home Missions, under the guidance of the executive director of the CRCNA, be tasked with the development of strategies that accomplish the following:

- A cataloging of all resources offered by our agencies that support the vision of a reinvigorated diaconate.
- Developing an approach, whether by way of conferences, staff, materials, or other means, that gives energy to the diaconal initiatives of churches, classes, and the denomination.
- To report annual progress on the above to synod through the respective agency reports.

V. Proposed changes to Church Order

An important part of the work of our task force is to propose revisions to the Church Order that will encourage a more robust diaconal ministry in the CRC. The proposed revisions below (noted in *italics*) are largely based on the work of the previous task force. We reexamined each article in the light of feedback we received from synod, whether as criticism or as call for clarification. In our revisions we also include changes to fulfill our expanded mandate to address the office of elder.

Current Article 1-a

a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.

Proposed Article 1-a

a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40) *in order to be equipped “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12)*, regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.

Ground: Adding the quotation from Ephesians 4:12 clarifies that the church has a Church Order not merely for the sake of orderliness but for the sake of ministry.

Current Articles 4-a and -b

- a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination of at least twice the number to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.
- b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons.

Proposed Articles 4-a and -b

- a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination *of suitably gifted persons* of at least twice the number to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.
- b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to *suitably gifted* persons.

Ground: Adding the phrase *suitably gifted* clarifies that suitability for office is a matter of spiritual giftedness.

Current Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ.

Proposed Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and *equip* the members *so that* the church of Jesus Christ *may be built up*.

Ground: According to Ephesians 4, it is God who builds up the church through the equipping ministry of those called to office. These changes bring the Church Order in line with the biblical text.

Current Article 12-a

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with the elders, shall supervise the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, and see to it that everything is done decently and in order. The minister, with the elders, shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism.

Proposed Article 12-a

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with *other officebearers*, shall supervise the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, see to it that everything is done decently and in order, exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism and diaconal outreach.

Ground: According to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, ministers of the Word are called to common tasks with elders *and* deacons in equipping the church. Likewise, the second half of Church Order Article 12-a is intended to give an illustrative list of those tasks that the minister is called to do with other officebearers. Making reference in the article to elders alone is confusing, since some of the tasks belong to other officebearers as well, such as supervising fellow officebearers (see Church Order Art. 82-84, and Supplement, Art. 82-84) and exercising pastoral care (see Art. 65). The proposed language removes this confusion by making a generic reference to other officebearers and including diaconal outreach in the tasks that the minister does in common with other officebearers.

Current Article 25-a

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. As a rule a specified number of them shall retire from office each year. The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

Proposed Article 25-a

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. *The length of term should be appropriate for continuity and succession of ministry leadership, accountability for ministry outcomes, and the regular infusion of gifts.* The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make

immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

Ground: While this article was written to give councils flexibility in the length of terms of office, the “as a rule” language has suggested that flexibility is discouraged, and this has hindered the equipping work of some officebearers in some contexts. The proposed revision does not change the meaning of the article—terms should still be limited to a specified period of time—but it does better emphasize flexibility and the purpose for which that flexibility should be employed.

Current Article 25-b

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord’s Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

Proposed Article 25-b

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall *provide counsel* and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. *As shepherds of the church, they shall encourage and support the members in their Christian life.* The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord’s Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

Ground: The proposed revision adds a clearer expression of the elders’ calling as shepherds to positively build up the church of Christ.

Current Article 25-c

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ’s church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Proposed Article 25-c

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers. *Deacons shall lead the members in ways that inspire faithful stewardship of their time, talents, and resources and so give life in this world the shape of God’s kingdom. Thus deacons shall create and encourage participation in structures and ministries of mercy, justice, and reconciliation, both locally and globally. All of this shall be done with words of biblical encouragement and testimony.*

Ground: The proposed revision gives a more comprehensive description of the mandate for deacons as understood and practiced by many

diaconates and described in various deacon handbooks and other resources and in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons.

Current Article 34

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with proper credentials which authorize them to deliberate and vote on matters brought before the major assemblies. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

Proposed Article 34

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with proper credentials which authorize them to deliberate and vote on matters brought before the major assemblies. *In any matter that lies almost exclusively within the mandate(s) of one or two of the offices, the delegates shall exercise due deference in deliberation.* A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

Ground: The proposed language addresses the concern that when all offices are seated in major assemblies, some matters brought to the floor will lie largely outside the calling of one or two of the offices. Likewise, the article should instruct all delegates to be mindful of their gifts and mandate and defer in deliberation to those most competent.

Current Article 35-a

a. In every church there shall be a council composed of the minister(s), the elders, and the deacons. Those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as the calling of a pastor, the approval of nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern, are the responsibility of the council.

Proposed Article 35-a

a. In every church there shall be a council composed of the minister(s), the elders, and the deacons. Those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as *promoting its mission*, calling a pastor, *approving* nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern, are the responsibility of the council.

Ground: Since the article gives only an illustrative list of matters of common concern, there is no need for the article to be comprehensive. However, the proposed language recognizes that the promotion of the church's mission should be preeminent in the common administration of the church.

Current Article 35-b

b. In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder are the responsibility of the consistory.

Proposed Article 35-b

b. In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder are the responsibility of the consistory. *The consistory shall give an account of its work to the council.*

Ground: The proposed language codifies a common practice: that of elders reporting on their work to the council, just as deacons do (Art. 35-c). This parallel practice between the diaconate and the consistory follows from the principle of the parity of office and from Belgic Confession, Article 30, in which we confess that the governance of the church belongs to the council. A report from the elders to the council also facilitates council oversight of the activities of the elders, as required by the practices of mutual censure and special discipline, both of which are the tasks of the council (Art. 35-a; Supplement, Art. 82-84).

Note: Synod 2013 decided to propose changes to Article 40-a and its Supplement to Synod 2015 (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 623-24).

Current Article 42-b

b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel, with teams composed of two ministers or one minister and one elder. Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

Proposed Article 42-b

b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel. *Team composition shall include a minister of the Word and at least one other officebearer.* Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

Grounds:

1. Oversight of officebearers belongs in the hands of ministers, elders, and deacons at the congregational level (see Art. 35-b and Supplement, Art. 82-84), and the same should be true at the classical level, especially when all three offices are delegated to the classis.
2. Some matters for which church visitors may be required are matters that lie primarily within the mandate of the office of deacon, and the churches would benefit from having an experienced deacon as one

of the church visitors, which the proposed article allows, but does not require.

Note: Synod 2013 decided to propose changes to Article 45 to Synod 2015 (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 624).

Current Article 62

Offerings for benevolence shall be received regularly in the worship services. Offerings also shall be received for other ministries of the congregation and the joint ministries of the churches.

Proposed Article 62

Opportunity shall be given regularly, as part of worship, to offer gifts, both financial and otherwise, to develop and sustain ministries of the congregation, locally within its own community, the shared ministries of the denomination globally, and other causes that the church supports.

Ground: The proposed language offers a more comprehensive description of the nature of offerings and promotes meeting the needs of the poor in a variety of ways—through more than just offerings of benevolence.

Current Article 64-a

a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers.

Proposed Article 64-a

a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers, *and to equip them to fulfill their calling in the church and in the world.*

Ground: The proposed language gives a more comprehensive and missional description of the purpose of nurturing faith in adults, in line with the meaning of Ephesians 4:12.

Articles 73-77

Current Articles 73-a and -b

a. In obedience to Christ's Great Commission, the churches must bring the gospel to all people at home and abroad, in order to lead them into fellowship with Christ and his church.

b. In fulfilling this mandate, each council shall stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed and to support the work of home and world missions by their interest, prayers, and gifts.

Current Articles 74-a and -b

a. Each church shall bring the gospel to unbelievers in its own community. This task shall be sponsored and governed by the council. This task may be executed, when conditions warrant, in cooperation with one or more neighboring churches.

b. Each church shall carry on a ministry of mercy. The deacons shall enable the needy under their care to make use of Christian institutions of mercy. They shall confer and cooperate with diaconates of neighboring churches when this is desirable for the proper performance of their task. They may also seek mutual understandings with agencies in their community which are caring for the needy, so that the gifts may be distributed properly.

Current Articles 75-a and -b

a. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks, each classis shall have a classical home missions committee.

b. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

Current Articles 76-a and -b

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism, and shall also carry on such home missions activities as are beyond their scope and resources. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be governed by synodical regulations.

b. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy, and shall carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources. Synod shall appoint a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy. The work of this committee shall be governed by synodical regulations.

Current Supplement, Article 76-a

The synodical regulations referred to in Article 76 may be found in the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 741-46 and subsequent revisions thereof).

Current Articles 77-a and -b

a. Synod shall encourage and assist the joint world mission work of the churches by regulating the manner in which this task is to be performed, providing for its support, and encouraging the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities, synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be governed by synodical regulations.

b. The denominational diaconal committee shall extend the ministry of mercy of the congregations and classes worldwide.

Current Supplement, Article 77-a

Synod regulates the work of the world missions committee by way of the Constitution and decisions of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Proposed Article 73: The Church's Mandate to Ministry

In joyful obedience to the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, the church is called to bear witness to Jesus Christ and his kingdom through word and deed.

Ground: The proposed change states the purpose of the article more succinctly. Word and deed together are integral for a full expression of the church's obedience to the Great Commission. A broader scope to Article 73-b has been moved to Article 74-c.

Proposed Articles 74-a through -d: The Ministry of the Congregation

a. Each church shall bring the gospel to non-Christians within the unique context of its own community. The local church is to announce and demonstrate, through word and deed, that God's reign has come; to live as an exhibit of God's healing and reconciling grace; and to extend to all the invitation to experience new life in Christ through repentance and faith.

b. The council shall be responsible to develop a vision and provide training and leadership to equip the church to fulfill her unique evangelistic and diaconal calling. Churches are encouraged to work with neighboring churches, appropriate community resources, classical and denominational resources, and other gifts the Lord has provided to help accomplish her task.

c. Each council shall encourage the members of the congregation to support denominational and classical ministries by their interest, prayers, and gifts.

d. Each church shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.

Grounds: This emphasizes the integration of word and deed in the ministry of the church at the congregational level. It also captures the essence of the proposals in the Office of Deacon Task Force report (2013), but with less complicated wording.

Proposed Articles 75-a and -b: The Ministry of the Classis

a. The classes shall implement a ministry plan that advances evangelistic and diaconal witness to Christ and his kingdom in its specific region and, when necessary, assist those churches needing support to fulfill their missionary task.

b. Each classis shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.

Grounds: This emphasizes the integration of word and deed in the ministry of the church at the classical level. It also captures the essence of the proposals in the Office of Deacon Task Force report (2013), but with less complicated wording.

Proposed Article 76: Denominational Ministries

a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of word and deed witness to Christ and his kingdom. Synod shall also appoint denominational ministries that engage churches and classes in ministries that are national and global.

b. *Synod shall ensure that deacons and elders are incorporated into the structure and plans for ministry in a manner consistent with their respective mandates.*

Grounds: This emphasizes the integration of word and deed in the ministry of the church at the denominational level. It also captures the essence of the proposals in the Office of Deacon Task Force report (2013), but with less complicated wording; and it provides flexibility as the CRCNA is currently studying structure for ministries.

It is proposed that Supplement, Article 76-a be removed.

Proposed Article 77: Synodical Governance of Ministries

Synod shall regulate the work of denominational ministries by way of the Constitution and decisions of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

It is proposed that Supplement, Article 77-a be removed.

Ground: The proposed change includes and expands upon the current Supplement Articles 76-a and 77-a.

VI. Proposed changes to Rules for Synodical Procedure

The proposed amendment to Church Order Article 34 that calls for delegates to “exercise due deference in deliberation” calls for an accompanying change in the Rules for Synodical Procedure. The following proposed change specifies how the president and delegates to synod will see that “due deference” is actually extended. The task force recommends the following additions to the duties of the president of synod and the delegates to synod when issues are discussed (changes indicated by *italics*):

Proposed new section II, A, 4

4. The president shall ensure that the minister, elder, or deacon delegates exercise due deference when matters arise that do not belong to common administration but lie almost exclusively within the mandate(s) of one or two of the offices.

Note: The present section II, A, 4 and subsequent sections would then be renumbered 5, 6, 7, and so forth.

Proposed new section VIII, J, 2

2. All delegates participate in the deliberations on matters of common administration. If matters arise that lie almost exclusively within the mandate(s) of one or two of the offices, the delegates representing the other office(s) shall exercise due deference.

Note: The present section VIII, J, 2 and subsequent sections would then be renumbered 3, 4, 5, and so forth.

VII. Proposed Changes to the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons

It is proposed that the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons be updated to be consistent with the proposed changes in the Church Order. Changes from the current form (1982) are noted in **boldface text**.

Congregation of Jesus Christ:

Today we celebrate God's gift of faithful leadership for his people. We joyfully thank him for elders and deacons who have served well and completed their terms of office. And we praise him for providing their successors.

In the officebearers of the church we see the love of Christ for his people. As the Lord of the church he appoints leaders **to govern in his name and promote the spiritual well-being of his people**. By his Spirit he equips **these leaders** so that believers may grow in faith, develop disciplined Christian living, serve others in selfless love, and share with all the good news of salvation. **The apostle Paul stated this most clearly when he wrote to the church in Ephesus, "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13).** And Jesus Christ taught us the spirit of true leadership when he said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:26-28).

Elders serve **by exercising oversight** of the church in Christ's name. **In taking his leave from the elders in Ephesus, Paul counseled them: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).** Also in Acts we see the **apostles and elders of the church providing leadership**. Elders must provide true preaching of the Word, instruction for faith formation for **both youth and adults**, regular celebration of the sacraments, and faithful counsel and discipline while keeping in confidence those matters entrusted to them. And they must promote fellowship and hospitality among believers, ensure good order in the church, and stimulate witness to all people.

Deacons serve by **leading and equipping the church to serve its members and the world in a rich diversity of ministries, awakening compassion, demonstrating mercy, seeking justice, and collaborating with God's Spirit for the transformation of persons and communities**. **In imitation of Christ's mercy, deacons summon the church to help relieve victims of injustice, equip the church for ministries of reconciliation and peacemaking, seek opportunities for advocacy, and call God's people to faithful stewardship of the gifts of creation.** By this they show that Christians live by the Spirit of the kingdom, fervently desiring to give life the shape of things to come. Deacons are therefore **to identify and develop gifts in both the church and community**, assess needs, promote generous stewardship, and offer wise and respectful care for the poor. By adding to all this words of encouragement and hope, deacons demonstrate in word and deed the care of the Lord himself.

The deacons and elders, together with the ministers, are responsible for the general administration of the church.

These tasks of elders and deacons call for believers who are Christlike, who are mature in the faith, and who exercise their offices with prayer, patience, and humility.

Now we intend to ordain elders and deacons and to install them for terms of service in this congregation. Those appointed to the office of elder are [names]. Those appointed to the office of deacon are [names].

To express your acceptance of these offices, you are asked to stand, and here in the presence of God and his church, to answer the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation God himself is calling you to these holy offices?

Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?

Do you subscribe to the doctrinal standards of this church, rejecting all teaching which contradicts them?

Do you promise to do the work of your offices faithfully, in a way worthy of your calling and in submission to the government and discipline of the church?

Answer [by each officebearer]: I do, God helping me.

The officiating minister shall then say [the laying on of hands at this point is optional]:

God our heavenly Father, who has called you to these sacred offices, guide you by his Word, equip you with his Spirit, and so prosper your ministries that his church may increase and his name be praised. Amen.

Charge to the Elders

I charge you, elders, **as shepherds of the flock**, to “**hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that [you] can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it**” (Titus 1:9). Be a friend and Christlike example to children. Give clear and cheerful guidance to young people. By word and example, bear up God’s people in their pain and weakness, and celebrate their joys with them. Hold in trust all sensitive matters confided to you. Encourage the aged to persevere in God’s promises. Be wise counselors who support and strengthen the pastor. Be compassionate, yet firm and consistent in rebuke and discipline. Know the Scriptures, which are “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Pray continually for the church. Remember at all times that if you would truly give spiritual leadership in the household of faith, you must be completely mastered by your Lord (1 Tim. 3:2-7).

Charge to the Deacons

I charge you, deacons, to inspire faithful **ministries of service to one another, to the larger community, and to the world**. Remind us that the Lord requires us “**to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God**” (Mic. 6:8). Prompt us to seize new opportunities to love God, our neighbors, and the creation with acts of generous sharing, joyful hospitality, thoughtful care for the poor, and wise stewardship of all of God’s gifts. Weigh our opportunities for giving and service, that we

might use the church's resources discerningly. Offer wise care to victims of injustice, and teach us holistic responses that respect their dignity and mend the broken relationships and exploitative structures and systems that contribute to poverty. With respectful compassion for the needy and awareness of the often hidden needs of the wealthy, teach us to minister to rich and poor alike, both within and outside the church. **Encourage all with words that bring hope to their hearts and with deeds that bring joy into their lives. Show us by your example how to be critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society, and to be sensitive counselors to the victims of such evils. Let your lives be above reproach, and live as examples of Christ Jesus, looking to the interests of others. And in all your ministries help us anticipate and participate in the renewal of all things when God's kingdom comes.**

Charge to the Congregation

I charge you, people of God, to receive these officebearers as Christ's gift to the church.

Recognize in them the Lord's provision for healthy congregational life. Hold them in honor; take their counsel seriously; respond to them with obedience and respect; accept their help with thanks. **Wholeheartedly participate in the ministries into which they lead you.** Sustain them in prayer and encourage them with your support, especially when they feel the burden of their office. Acknowledge them as the Lord's servants among you.

Do you, congregation, pledge to receive them as you have been charged?

Answer [by the congregation in unison]: We do, God helping us.

Prayer

Our merciful Father in heaven, we thank you that you have provided faithful and gifted people to serve as elders and deacons. As these new officebearers assume their responsibilities, fill them with your Spirit, endow them with your wisdom, and grant them strength. Make them faithful workers in your vineyard. Under their guidance may your church grow in every spiritual grace, in faith which is open and unashamed, and in the committed service that promotes your reign in the world. Help them to perform their duties with enthusiasm and humility. In their work, grant them a sense of sustained awe which is rooted in daily adoration of you, their Lord. Through them may your name be honored and your church be served.

Help us, your people, to accept them gladly, encourage them always, and respect them for the sake of your precious Son, our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Grounds:

1. These changes incorporate important aspects of the role of deacons as developed by the Office of Deacon Task Force in 2013, many of which deacons are already doing.
2. This proposed form includes more references to common aspects of the offices as stated in the Church Order (see, among others, Art. 4, 5, 9,

10, 14-18, 32, 35-38, 40, and 66) and outlined in the section on Parity of Office within this report.

3. This proposed form provides more appropriate Scripture references regarding the role of elders.

VIII. Deacon/diaconate, elder/consistory, council, classis, and synod roles and responsibilities from the Church Order

We offer the following summary of the various roles and responsibilities as found in the current Church Order to assist the reader in understanding the full scope of responsibilities of the various offices and assemblies:

A. Deacon/diaconate

The deacon's role and responsibilities:

1. Be an adult confessing member who meets the biblical requirements (Church Order Article 3-a)
2. Be officially called and ordained or installed to hold and exercise office in the church (Art. 3-b)
3. Signify agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Art. 5)
4. Serve for a limited time (Art. 25-a)
5. Represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, stimulate members to faithful stewardship on behalf of the needy (Art. 25-c)
6. Lead the congregation in ways that inspire faithful stewardship of time, talent, and resources (*proposed* Art. 25-c)
7. Call the members to be ambassadors of reconciliation in all areas of life (*proposed* Art. 25-c)
8. Create and encourage participation in structures and ministries that use member gifts in areas of compassion, community transformation, creation care, justice, stewardship, and pastoral care, both locally and globally (*proposed* Art. 25-c)
9. Give an account of the diaconate's work to the council (Art. 35-c)
10. Meet at least once per month (Art. 36-a)
11. Extend pastoral care to all members (Art. 65)
12. Enable the needy under their care to make use of Christian institutions of mercy (Art. 74-b)
13. Confer and cooperate with diaconates of neighboring churches (Art. 74-b)
14. Seek mutual understandings with agencies in their community that are caring for the needy (Art. 74-b)
15. Be subject to general and special discipline (Art. 82)
16. Never lord it over another officebearer (Art. 85)

B. Elder/consistory

The elder's role and responsibilities:

1. Be an adult confessing member who meets the biblical requirements (Art. 3-a)
2. Be officially called and ordained or installed to hold and exercise office in the church (Art. 3-b)
3. Signify agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Art. 5)

4. Supervise, with the minister, the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, see that everything is done decently and in order, exercise pastoral care over the congregation, engage in and promote the work of evangelism (Art. 12-a and 65)
5. Give approval for a commissioned pastor to serve beyond their specific field of labor (Art. 23-e)
6. Serve for a limited time (Art. 25-a)
7. Oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, participate in and promote evangelism, defend the faith, nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability (Art. 25-b)
8. Give an account of its work to the council (*proposed* Art. 35-b)
9. Meet at least once per month (Art. 36-a)
10. Regulate the worship services (Art. 52-a)
11. Ensure that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed (Art. 52-b)
12. Appoint those who lead worship services or read a sermon (Art. 53-a and -b)
13. Approve sermons read in a worship service (Art. 53-b)
14. Ensure that baptism is requested and administered to children of confessing members as soon as feasible (Art. 56)
15. Supervise participation in the Lord's Supper (Art. 59-a)
16. Receive testimony of faith, life, and doctrine of those who make a public profession of faith (Art. 59-b)
17. Examine persons from other denominations and determine how to admit them as confessing members (Art. 59-f)
18. Supervise the instruction of youth in Scripture, the creeds, and the confessions of the church (Art. 63-b)
19. Supervise the instruction of adult members (Art. 63-b)
20. Instruct and admonish those under the elders' spiritual care to marry only in the Lord (Art. 69-a)
21. Encourage a spirit of mutual accountability, calling the congregation away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity within the body, especially in conjunction with participation in the Lord's Supper as mandated in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (Art. 79-b)
22. Instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation (Art. 79-c)
23. Exercise the authority that Christ has given to his church regarding sins of a public nature or those brought to its attention according to Matthew 18:15-17 (Art. 80)
24. Faithfully disciple members who have sinned in life or doctrine (Art. 81-a)
25. Exclude from membership in the church of Christ those who persist in their sin (Art. 81-a)
26. Inform the congregation and encourage its involvement in both the exclusion from and the readmission to membership (Art. 81-d)

