



Christian  
Reformed  
Church

# Agenda for Synod 2020

**Synod 2020 will not meet as planned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The Program Committee for Synod 2020 (officers of Synod 2019) will prepare a list of matters from this agenda that