27. Be subject to general and special discipline (Art. 82)
28. Never lord it over another officebearer (Art. 85)

C. *Council*

The council's role and responsibilities:

1. Present officebearer nominations to the congregation (Art. 4-a)
2. Give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitably gifted persons for nomination (Art. 4-b)
3. Supervise the election of officebearers by the congregation and establish election regulations (Art. 4-c)
4. Ordain or install officebearers (Art. 4-d)
5. Stipulate, via regulation, occasions that officebearers shall signify agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Art. 5)
6. Nominate and call a minister; seek approval of classical counselor; sign the letter of call (Art. 9)
7. Provide ecclesiastical testimonial of doctrine and life for a former minister (Art. 10-b)
8. Give consent for a minister of the Word to leave the congregation for another church (Art. 14-a)
9. Provide for the proper support of its minister(s) (Art. 15)
10. Give approval for and supervise a minister on a temporary leave of absence from service to the congregation (Art. 16)
11. Initiate the release of a minister from active ministerial service in a congregation (Art. 17-a)
12. Provide for the support of a released minister (Art. 17-b)
13. Approve the retirement of a minister (Art. 18-a)
14. Declare a minister emeritus to be eligible for call if the reasons for retirement no longer exist (Art. 18-c)
15. Give approval for a commissioned pastor to continue to serve a newly organized church (Art. 23-b)
16. Directly supervise commissioned pastors (Art. 23-b)
17. Make proper provision for receiving communications, preparing agenda and acts, keeping files and archives, and conducting the financial transactions of the council (Art. 32-c)
18. Provide for the safeguarding of the church's property through proper incorporation (Art. 32-d)
19. Be responsible for tasks that belong to the common administration of the church, such as the calling of a pastor, the approval of nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern (Art. 35-a)
20. Meet at least once per month (Art. 36-a)
21. Exercise mutual censure at least four times per year, assessing and encouraging each other in the performance of their official duties (Art. 36-b)
22. Seek the cooperation of the congregation in the election of officebearers, invite congregational judgment about major matters, call an annual meeting of members (Art. 37)
23. Have the authority to make and carry out final decisions (Art. 37)

24. Consult with classis in the distribution of assets when disbanding (Art. 38-d)
25. Delegate minister/elder/deacon to classis (Art. 40-a)
26. Issue a certificate concerning a confessing member's doctrine and life when the member moves to another church (Art. 66-a)
27. Diligently encourage members to establish and maintain good Christian schools (Art. 71)
28. Urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with a biblical, Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation (Art. 71)
29. Stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed and to support the work of home and world missions (Art. 73-b)
30. Sponsor and govern the bringing of the gospel to unbelievers in its own community (Art. 74-a)

D. Classis

The classis's role and responsibilities:

1. Stipulate, via regulation, occasions on which officebearers shall signify agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Art. 5)
2. Ensure that ecclesiastical regulations have been observed when calling a minister (Art. 9)
3. Receive the account of the classical counselor regarding call of a minister (Art. 9)
4. Approve the ordination of a candidate for the ministry of the Word (Art. 10-a)
5. Examine a candidate for the ministry of the Word concerning doctrine and life according to synodical regulations (Art. 10-a)
6. Approve the installation of a minister (Art. 10-b)
7. Provide ecclesiastical testimonial of doctrine and life for a former minister of the classis (Art. 10-b)
8. Determine whether the work of a minister in other work is consistent with the calling of a minister (Art. 12-c)
9. Release a minister of the Word who resigns from the ministry of the CRC to enter a ministry outside the denomination (Art. 14-b)
10. Give approval for a minister of the Word to be released from office to enter upon a nonministerial vocation (Art. 14-c)
11. Give approval for a former minister of the Word who was released from office to be declared eligible for call and conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry (Art. 14-e)
12. Give approval for a minister to obtain primary or supplemental income by means of other employment (Art. 15)
13. Give approval for a minister to be released from ministry (Art. 17-a)
14. Give approval for the support of a council of a released minister (Art. 17-b)
15. Declare a minister of the Word who has been released from active ministerial service in a congregation to be released from the ministerial office based on specified criteria (Art. 17-c and -d)
16. Approve the retirement of a minister (Art. 18-a)

17. Declare a minister emeritus to be eligible for call if the reasons for retirement no longer exist (Art. 18-c)
18. Coordinate financial aid for those seeking to become ministers of the Word who are in need of it (Art. 21)
19. Give approval for commissioned pastors to serve in various capacities (Art. 23-b and -c)
20. Give approval for a commissioned pastor to serve beyond their specific field of labor (Art. 23-e)
21. Defines rules for classical procedure (Art. 28-c)
22. Make proper provision for receiving communications, preparing agenda and acts, keeping files and archives, and conducting the financial transactions of classis (Art. 32-c)
23. Provide for the safeguarding of classis property through proper incorporation (Art. 32-d)
24. Appoint a classical interim committee to act for classis in matters that cannot await action by the classis itself (Art. 33-b)
25. Designate a neighboring council for the care of a group of believers among whom no council can yet be constituted (Art. 38-a)
26. Give approval for a council to be constituted for the first time (Art. 38-b)
27. Give approval for a congregation to disband or revert to unorganized status (Art. 38-d)
28. Give approval for the merger of two or more councils and congregations (Art. 38-e)
29. Give approval for churches uniting to form union congregations (Art. 38-g)
30. Be defined as a group of neighboring churches (Art. 39)
31. Meet at least every four months unless determined to be impractical due to great distances (Art. 40-b)
32. Be responsible for appointing persons to provide counsel and advice to churches; appoint church visitors to visit each church yearly; appoint classical counselors to provide advice to any church in the process of calling a minister of the Word (Art. 42-a)
33. Maintain a student fund and a Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (Art. 43-a)
34. Grant the right to exhort within its bounds (Art. 43-b)
35. If so desired, take counsel or joint action with neighboring classes (Art. 44-a)
36. If so desired, organize into an ecclesiastical assembly with other classes (Art. 44-b)
37. Delegate ministers and elders *and deacons* to synod (*proposed* Art. 45)
38. Nominate synodical deputies (Art. 48-a)
39. Approve an ordained person to administer the sacraments (Art. 55)
40. Assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs, administered by a classical home missions committee (Art. 75-a)
41. Assist the churches in their ministry of mercy, administered by a classical diaconal committee (Art. 75-b)

E. *Synod*

The synod's role and responsibilities:

1. Stipulate, via regulation, occasions on which officebearers shall signify agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Covenant for Officebearers (Art. 5)
2. Directly appoint ministers of the Word (Art. 12-b)
3. Ratify the appointment of a minister of the Word to a local church (Art. 12-b)
4. Establish regulations for ministers to be released from active ministerial service (Art. 17-a)
5. Govern a theological seminary through a board of trustees appointed by synod (Art. 19)
6. Establish regulations for students to receive licensure to exhort in public worship services (Art. 22)
7. Define rules for synodical procedure (Art. 28-c)
8. Establish rights for other appeals and adopt rules for processing them (Art. 30-b)
9. Make proper provision for receiving communications, preparing agenda and acts, keeping files and archives, and conducting the financial transactions of synod (Art. 32-c)
10. Provide for the safeguarding of the property of the Christian Reformed Church in North America through proper incorporation (Art. 32-d)
11. Appoint the Board of Trustees to act for synod in matters that cannot await action by synod itself (Art. 33-b)
12. Establish the procedure and regulations for a non-Christian Reformed congregation to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church (Art. 38-c)
13. Establish the process to follow when a council decides to disaffiliate from the denomination (Art. 38-f)
14. Approve the organization of a new classis and the redistricting of classes (Art. 39)
15. Approve the authority, jurisdiction, and mandate of a classical level ecclesiastical assembly (Art. 44-b)
16. Be defined as an assembly representing the churches of all the classes (Art. 45)
17. Meet annually (Art. 46-a)
18. Be responsible for the adoption of the creeds, the Church Order, and the principles and elements of worship; approve the liturgical forms, the *Psalter Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship (Art. 47)
19. Appoint ministers to serve as synodical deputies (Art. 48-a)
20. Appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches (Art. 49-a)
21. Designate the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church in North America is in ecumenical fellowship and dialogue, and designate the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates (Art. 49-b)
22. Send delegates to ecumenical bodies (Art. 50-a)
23. Present matters to ecumenical gatherings (Art. 50-b)
24. Ratify decisions of ecumenical bodies (Art. 50-c)

25. Encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism (Art. 76-a)
26. Appoint and regulate a denominational home missions committee (Art. 76-a)
27. Encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy (Art. 76b)
28. Appoint and regulate a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy (Art. 76-b)
29. Encourage and assist the joint world mission work of the churches, provide for its support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries (Art. 77-a)
30. Appoint and regulate a denominational world missions committee (Art. 77-a)
31. Develop guidelines for reinstatement to office for those deposed for acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct (Art. 84)
32. Revise Church Order (Art. 86)

IX. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Chris Ganski, reporter, and Mr. Andrew Ryskamp (staff adviser) when the report of the Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon is addressed.

B. That synod encourage the churches and classes to begin actively engaging with the content of this report prior to submission of the final report to Synod 2015.

Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon
 Amanda Bakale
 Roy Berkenbosch
 Henry De Moor
 Chris Ganski, reporter
 Rudy Gonzalez
 Calvin Hoogendoorn
 George Monsma
 Nick Monsma
 Rosetta Polk-Pugh
 Andrew Ryskamp (staff adviser)
 Mick Vanden Bosch
 Terry Woodnorth, chair



I. Introduction to and overview of the work of the task force

Synod 2011 appointed “a CRCNA Structural and Cultural Review Task Force to conduct a review of the organization, culture, and leadership of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 864). The mandate of the task force, proposed to synod by the Board of Trustees (BOT), included providing advice to the BOT and/or synod regarding short-, medium-, and long-term measures that would improve the culture, structure, and leadership within the Christian Reformed Church.

The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) began its work by listening to a broad array of observations from a variety of persons and groups. In its report to Synod 2012 the task force verified the depth of concern related to the structure and culture of the denomination and identified key issues to address as well as tensions to navigate. The TFRSC shared its findings and initial identification of issues and requested a multiyear framework for fulfilling its mandate. Synod 2012 endorsed the work of the task force and extended the reporting time frame of the task force with the expectation that it would provide annual updates to the Board of Trustees and subsequent synods through 2015.

Some key highlights of the task force’s work to date:

- A. Developed a new position description and leadership profile for the executive director of the CRCNA and provided input and guidance related to search committee formation and timeline.
- B. Worked extensively (along with the interim director of Canadian ministries) at identifying a framing document that entails a definition of and a pathway forward for cultivating binationality in the CRCNA.
- C. Developed a picture of an executive team on which the Canadian ministries director will serve with the executive director of the CRCNA on a senior leadership team. This development underscores the importance of collaboration between senior leaders and will be a key avenue for continued work in binationality.
- D. Developed a position description for a deputy executive director of the CRCNA and provided input and guidance regarding the formation of a search committee and a timeline for the search process.

E. Developed a structure proposal to the Board of Trustees by which an executive team could implement the mission of the Christian Reformed Church between meetings of synod.

F. Identified the need for a designation of ongoing ministry priorities that could provide a framework for breaking down “silos” and forming collaboration tables and could inform the CRCNA strategic planning process and communication patterns so that local church and denominational ministries could intersect more and interact better to ultimately serve and support local church ministry.

G. Presented to Synod 2013 and received endorsement for the “Five Streams” proposal for discussion and discernment within the church, its agencies, boards, and planning groups.

H. Provided specific input, guidance, and instruction through synod to the Board of Trustees on developing a “collaborative culture.”

Note: Readers of this report are encouraged to reference the reports of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to Synods 2012 and 2013 as found in the *Acts of Synod 2012* (pp. 665-88) and the *Agenda for Synod 2013* (pp. 348-93; available online at www.crcna.org/SynodResources). The report to Synod 2013 provides additional background and rationale for the development of the “Five Streams” ministry priorities. The reports and findings tend to be cumulative, and earlier reports are helpful in the ongoing conversation.

II. Central issue from the TFRSC for Synod 2014 to address

The central matter brought by the task force for discussion and discernment at Synod 2014 is the nature of the relationship and authority of church councils, classes, synod, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, and agency boards. We seek to analyze and address the “dual authority and accountability” that currently exists between agency boards and the Board of Trustees, which has at times led to confusion, duplication, suspicion, and tension.

The decisions of synod in the past have been consistent with the Reformed principle of delegated authority: councils, classes, and synod.

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 (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22; Rom. 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 (Matt. 20:24-28; Acts 20:28; Heb. 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.

(*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 684-85; see *Agenda for Synod 1987*, p. 276;
Acts of Synod 1987, p. 596)

The church is governed by councils, classes, and synod. The work of the denomination is administered by synod through its various boards, committees, and agencies. Councils through classes to synod is the way in which the Christian Reformed Church governs itself.

The phrase *original authority* helps us note where that authority begins under the lordship of Christ, but it does not address how an agency board and the Board of Trustees work together when both have been delegated with authority by synod. In addition, the "foundational principles" do not address how the executive director works in this "shared" or "dual" authority environment.

As we anticipate the appointment of a new executive director, it is vital to note that the way an executive director works with agency directors and ministry offices is not just a function of culture; it is also a function of structure.

III. Background and history on administrative structure in the CRCNA

What are the structures and culture that will most enhance and develop ministry and a culture of collaboration? That singular question is one that local churches ask and one that we are asking as a denomination.

We all desire to glorify God. We all desire to be good stewards of time, talent, and treasure. We all desire to simplify where possible. We all desire to have better communication, fruitful collaboration, and greater capacity for ministry impact. Our answer to the questions raised seeks to serve the church, including the local church.

At the same time, we also note that what seemed to be effective and efficient at one time may no longer be as effective or efficient for the current times and circumstances. For example, advances in technology and communications now provide different tools and opportunities for effective ministry and organization. We are always navigating between certain principles of ministry and practices of ministry. Answers given in one era may not be answers to give in the next.

In Scripture we find an example of a change in ministry structure that addresses a new context of ministry. Acts 6:1-7 shows the development of ministry structure by responding to ministry needs (the feeding of Hellenistic Jewish widows and the focusing of the apostles' ministry). Changes were made, and a new or reformed structure was developed to address the new ministry needs and context of ministry. The change was based on purpose and was directed by ministry-purpose.

This principle of purpose- or ministry-driven structure may be seen as an additional “foundational principle” to add to the three identified by Synod 1987. This principle of structure being directed by ministry concerns is one in which every church needs to engage as part of faithful and fruitful ministry discernment.

Within the Christian Reformed Church we have developed agencies and offices in order to, among other reasons, (1) do ministry that the local church cannot do on its own and (2) share resources to support local ministry.

As the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture has continued its work of evaluation, investigation, and offering proposals for action, this year we have focused our work on the agency boards and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Already within the TFRSC report to Synod 2012 the following common theme was articulated by many observers:

The CRCNA operates largely as autonomous agencies and ministries—in part due to our history, culture, structure, and leadership—a “confederacy of nonprofits” versus a “union of ministries.” Conflicting interests between agency boards, agency directors, and central administration (Denominational Office) have contributed to the following results:

- a very complex organization
- collaboration issues
- a culture of competition and division
- communication issues
- underrepresented specialized ministries
- funding distribution issues
- difficulty in making timely decisions
- an organization that may be too costly to maintain

This report to Synod 2014 follows in a line of other reports and recommendations from previous synods and study committees. The most significant actions include the following:

- 1971 The Synodical Interim Committee (precursor to the current Board of Trustees of the CRCNA) is established, enabling it to monitor coordination of denominational ministries.
- 1976 Agencies are instructed to do the **work** of collaboration; the Synodical Interim Committee is to **promote** it (emphasis added).
- 1981 A review committee insists that the Synodical Interim Committee “exert more leadership to assure that agencies themselves vigorously pursue their tasks in coordination, planning, setting priorities, and evaluating results,” but synod does not provide the Synodical Interim Committee with additional authority.
- 1982 A World Missions and Relief Commission is appointed to deal with issues on various mission fields and develop better coordination of ministry.
- 1983 Classis Hudson asks synod to name a committee to “study the organizational structure of the Christian Reformed Church, including all denominational boards and agencies.” Synod 1983 agrees and directs

the matter to the Synodical Interim Committee, which forms a Study Committee on Structure.

- 1985 The Board of World Ministries is called into being, and its executive director (Dr. Roger Greenway) is appointed the following year.
- 1987 The Study Committee on Structure presents a report titled "Vision 21." Synod endorses the report, adopts its "foundational principles" and "guidelines," and appoints yet another committee (Committee on Structure Review) to address remaining questions.
- 1990 Synod declines to move agencies and offices under seven operating committees aligned under a Synodical Administrative Board (to replace the Synodical Interim Committee) as recommended by the Committee on Structure Review, but synod agrees to move forward with the creation of a new position titled executive director of ministries.
- 1992 Dr. Peter Borgdorff is interviewed and appointed to the position of executive director of ministries. The Board of World Ministries is dissolved. A denominational Board of Trustees is appointed. In the structure that comes into being, all agencies and ministries report to synod through the Board of Trustees. The executive director of ministries is charged, on behalf of synod and the Board of Trustees, with executive authority to coordinate and oversee the ministries of the denomination.

The past twenty years have seen additional developments, but the duality of a Board of Trustees having "administrative authority" and agency boards and offices also having "administrative authority" still exists.

It may be helpful to identify some concrete examples that illustrate the need to address the "dual authority" that exists between agency boards and the Board of Trustees.

1. A search for an agency director leads to the identification of a nominee. The agency board recommends the nominee to the Board of Trustees. Currently the Board of Trustees has the opportunity to interview and either affirm or decline the nominee. If they affirm, it seems like a "rubber stamp" to some. If they decline, it seems to some that the Board has stepped into an agency process, and to others that the Board has overstepped its authority.
2. An agency identifies a certain goal or aim, such as planting 300 churches over the next ten years. How does this goal of an agency become part of a denominational strategic plan and part of the discussion of funding by ministry shares? Is a denominational strategic plan the sum of agencies' plans and offices' plans, or is it more? What structure would aid greater collaboration?
3. An agency director recently asked whether the Canadian ministries director could directly contact persons within the agency without first contacting the agency director. Do members of the denominational executive team have the right and responsibility to contact agency personnel as part of their role and authority?

These three examples illustrate the need to provide better understanding and to delineate how to navigate the “dual accountability” that currently exists.

In the course of our denominational history, we have sought to work through the polarity of centralization and decentralization. We have sought to honor the focused passions of people and ministries while also seeking to harness together resources and people for a unified mission. This task force report is not intended to “solve” these concerns but to indicate ways in which we might move forward together in a new era of ministry.

In this regard, it might be helpful to recall the challenge contained in the “Vision 21” report as detailed in the *Agenda for Synod 1990*:

The key to successful coordination and integration is appropriately designated authority. The Synodical Interim Committee was not able to achieve satisfactory integration of agency work because it was not vested with the authority to see to it that it was done. . . . If the denomination is serious about coordination of resources and work, then it must accept the necessity of an administrative structure that is given the authority of synod to do the work mandated by synod.

(*Agenda for Synod 1990*, p. 337)

Before presenting any options by which we might move forward together in a new era of ministry, we need to provide an analysis of our current structures.

IV. Process of analysis of current structure

A. Strategic questions about current structures

In its deliberations over the past year, the task force has focused on the following questions:

- When are agency boards needed to achieve the mission, and when are advisory councils more appropriate?
- How can greater integration of functions be fostered, and when should that include integration of governing boards or advisory bodies?
- How should governing boards be represented on the Board of Trustees or relate to it? Should there be some linkage? If so, how?

In addition, we were asked to describe the nature of the relationship and authority between synod, the Board of Trustees, classes, and local congregations.

B. Mapping the range of boards and advisory committees

One issue that gave rise to the appointment of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture was the lack of clarity about the roles of the various boards and advisory committees and the relationships between them. It should be noted that over two hundred and sixty persons serve at any one time on the various boards and advisory committees of the denominational ministries of the Christian Reformed Church.

In the past two years the task force has listened to various stakeholders and has confirmed the need for a more detailed analysis of what works well and what could be improved, as well as options for doing so. During this third year of the task force’s work, a subgroup of the task force engaged in

further research and consultation with boards and committees to inform task force discussions.

Attached to this report is a summary of the data gathered from the research (Appendix A). The subgroup considered issues to be addressed and sought to provide options for moving forward. Our purpose was to build on existing strengths to better position the CRCNA for ministry in the current and emerging context.

This discussion was also informed by synod's endorsement of the Five Streams proposal as a framework for ministry priorities. Existing agency boards and advisory bodies were asked to consider how they could contribute to ministry priorities and what structures could best support their engagement.

One of the first steps taken by the TFRSC was to gather information from all the boards and advisory committees with regard to their mandates, compositions, modes of operation, costs, and so forth. A mapping of the data revealed the following:

- that a wide range of structures exist, from nearly autonomous governing boards to informal advisory bodies
- that mandates range from very specific functions to comprehensive missional statements
- that size, composition, and criteria for recruitment vary widely
- that differences in structure, size, and composition are not clearly linked to functional differences. Bodies that perform comparable functions, for example, differ significantly in composition and size.

C. Initial conversations with boards and committees

Questions based on the issues identified in this early listening process were given to all agency boards and selected advisory committees prior to conversations with TFRSC members. The conversations focused on the question, What should the priority considerations for any changes and analysis of various options and their impact be? The results informed a TFRSC discussion on next steps (see questionnaire in Appendix B).

Common themes from the conversations:

- Common high-priority criteria for any structural change were (1) nimbleness to respond to a changing context, (2) collaboration between entities within the CRCNA and with partners outside the CRCNA, (3) expansion of ministry, and (4) appropriate legal authority to achieve a mandate.
- Value-added elements of both boards and advisory committees were identified as (1) the ability to focus on one area of ministry and work together to advance its goals and (2) maintaining strong connections with classes and congregations.
- Advisory committees and boards are valued by staff for providing support, advice on specific ministry, and assistance in building bridges to support community.
- Concerns about centralization include loss of focus on specific ministries, overload of general board members, and fewer avenues by which to connect with “owners” and stakeholders. In particular, there was a

lack of confidence expressed in the capacity of the Board of Trustees, as it currently operates, to give adequate attention to all ministries.

- Structures that allow high levels of differentiation in specific ministries but foster unity in achieving broad goals were preferred. Pluraformity in unity emerged as a general value for more effective relationships between the various ministries.
- While some boards operate in similar ways to advisory councils and most members of advisory councils find that structure adequate to achieve their goals, there is reluctance among many board members to consider changing from boards to advisory committees.
- Transition from current structures to any replacement will require careful management. One-size-fits-all solutions will not address diverse needs.
- Management and culture changes rather than structural reform can address some of the concerns relating to boards.
- Selection and training of board members could improve effectiveness, as well as having a clear understanding about mandates and relationships between boards.
- While there is no consensus regarding a preferred structure for all boards and committees, there is openness on some boards to consider changes that would foster greater collaboration and sense of unity in an integrated mission. Purpose-directed structural change may evolve from effective collaboration.

V. Suggested pathways to more effective governing structures and relationships

Given the complexity of the CRCNA, pursuing multiple avenues for improvement over time seems more likely than making a single, dramatic structural change.

A. Strategic objectives

The task force considered options to combine four strategic objectives:

1. Maintain the edge and capacity for focused attention on one ministry area, providing strategic input into ministry priorities and wise counsel to staff.
2. Increase coordination and collaboration between ministries, where possible, in order to advance the Five Streams of ministry priorities, as identified, for the denomination.
3. Strengthen the conversation and framework on binationality.
4. Strengthen the connection and ministry of the denomination and its agencies with the classes and congregations.

B. Potential strategies

The following potential strategies emerged from our consultations and conversations as steps on a path to achieve the objectives:

1. Promote collaboration (internally) and partnerships (externally).
 - Pursue an intentional, consistent strategy to identify and implement integrated projects that add value for achieving ministry goals and involve more than one agency and ministry office.

- Create some collaboration tables for specific strategic initiatives that will achieve a common purpose, to learn by experience (e.g., global people group ministry or outreach to Muslims).
 - Create physical collaboration table spaces and encourage agencies and offices to use them.
 - Provide skill-training and capacity-building tools for collaboration.
 - External partnerships can provide significant opportunity for ecumenical relationships to address broader systemic issues and for leveraging resources to expand ministry impact.
2. Integrate management of specific collaborative projects.
 - Implement pilot projects in collaborative groups and work through management issues as part of the pilot project.
 - Identify and communicate about best practices in working together.
 - Increase ongoing strategic planning to develop clear goals, analysis and planning of strategies, resource allocations (people and finances), and execution of plans.
 3. Clarify roles and recruitment for boards.
 - Clearly describe the roles of the Board of Trustees, the specialized boards, advisory committees, and administration (ED) in a more effective structure that could evolve through practice. While change will be gradual, growing out of experience, it is important to clarify feasible ends to reduce anxiety.
 - Develop a strategy for nomination, selection, retention, and training to attract highly qualified board members.
 - Build trust through purpose-directed interactions between staff and boards at various levels.
 4. Provide training and capacity-building for general and specialized boards.
 - Provide training in governance for boards that have a governance role to increase clarity about the responsibilities of a governing board.
 - Provide training in tools that boards and advisory committees can use to discern when end goals require differentiation and specialization and when to encourage cooperation and collaboration between ministries, within the complex organization of the CRCNA.
 5. Use strategic plan implementation as a basis for cooperation between boards.
 - Periodic and annual reviews of progress on strategic plan initiatives by specialized boards could be the basis for engagement with the Board of Trustees.
 - Discussion of progress and challenges in implementing the new strategic plan and emerging strategic issues could provide a more constructive basis for periodic dialogues between specialized boards and the Board of Trustees.

6. Implement a moratorium on development of new boards or advisory committees unless specifically required in executing the new strategic plan.
7. Present a range of options for consideration and suggested criteria for any discernment process.

All stakeholders, including the various agencies, will be invited into further conversation and consultation to consider a proposal to realign the governing structures for Back to God Ministries International, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Missions, and World Renew.

VI. Identification of criteria for a discernment process

As we move forward with the conversation, we propose the following, based on our research and the conversations to date, as key criteria for a discernment process:

- Adaptiveness—the ability to nimbly respond to new ministry opportunities and strategic challenges.
- Focused passion—the ability to channel or focus passion for a specific ministry.
- Connectivity—to local congregations, classes, and individual church members; development of a structure that promotes projects and ideas from local congregations across the denomination while also supporting the local church.
- Collaboration—increased communication, coordination, and cooperation for more effective and efficient ministry.
- Clear accountability—providing clarity or elimination of unnecessary dual accountability in reporting structures.
- Reduction of tension or possible tension between agencies with boards and offices with advisory committees within the overall structure of the CRCNA.
- Reduction of costs—as one factor for long-term sustainability.
- Clarity of governance—developing a board structure that focuses on governance and overseeing the implementation of denomination-wide strategic direction.
- Expansion and development of ministry that sees the harvest field and seeks to deploy workers for that harvest throughout the world.
- Openness to external partnerships—enables expansion, impact, and scope of ministry beyond what local congregations or even the denomination can do as well.
- Binationality—enhanced by structure that respects ministry in each national context.
- Support of denominational priorities—finding a way to more effectively develop and deliver on a unified mission and ministry for our denomination and congregations.
- Quality programming and increased trust—ensuring our commitment to meet accountabilities, standards, accreditations, and local obligations for quality programming and trust of the local congregation.

VII. Range of proposals presented for consultation and consideration

As the task force continued its work, it became clear that we would best serve the church and synod by not presenting a specific proposal for Synod 2014 to adopt. We desire instead to provide a context in which the conversation can continue before any decision is made. As part of the discernment process, we provide the following range of options for the ongoing conversation and briefly identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of each option.

A. Continue with the status quo—the structure of a Board of Trustees and agency boards as they currently exist

The Board of Trustees and agency boards continue, with both having designated authority. The executive director is charged with “bridging” these two layers of dual authority.

1. Strengths: No disruption of activities. No major transitions.
2. Weaknesses: This approach would not resolve many of the issues discussed earlier in this report. In addition, a status quo approach does not address the “overlap” of dual accountability between the Board of Trustees and agency boards. This model does not seek to engage the question of how to enhance collaboration and communication for a unified denominational ministry plan. Nor does it aid a new executive director and executive team in pulling together agencies and offices.

B. Centralize authority by changing all agency boards to advisory councils and maintaining the authority and make-up of the Board of Trustees

Agency boards would change to having advisory council status. The Board of Trustees alone would have designated authority from synod and would delegate authority to agencies and offices. This model proposes that there be no change to the composition of the Board of Trustees.

1. Strengths: Would help in aligning authority and responsibility under a new executive director and executive team who are agents of the Board of Trustees. Would help in aligning a unified denominational ministry plan by providing a structure that would support such a unified plan. Would yield potential cost savings—for example, by reducing the number of times an agency board met annually as it moved toward being an advisory council.
2. Weaknesses: Would be seen as an avenue for increased centralization as a denomination. This might be seen as placing more authority in a central Board of Trustees while diminishing the passions of agency boards and advisory boards. Does not address the current nomination process of those elected to the Board of Trustees and how members of the Board of Trustees function. Some specific concerns to be addressed would be the effect of this change on registered charity status and the effects on alliances and the ability to minister in various parts of the world (for example, World Renew’s alliances with government donors).

C. Revise the structure of both the Board of Trustees and agency boards to align with ecclesiastical structures; develop a classis-based council of delegates with an executive council that replaces the Board of Trustees and change (all or some) agency boards to advisory councils

Replace the Board of Trustees with a council of delegates from every classis (including at-large members) who would choose an executive council of twelve members. The council of delegates would meet once between synods, and the executive council would provide policy governance between synod and council meetings. Change all or some agency boards to advisory councils.

1. Strengths: Aligns an administrative structure with classical representation. Removes two layers of administrative designated authority (Board of Trustees and agency boards) by merging the advantages of a smaller executive council and the breadth of a classically based board of delegates. Potential cost savings would result by having the board of delegates meet once a year and the executive council meet three times a year.
2. Weaknesses: There would need to be a time of transition for the Board of Trustees and for agency boards and advisory councils. Might still be seen, by some, as centralization, with all agency boards changing to advisory councils. Some specific concerns to be addressed would be the effect on registered charity status and the effects on alliances and the ability to minister in various parts of the world (for example, World Renew's alliances with government donors).

While options A and B above are worthy of discussion, we provide these options for contrast and comparison. In addition, these two options have been part of the ongoing denominational conversation since at least 1990. Option A is on the decentralization end of the scale, while option B is on the centralization end of the scale.

Because option C is being presented for your initial impression, we submit the following additional information for consideration and discernment. We present this material by way of "What if . . . ?" questions to invite continued conversation and discernment. In addition, we have included graphic representations of these three options as Appendix C to this report.

- *What if* the Board of Trustees were the only body to receive specific delegated authority from synod, and agency boards or other offices received designated authority from synod through the Board of Trustees?
- *What if* we formed a council of delegates by which every classis was represented and we added 12 to 15 persons as at-large members, meeting annually, as a body that heard all agency and ministry reports and affirmed or overturned the ongoing work of an executive team and an executive administrative council?
- *What if* a group of 12 persons (six from the United States and six from Canada), selected from the council of delegates, formed an executive council that could provide more nimble support and guidance to an executive team led by the executive director?
- *What if* some agencies could continue to be served by their "board" members as they transitioned from being agency boards to advisory boards? (Various offices with their advisory boards could continue as

well.) What if these new advisory boards met one time less each year than the agency boards currently do?

- *What if* we found a way for agency boards to remain as registered charity boards for their external functioning but were able to align them within a classically based Board of Trustees?
- *What if* we saw option C above as similar to what has occurred in many churches that have a large council of elders and deacons but have introduced an administrative board to more effectively and efficiently serve the church?
- *What if* we formed a nominating committee that would function in identifying more persons to serve at various levels of the church?
- *What if* the board of delegates were made up of experienced persons who have served on the boards of agencies, institutions, or offices?
- *What if* decisions about replacing some or all existing boards with advisory councils would be based on conversations, consultation, and thorough evaluations, using key criteria as a guide for assessment?

It is our recommendation that any option for moving forward be evaluated along the lines of common themes, outcomes, and key criteria presented in section VI above.

VIII. Other issues to address

As done in our previous reports to synod, we provide the following updates to synod regarding issues identified in our work.

A. Develop a process for assessing meaningful outcomes of the Ministry Plan, and assess the effectiveness of the Scorecard/Dashboard method of assessment

Sometimes the naming of a concern begins the process of addressing the concern. At the beginning of our journey, the task force heard a great deal of discussion about the perceived ineffectiveness of the Scorecard/Dashboard method of assessment as it was being implemented. In 2013, the CRCNA's administration (ED and DED) proposed and the Ministries Leadership Council affirmed discontinuance of the Scorecard/Dashboard method of assessment unless a particular office or agency might want to continue with this method for their own use.

As the denomination moves forward in conversation and discernment about a "fundamentally reframed" Ministry Plan, it would be good to note that the plan should also include a process to assess meaningful outcomes.

B. Develop a nominating committee/team for denominational ministries

A comment we have often heard was that there is a lack of trust because people do not know who is on the Board of Trustees and they do not "trust" the process by which members are brought onto the Board of Trustees. (We have even heard stories of those chosen to serve from a classis simply because they noted they had someone to visit in Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

We are interested in the possibility of forming a nominating committee/team and asking that one-third of BOT members (or board of delegates) be chosen from a pool of those who have completed board service for agencies, offices, or institutions. In other words, we seek to use experienced board members who have served well and know the agencies, offices, and institutions.

C. Provide policy board governance training for board members

Another key comment that recurred in our research was that the Board of Trustees has, at times, gotten into management of agencies rather than governance. In contrast to this approach, many persons asked about Board members receiving training in board governance (i.e., policy development, strategic planning, types of governance such as Carver Board Governance, etc.). The time does appear ripe for consistent understanding and use of such tools to more deeply aid board members in navigating between governance and administrative management.

D. Define ways to enhance multiethnicity and diversity as an outgrowth and outcome of our mission

Since the TFRSC began its work, the work of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group II (DLPG II) concluded and reported to Synod 2013. The decisions of Synod 2013 in response to the DLPG II report have begun to be addressed. One such decision is that a “pool” of potential board candidates be created. We affirm that direction and see that as something that could fit under and be a part of the work of a denominational nominating committee.

We again note that the way board members are currently chosen is seen by many as haphazard and inconsistent. How do we seek and find the best possible nominees to represent and provide diversity in leadership for the CRC?

E. Finalize the senior leadership position descriptions and consider how a “leadership team” may function after identifying an executive director

The appointment of a new executive director is an event that we pray for, along with others. We understand that there will necessarily be a time of transition. We understand that the Board of Trustees is forming a transition committee to serve the new executive director. The task force supports and encourages the formation of such a transition committee.

IX. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Joel R. Boot, chair, and Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, reporter, when the report of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture is discussed.

B. That synod allow up to thirty minutes to hear an update report from members of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture and, in addition, allow up to thirty minutes for a guided table discussion on the TFRSC report during a plenary session to be determined by the officers of synod.

C. That synod recommend this report to the churches and, in particular, the “range of proposals” presented in section VII for further discussion and discernment within the church, its agencies, boards, and planning groups. This discussion and discernment will occur in the coming year, led by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture, with a final proposal to be presented to Synod 2015.

D. That synod ask the Board of Trustees to explore the development of a nominating committee that would not only identify potential persons to serve on denominational boards/committees but also keep a list of persons who have served previously on denominational boards and advisory committees.

E. That synod ask the Board of Trustees to explore the opportunity to train all board members, including the present Board of Trustees, in board governance—policy development, strategic planning, decision-making, and models of governance.

F. That synod thank Mr. Terry Vander Aa and Mrs. Jane Vander Haagen for their service on the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture from 2011 until 2013. Both of these individuals resigned from the task force because of personal health matters that arose. We are glad to report that both have experienced a measure of healing and improved health.

Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture

Calvin J. Aardsma

Joel R. Boot, chair

R. Scott Greenway

Tammy Heidbuurt

Julius T. Medenblik, reporter

Peter Meerveld

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo

Bill Terpstra

Katherine Vandergrift

Colin P. Watson, Sr.

Appendix A

Research of Board Structure and Offices

QUESTIONS		Educational Institutions		CRCNA Agencies					
		BOT	Calvin College	Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)	CRHM	CRWM	Faith Alive	BTGMI	World Renew
1	Official mandate of each governing board and advisory committee				Governance	Governance - Ensure that responsibilities of the mandate (vision) are done in keeping with God's Word and CRCNA standards	Governance	To insure that BTGMI programming is accompanied by appropriate follow-up activities and literature, and that BTGMI provides leadership to the CRCNA in the use of media.	Governance (Global Governance Policy GP#1)
	Vision and purpose of the organization				Promote, support, and pray—the synodical mandate of CRHM	Proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God to all the world; call people to repentance, faith, and obedience	Promote Christian faith; develop, publish, sell, distribute literature	To lead the church into international media witness through media programming and related activities that communicate the Reformed faith in response to the need for conversion, discipleship, and cultural transformation.	Increase capacity of communities and partners; Improve the well-being of people (Global Ends Policy #1)
2	Composition of each board (country, region, classis, other)	30 Total: 12 regional, 3 at-large (each U.S. & Canada), ED ex officio	30	19 total: 12 regional, 6 at-large (2 from Region 4)	25 total: 12 regional, 7 at-large, 6 alternate	18 total: 12 regional, 6 at-large (4 U.S. & 2 Canada)	18 total: 12 regional, 3 at-large (Korean, Business, other), 3 RCA delegates	14 regional (4 from Canada, 10 from U.S.); 2 at-large	14 elected members of Joint Ministry Council, plus classical representatives; Canada: 13 classical delegates, 8 at-large; U.S.: 39 classical delegates, 7 board members
	Additional attendees at board meetings	4 staff plus 2 legal council (U.S., Canada)			Senior staff, regional staff; at times guests (i.e. church planters, campus pastors, etc.)	Directors of World Missions, International, Canada and missions engagement		6 staff	
3	Nomination, appointment process, terms for membership on each board				Classical involvement; board recommendations allowed	Committee of the board engages classes (and denomination at large) to submit nominees; synodically governed process with detailed guidelines	Formal process, classical involvement	Delegates nominated by classes, approved by synod; JMC delegates; two members of BTGMI also serve as liaison on BTGMI Advancement Board.	Delegates nominated by classes, approved by synod; JMC members elected from delegates

Appendix A

Research of Board Structure and Offices

QUESTIONS		Educational Institutions		CRCNA Agencies				
		Calvin College	Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)	CRHM	CRWM	Faith Alive	BTGMI	World Renew
4	Requirements or qualifications for membership on each board			Leadership: specific expertise needed; diversity, availability	Passion for mission, breadth of experience as needed, promote work of CRWM, global worldview	Strategic, passionate, communicate/advocate	Attend 3 yearly meetings; understand their role as part of a policy-setting body; represent BTGMI in their region; pray for, challenge, encourage, and support staff.	Leadership, specific expertise, diversity
5	Relationship to the Board of Trustees (BOT), including information flow			Synod appoints board members; board minutes go to BOT; recommendations re structure, etc., go to BOT; uncertainty about BOT relationship with the BOT in terms of authority, governance, and collaboration toward ministry; what is BOT's role toward the agency boards?	Information flows largely through agency director; minutes and memos	Synod appoints board; communications to ED office	Subject to synod and BOT; board minutes flow to BOT through ED office.	JMC is the official governance entity; subject to synod and its appointed body, the BOT
6	Relationship to staff and other decision making bodies within the CRCNA			Support; prayer	Agency director is the link among board, staff, other decision making bodies and agencies	See above	Board executive maintains close relationship with BTGMI director; board receives reports from ministry leaders, director of finance, and director of advancement	Co-directorate is Board's only link to operational achievement and conduct
7	What is the extent and nature of the board role in deciding priorities, policies, and strategic decisions for the operations of the ministry?			Contribute to and approve long-range ministry and financial plans; ensure that the board is legally incorporated	Board engaged in governance functions; priorities, and policies; owner of the mission, vision, and values; monitors results	Governance, strategic direction, budget, hire key staff	BTGMI board is responsible for setting policy and providing strategic direction to staff.	JMC produces written governing policies addressing each category of corporate decisions

QUESTIONS			Educational Institutions		CRCNA Agencies				
			Calvin College	Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)	CRHM	CRWM	Faith Alive	BTGMI	World Renew
8	What is the extent and nature of the board's role in building support for ministry within churches? What is the extent and expectation of board members' connection to churches or classes?	BOT			Report on HM ministry objectives to classes and serve as ambassadors of HM programs and objectives	Board members encouraged to interact frequently with classes; report activities to entire board at each board meeting	Communicate to classes and churches but no expectation for raising financial support	Board members represent BTGMI in the regions they represent, communicating with stated clerks, classes, and churches as needed. In addition, the BTGMI Advancement Board was created to support the BTGMI board in its advancement and stewardship needs.	Each JMC member and delegate asked to have a plan of interaction with classes and churches, supported by staff
					2/2013: \$9,000; 9/2012: \$11,300; 2/2012: \$7,700	Average cost last 3 years: U.S. \$38,380; Canada \$18,500; Total \$56,880 per year; cost includes board field visits and 3 meetings per year; significant ministry value in building bridges to local churches	Travel and meeting costs for board meetings usually 2 (in GH) since April meetings replaced by web conferences to save expenses	2010-\$28,000; 2011-\$29,500; 2012-\$54,000 (includes director search); 2013-\$40,000 (one meeting in Burlington office). Seeking to determine added value of off-site meetings.	Cost total over 3 years (2010-2013) is \$126,844; board delegate training, travel, and meetings; benefits include creating passionate activities for World Renew in local communities
9	Cost/benefit analysis (i.e., What are the costs related to your board/committee? How much have you spent on board training, travel, and meetings over the past three years—by year? What is identified as added value?)				Unless we meet less often but that doesn't seem feasible; board officer meetings are conference calls. Reduce the size of the boards.	CRWM budget quite lean in terms of size and scope of agency; some years field visits are suspended to reduce costs (recently restored)	Two face-to-face and 1 conference call per year for board meetings	Board costs are monitored and maintained at an effective level for the governance of the organization.	No expectation to further reduce costs in this area.
10	What are your suggestions to reduce costs?								
			Greater autonomy; independence of boards						

Appendix A

Research of Board Structure and Offices

QUESTIONS		Other Ministries							Pastor-Church Relations (PCR)			Office of Social Justice (OSJ)
		Chaplaincy and Care	Disability Concerns	Safe Church Ministry (SCM)	Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG); Justice Ministry - Canada	Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC)	Specialized Transitional Ministry (STM) Program Steering Committee (managed by PCR)	Staff Ministry Team (SMT) (managed by PCR)	Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) Implementation Team (IT)			
1	Official mandate of each governing board and advisory committee	Chaplaincy Ministry Advisory Council (CMAC); meet with and support regional chaplaincy groups	Assist churches in removing barriers; <u>mandate under revision</u>	Subcommittee of BOT; advise director and the BOT	CCG is a Committee overseeing the Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD)	CAMC Mandate approved by BOT in 2006: Educate and mobilize CRC to live in reconciled relationships as covenant people before God	Self-created to oversee STM	Synod mandated PCR to provide church staff support	Advisory team	No board		
	Vision and purpose of the organization	Assist staff (Office of Chaplaincy Ministry) in promoting chaplaincy, exploring new trends, (deliberate on issues, advise staff, make recommendations to BOT)	Gather information, increase awareness, educate/encourage congregations; regional programs and activities	Guide SCM, be a resource for the director, and advise BOT as needed	CPD is a place of conversation, learning, and action on God's call to justice and peace	Engage and mobilize congregations to answer God's call to justice and reconciliation with indigenous neighbors	Strategic support to churches in transition; create policies and procedures for STM as needed	Provide support similar to clergy support	Decide on grant proposals, advise staff re administration and strategy, assist in evaluation	Social Justice and hunger action; accountable to BOT through ED and DED		
2	Composition of each board (country, region, classis, other)	8-9 total; 7 U.S., 2 Canada (by geographic cluster)	Advisory Committee (OCAC); 7 total; 5 U.S., 2 Canada (not by region), plus RCA representative	6 total; 4 U.S., 2 Canada; balance gender, nationality (U.S./Canada)	6 board members—regional representation Canada-wide; one member serves as a rep to the RCA Canadian Regional Synod	6 members: 3 representing combinations of Canada regions; 1 appointed by RCA Regional Synod; 2 at large	Staff of PCR and 4 active STM	2 staff from PCR; 6-8 church staff ministry leaders	2 Canada, 6 U.S. (4 as of 8-1-13), 1 staff	N/A		
	Additional attendees at board meetings						N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
3	Nomination, appointment process, terms for membership on each board	Current board suggests nominees; 3-year terms	Nominated by current members; approved by BOT	Nominations come from committee or staff; final approval from the BOT	Board members nominated by CCG, appointed by BOT for 3-year term; may serve 2 terms	Chair of CAMC works with CMD and other CRC/ecumenical partners to seek nominees; recommend to BOT for approval; up to 2 - 3 year terms	PCR Staff are standing members; STM members invited by staff	Recommended by pastors; approved by current members	Recruited and appointed by staff			

Research of Board Structure and Offices

Appendix A

QUESTIONS		Other Ministries						Pastor-Church Relations (PCR)			Office of Social Justice (OSJ)
		Chaplaincy and Care	Disability Concerns	Safe Church Ministry (SCM)	Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG); Justice Ministry - Canada	Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC)	Specialized Transitional Ministry (STM) Program Steering Committee (managed by PCR)	Staff Ministry Team (SMT) (managed by PCR)	Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) Implementation Team (IT)		
4	Requirements or qualifications for membership on each board	Awareness and supportive of chaplaincy	Leadership, CRC members in good standing (except for RCA rep)	Passion for the mission of SCM	Committed Christians with a passion for justice	Embrace the mission of CAMC, willing to serve, Reformed worldview, support cultural contextualization of the gospel	PCR staff or active STM	Paid staff; represent each of admin., education, youth, worship/music, outreach	Diversity, pastor (small congregations), leadership		
5	Relationship to the Board of Trustees (BOT), including information flow	Annual report to the BOT	DCAC meeting minutes and recommendations to BOT	SCM Advisory Committee is a subcommittee of the BOT	Committee reports to the BOT; research and information manager of CPD informs CMD, and chair of CCG informs BOT	CAMC is officially a committee of BOT; responsible to BOT through the director	Regular reports to BOT	Regular written updates plus BOT initiated contact	BOT reporting through PCR as of 7-1-2012		
6	Relationship to staff and other decision making bodies within the CRCNA	Advices and assists director of Chaplaincy and Care (policies, endorsements, and grants)	DCAC serves as advisors to director for vision and direction	Relationships with PCR in addition to own staff members	Primary partnerships; Aboriginal Ministries Committee, Race Relations, OSI, RCA Regional Synod	Staff support from justice and reconciliation mobilizer; 3 Urban Aboriginal Ministry directors; relationships with CCG, OSI, Race Relations	Staff relationships through PCR staff	SMT reports only to PCR; copy of minutes to MLT	IT advises program director, who is accountable to PCR; PCR represented on MLC		
7	What is the extent and nature of the board role in deciding priorities, policies, and strategic decisions for the operations of the ministry?	Purely advisory	Director makes decisions after consultation with DCAC	Committee serves as advisor to director; recently was more involved in financial and staffing issues when director position was vacant	2 meetings per year plus conference calls for planning, priority setting, and program review; have a 3-year strategic plan	Committee guides the work of Aboriginal Ministry in Canada; not a governance body; no supervisory responsibilities	Committee takes recommendations under advisement; PCR decides	Collaborative and consensual decisions; accountable to PCR	IT advice is critical to the SCE program		

Appendix A

Research of Board Structure and Offices

QUESTIONS		Other Ministries							Office of Social Justice (OSJ)	
		Chaplaincy and Care	Disability Concerns	Safe Church Ministry (SCM)	Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG): Justice Ministry - Canada	Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC)	Specialized Transitional Ministry (STM) Program Steering Committee (managed by PCR)	Staff Ministry Team (SMT) (managed by PCR)	Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) Implementation Team (IT)	Lesser (or no) independence of boards or committees
8	What is the extent and nature of the board's role in building support for ministry within churches? What is the extent and expectation of board members' connection to churches or classes?	CMAC members encouraged to attend class meetings - to be supportive, but no specific assignments to enable this	No formal expectations of DOAC members, though some make church connections on DC behalf	No real role for building support; materials sent to churches annually for Abuse Awareness Sunday; committee members sometimes help with class and other presentations as needed.	Resource development not a strong component of board role; CPD information regularly sent to churches	CAMC members involved in local CRC but no formal expectation to connect to churches and classes; CAMC supported by ministry shares	STM Program provides strategic support to churches in transition; each steering committee member is active with a congregation	Team role: equip and encourage ministry staff	No formal role of IT members to build support for program in churches, though this does take place	
9	Cost/benefit analysis (i.e., What are the costs related to your board/committee? How much have you spent on board training, travel, and meetings over the past three years—by year? What is identified as added value?)	CMAC meets 2 times per year, average per year about \$2,000; \$8,000 total for the past 4 years; travel and lodging for annual conference and CMAC meeting	Total cost over 3 years (2010-2013) \$4,004; 4 meetings per year; usually one meeting held via video conference and one just before annual DC Leadership Conference	Costs primarily travel; meetings were 3 times per year; past 2 years only 2 times per year	\$9,500 for board meetings and conferences (annually); added value: opportunity to network and get a regional sense beyond CPD (Ottawa) office (and vice versa)	Total CAMC budget is \$15,500, of which \$5,000 is for conferences and meetings	Minimal cost, mainly borne by the congregation being served; value: helping churches through difficult situations	\$4,000 to \$5,000 per year for face to face meetings; benefit is full integration of team (especially with new members)	\$25,000 over the past 3 years (2010-2013); IT meets face to face for about \$380 per person per meeting; 2 meetings per year (Jan. and July)	
10	What are your suggestions to reduce costs?	No suggestions; costs minimal; annual meeting valuable to meet with chaplains and CMAC members	Low costs since DOAC members live close to Grand Rapids, use of video conferencing	Committee and staff agreed to cut costs by meeting only once per year; 2 other meetings using video conferencing	No real opportunity to reduce costs; budget is \$141,000 and 1 full-time staff	Current budget is very small; further reduction would severely compromise the effectiveness of the committee	Minimal cost, so minimal opportunity for reduction	Minimal costs due to only 2 meetings per year; phone calls for all other communications	If IT were disbanded, significant loss of program's connection with local church and pastors	

Appendix B

Questions for Boards and Advisory Groups in the CRCNA

1. What criteria and/or core values should be considered in making structural changes to boards and advisory committees of the CRCNA and its ministries? Some are listed below. Check those that you think apply and then circle your top five priorities. Feel free to provide comments:

- More nimble and flexible structures to facilitate ministry at denominational and local congregational levels in changing contexts.
- Greater (higher quality and quantity) input of congregations into direction and priorities of ministry.
- More legal authority for one centralized body (Board of Trustees) over ministries and their multiple mandates.
- More legal authority for decentralized bodies (boards/committees) over each major mandate or ministry.
- Reduce costs and complexity of administration within the CRCNA.
- Enhanced accountability.
- Better management of risks.
- Expansion of ministry—reaching more people.
- More coordination and collaboration between CRCNA ministries to better achieve common goals.
- Increased sense of unity.
- More coordination and collaboration between a CRCNA ministry and those outside the CRCNA to better achieve common goals.
- Connecting to more opportunities outside the CRCNA to achieve goals beyond current CRCNA ministries.
- Other?

2. Suggestions for Improving Agency Board or Ministry Advisory Council

What suggestions do you have for improving the structure of your board or advisory committee to make it more effective in achieving its mandate and/or goals?

3. Five Streams

What can your agency board or advisory council do to contribute to the development and implementation of the Five Streams that Synod 2013 is asking CRC congregations to consider as a framework for ministry? (See Addendum 1.)

4. Options for Boards and Advisory Councils

In 2012, the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) reported to synod the following analysis that came as a summary of staff comments during listening sessions that the TFRSC held with them:

The CRCNA operates largely as autonomous agencies and ministries—in part due to our history, culture, structure, and leadership. Thus we have a “confederacy of non-profits” versus a “union of ministries.” Conflicts of interest between agency boards, agency directors, and central administration (DO) are contributing to

- a very complex organization.
- collaboration issues.
- competition and division.
- communication issues.
- under-represented specialized ministries.
- funding distribution issues.

To address this, the following suggestions were given by denominational staff during these listening sessions with TFRSC:

- Consolidation of boards/Do not consolidate
- Fewer boards or one board
- Change mandate of agency boards to advisory committees of the BOT
- Ministry Council should be the binding agent for integration
- Representative(s) from each board/ministry would be part of the BOT
- Combine mission agencies into a Council of Executive Ministries to enable long-term vision and collaboration
- “Charter” outlining clear authorities and decision making processes between ministries, BOT, DO, and synod

In light of this, there are currently five options being explored by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture with regard to governance for agency boards and ministry councils:

- Option 1: Retain agency boards or advisory councils and then have one or two members from each board serving also as members of the Board of Trustees (BOT).
- Option 2: Constitute a BOT that has representatives of each classis; this BOT would have subsets of committees/advisory councils that would specialize in given areas of agencies or ministries. This would mean agency boards would shift to advisory councils.
- Option 3: Consolidate agency boards or advisory councils with other agency boards or advisory councils (e.g., where they align well with the Five Streams), and then two members from the consolidated board/council would also serve on the Board of Trustees.
- Option 4: Change agency boards to advisory councils that would have one or two members serving also as members of the Board of Trustees.
- Option 5: Retain the current structure of agency boards or advisory councils in its connection with BOT.
- Option 6: Your suggestion?

In the table below, please indicate your feedback on these options, describing what you see as the merits and challenges for each option. Feel free to add another option (6) if you have one.

OPTION #	MERITS	CHALLENGES	FEASIBILITY LEVEL **
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

** Indicate how feasible this option would be for your agency or advisory council within a range of **HIGH** (highly feasible/preferred), **MED** (could make it work well), **LOW** (would take a lot to make it work), **NA** (not at all possible).

5. Are there any other ideas or suggestions you have for the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture as it considers the structure and governance of agency boards, advisory committees, and the BOT in the CRCNA? (Note Addendum 2 if you wish to review and comment on the purpose and functions of the BOT with regard to your perception of the role of advisory councils or agency boards.)

Christian Reformed Church in North America

Our Five Streams

(Denominational Priorities)

Faith Formation	Servant Leadership	Global Missions	Loving Mercy; Doing Justice	Gospel Proclamation and Worship
<p>As a community of believers we seek to introduce and nurture faith in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>We believe the church must work together to challenge and equip each believer to grow in their faith as they seek to be faithful disciples in the kingdom of God.</p>	<p>We seek to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God.</p> <p>We believe the lifelong equipping of all leaders is essential for the flourishing of churches and ministries.</p>	<p>We are a missional community with a kingdom vision.</p> <p>Therefore, we seek to be witnesses and agents of the kingdom “to the ends of the earth.”</p> <p>Our primary objective is to start and strengthen local churches, both in North America and around the world.</p>	<p>We hear the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged.</p> <p>Our hearts are broken by the things that break the heart of God.</p> <p>Therefore we seek “to act justly and love mercy” as we walk humbly with [our] God (Mic 6:8).</p>	<p>Faith comes through the hearing of God’s Word.</p> <p>We seek to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and worship him in all that we do.</p>

Note: Each stream or priority is to be supported by a “collaboration table” of representatives of select ministries and/or institutions within the CRCNA for the purpose of advancing the respective *stream* within the denomination.

Addendum 2

Excerpts from the Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

Article II Purposes

The purposes of the Board are to transact all matters assigned to it by synod; to supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod and designated in the bylaws of the Board, including the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and to cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination toward integrating the respective missions of those institutions into the denominational ministry program. To fulfill its purposes, the Board will do the following:

- A. Lead in developing and implementing a denominational ministries plan for the agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- B. Assure collaboration among agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- C. Exercise general oversight and authority in the manner stated in the bylaws of the Board.

Nothing contained herein shall interfere with the authority of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to govern their respective institutions and to manage their personnel, facilities, educational programs, libraries, and finances according to their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Article III Functions

The functions described in this article are carried out by the Board under the authority of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and by virtue of the Board's legal status with respect to its corporate entities in accordance with applicable laws in Canada and the United States.

To achieve the purposes described in Article II hereof, the Board shall carry out the following functions:

- A. Implement all matters committed to it by the specific instruction of synod, carrying out all necessary interim functions on behalf of synod, and execute all synodical matters that cannot be postponed until the next synod.
- B. Lead in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan that reflects the biblical and Reformed mission commitment of the Christian Reformed Church. The denominational ministries plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies, the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work, and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.
- C. Present to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

D. Serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. In its discharge of this responsibility, the Board shall require reports from all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

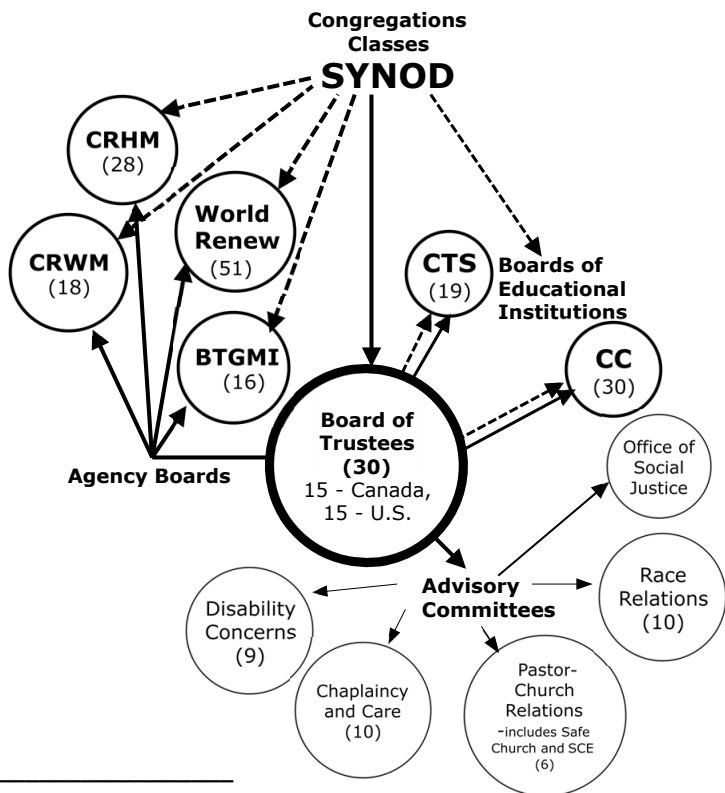
E. Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agency boards and committees. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the bylaws of the Board and the provisions of the Church Order. Appeals that deal with an action of the Board may be submitted to synod for adjudication.

F. Discharge all responsibilities incumbent upon directors of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a Michigan not-for-profit corporation (CRCNA-Michigan), and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a federally registered charity corporation (CRCNA-Canada) organized under the laws of Canada.

G. Serve as the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC), which is responsible for any joint-venture agreements between the CRCNA-Michigan and CRCNA-Canada. Members of the Board also serving as directors of CRCNA-Canada are responsible for joint-venture agreements between CRCNA-Canada and the agencies and committees of the denomination that are not registered as Canadian charities.

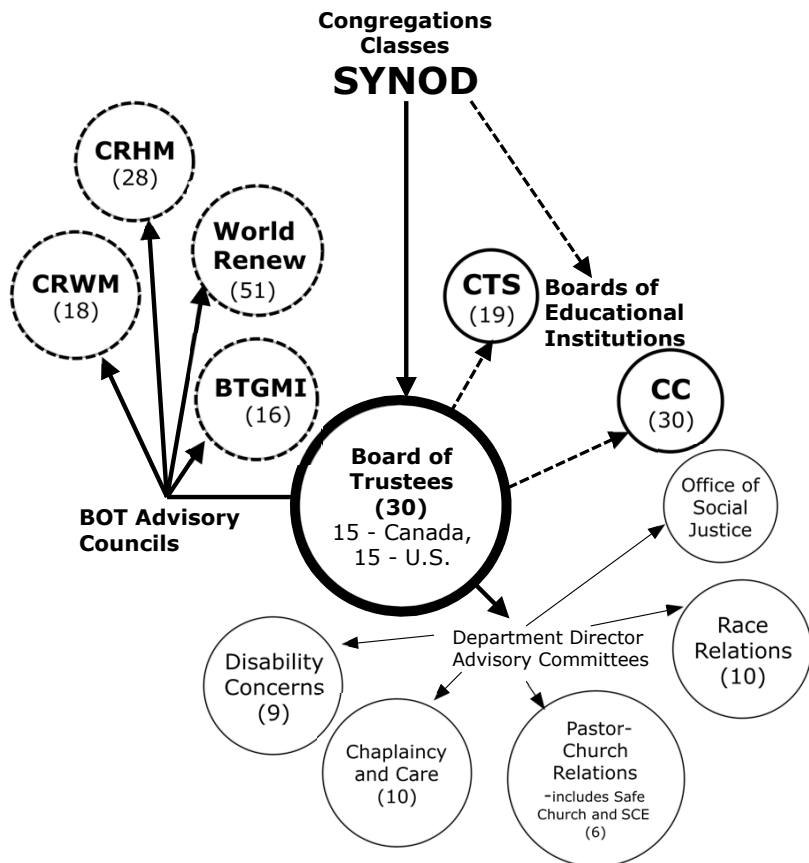
H. Approve all joint-ministry agreements between or among agencies and committees.

Option A: Status Quo



- Notes:**
1. Board of Trustees and agency boards — both receive delegated authority from synod.
 2. BOT has 30 members (15-U.S.; 15-Canada). BOT has an Executive Committee of 6 members (3-U.S.; 3-Canada).
 3. Abbreviations: Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM); Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM); Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI); Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS); Calvin College (CC); Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE).
 4. Board and advisory committee sizes vary widely (see numbers in parentheses).

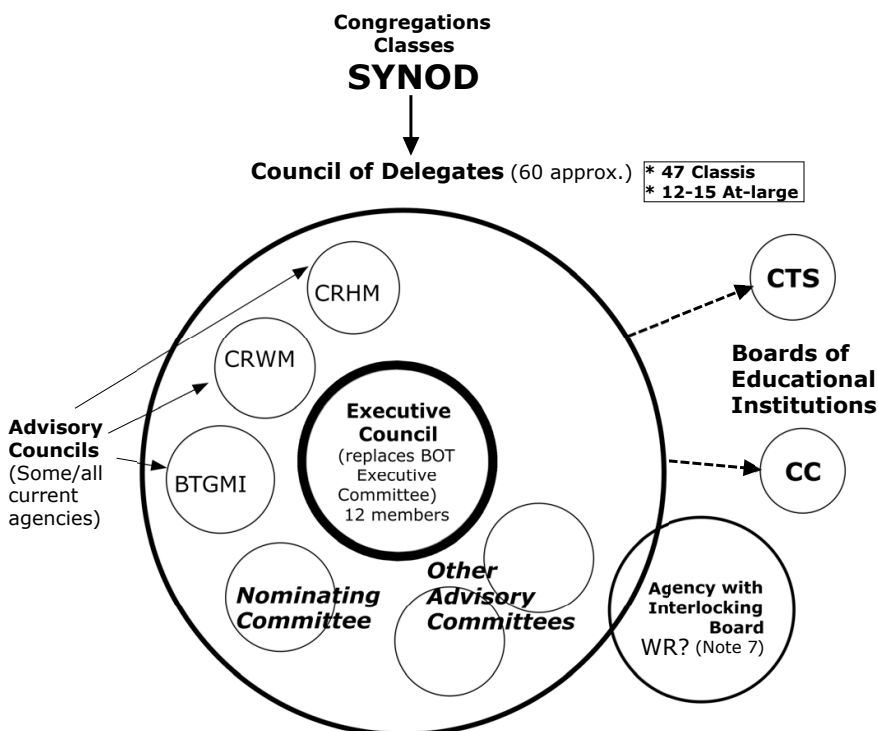
Option B: Centralized Authority



Notes:

1. Board of Trustees and agency boards — both receive delegated authority from synod.
2. BOT has 30 members (15-U.S.; 15-Canada). BOT has an Executive Committee of 6 members (3-U.S.; 3-Canada).
3. Abbreviations: Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM); Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM); Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI); Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS); Calvin College (CC); Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE).
4. Board and advisory committee sizes vary widely (see numbers in parentheses).

Option C: Council of Delegates Replaces BOT



Notes:

1. Executive Council (EC) and Council of Delegates receive delegated authority from synod.
2. EC has 12 members (6-U.S.; 6-Canada). EC meets 3 times/year.
3. EC can create or restructure Advisory Councils.
4. Council of Delegates (CoD) has 1 rep per classis, plus 12-15 at-large (meets once/year).
5. CoD members appointed from experienced board members of agencies (at least 1/3).
6. Advisory Committees meet at least 2 times per year—once with the entire Council of Delegates and one other time of their own choosing.
7. Some agencies may fit the criteria to have a fully functioning independent (but interlocking) board; (World Renew, perhaps?) some members (at least 1/3) may be appointed by EC. Area for further study.
8. Other Advisory Committees may include committees to support the work in each of the Five Streams (i.e., Faith Formation, Servant Leadership, Global Missions, Love Mercy - Do Justice, and Gospel Proclamation and Worship).

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overture 1: Permit the Transfer of East Bay Korean CRC of El Cerrito, California, to Classis Central California

Classis Pacific Hanmi overtures synod to transfer East Bay Korean Christian Reformed Church of El Cerrito, California, from Classis Pacific Hanmi to Classis Central California. This transfer was requested by the church and has been approved by both Classis Pacific Hanmi and Classis Central California.

Grounds:

1. Classis Pacific Hanmi is located mainly in the Los Angeles area; however, East Bay Korean CRC is too far away.
2. Because it is too far away, the church cannot participate in important classis activities and training programs.
3. Because East Bay CRC is closer to Classis Central California, it would be best to move the church to that classis to permit the church to be more active in that classis.

Classis Pacific Hanmi
Jang Ho Park, stated clerk

Overture 2: Permit the Transfer of East Bay Korean Church of El Cerrito, California, to Classis Central California

Classis Central California overtures synod to permit the transfer of East Bay Korean CRC, located in El Cerrito, California, from Classis Pacific Hanmi to Classis Central California. This transfer was requested by the church and has been approved by both Classis Pacific Hanmi and Classis Central California.

Ground: The geographic location of East Bay Korean CRC makes Central California a more convenient fit and will allow for fuller participation of East Bay Korean CRC in the ministry of classis.

Classis Central California
David E. Vander Meulen, stated clerk

Overture 3: Permit the Transfer of Three Congregations from Classis Pacific Hanmi to Classis Central California

Classis Pacific Hanmi overtures Synod 2014 to approve the transfer of Happy Valley CRC, Pleasanton, California; Lord's Grace CRC, Tracy, California; and San Jose Church of God's Love, Saratoga, California, to Classis Central California.

Grounds:

1. Classis Central California is agreeable with these transfers.
2. These three congregations are at a point in their ministry where they desire to function in an English-language setting for regional ministry.
3. The geographic proximity to Classis Central California will facilitate easier participation in classis meetings and functions.

Classis Pacific Hanmi
Jang Ho Park, stated clerk

Overture 4: Permit the Transfer of Three Congregations to Classis Central California from Classis Pacific Hanmi

Classis Central California overtures synod to approve the transfer of Happy Valley CRC (Pleasanton, Calif.), Lord's Grace CRC (Tracy, Calif.), and the San Jose Church of God's Love (Saratoga, Calif.) from Classis Pacific Hanmi to Classis Central California. This transfer was requested by the churches and approved by both Classis Pacific Hanmi and Classis Central California.

Ground: The geographic location of these three churches has made participation in Classis Pacific Hanmi a difficulty, and a move to Classis Central California will facilitate easier participation in the life of classis.

Classis Central California
David E. Vander Meulen, Stated Clerk

Overture 5: Permit the Transfer of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, from Classis Hackensack to Classis Southeast U.S.

Classis Southeast U.S. overtures synod to approve the transfer of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, from Classis Hackensack to Classis Southeast U.S.

Grounds:

1. We respect their desire to transfer.
2. The logistics of flights are easier to Florida.
3. Classis Southeast U.S. has a history of church plants in North and South Carolina.
4. Terra Ceia CRC desires to participate in a smaller classis and wants to contribute to the many emerging congregations in Classis Southeast U.S.

Classis Southeast U.S.
Vernon G. Vander Zee, stated clerk

Overture 6: Approve the Transfer of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, from Classis Hackensack to Classis Southeast U.S.

Classis Hackensack overtures synod to approve the transfer of Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, to Classis Southeast U.S.

Grounds:

1. As Terra Ceia CRC supports church planting in North Carolina, Classis Southeast U.S. is engaged with church planting in South Carolina and has done church planting in North Carolina.
2. Classis Southeast U.S. is geographically next door.
3. It has been difficult for officebearers from Terra Ceia to travel to attend Classis Hackensack meetings. Being a member of Classis Southeast U.S. would be easier.
4. Terra Ceia CRC feels they can better contribute to the ministry of Classis Southeast U.S. than they presently are able to do in Classis Hackensack.

Classis Hackensack
Sheila E. Holmes, stated clerk

Overture 7: Permit Classis Pacific Hanmi to Divide to Form Two Classes

I. Background

Over the past year a committee of Classis Pacific Hanmi has researched and studied the possibility of dividing Classis Pacific Hanmi into two separate classes. Factors considered include the following:

1. In comparison to other classes, Classis Pacific Hanmi is extremely large, consisting now of fifty congregations (see the 2014 *Yearbook*).
2. Requests have been submitted by some of the churches within Classis Pacific Hanmi to form a new classis.
3. The classis leadership and classis as a whole have agreed that there is a need to divide to form two classes for the sake of better management of classical work and ministry.
4. The central goal in forming two classes is for a renewed vision in the classis and in the development of its ministry.
5. Although our Korean-speaking churches still need to learn more effective CRC practices, it is very apparent that God is blessing the strategy of a Korean-language classis. (The classis began in 1996 with eleven congregations and now numbers fifty congregations.) A tentative roster is provided with this overture, demonstrating that 23 churches with 28 pastors would make up the membership of one classis, and 19 churches with 31 pastors would form the other classis. At this time of restructure, a few churches in the current classis seek to move into an English-speaking classis—their request is coming via a separate overture.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Hanmi overtures Synod 2014 to form two classes from the membership of the present Classis Pacific Hanmi, with the following understanding:

1. Both classes will begin to meet separately in September 2014.
2. A roster of the two classes and the names and functionaries of the two classes will be provided to the synodical office in the fall of 2014 after the two groups officially meet.
3. A mentor or mentoring committee to assist with the implementation of this process will be appointed by the office of the executive director to enable us to grow into healthy CRC classes.

In order that the above overture and perspective can be explained well in the English language, we ask that Rev. David Koll, director of Candidacy and longtime friend of our classis, be allowed to speak on our behalf when synod and its advisory committee considers this overture.

Classis Pacific Hanmi
Jang Ho Park, stated clerk

Tentative Roster

Classis 1: 23 Churches; 28 Pastors		Classis 2: 19 Churches; 31	
Jahng S. Jeong	Olympic Pres.	Namjoong Kang	Good Shepherd
Sunil Kim	Marathon	Tae K. Ko	Good Tree
Yong S. Kim	South Bay Early	Sung J. Kang	Han Sa Rang
Deog Jong Nam	Pilgrim	Joseph K. Kwak	Ye-Eun Pres.
Dong Woo Nam	Lord's Love Mission	Sung Hwan Kim	Good Tree
Il Hyun Nam	Logos Korean	Jonathan Kim	Triumph
O Seog Seo	LA Peace	Won Chul Ma	Inland All Nation
Kwak C. Yoon	San Jose New Hope	Jae Seong Moon	Triumph
Paul Im	Spring Fountain	Jang Ho Park	Good Shepherd
Se Jong Jang	Areumdaun	Sung Won Yoon	Orange Hanmin
Sung Ho Jung	New Vision	Chong Dae Yoon	Valley Dong San
Sung Yong Jung	Dallas Woori	Myung S. Lee	Great Vision
Yong C. Chung	Meeju Nanum	Jae D. Lee	Garden of Grace
Sang M. Moon	Cerritos Woori	Joshua S. Lim	Heart of the Lord
Dongil Kim	Gracious Ark	Ji Neung Jug	Inland All Nation
Hyung Joo Park	Spiritual Eyes	Jason Jun	LV New Life
Chul G. Yi	Spiritual Eyes	Kyung Hyun Cho	Korean Comm.
Boo H. Kwak	Disciples Comm.	Sung Chang Choi	New Joy
Hee Jin Kang	East Bay K.P.	Edward Yoon	Phoenix Presb.
Han D. Park	SA All Nation	Jong Pil Oh	Urim
Jung Ha Jung	Happy	Chan Gun Jung	Good Shepherd
Cheon S. Lee	S.C. Brothers	Joseph Seol	Missio Dei Chapel
Ik Chang	Retired	Nak Y. Ryu	Missio Dei Chapel
Tong K. Park	Retired	Jin Ku Kim	Oxnard Korean
Roger Ryu	Retired	Sung Jae Kang	Retired
Young R. Ki	Wholly Offering	Won Suk Song	Loan (Alaska Oriental)
Sung Hyun Huh	The Lord's Church	Theodore Lim	Global Mission
David Suh	CRWM	Taek Ho Yang	Missionary
		Sungil Son	In Korea
		Jae Young Kim	Seminary
		Kyung Ho Park	Applied Loan Pastor

Undecided Churches/Pastors		Transfer to California Central Classis	
In Y. Jung	Retired	Kang W. Kim	Happy Valley
Vacant	Smyrna Church	Boo Sik Kong	Lord's Grace Church
Pil H. Yang	Missionary	Kyung Jang	San Jose God's Love
Sung C. Yoon	N/A		
Jung Ho Seo	N/A		
Song J. Cho	N/A		
Sung Ho Park	Inland All Nation		

Overture 8: Mandate *The Banner* to Include in Every Issue a Segment That Clearly Teaches the Truths of Our Confessions

I. Overture

To help alleviate doubts and prevent “intolerable confusion,” Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to mandate *The Banner* to include in every issue a segment that clearly teaches the truths of our confessions. This segment should have a caption explaining that although all of *The Banner’s* articles may not necessarily represent the official views of the denomination, this particular segment certainly does. Further, although there will be articles that raise questions and challenge readers, no article should be published that clearly opposes the confessions.

Grounds:

1. *The Banner* is a tool by which to promote the unity of the CRCNA. When this tool attacks the “Forms of Unity,” it becomes divisive.
2. Confusion with regard to our confessions causes congregations to place less emphasis on doctrine, our children to question the value of such teaching, and our new members to wonder where we stand theologically.
3. To avoid confusion, *The Banner’s* subscription to the confessions should be consistently underscored.
4. This overture protects *The Banner’s* freedom to raise questions and challenge its readers, but at the same time calls *The Banner* to reinforce our confessional unity.

II. Background

Since 1914 *The Banner* has been the official magazine of the CRCNA. *The Banner* has been mandated by synod to do four things: inform, inspire, educate, and challenge its readers. The aspect of challenging its readers is in keeping with the 16th-century Reformation principle *semper reformanda* (“always reforming”). This is a key principle whereby the church of Christ must continually be sanctified and Reformed by the teaching of God’s Word. However, the church of the Reformation also underscored the importance of affirming scriptural truth as outlined in the confessions. The confessions have been properly identified as our Forms of Unity. The denomination’s official magazine should be in alignment with the denomination’s official confessions. The magazine’s website says, “Our mandate is to inform, inspire, educate, and challenge members of the CRCNA by ‘speaking the truth in love’ (Ephesians 4:15).”

Certainly this mandate to “speak the truth in love” does not require *The Banner* to simply regurgitate the truth as contained in the confessions, but it does forbid a flat-out denial of confessional truth. Henry DeMoor, in his commentary on Church Order Article 83, states: “Leadership comes with heavy responsibilities. It is possible, from time to time, to allow a member to express reservations about our confessions. On the other hand, when the ordained do this the result is intolerable confusion.”

In violation of its mandate, *The Banner* published an article in the June 2013 issue titled “Tomorrow’s Theology.” This article did not merely raise questions but argued against our confessions’ teaching on many major fronts, including creation, Adam and Eve, the fall into sin, original sin, salvation, and eschatology. In the July 2013 issue the editor wrote an article, “Why We Dare Not Play It Safe,” explaining *The Banner’s* policy and why it is important to provide a place where issues can be openly discussed. In the August 2013 issue, the editor apologized for publishing articles that “led to significant doubt about the magazine’s direction.”

Classis Wisconsin
Kenneth Prol, stated clerk

Overture 9: Review the Membership of the *Banner* Editorial Council and Review the Editorial Policy of *The Banner*

I. Background

In the May through August 2013 issues, *The Banner* published a series of articles and editorial responses (“Tomorrow’s Theology” in May; “Sex, Intimacy, and the Single Person,” “Why We Dare Not Play It Safe,” and “Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ” in June), which greatly upset members throughout the denomination. A flurry of letters, online comments, and even overtures calling for the editor to resign circulated through the denomination and its various organs of communication.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of the denomination responded by addressing the issue at their September 27, 2013, meeting. They reviewed *The Banner’s* mandate established by Synod 1998, interviewed the editor, Rev. Robert De Moor, and expressed disappointment with the situation. It “concurred with the *Banner* editor’s assessment that he failed to use appropriate editorial judgment by not more clearly indicating that these articles were intended to promote conversation and were in no way intended to present official positions of the CRC” (formal communication to the CRC churches by the Board of Trustees, dated Sept. 27, 2013).

Furthermore, the BOT accepted the editor’s apology, did not accede to the overtures presented, and appointed a subcommittee to review and recommend measures to strengthen the mandate of *The Banner* Editorial Council.

While these actions deal with the pressing issues and reactions caused by the publishing of these articles, we respectfully believe that a longer term solution for the oversight of the mission and editorial policy of *The Banner* needs to be implemented for the following reasons:

1. The analogy of a “kitchen table” has been used to describe the mission and editorial policy of *The Banner*. This analogy breaks down at a key

point. A kitchen table, and the conversations that take place around it, primarily involve a family, and as such are private and not open for public participation or observation.

The Banner, by its own admission, and in the perception of members of the denomination, is the public voice for the denomination. As such, it is not a suitable place for private familial conversation, or certainly open argumentation.

Further, the BOT tacitly recognized this function and mission of *The Banner* in handing down its decision on September 27, 2013, when it concurred with the *Banner* editor's assessment that he "failed to use appropriate editorial judgment by not more clearly indicating that these articles were intended to promote conversation and were in no way intended to present official positions of the CRC." This distinction regarding editorial judgment and the purpose of the articles would be redundant if *The Banner* was seen by the denomination and those outside the denomination as merely our kitchen table, where we "freely converse about significant matters and where all reasonable voices are heard," and not, in fact, the public voice of the denomination.

2. The leadership of the church is charged with protection of the members of the congregations placed in their care (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Scripture likens these members to sheep and babies; analogies which are pregnant with meaning for those in positions of leadership.

We believe that in the role of teachers, guards, and overseers, it is unwise and detrimental to the spiritual health of God's people to expose them to biblically unorthodox ideas in the name of promoting discussion with the goal of stimulating them to growth and maturity.

The writer of Hebrews (5:14) reminds us that solid food belongs to those who are of full age, or to those who are mature in their faith, "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This implies that congregants reach a certain level of instruction, knowledge, discernment, and maturity before they are ready to be exposed to such ideas.

To expose the less seasoned believer prematurely to such solid food will only cause doubts, confusion, and unnecessary tumult—thereby weakening the faith of God's people. It is the role of the leadership of the local church to understand the maturity of those placed in their care and to give them food that is suitable. This requires a level of intimacy and knowledge that is not possessed by an editor of *The Banner*.

Should we be surprised, then, when controversial articles are indiscriminately published in the denominational voice, that such a violent reaction ensues? Such tactics are not a suitable methodology for helping sheep grow in their understanding and application of their faith.

It takes great maturity, wisdom, knowledge, and humility to study, understand, and discern the orthodoxy and utility of "new ideas" in light of the standard of God's Word. This is not the job of the voice of our denomination, and certainly not the work of the less mature members of our congregations. This task is best carried out by synod, scholars, and refereed journals.

II. Overture

Classis Columbia therefore overtures synod to do the following:

1. Ensure that the Editorial Council overseeing *The Banner* is comprised of one member from the Board of Trustees (elected or appointed by the Board of Trustees) and three pastors and three elders selected from local congregations representative of the whole denomination (as the board members for agencies are chosen). These six members would be chosen as follows: one pastor and one elder from regions 1-4; one pastor and one elder from regions 5-8; and one pastor and one elder from regions 9-12. The chairperson of this Editorial Council will be elected by the Council itself from the six representatives from the local congregations.
2. Reaffirm *The Banner's* mandate "to (1) inform readers about what is happening in the CRC as well as the church at large; (2) provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living; and (3) stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which we are a part," (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, p. 76) as an expression of our commitment to the authority of Scripture and our Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

- a. The *Banner* serves as the official publication of our denomination.
- b. "Critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which we are a part" is only beneficial to the local congregation insofar as it fosters a Reformed biblical worldview in a manner that stimulates healthy conversations which are edifying and encouraging.
- c. Such oversight will be beneficial to the local congregation that it serves.

Classis Columbia

Roger D. Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 10: Remove the Current Editor of *The Banner*, Retract Two Articles, and Publish Articles That Faithfully Reflect the Bible and the CRC's Doctrinal Standards

I. Overture

In the June and July 2013 issues of *The Banner*, Editor Bob De Moor published two articles, "Tomorrow's Theology" (June) and "Where Do We Draw the Line?" (July). These articles, as Editor De Moor has conceded, "argue for modification of present Christian Reformed doctrinal and ethical understandings" (www.thebanner.org/other/2013/06/dear-brothers-and-sisters-in-christ).

Because these articles are contrary to the Bible and to the Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) doctrinal standards, their publication undermines the CRC's commitment to the Bible and the creeds; it also undermines the denomination's witness to the world. Accordingly, Classis Illiana overtures synod to direct the necessary persons or agencies to remove Rev. De Moor as editor of *The Banner*, retract the two articles, and publish articles that faithfully reflect the Bible's and the CRC's doctrinal standards' teaching on Adam

and Eve, the fall, original sin, salvation, and human sexual behavior. Synod must act because the Board of Trustees (BOT) has failed to take meaningful action to safeguard the CRC's theological integrity and Christian witness.

Grounds:

1. *The Banner* published articles contradicting sound doctrine and godly living as taught in Scripture and the Reformed confessions.
2. The editor-in-chief of *The Banner* is responsible to publish only articles that do not plainly contradict Scripture and the Reformed confessions.
3. The recent articles were such blatant and egregious violations of biblical and confessional teaching, and so divisive and disruptive of the well-being and harmony of CRC congregations, that *The Banner* needs new leadership in order to regain trustworthiness and credibility.
4. Our witness to the world as CRC congregations has been damaged severely, creating the impression in the minds of many that these articles represent a profound deterioration in our theology and commitment to Christian orthodoxy.
5. With changes in Faith Alive Christian Resources and the dissolution of its board, *The Banner* currently is under the direct supervision of the BOT.
6. As evidenced by the BOT Highlights of the BOT's September 2013 meeting, the BOT has failed to take sufficient action in this case.
7. Failure of the denomination to act more forcefully here will strengthen and solidify the concerns that have been created by these events, and further separate us from our Bible-believing brothers and sisters throughout the world.

II. Rationale

A. *"Tomorrow's Theology" is contrary to the Bible and to the CRC's doctrinal standards*

The article says that Reformed doctrines regarding Adam and Eve, the fall, original sin, and salvation will someday seem silly. "Tomorrow's Theology" bristles with too many doctrinal deviations to examine in detail here. One sentence suffices as an example. Rev. Walhout states, "But if Adam and Eve are not understood as real historical people, then there can hardly be an inheritance of sinfulness from parent to child all the way back to Adam—in which case the entire doctrine of original sin falls by the wayside." In contrast, the Bible and both the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) and the Belgic Confession (BC) teach that Adam and Eve were real, historical individuals, the first human beings, the progenitors of humankind, specially created in God's image on the sixth day of creation. They were created with true righteousness and holiness ("And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good," Genesis 1:31; HC Q&A 6), but rebelled against God, corrupting human nature with original sin. "Tomorrow's Theology" denies these truths. By way of example, it also denies the following:

1. Romans 5:19: "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."
2. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49: "Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the

spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

3. HC Q&A 7: "Then where does this corrupt human nature come from? A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise. This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are all conceived and born in a sinful condition."
4. BC Article XV: "We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind. . . ."
5. BC Article XVI: "We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just."

Editor De Moor correctly perceived that Rev. Walhout's opinions were contrary to the CRC's doctrinal standards. Indeed, this should have been obvious to any reasonably informed editor. Rev. Walhout worked at CRC Publications for 13 years, and *The Banner* referred readers to his website. In his web profile, Rev. Walhout clearly states that he feels free to abandon his church's theology: "Being retired from professional life, I am now free to explore theology without the constraints of ecclesiastical loyalties" (www.smashwords.com/profile/view/OldHorizons). Rev. Walhout bluntly says that the Heidelberg Catechism "should no longer be accepted as definitive of Christian theology" (*The Heidelberg Catechism*, 2011, p. 2). Before Editor De Moor published "Tomorrow's Theology," Rev. Walhout had already stated in a 2012 book that Reformed doctrines would tumble like dominoes before the force of evolutionary theory:

Something is happening in the realm of science that has theological consequences, such that one traditional doctrine of the Reformed faith after another is affected, knocked over so to speak... While it is true that this entire essay is an "if-then" exercise, I do wish to preface it with an admission that I personally am convinced that the "if" part of it is basically correct, so that for me at least the "then" part of it follows rather consistently. If the evolutionary scientists are correct, then traditional Reformed theology is in trouble, serious trouble.

(*Theological Dominoes*, 2012, pp. 2-3)

As editor of the CRC's flagship publication, Rev. De Moor is doing his job when he informs the denomination's members of such heterodox opinion expressed by a longtime leader at CRC Publications; Rev. De Moor is not doing his job when he presents these opinions without rebuttal or correction from the Bible or the creeds. Editor De Moor's June 26, 2013, open letter cited the green box that appeared along with Rev. Walhout's article as evidence he sought to convey that Walhout's opinions were not the official position of the CRC. This insert, however, did not even mention the denomination's doctrinal standards, much less refute Walhout.

Editor De Moor's June 26 letter apologized "that the manner and timing of publishing these articles has led to significant doubt about the magazine's direction. . . ." We accept that apology as far as it goes, but respectfully

submit that it does not address the real problem with his decision to publish Rev. Walhout's article as an un rebutted challenge to the teachings of the Bible and the CRC's confessions.¹ Editor De Moor plans to continue these "painful but necessary conversations," but his actions have shown that he can no longer be trusted to conduct these conversations within the bounds of Scripture and our common confessions.

B. "Where Do We Draw the Line?" is contrary to the Bible and to the CRC's doctrinal standards

"Where Do We Draw the Line?" advocates drawing a line for sexual intimacy at "committed relationship[s] between two reasonably mature young people," while eschewing the church's stance against premarital cohabitation. Echoing Editor De Moor's June 26 letter, Harry Van Belle concludes by calling for the beginning of a conversation. Without apparent irony, Mr. Van Belle talks of "leading the next generation with biblically grounded insights" even as he runs roughshod over the Bible's divinely inspired wisdom regarding sexual expression.

As with questions of human origins and original sin, the Bible and the creeds have had this conversation already:

1. HC Q&A 108: "What is God's will for us in the Seventh Commandment?
A. God condemns all unchastity. We should therefore thoroughly detest it and, married or single, live decent and chaste lives."
2. Ephesians 5:3-6: "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."

Instead of having conversation in which one of the participants advocates jettisoning the teaching of Scripture and the creeds, a *Banner* editor should foster a conversation that equips our denomination's parents to train up their children in the way they should go, that inspires its young people, young

¹ Editor De Moor merely expressed regret that "the manner and timing of publishing these articles has led to significant doubt about the magazine's direction." The problem was not the manner or timing or negative perceptions of *The Banner's* direction. The problem was the unbiblical content of the articles, which should not have been published in the denomination's official magazine except as examples of teachings contrary to the Bible and the Three Forms of Unity.

adults, and other singles to live holy and chaste lives to the glory of God, and that fosters strong marriages.

C. The editor failed to discern the CRC's current context and thus caused great damage to perceptions of The Banner and the CRC

In the April 2013 issue of *The Banner*, when he was about to publish the two articles that contradicted the Bible and the confessions, Rev. De Moor published an editorial titled, "Don't Be So Sure." He wrote: "On many debatable issues *The Banner* has been accused of 'pushing its own agenda.' Truth to tell? We open the pages of this magazine to a discussion of such topics because we really and sincerely *don't know*" (emphasis in original). In subsequent issues of *The Banner*, the editor proceeded to publish two heterodox articles on matters that he evidently thinks we should not be too sure about.

This occurred in a context where Rev. De Moor's predecessor as editor of *The Banner*, John Suk, had written a book titled *Not Sure* and had recently left the Christian Reformed Church while affirming homosexual marriage and expressing unbelief that Jesus is coming again in power and glory. At the very time when a former *Banner* editor had just done such things, it was hardly the right moment for the current editor to urge the denomination, "Don't Be So Sure." It was a time for *The Banner* to demonstrate its trustworthiness, not its edginess. Yet the editor chose to call for uncertainty and to publish articles that contradicted biblical, Reformed theology and ethics.

During the same period, the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources, the CRC's publishing arm, was being disbanded. Amid uncertainty about the future of publishing by the CRC and its agencies, it was hardly the time for *The Banner* to publish an attack on Reformed theology by a longtime leader at Faith Alive (formerly CRC Publications). The editor's decision to publish Rev. Walhout's views involved not only a lack of theological discernment but also a disastrous lack of practical wisdom and a failure to be alert to the denominational context and perceptions.

D. The Board of Trustees has failed to act to safeguard the Christian Reformed Church's theological integrity and witness

At its September 2013 meeting, the Board of Trustees addressed what it referred to as "the controversy that resulted from several recent articles in *The Banner*." Rather than addressing the articles themselves, particularly the decisions of the editor, which were responsible for their printing, the BOT believed itself merely to be addressing the controversy over his decisions. With respect, the problem is not just the controversy. Rather, the root problem is that these contradictions to biblical, Reformed teaching have been printed in *The Banner*, and that the editor is responsible for this fact. The BOT's seeming lack of concern over the articles themselves, and Editor De Moor's role in their printing, also is evident, more importantly, in the slight action that it took in response. Simply to express "disappointment" with those decisions and to appoint "a subcommittee to review and recommend measures to strengthen the oversight role of the *Banner* Editorial Council" does not take either those decisions, nor the articles at issue, seriously enough.

No strengthening of the role of the *Banner* Editorial Council would have improved this situation at all. In fact, the minutes of the *Banner* Editorial Council meeting of June 6, 2013, state that its "members expressed wholehearted support for the Editor's actions," related to the printing of

"Tomorrow's Theology." Furthermore, the council approved the following official statement in summary: "The Editorial Council agrees that the editor's actions were within his mandate and the mandate of *The Banner*, and that he performed his duties within the appropriate boundaries and with integrity."

After a review of the Editorial Council's minutes, the decision by the BOT to strengthen the oversight role of the Council appears to be an endorsement of the editor's actions. This is not only insufficient; it is incredible. The church has been subjected to the proposed dismantling of nearly every basic tenet of the biblical gospel in light of the theory of evolution, and this is the BOT's official response. For the sake of the Christian Reformed Church's theological and confessional integrity, Synod must reject "Tomorrow's Theology" and "Where Do We Draw the Line?" and take the only action that will evidence the seriousness of this rejection: replace the editor who decided to publish them.

III. Conclusion

In the aftermath, Editor De Moor wrote an editorial "Why We Dare Not Play It Safe." One statement is particularly important for synod to consider. According to Editor De Moor, "Our editorial policy allows for articles from a diversity of views and opinions—provided they are within the bounds of Scripture [and] don't directly advocate against the doctrines taught in the creeds and confessions." That is precisely the problem: "Tomorrow's Theology" and "Where Do We Draw the Line?" were not within the bounds of Scripture and directly advocated against the doctrines taught in the creeds and confessions. In light of Editor De Moor's own stated understanding of *The Banner's* editorial policy, it would appear that he thought those articles did not conflict with Scripture or the Reformed confessions.

Each generation of God's people must grapple with the issues of the day. Two issues prominent in the early 21st century are human origins (and all that flows from the seminal early chapters of Genesis) and human sexuality. As the church engages on these issues, the Savior calls his people to bear witness to him and to the truth revealed in his Word. Conversations are one way to bear such witness, and *The Banner* is one place to converse. However, the CRC's witness on these issues is dimmed when *The Banner's* conversation fails to reflect Scripture and the creeds and instead presents, without rebuttal, articles contrary to them. By his actions in connection with the articles discussed above, Editor De Moor has shown himself unfit to steward the CRC's discussion of these issues. Accordingly, Classis Illiana respectfully requests that synod (1) direct the necessary persons or agencies to remove Editor De Moor from *The Banner's* editorial staff and (2) direct *The Banner's* editorial staff to address issues of human origins, original sin, and human sexuality in a manner consistent with the Bible and the CRC's creeds and confessions.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 11: Remove and Replace the Editor-in-chief of *The Banner*

The council of Saint Joseph CRC in St. Joseph, Michigan, overtures synod to remove and replace the editor-in-chief of *The Banner* for violating the proper parameters of his position by publishing open attacks on biblical, Reformed doctrine and ethics.

Grounds:

1. The editor-in chief of *The Banner* has been charged by synod to publish only articles that are “faithful to Scripture and the confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 372).
2. This charge is of the utmost importance, and synod established it for good reason. People both inside and outside of the CRC look to *The Banner* to provide an edifying and faithful perspective on issues that confront the church as it makes its way through the confusing world in which it lives, seeking to be faithful to Christ as it holds out the word of life. Each decision the church makes on such matters is of eternal consequence, whether that decision is made by an individual church member or by a gathered congregation. Publishing materials for the church’s consideration of these issues, then, that are plainly contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures and confessions, violates the most basic responsibility that is given to those in the church who are given a voice of teaching or influence. As we are cautioned in James 3:1, “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” The strictness of this judgment is made all the clearer for us by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:16: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” This is no idle warning, and the church must take it seriously.
3. The seriousness of this responsibility is reinforced by the language of both the current Covenant for Officebearers, and its forerunner, the Form of Subscription, one of which the editor of *The Banner* and all synodical delegates have signed. The Covenant for Officebearers reads as follows:

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God’s creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God’s Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their

doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. *The Banner* has, under the direct leadership of its current editor, published articles that plainly contradict both Scripture and the Reformed confessions. Two recent articles, "Tomorrow's Theology," by Rev. Edwin Walhout, and "Where Do We Draw the Line?" by Harry Van Belle, were particularly blatant and egregious violations of this and demand immediate attention.
5. As evidenced by the BOT Highlights of the BOT's September 2013 meeting, it is clear that the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA has failed to take sufficient action in this case. To simply express "disappointment" with the editor's decisions and to appoint "a subcommittee to review and recommend measures to strengthen the oversight role of *The Banner* Editorial Council," is far from adequate, especially given the fact that this same *Banner* Editorial Council stated in its June 2013 minutes that its "members expressed wholehearted support for the Editor's actions."
6. Failure of the denomination to act more forcefully here will only serve to strengthen and solidify the concerns that have been created by these events, further separate us from our Bible-believing brothers and sisters throughout the Christian world, and significantly diminish the actual working authority of both the Covenant for Officebearers and the decisions of synods past (in this case Synod 1998) as each seeks to ensure the biblical and confessional reliability of our voice to the world.
7. The only action that can deal sufficiently with this situation is the removal and replacement of the editor.

Council of St. Joseph CRC, St. Joseph, Michigan
Aaron Mead, clerk

Note: The above overture was submitted to the January 16, 2014, meeting of Classis Holland but was not adopted.

Overture 12: Repudiate the Unbiblical and Contra-Confessional Content of Articles Published in *The Banner*, and Replace the Current Editor and Editorial Council of *The Banner*

I. Background

In 2013 the editor and the editorial council of *The Banner* decided to publish two articles containing unbiblical and contra-confessional teachings: “Tomorrow’s Theology” (by Rev. Edwin Walhout, June 2013) and “Where Do We Draw the Line?” (by Mr. Harry Van Belle, July 2013). In response to these articles, many letters and a couple of overtures from CRCNA classes were addressed to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, asking the BOT to take action by replacing the editor of *The Banner*.

However, instead of replacing the editor of *The Banner*, the BOT distributed a formal communication to the churches in which it noted that the editor, Rev. Robert De Moor, “has faithfully served as editor of *The Banner* for the past ten years. . . .” As evidence of his ability to stimulate the discussion of theological issues and trends in the denomination, the BOT cited “an increase in readership” of *The Banner* and “many expressions of appreciation as well as, at times, negative responses.”

In addition, the BOT took the following actions: (1) The BOT expressed “disappointment with the situation,” concurring with the *Banner* editor’s self-assessment that “he failed to use appropriate editorial judgment by not more clearly indicating that these articles were intended to promote conversation and were in no way intended to present official positions of the CRC.” (2) “The BOT accepted Rev. De Moor’s sincere apology for the manner in which the articles in question were presented.” (3) The BOT did not accede to overtures that requested the replacement of the current *Banner* editor. (4) The BOT appointed a subcommittee to review and recommend measures “to strengthen the mandate of the *Banner* Editorial Council.” (Quotations in this paragraph are from the Formal Statement adopted by the BOT on September 27, 2013.)

Note that the editor of *The Banner* did not apologize for the *content* of the above-mentioned articles, but for the *manner* in which the articles were presented. He did not publicly apologize for allowing unbiblical and contra-confessional doctrinal and moral teachings to be published in *The Banner*, but for insufficient editorial disclaimers.

Note as well that by choosing this occasion to commend the editor for his ten years of service, the BOT chose not to hold him (or the editorial council) responsible for the content of the above-mentioned articles.

Classis Minnkota is convinced that the action of the BOT to date is inadequate and that it does not sufficiently take into consideration the implications of the Covenant for Officebearers (formerly Form of Subscription). Those who subscribe to the Covenant for Officebearers affirm “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God. . . .” Acknowledging the authority of God’s Word, they promise to “submit to it in all matters of life and faith.” They also affirm the three confessions of the CRCNA (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) “whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. . . .” Therefore those who subscribe to the Covenant for Officebearers pledge to “promote and defend” these doctrines faithfully, “conforming

[their] preaching, teaching, writing, serving and living to them.” Also, those who subscribe to the Covenant for Officebearers state that if they become convinced that teachings in the confessions are contrary to the Word of God, they will “communicate [their] views to the church, according to the procedure prescribed in the Church Order and its supplements.”

At this point we should highlight the regulations in the Church Order Supplement that guide those who have difficulty with points of doctrine in the confessions. Those who find themselves differing from the confessions are to express their concerns privately to their council, to their classis, or to synod so that the church may decide whether or not their views are biblical and therefore may be openly taught. Church Order Supplement, Article 5 states, “In all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, the matter shall not be open for discussion by the whole church. . . .”

To our knowledge, the authors of “Tomorrow’s Theology” and “Where Do We Draw the Line?” did not express their contra-confessional views privately to their council, etc., for evaluation, but openly broadcast their views, in part by having them published in *The Banner*. In this way they violated the spirit and the letter of the Covenant for Officebearers and Church Order regulations. By agreeing to publish these articles, the editor and the editorial council of *The Banner* became accessories to this violation of the Covenant for Officebearers. Therefore, the editor and editorial council of *The Banner* should be held accountable, not for failing to publish disclaimers, but for giving Walhout and Van Belle a platform for violating the Covenant for Officebearers.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2014 to repudiate the unbiblical and contra-confessional content of articles published in *The Banner* and to replace the current editor and the editorial council of *The Banner*.

Grounds:

1. The current editor and the editorial council of *The Banner* published articles with unbiblical and contra-confessional teachings that questioned the historical reality of Adam and the veracity of the doctrine of original sin (Walhout, “Tomorrow’s Theology”) and called for a redefinition of biblical morality, suggesting that it is time for the church to bless pre-marital cohabitation by those who are committed to each other (Van Belle, “Where Do We Draw the Line?”). These teachings contradict the Bible doctrines taught in the Catechism:
 - a. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 7
 - Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?
 - A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise. This fall has so poisoned our nature that we are all conceived and born in a sinful condition.
 - b. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 108
 - Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?
 - A. That God condemns all unchastity, and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it and live decent and chaste lives, within or without the holy state of marriage.

2. To date, the editor and the editorial council of *The Banner* have not apologized for or repudiated the content of the articles that were published; they have only expressed regret for the manner in which the articles were published.
3. The editor and the editorial council of *The Banner* demonstrated a serious lapse of judgment by choosing to make *The Banner* the means for the authors of these articles to violate the Covenant for Officebearers.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 13: Direct the BOT to Create an Editorial Policy for *The Banner* That Requires Adherence to the Covenant for Officebearers

I. Background

Two articles in *The Banner* in 2013, “Tomorrow’s Theology” by Edwin Walhout and “Where Do We Draw the Line?” by Harry Van Belle, generated significant controversy because they promoted changing currently held doctrinal and ethical commitments in the CRCNA. A number of people we as pastors and elders have talked with believe these articles illustrated a general movement in our denominational magazine to regularly call into question the beliefs we cherish. While we appreciate the news and articles that do address contemporary issues from a Reformed perspective, a significant number of leaders and congregants have canceled their subscription to *The Banner*, have removed this publication from their churches, and continue to question why ministry shares fund a publication that promotes worldly perspectives. Whether we like it or not, many people read articles from *The Banner* as representative of the beliefs held by the CRCNA. Having to explain that leaders in the CRCNA promote perspectives contrary to its official teachings undermines our unity and interferes with our witness. We believe this overture offers a constructive parameter that would clarify the nature and purpose of this publication moving forward.

The editorial titled “Why We Dare Not Play It Safe” from the July 2013 issue of *The Banner* summarized synod’s mandate that this publication “do four things: inform, inspire, educate, and challenge its readers.” The editor articulated his belief that challenging its readers involves publishing articles that do not represent the official views of the magazine, the editor, or the denomination. He later stated, “Our editorial policy allows for articles from a diversity of views and opinions—provided they are within the bounds of Scripture, don’t directly advocate against the doctrines taught in the creeds and confessions, and remain reasonable and respectful.” This has left readers confused about the editorial policy and has stereotyped those who disagree with the above articles as wanting to “play it safe.” There is a distinction between challenging readers to live out the faith we profess and challenging the very faith we profess. We are convinced the readership of *The Banner* agrees it should do the former but not the latter.

The “editorial note” from the August 2013 issue of *The Banner* offered an ambiguous apology for the above-mentioned articles. The editor affirmed the principle that engaging issues does not mean calling “into question our

common commitment [to its creeds, confessions, and the infallibility of Scripture],” yet he stated that the authors of the articles in question “genuinely seek to apply their Reformed understanding to difficult issues.” The substance of the editor’s apology is that “the manner and timing of publishing these articles has led to significant doubt about the magazine’s direction.” In other words, *The Banner* did not acknowledge these articles violated editorial policy but called them “necessary conversations” and is sorry the readers have problems with them. Responses to concerned readers have sidestepped the underlying disagreement that these articles in question applied a “Reformed understanding to difficult issues.” The *Banner* Editorial Council meeting minutes from June 6, 2013, stated that no editorial policy boundaries had been crossed by these articles, yet in the BOT meeting notes from September 27, 2013, there was an acknowledgement of poor editorial judgment and a failure to edify. It remains unclear what does and does not qualify as “Reformed understanding” and therefore what is and is not included in *The Banner*.

The commitment of ordained leaders in the CRC to promote sound doctrine and to restrain from teaching anything contrary is formally stated in the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church. By signing this document, leaders acknowledge that they “heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving and living to them.” They agree to handle disagreements in the following way: “Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God’s Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements.” The church order does not instruct those who disagree with the church’s teaching to write editorials or articles in the denominational publication advocating their views, but this is how calls to change our beliefs and practices have been brought to the church. Even though the congregations who hold ministerial credentials are responsible for holding individual contributors to *The Banner* accountable for their doctrine and ethics, we believe the BOT ought to create an editorial policy for *The Banner* that makes adherence to the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church an explicit requirement to help define what is a “Reformed understanding” and clarify what it means to inform, inspire, educate, and challenge its readers.

II. Overture

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures synod to direct the BOT to create an editorial policy for *The Banner* which, at the very minimum, requires adherence to the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church as it carries out its synodically adopted mandate.

Grounds:

1. Such an editorial policy ensures that persons unfamiliar with or newer to the CRC would consistently encounter beliefs the CRC adheres to in the pages of its publication.
2. This editorial policy promotes the denominational framework for nurturing unity within diversity in our congregations through its denominational publication.

3. With an abundance of publications and forums in which beliefs are questioned and all options are on the table, *The Banner*, a publication by the church for the church, does not need to participate in such dialogue for CRC members to encounter views that go against our creeds and confessions.
4. This editorial policy reinforces what the Covenant for Officebearers already states and what most congregants already expect from *The Banner*.
5. This recommendation gives a gracious benefit of the doubt to all individuals involved in this recent controversy and focuses on creating a policy everyone can agree on.

Classis Atlantic Northeast
Christopher A. Fluit, stated clerk

Overture 14: Appoint a Study Committee to Provide Guidelines for Fiscal Management of Donations by CRC Agencies and Institutions

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtures synod, in light of the recent financial mishaps at Calvin College, to establish a study committee to set and/or review guidelines for the fiscal management of donated funds. This committee would look into policies that prevent employees or directors of agencies and institutions supported by ministry shares from engaging in risky investment strategies.

Grounds:

1. The January 2013 issue of *The Banner*, under the heading “Calvin College VP of Finance Steps Down,” reported that “the college is facing payments on more than \$100 million in debt resulting from investment losses that will come due in 2017. The college is currently undergoing an 18-month review to direct about 10 percent of its budget to service the debt.”

The April 2013 issue of *The Banner* gave more information, indicating that cost of new buildings exceeded donated funds by a considerable margin. Investment income was supposed to cover the difference, but fell far short.

The new president indicated in an open letter to the college community that there were acts of omission and commission that led to this financial situation.

Note: This overture does not seek to find blame. President Le Roy appointed an independent task force to examine the financial situation of the college. This overture seeks to build on this task force and institute wise policies not only for Calvin College but also for other agencies and institutions supported by ministry shares.

2. This is not the first time that agencies or institutions affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church in North America have made risky investments. About 15 years ago, many agencies learned that their invested funds had been lost in a single investment. Many of us believed that the denomination would have learned never again to put a great deal

of their eggs in one periled basket. Clearly no policies have been put in place to prevent such extreme losses.

3. Some people have lost confidence in the institutions and agencies affiliated with our denomination because of such unreasonable risks taken with donated funds. For instance, a month after the first *Banner* article, one church (Iron Springs [Alberta] CRC) had an offering scheduled for Calvin Theological Seminary. Some people contacted the deacons, wondering if this was justified based on what they had read in the January issue of *The Banner*. In other words the mistakes made in one institution have placed a shadow of mistrust on other similar institutions.
4. As charitable institutions or organizations, we are entrusted with the funds given to us by donors. These donors believe it is right and good stewardship for them to give both to the local church and to various agencies and institutions. They expect that the organizations, agencies, and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church also use good stewardship. Few people consider a highly leveraged risky investment to be good stewardship of donated funds.
5. Some of these institutions, including Calvin College, are legally owned by or affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church, and, as such, there might be liabilities for the denomination if these institutions failed.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
J. Cameron Fraser, stated clerk

Overture 15: Re-examine Missionary Support Policies, Specifically the Policy that Requires Missionaries to Raise 90 Percent of Their Support

I. Background

The advisory committee of Synod 2013 included a brief sentence at the end of observations on Christian Reformed World Missions, dropping the following bombshell: “Missionaries will need to raise 90 percent of their funding, a change from the previous amount to be raised: 60 percent” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 580).

Some discussion is reported in *The Banner* of July 2013; moreover, the January 2014 *Banner* (pp. 10-11) carries an extensive report with missionary reactions. Actually, many involved members are not aware of this shift from ministry share support to privately raised support and are shocked by it.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to instruct Christian Reformed World Missions to reexamine its policy switch that requires our missionaries to raise 90 percent of their support, and meanwhile to reinstate its previous policy of missionaries raising 60 percent of their support.

Grounds:

1. When our missionaries are asked to raise up to 90 percent of their support, we break with the principle stated in the letter of call: “Knowing that the laborers are worthy of their hire, to encourage you in the

discharge of your duties and to free you from material need while you are ministering God's Word to us, the council promises . . . [here follow salary details]." This is the principle on which our ministers/missionaries were called: you do this ministry; we will support you.

2. Fundraising distorts the message and the relationship the missionary shares with the home church by stressing the need for financial support instead of building a sense of shared mission.
3. There's a frightening paragraph in *The Banner* article (Jan. 2014, p. 10): "In material sent to missionaries, CRWM noted that if missionaries do not meet the goal, it may be necessary to increase the length of their next home service to *'provide more time for them to build relationships'*" (italics added).
4. Many congregations already provide substantial support in addition to their ministry share payments to daughters and sons of the church who are engaged in various ministries, and they have their local mission efforts to support.
5. There are, of course, different funding models for missions (e.g., tent-maker). But in our history if you call and send someone full-time, you support them full-time so that they can do their calling.

Note: Subsequent to classis' approval of the above overture, the originating council proposed changes to the overture. On February 11, 2014, the executive team of classis decided to incorporate these changes as shown in italics and underlined, with the understanding that classis will review these changes at its May 15, 2014, meeting and inform synod of its final action.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Overture 16: Establish a Review Committee to Study Two Aspects of Christian Reformed World Missions

Classis B.C. North-West overtures Synod 2014 to establish a review committee to study and make recommendations to address the following two aspects of Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM):

1. How missionaries are to be enabled, using the new support model, and equipped to serve out in the field.
2. The current administrative structure and its expectations of those serving in the field.

Grounds:

- a. The new expectation announced at Synod 2013 that career missionaries of CRWM will need to raise a total of 90 percent (an increase of 45%) of their basic costs in 5 percent increments over the next number of years.
- b. The amount needed to be raised is much more than similar mission organizations such as Youth With a Mission and World Renew.
- c. As a denomination, we should not be following the culture's individualistic tendency but should work together as the body of Christ to support one another.

- d. With the decrease of ministry shares over the years, creative ways need to be explored to take the burden of fundraising off of career missionaries.
- e. The CRC, as a covenantal body, is failing to give missionaries the opportunity to do the work they are commissioned to do by requiring them to become fundraisers and overly accountable to administration.
- f. The current ratio of career missionaries to administration is 1.6 to 1.
- g. Frustrations are being voiced and reported by our career missionaries.

Classis B.C. North-West
Andy de Ruyter, stated clerk

Overture 17: Amend CRC Church Order Article 38 to Include Provisions for Congregations to Affiliate with Denominations in Ecclesiastical Fellowship

I. Background

In March 2012, Pillar Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, approved a plan of dual affiliation with both the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). In May 2012, Classis Holland of the CRC and the Holland Classis of the RCA approved that plan, affirming that Pillar Church is affiliated with both denominations. To live out our calling to be a unifying presence and work for the common good of both denominations, Classis Holland offers this overture to amend the CRC Church Order to provide an avenue for other CRC churches to affiliate with the RCA and/or other denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship in order to be more faithful and effective in mission to God.

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to add the following new subsection to Church Order Article 38, defining how an individual congregation can form affiliations with denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship while also maintaining affiliation with the CRC. This change in the Church Order thus allows for “multiaffiliated” churches. This proposal follows the language and pattern of Article 38-g, which addresses a situation in which two or more churches merge into a union church. Our proposal addresses a situation in which one church develops formal affiliation with more than one denomination.

Proposed Church Order Article 38-h

Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship, with the approval of classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to form a multiaffiliated church (a church with two or more denominational affiliations):

- a. The following plan is adopted by the _____ Christian Reformed Church of _____, effective as of the date when the congregation has approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by its rules of procedure and when the local classis/presbytery of each denomination has approved the particular plan of affiliation.
- b. The purpose of this affiliation is to provide for the worship of almighty God, instruction in the Christian faith, and outreach and diaconal ministry by a congregation that is expanding its affiliation to one or more denominations in order to minister more effectively.
- c. The multiaffiliated church shall be known as _____ Church.
- d. The multiaffiliated church shall be subject to the constitution of each church involved as set forth in subsections *m*, *n*, *p*, and *q* below.
- e. The council/consistory shall annually report its active membership count and other statistics to the respective denominations as required by each denomination.
- f. Initially, the officers (elders and deacons) shall be those officers in active service at the time of the change in affiliation. They will undertake to perform their responsibilities as indicated in subsections *d* above and *m*, *n*, *p*, and *q* below.
- g. Following the change in affiliation, officers will be elected according to the rules of procedure approved in the resulting church.
- h. The minister(s) of the resulting church shall be full and responsible members of each assembly (judicatory) of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided below in subsection *n*.
- i. The multiaffiliated church shall make changes in its Articles of Incorporation to include the substance of subsections *b*, *c*, and *d* and the confessional standards of the affiliated churches.
- j. While recognizing the basic right of any giver to designate the cause or causes to which the gift shall go, the council/consistory/session of the multiaffiliated church shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or

benevolence program that shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the council/consistory/session shall decide in response to the requests of the broader assemblies (judicatories).

- k. Per capita ministry shares (assessments) shall be paid to each classis/presbytery and to synod/general assembly on the basis of the total communicant membership of the church, equitably divided among the denominations involved.
- l. All members of the church shall be under the discipline of the elders (session), according to rules agreed upon in harmony with the constitution of each denomination where they coincide, and in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the elders (session) where the provisions may be contradictory.
- m. Appeals against the actions of the council/consistory/session shall be made to one assembly or judicatory only (presbytery or classis), at the choice of the members, and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the assemblies of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the council/consistory/session and on the members.
- n. A minister shall be subject to the discipline of the council/consistory/session and the classis/presbytery, provided that when an assembly begins an action, it shall invite a committee from the others to join in formulating and pressing charges. In the event of appeal, the case shall be finally decided by the broadest assembly to which the appeal is taken in the church that commenced the action, and that decision shall be equally binding on the council/consistory/session and classis/presbytery.
- o. A minister shall participate in the denominational pension plan of the denomination within which that minister is ordained and in compliance with its requirements.
- p. Protests/complaints against the actions of the council/consistory/session may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant. Once a complaint is registered with an assembly (judicatory), no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same matter.
- q. The plan of affiliation that is formed may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of the congregation at two separate congregational meetings held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of

the classes (presbyteries) involved. In case of dissolution of the plan, all property of the church, real and personal, shall be divided according to a formula established at the time of purchase or the plan of affiliation. If a written formula does not exist, then the acquired property shall be divided equitably between the classes (presbyteries) of jurisdiction, unless a classis or presbytery chooses to waive its right to the property.

- r. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases where the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in subsection *l* above), the council/consistory/session of the multiaffiliated church shall petition the assemblies (judicatories) of immediate jurisdiction to overture their respective broadest assembly to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretations or by constitutional amendment.
- s. No provision in this document shall be construed as modifying or amending the Church Order/Constitution of this church in its application to any but multiaffiliated churches organized under this provision, their members, officers, or ministers.

Classis Holland

Anthony L. Louwerse, stated clerk

Overture 18: Establish a Study Committee to Look into Recent Theologies That Teach That the Genesis Accounts of the Creation and Fall of Humankind Are Not Historical Events and That Adam and Eve Are Literary Rather Than Historical Characters

I. History

For many in the Christian Reformed Church, the February 2011 issue of *The Banner* brought to light an interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis which, while not new, had never before been openly expressed by theologians within our church. In separate articles in the official journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Dr. Daniel Harlow and Dr. John Schneider, two professors at Calvin College, expressed the view that Adam and Eve were not historical characters, only literary ones similar to other mythological characters in other Middle Eastern religions. Thus, their disobedience in the Garden of Eden was not a historical event and was not the reason for humankind's fall into sin but was a story simply meant to tell us certain theological truths. They also concluded that the doctrines of "original sin" and "the atonement" taught in all three Reformed confessions needed to be reinterpreted. Both professors gave as one reason for their new understanding the recent developments in the fields of genetics and human evolution. They claimed that, because of these new discoveries, it was impossible for

all human beings to descend from only one human couple. Hence, God's general revelation made it necessary for us to change our interpretation of his special revelation recorded in Holy Scripture. Second, they pointed to similarities between the biblical literature and the creation myths of other Middle Eastern religions of that time period, concluding that the biblical account was fashioned using similar characters and a similar story line to correct some of the theological misunderstandings of these other accounts and that the biblical writer never intended to relate a historical set of events.

While some of us were troubled that the college had initially given approval for these professors to write their articles in a professional journal, and to later express these views in a public forum at Baylor University, we were relieved that the college administration, led by President Galen Byker, did what they could to assure the church that they too were concerned about these views and were looking into the situation. Although some felt that the resulting disciplinary actions against the professors were unjust, many of us believed that they were necessary to reassure the denomination that Calvin College was serious about upholding our Reformed confessions.

This situation helped the rest of the church to realize the tension that often exists within our academic community between their responsibility to uphold our creeds and their responsibility to pursue new discoveries and understandings. In fact, at Synod 2011, President Byker informed delegates that Calvin College used that very incident to launch a faculty inquiry into this matter and that it would present its findings to a future synod.

Also, at Synod 2011, during the deliberation re the proposed Covenant for Officebearers, President Byker argued that synod should send the document back to the committee for more work because, he warned, if the proposed covenant had been in place a year earlier, he would not have had the tools he needed to deal with these two professors. Because of the way the Calvin administration handled it, the matter seemed to be closed.

In the June 2013 issue, *The Banner* printed an article by Rev. Edwin Walhout titled "Tomorrow's Theology." Although Rev. Walhout was careful not to draw any firm conclusions, the thrust of his article was that because most scientists today accept the evolution of human beings as a fact, the church must make changes in its theology and, in his words, "the way we understand the purpose of Christianity." Like Harlow and Schneider, he suggested that there is a strong possibility that Adam and Eve were literary rather than historical characters. Rev. Walhout went on to explain that, if this were true, the church must consider serious changes in its doctrines of the fall, original sin, salvation, and God's purpose in history. Although it must be said that Rev. Walhout was careful not to deny outright any of our Reformed confessions, he certainly attempted to make the case that some of our key doctrines were not defensible in our modern world.

If this had simply been a matter of one retired minister expressing his views, some of us might question *The Banner* editor Robert De Moor's judgment whether this should have been printed in *The Banner*. Yet, based on some of the responses on *The Banner's* website, it would seem that Walhout's views were attractive. Several contributors defended the notion that because evolution was "a fact," such changes in our theology were needed. And in an editorial defending his decision to include Walhout's article and another later article on sexuality and marriage in *The Banner*, Rev. De Moor wrote,

"We allowed these articles first of all *because we believe the authors represent more than just a few voices within our denomination* and so, rather than ignoring these voices, we believe they should be heard and responded to in truth and love" (August 2013, italics added). If these are more than just a few voices, then Rev. De Moor is correct: The church must respond in love and truth.

II. Clear contradictions to the Reformed confessions

In his article "After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science" in the September 2010 issue of *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith*, the official journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Calvin College professor Daniel Harlow clearly expresses his understanding that the accounts of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve were not historical events and that Adam and Eve were only literary creations by the author of that section of Genesis. Further, he lays out theological ramifications of his views for three foundational doctrines of Reformed theology: the creation and fall of humanity, original sin, and the atonement. In each of these areas he denies the clear teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort.

In the same issue of *Perspectives on Science and the Christian Faith*, emeritus professor John Schneider of Calvin College does the same in his article "Recent Genetic Science and Christian Theology on Human Origins: An 'Aesthetic Supralapsarianism.'"

Then, in the June 2013 issue of our denominational magazine, *The Banner*, Edwin Walhout in his article "Tomorrow's Theology" also expresses that because of recent discoveries in the areas of genetics and human evolution, he also questions the historicity of early Genesis and of Adam and Eve and their fall in the Garden of Eden. Like Harlow and Schneider, he also explains the impact of such a belief on our understanding of the doctrines and the goal of the Christian faith.

What follows are the statements of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort on each of the aforementioned doctrines. Following the statements are quotations from the aforementioned articles by Harlow, Schneider, and Walhout—all of which should be read with this overture and are available free via the following links:

- Harlow: <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2010/PSCF9-10Harlow.pdf>
- Schneider: <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2010/PSCF9-10Schneider.pdf>
- Walhout: <http://www.thebanner.org/features/2013/05/tomorrow-s-theology>

A. *The creation and fall of humanity*

1. Statements from our Reformed confessions

a. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 6

Q. Did God create people so wicked and perverse?

A. No. God created them good¹ and in his own image,² that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³ so that they might truly know God their creator,⁴ love him with all their heart, and live with God in eternal happiness, to praise and glorify him.⁵

[¹Gen. 1:31; ²Gen. 1:26-27; ³Eph. 4:24; ⁴Col. 3:10; ⁵Ps. 8]

b. Belgic Confession, Article 14

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Humanity

We believe that God created human beings from the dust of the earth and made and formed them in his image and likeness—good, just, and holy; able by their will to conform in all things to the will of God.

But when they were in honor they did not understand it²¹ and did not recognize their excellence. But they subjected themselves willingly to sin and consequently to death and the curse, lending their ear to the word of the devil.

For they transgressed the commandment of life, which they had received, and by their sin they separated themselves from God, who was their true life, having corrupted their entire nature.

So they made themselves guilty and subject to physical and spiritual death, having become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all their ways.

They lost all their excellent gifts which they had received from God, and retained none of them except for small traces which are enough to make them inexcusable.

Moreover, all the light in us is turned to darkness, as the Scripture teaches us: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”²² Here John calls the human race “darkness.”

Therefore we reject everything taught to the contrary concerning human free will, since humans are nothing but the slaves of sin and cannot do a thing unless it is given them from heaven.²³

For who can boast of being able to do anything good by oneself, since Christ says, “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me”?²⁴

Who can glory in their own will when they understand that “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God”?²⁵ Who can speak of their own knowledge in view of the fact that “those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit”?²⁶

In short, who can produce a single thought, knowing that we are not able to think a thing about ourselves, by ourselves, but that “our competence is from God”?²⁷

And therefore, what the apostle says ought rightly to stand fixed and firm: God works within us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.²⁸

For there is no understanding nor will conforming to God’s understanding and will apart from Christ’s involvement, as he teaches us when he says, “Apart from me you can do nothing.”²⁹

[²¹Ps. 49:20; ²²John 1:5; ²³John 3:27; ²⁴John 6:44; ²⁵Rom. 8:7; ²⁶1 Cor. 2:14; ²⁷2 Cor. 3:5; ²⁸Phil. 2:13; ²⁹John 15:5]

c. Canons of Dort, The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Human beings were originally created in the image of God and were furnished in mind with a true and sound knowledge of the Creator and things spiritual, in will and heart with righteousness, and in all emotions with purity; indeed, the whole human being was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil’s instigation and by their own free will, they deprived themselves of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place they brought upon themselves blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in their minds; perversity, defiance, and hardness in their hearts and wills; and finally impurity in all their emotions.

2. Quotations from Harlow, Schneider, and Walhout

a. Harlow

I have come to share the view that the narratives in Genesis 1–11 were probably written and read as both paradigmatic and protohistorical—*imaginative portrayals of an actual epoch in a never-to-be-repeated past that also bears archetypal significance for the ongoing human situation*. (Daniel Harlow, “After Adam: Reading Genesis in an Age of Evolutionary Science,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, vol. 62, no. 3, September 2010, p. 182)

To begin with, *read on its own*, Genesis does not teach that the first human beings were created immortal and that death entered the world only after and as a consequence of their transgression. (Harlow, p. 188)

According to Genesis, then, human death was a natural part of God’s created world, not part of the fallout of a fall. (Harlow, p. 188)

Another point worth noting is that *Genesis itself does not picture the first human beings created in a state of spiritual maturity and moral perfection*. The moral integrity of Adam and Eve is a prominent theme in the Latin church fathers’ and the Reformers’ reading of Genesis but not in the Orthodox tradition. (Harlow, p. 188)

b. Schneider

We may think that the writer of Genesis deliberately used Adam and Eve as literary types that represented the first human beings symbolically, in which instance, we can simply stretch the symbolism to include the original colonies of our ancestors, to be compatible with polygenism. This hermeneutical strategy will probably require giving up concordism and its principled inerrancy, however, because it seems unlikely that Paul (or Luke) in the New Testament understood biblical Adam in this symbolic way. (John Schneider, “Recent Genetic Science and Christian Theology on Human Origins: An ‘Aesthetic Supralapsarianism,’” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, vol. 62, no. 3, September 2010, p. 200)

The mere fact that Paul thought Adam, like Abraham, was a specific person by that name does not necessarily mean that we should have that belief (widely held by first-century Jews) now. . . . Genesis and premodern Christian tradition attribute quite a list of unpleasant and peculiar things in *nature* to the occurrence of a historical Fall of human beings. The trouble is that paleoscience overwhelmingly proves that labor pains, the locomotion of snakes, predation, deadly diseases, mass extinction, thorn plants and weeds, and violent natural events existed for millennia before the existence of the first humans. Thus, they cannot be the consequence of a “curse” that God placed on the creation as punishment for human sin. Furthermore, the genomic sequence-data expose a fascinating, if otherwise grim, history of viruses that have left “scars” in human and animal DNA. (Schneider, p. 201)

The bottom line is that if the first human beings evolved genetically this way, then it is very hard to see how they could have originated in conditions of original righteousness, as required by Augustinian theology, for they would have inherited powerful natural dispositions toward selfish actions. Moral freedom and the will to resist or redirect those dispositions toward unselfish actions surely presupposes time for cultivating a nascent moral awareness, and for building character through a history of personal and social discipline. . . . It would seem that the Creator had deliberately stacked the moral deck against them. Did God then expect these beginners at the moral game to play a winning hand, and bet the entire future of the creation that they would win, as Augustinian theology on the Fall would have us believe? Surely God knew better. (Schneider, p. 202)

c. Walhout

Adam and Eve: Traditionally we've been taught that Adam and Eve were the first human pair, Adam made out of dust and Eve from one of Adam's ribs. But sustaining this doctrine is extremely difficult when we take seriously the human race as we know it today sharing ancestry with other primates such as chimpanzees. Where in the slow evolution of *homo erectus* and *homo habilis* and *homo sapiens* do Adam and Eve fit? We will have to find a better way of understanding what Genesis tells us about Adam and Eve, one that does justice to Genesis and also to what the Bible teaches about their connection to Jesus.

Fall into sin: We have traditionally understood Genesis to show the first human beings, in a state of innocence, living sinlessly in the Garden of Eden. They are then tempted. They yield to temptation and God sends them out of Eden. But if we take the discoveries of historical science seriously, where could we fit that story in? It would be extremely difficult to locate any such Garden of Eden, and even if we were able to do so in modern Iraq, where is the scientific and historical evidence of a pristine origin and expulsion from that Garden? Furthermore, at which stage in human development would we place this event? We will have to find a much better way of understanding what sin is, where it comes from, and what its consequences are. Theologians will have to find a new way of articulating a truly biblical doctrine of sin and what effect it has on us. (Edwin Walhout, "Tomorrow's Theology," *The Banner*, vol. 148, no. 6, June 2013, p. 20)

B. Original sin

1. Statements from our Reformed confessions

a. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 7

Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹ This fall has so poisoned our nature² that we are all conceived and born in a sinful condition.³

¹Gen. 3; ²Rom. 5:12, 18-19; ³Ps. 51:5]

b. Belgic Confession, Article 15

Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin

We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has been spread through the whole human race.³⁰

It is a corruption of the whole human nature—an inherited depravity which even infects small infants in their mother's womb, and the root which produces in humanity every sort of sin. It is therefore so vile and enormous in God's sight that it is enough to condemn the human race, and it is not abolished or wholly uprooted even by baptism, seeing that sin constantly boils forth as though from a contaminated spring.

Nevertheless, it is not imputed to God's children for their condemnation but is forgiven by his grace and mercy—not to put them to sleep but so that the awareness of this corruption might often make believers groan as they long to be set free from the body of this death.³¹

Therefore we reject the error of the Pelagians who say that this sin is nothing else than a matter of imitation.

[³⁰Rom. 5:12-13; ³¹Rom. 7:24]

c. Canons of Dort, The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Human beings brought forth children of the same nature as themselves after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt they brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam and Eve to all their

descendants—except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of their perverted nature.

Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin. Without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

2. Quotations from Harlow, Schneider, and Walhout

a. Harlow

In Genesis, Adam and Eve's sin is neither the greatest sin nor the cause of all future humanity's sins but only the first in a series of sins. (Harlow, p. 189)

In formulating his typology, Paul's main interest is to depict Christ as a representative figure, one whose act affected not only himself but the entire human race. He brings in Adam less as a figure of history than as a type of Christ—a symbolic stand-in for fallen humanity. Paul, like Luke, no doubt regarded Adam as a historical person, but in his letters he assumes the historicity of Adam instead of asserting it, and in Romans 1–3 he can describe the problem and universality of sin at great length without any reference at all to Adam. (Harlow, p. 190)

Can and should the Augustinian doctrines of the Fall and original sin be retained with conviction in the age of evolutionary science? I think the answer is yes, as long as we are willing to make some serious modifications to it. On the one hand, evolutionary biology can be seen to confirm those essential components of original sin that are among Augustine's most enduring theological intuitions: the inevitability of human sin and the inability of human beings to overcome their inherited tendency to sin. . . . On the other hand, evolutionary biology gives us a better explanation than Augustine did of why all humans are united in sin: not because we bear the guilt and fractured will of a single ancestral couple who fell from a state of original righteousness, but because we share a transtemporal and universal biological and cultural heritage that predisposes us to sin. (Harlow, p. 191)

b. Schneider

It is fitting, is it not, for the God who subjected all human beings to sin in the first place, to extend mercy to all human beings in that self-sacrificial way (Rom. 11:32). (Schneider, p. 203)

c. Walhout

Original sin: According to this doctrine, the fall of Adam and Eve is an actual historical event that plunged the entire human race into sin. Ever since, both the guilt of sin and the pollution of sin, theologically speaking, have been passed on from parent to child in such a way that we all come into the world tainted by them. We say that our children are conceived and born in sin. But if Adam and Eve are not understood as real historical people, then there can hardly be an inheritance of sinfulness from parent to child all the way back to Adam—in which case the entire doctrine of original sin falls by the wayside. We will have to find a better way of understanding not only what sin is but its effect on the population in general—a way that does justice both to the Bible and to science and that helps us understand how sin works in our own lives under God. (Walhout, p. 20)

C. *The atonement*

1. Statements from our Reformed Confessions

a. Heidelberg Catechism

Q. and A. 16

Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin;¹ but a sinful human could never pay for others.²

[¹Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16; ²Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:18]

Q. and A. 17

Q. Why must the mediator also be true God?

A. So that the mediator, by the power of his divinity, might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.¹

[¹Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21]

Q. and A. 18

Q. Then who is this mediator—true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹ who was given to us to completely deliver us and make us right with God.²

[¹Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5; ²1 Cor. 1:30]

Q. and A. 20

Q. Are all people then saved through Christ just as they were lost through Adam?

A. No. Only those are saved who through true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his benefits.¹

[¹Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21]

b. Belgic Confession, Article 17

Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Humanity

We believe that our good God, by marvelous divine wisdom and goodness, seeing that Adam and Eve had plunged themselves in this manner into both physical and spiritual death and made themselves completely miserable, set out to find them, though they, trembling all over, were fleeing from God.

And God comforted them, promising to give them his Son, born of a woman,³² to crush the head of the serpent,³³ and to make them blessed.

[³²Gal. 4:4; ³³Gen. 3:15]

c. Canons of Dort, The Second Main Point of Doctrine

Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. This justice requires (as God has revealed in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.

Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God's wrath, God in boundless mercy has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.

Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is—as was necessary to be our Savior—not only a true and perfectly holy human, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God’s wrath and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

2. Quotations from Harlow, Schneider, and Walhout

a. Harlow

Once the doctrine of original sin is reformulated, the doctrine of the atonement may likewise be deepened. But the new understanding of sin requires that we now favor theories of the atonement like the *Christus victor* model or the moral influence theory, instead of the theory of a ransom paid to the Devil or a satisfaction paid to God’s honor. Better, to privilege Paul’s soteriology, we must elevate the truth of a new humanity inaugurated in Jesus Christ, whom God sent into the world in suffering solidarity with a groaning creation—to be the vanguard of a new creation full of new creatures destined to be transformed and drawn up into the life and fellowship of the triune God (e.g., Rom. 8:18–32; 1 Cor. 15:28; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17; Eph. 1:10; 2:15; Col. 1:20). (Harlow, p. 192)

b. Schneider

The second point is about divine grace, atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation of the world with God through Christ. As suggested above, in this Christological and teleological understanding of creation, one does not depict God as a sort of unwitting, overly optimistic experimenter, whose greatest and best creature unexpectedly and disastrously goes bad (a sort of Frankenstein story, only with Noah there to save the day). In the alternative account, God’s creatures are more like pitiful sheep that have gone astray, in the way that sheep do, as every good shepherd knows. Or we are more like juveniles who cannot but misbehave, as all good mothers and fathers know their growing children will. (Schneider, p. 204)

These intuitions about grace have very important implications for Christian thinking on the matter of eternal damnation, which is very hard to integrate well into theology as integrated with evolutionary science, and is also very difficult, if not impossible, to sustain within successful Christian theodicy. . . . As Barth has shown, there is some justification for seeing the original creation of Genesis 1, and even also Eden in Genesis 2–3, as unperfected work, and this may well disclose the artistry of a later hand in the last composition by someone who was made uncomfortable by the crude theology of the original, and so may have changed it in ways more compatible with the theology of Wisdom.⁵¹ (Schneider, pp. 204–5)

Rather, Paul was endorsing the prerogative of God, the Artist, to execute his perfectly just purposes in a manner that seemed unjust in the extreme—in fact, was unjust in the short term—unimaginably cruel and unfair to the people involved, treating them as mere objects of wrath and destruction (Rom. 9:22) for the sake of other people, the objects of mercy, in this instance, the Gentiles worldwide (Rom. 9:23). The challenge is to trust that God is not “trans-moral” in that sense, despite appearances, but that the plan, in all its often unjust parts, works perfectly together for good. In Rom. 11:32, Paul sums up the whole of his thinking better than anywhere else: “God has subjected everyone to sin, in order to have mercy on everyone.” (Schneider, p. 208)

c. Walhout

Salvation: We have traditionally understood the work of Jesus as dealing with the two aspects of original sin: guilt and pollution. Jesus removes our guilt by dying for our sins on the cross; he removes our pollution by sending us his

Holy Spirit. This makes good sense, but if the doctrine of original sin needs to be revisited, theologians need to consider whether our understanding of Jesus also needs to be revised. Does the theory of evolution have any implications for how we understand Jesus' ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension? How does Jesus fit into the ongoing process of evolution in the fullness of time? How does his ministry impact people in later generations? We'll want our theologians to tackle this issue in a truly biblical way, preserving everything essential to the biblical story while fitting it into a new paradigm that defines meaningfully what Jesus Christ has done and what it means for us to be Christians. (Walhout, pp. 20-21)

III. Conclusions

As can be clearly seen above, the views of at least some of those who are advancing a non-historical reading of the first chapters of Genesis clearly deny the Reformed confessions. Reinterpreting the terms used to name the doctrines does not change that fact. The question we face as a church is "How should we deal with this?"

Just ignoring this challenge will not suffice but will bring more confusion and disunity among us. These are foundational doctrines that are basic to our understanding and application of Scripture. For example, the Christian Reformed Church has declared that homosexuality is a condition of disordered sexuality that reflects the brokenness of our sinful world resulting from the fall (*Acts of Synod 1970*, pp. 120-21, 540). If we accept the possibility that there was no fall, then we send a very cruel message indeed to those brothers and sisters who struggle with their homosexual desires.

But this goes deeper than touching on a few ethical and moral issues. Since our denomination was founded in 1857, our pastors have explained sin and its results according to the outline laid out in our confessions. They have counseled people struggling with sin with this structure in mind. We have used it to explain questions about theodicy. To allow such teachings to go unanswered certainly gives the impression that our longstanding teaching has been in error and that we have been giving false answers to such questions.

Ignoring such views among us also will bring further problems in the future. What will our church decide to do if a candidate for ministry even accepts the possibility that the biblical story of Adam and Eve and their fall into sin is not historical? In the past, such a candidate would have been denied ordination. Yet if ordained ministers and respected theologians within our church are given permission to not only hold to such views but publicly defend them, what reason do we have for denying such a candidate admittance into the ministry? And if a candidate who denies such basic doctrines is acceptable, why should we deny other candidates who deny other doctrines? Similar questions could be raised should a congregation seek to discipline a pastor or another officebearer who held such views.

All of this is certainly confusing to the flock of God which our Lord has placed under our care. Members have already left our church over this issue. Undoubtedly, more will consider doing so if we do not deal with it. But beyond that is the matter of integrity. Holding vastly divergent views on such basic theological doctrines is not sustainable and calls into question the veracity of our entire message. The greater concern is that members, especially younger ones, will be so confused that they will turn from the faith entirely.

So we must deal with this. But how do we deal with it? On one hand, we could simply declare that those who have been advancing these new ideas

be removed from office or from their positions of responsibility within our church and its agencies. This certainly would be a clear and swift response. Yet would that be the right response for us as a church of Jesus Christ?

The same apostle Paul, whose inspired writings are the reason we hold to the doctrines that have been called into question, also wrote, “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph. 4:15 [NIV, 1984]). The apostle indeed calls us to speak up for truth, but to do so in a way that is loving to one another and in a way that builds up the body of Christ.

One way we show love is by listening to others—by hearing them out. In this case it means that we must listen to the concerns that our brothers and the brothers and sisters who agree with them have about the sustainability of our theology in light of recent scientific discoveries and theories. While it could be argued that those who advanced these contrary views have not followed what they promised to do when they were entrusted with their positions, this fact should not keep us from showing love to them as the inspired apostle is calling us to do.

This does not mean that we must agree with them but, rather, that we should look into these discoveries and theories that concern them and determine exactly what the nature of their challenge is to our theology. We should look again at our biblical time-tested principles of how God’s general revelation relates to his special revelation. We should look honestly at the data and consult with Christian experts in these fields to determine whether there are other ways of explaining any apparent contradictions. We should again consider whether any form of theistic evolution can be a part of a Christian explanation for how our Creator created this world and us. And if it can be, we should consider whether holding to such a view should impact our theology in the ways in which those proposing a non-historical view of early Genesis say it will. Must one who holds to the evolutionary development of human beings also reject a historical Adam and Eve and the story of their fall in the Garden of Eden? Is it possible to hold both to a literary Adam and Eve and to the Reformed confessions?

For these reasons we propose that Synod 2014 appoint a committee to study such questions and give guidance to our church regarding how we should deal with them. Now, it can be argued that the proposed committee would be similar to the one that reported to Synod 1991 and that synod at that time made certain decisions that should enlighten our present concerns. The challenges this time, however, are different. Those whose writings and teachings concern us today are claiming that new discoveries have been made and that the science in this area has progressed significantly since then. They also are claiming that there have been new insights among biblical theologians about the relationship between pagan creation accounts and the biblical creation account.

We should note that such realities have challenged not only our denomination but other Reformed bodies and institutions as well. Other churches and institutions have been forced to deal with this same issue, including evangelical Reformed denominations and their seminaries. The incident involving the termination of Dr. Peter Enns from his position at Westminster Theological Seminary is a case in point.

We should also note that the challenge today is somewhat different from the one faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During that time, even many who supported theistic evolution were still holding to a belief in a historical Adam and Eve. As was demonstrated, a significant number today are denying that belief. And no one at that time was challenging the foundational doctrines of our faith.

Because the doctrines that are being challenged are so central to Reformed theology, we propose that the committee contain our best theological minds from as broad a theological spectrum as we can find in our church. The committee should be given ample time for study and it should be willing to consult with theologians from other denominations and Christian institutions. The committee must also consult with the best scientific minds in the Christian community. Thoroughness is key. We must not forget that the foundations of Reformed theology itself are at stake.

However, appointing a committee will respond to only part of the challenge our church faces. The louder the voices that challenge our theology become, the more division they will bring. The simple truth is that until our church through its synod changes or revises our doctrinal beliefs, they remain the teachings that we must uphold as truth. Hence, we must consider all contrary teachings as heresy. Synod must clearly reiterate what all who have signed either the former Form of Subscription or the current Covenant for Officebearers should know—that no one who has signed one of these documents should be spreading within our church or its institutions any teaching that contradicts our creeds or Reformed confessions without first bringing their concerns to synod.

Yet our church should not retroactively discipline those who have already broken the promise they made when they signed their name to one of these documents. Instead, we should remind them of their promise and call on them to act according to it. If they ignore such pleas and persist in spreading heresy, only then must we deal with their insubordination according to procedure outlined in our Church Order.

IV. Overture

For the above reasons Classis Wisconsin overtures Synod 2014 to

A. Appoint a study committee to look into challenges to our theology from recent discoveries in genetics, paleontology, and the other sciences, especially as they relate to our doctrines concerning the creation and fall of humanity, original sin, and the atonement.

B. While the committee will consist mainly of our best and most trusted biblical and systematic theologians, instruct the committee to consult with our best minds in the scientific community both to discover the actual nature of the challenge and to evaluate the possible solutions that the committee will advance.

C. Mandate the committee to also examine recent biblical criticism as it relates to the first chapters of Genesis, evaluating what contemporary biblical theologians have done by our accepted Reformed methods of exegesis and hermeneutics. The committee will take up the issue of treating early Genesis as a non-historical account and of interpreting Adam and Eve as literary rather than historical persons, giving guidance as to whether this is permissible within the boundaries of Reformed theology.

D. Mandate the committee to consult with the broader Christian community, especially with Reformed scholars from other denominations.

E. Instruct the committee to be as thorough as possible and to present its completed report to Synod 2020. If it needs more time, it can request additional time from a future synod.

F. Until synod allows it, no one who has signed the Covenant for Officebearers or the Form of Subscription may advance the teaching that the Genesis accounts of the creation of human beings and of their fall into sin are not historical events, or that Adam and Eve are literary rather than historical characters. Such teachings must not be advanced in our churches or in the classrooms of the seminary and colleges we own or support; nor can they be promoted via the websites, magazines, or other publications or forums owned or paid for by our denomination.

Classis Wisconsin
Kenneth Prol, stated clerk

Communication 1: Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan expresses its concern over recent articles that have been published in *The Banner* presenting non-biblical and non-Reformed positions.

In "Tomorrow's Theology" (June 2013), the historicity of Adam and Eve, the fall into sin, original sin, salvation, and God's purpose in history are all called into question. This article clearly contradicts the teachings of Belgic Confession Article 14 on "The Creation and Fall of Humanity," Article 15 on "The Doctrine of Original Sin," Article 16 on "The Doctrine of Election," and Article 17 on "The Recovery of Fallen Humanity." By calling into question these central doctrines of the historic Christian faith and the Reformed confessions, the entire gospel is being undermined.

In "Where Do We Draw the Line?" (July 2013), the author states, "Whether or not to engage in premarital sex should depend on the strength of the personal maturity of single people and on their level of commitment toward one another." This statement stands in direct contradiction to the historic position of the Christian church and the Christian Reformed Church. We read in Genesis 2:24, "A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." First Corinthians 7:1-2 reads, "Now for the matters you wrote about: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.' But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband." Based on these and myriad other passages, the church has understood marriage between a man and a woman to be the only acceptable place for sexual relations to occur. Now we have an article published in *The Banner* telling young adults that if they are mature and committed to each other, marriage is optional. We consider this a violation of Scripture and our confessions.

While it is true that *The Banner* carried disclaimers stating that these articles did not represent historic Reformed teaching, and an apology was offered for publishing them, the very next issue (September 2013) carried another article, "God's Plan for Creation," which again speaks of the "facts" of evolution while essentially relegating creation by the spoken "Word of God" (Genesis 1-2; Belgic Confession Article 12; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9) to myth.

At issue is not merely a discussion about origins but the gospel itself. In Romans 5:12 we read, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. . . ." And verse 15 goes on to say, "But the gift is not like

the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" Recent articles in *The Banner* suggest that sin did not enter the world through the one man, nor did death enter the world through sin; rather, it is a natural process. When the first half of the equation is denied, the second becomes irrelevant and the gift of Jesus Christ is voided. Destroy Adam and death as a result of sin, and the gift of Jesus Christ which rights the wrong is also destroyed.

In summary, we are convinced that these articles are neither biblical nor Reformed, and we believe that their presence in our denominational magazine risks causing many to stumble—even our children. We are mindful of the fact that Jesus speaks very strong words concerning those who cause little children to stumble.

While the church must always engage in discussions of sexuality, origins, and other matters of interest in culture, these two articles present positions contrary to Scripture and our confessions. We express our concern and disappointment and urge greater discretion on behalf of *The Banner*.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan
J. Cameron Fraser, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Eastern Canada

Classis Eastern Canada wishes to communicate our support for *The Banner*, its mandate, and its editorial staff. We commend Rev. Bob De Moor for his gracious humility and the Board of Trustees for their patient discernment through the complexities of our challenging yet necessary wrestling through difficult issues.

The goal of this communication is not to argue the merits or doctrinal integrity of any particular article or opinion but to affirm that *The Banner* is the place in which these types of discussions and questions must find safe and generous space.

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse and unified family. We are unified by a table of bread and wine, body and blood, the tremendous gift of grace. We are diverse in that we each approach that table with different experiences, educations, pains, cultures, nationalities, languages, attitudes, maturities, fears, strengths, and passions.

We believe that *The Banner* is an expression of that table fellowship where the gospel that unites us is clearly presented and also where we can freely share the different places we have come from so that we might better go together and engage this world in Spirit and in truth.

Every generation is challenged to think through our faith and our confessions and to live and embrace them as their own. To express a different perspective, to share an uncommon experience, or to raise questions in the light of new realities is not an affront to Word and creed but is instead an opportunity to learn and grow and affirm them as we discover again and again that our God is faithful to all generations.

Given the importance of healthy and safe discussion to the faith, health, and relevance of the Christian Reformed Church, we wish to give thanks

and encouragement for this forum that allows us to be always reforming together.

Classis Eastern Canada
Gayla Postma, stated clerk

Communication 3: Living Hope CRC, Sarnia, Ontario

Living Hope Christian Reformed Church in Sarnia, Ontario, wishes to communicate our concern over the way in which the Editorial Council of *The Banner* has executed the mandate given to them. On two significant occasions they have undermined their responsibility to “promote a strong denominational identity” and “express our common beliefs and values” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 197-98). The notable occasions we have in mind are the decisions to publish Edwin Walhout’s “Tomorrow’s Theology” (June 2013) and Harry Van Belle’s “Where Do We Draw the Line?” (July 2013).

We are aware of and appreciate the meeting of the BOT with Rev. Bob De Moor and the review team established by the BOT at their September 2013 meeting. Due to deadlines for submission, we were not able to review the work of this team before sending this communication. It is possible this communication will simply affirm the work already done by this team; or it is possible that this communication will offer insights and suggestions that complement or even contradict their work. Either way, we send this communication to express our thoughts, and we send it in the hope that the unifying aspects of *The Banner*’s mandate (described below) be given renewed emphasis.

I. Background

Synod 2004 adopted the proposal to change *The Banner* from a subscription-based magazine to an every-household and ministry-share-supported magazine. Much of the impetus for this change was financial, as subscriptions were dwindling. However, the 2004 report from (then named) CRC Publications expressed an equally strong concern over dwindling denominational loyalty and shared identity. An every-household *Banner* was adopted at least as much to address the latter concern as the former.

This is most evident in the following ground used by synod when adopting this proposal:

For the past decades, churches in North America, including the CRCNA, have witnessed a loss of denominational loyalty. Getting *The Banner* into the hands of every member helps the CRC not only to reverse this trend but also to *promote a strong denominational identity*.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 562; emphasis added)

As the 2004 report reflects on the editorial guidelines for an every-household *Banner*, it states, “The goal of such a magazine is to *draw our denomination together* both by honoring the diversity of its members and by seeking our common heart as we pursue the mission to which the Lord has called us” (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 197; emphasis added). In other words, the report recognizes that *The Banner* must respect and give voice to a diversity of perspectives that exist in our denomination. In doing so, however, the chief

aim is not to be diverse. The chief aim is unity—"to draw our denomination together" and "to promote a strong denominational identity." Diversity is not to trump but rather to be a servant of this more foundational unifying goal. As such, it seems to follow quite necessarily that *The Banner's* diversity must have limits and ought not be extended to include those perspectives that are adverse to our denominational identity (expressed in our confessions and position statements).

The aforementioned articles advocated against the doctrinal and ethical convictions that are a part of our covenanted identity. Thus these articles were an example of diversity at the expense of our shared identity and not in its service.

II. The nature of *The Banner*

The editor, Rev. Bob De Moor, issued an apology in the August issue of *The Banner* ("Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ") for the concern these articles raised. While appreciative for the response and most willing to forgive, we believe the apology highlighted where we disagree with the Editorial Council's understanding of its mandate. The apology was issued specifically for "the manner and timing of publishing these articles." It is our position that it was not merely an issue of "manner and timing." Because of the nature of *The Banner*, those articles should not have been published at all.

Rev. De Moor stated that the metaphor for *The Banner's* editorial policy is a kitchen table ("Why We Dare Not Play It Safe," July 2013), indicating their desire that *The Banner* be a place for conversation rather than being officially representative of denominational views. However, it is our conviction that *The Banner*, by virtue of its medium, is not and cannot be understood as mere kitchen table conversation. As the old adage says, "the medium is the message." And when a particular medium is accountable to, fully funded by, and universally distributed to a denomination, the message it inherently carries is that it represents and endorses the views of that denomination. Readers naturally assume as much, particularly those new to the denomination. As much as some might like *The Banner* to be understood as a kitchen table where nothing it prints carries any representative weight, it is unrealistic to expect *The Banner* to be understood that way, given its accountability (i.e., BOT and synod), funding (i.e., ministry shares), and distribution (i.e., to every household).

Because of the above-stated nature of *The Banner*, the magazine ought never publish articles that advocate against our confessions or that advocate immorality. There is no "manner or timing" that would make such articles appropriate for this medium. Simply listing our denomination's official position at the end of such articles merely gives the impression that the denomination is not that committed to its position. Likewise, publishing a rebuttal article (even if it is side-by-side) only gives the impression that our denomination is indifferent as to which position its readers prefer.

If *The Banner* wishes to equip us to respond to alternative views (as Rev. De Moor suggests in "Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ"), the correct approach is to print an apologetic that summarizes and then rebuts such views in one and the same article. We share a passion for apologetics and would be delighted to see more rigorous equipping in this area. However, when it comes to voicing opposition to the expressed convictions that shape our de-

nominal identity, we have covenantally agreed upon avenues for doing so—*Banner* articles are not one of them.

III. Consequences

The end result of publishing such articles is that *The Banner* will fail to do precisely what Synod 2004 intended—namely, “promote a strong denominational identity.” To the contrary, the result is that our identity is weakened and we become more fragmented as the unifying convictions that form our identity are freely assaulted (in an apparently, if not intentionally, official way). In short, printing such articles compromises the very denominational loyalty that an every-household *Banner* was supposed to foster.

We would like to see a renewed commitment on the part of *The Banner’s* Editorial Council to reflect our expressed denominational identity and stop printing altogether that which advocates against it.

Council of Living Hope CRC, Sarnia, Ontario
Nancy Bouterse, clerk

Note: This communication was presented to Classis Chatham at its winter meeting but was not adopted.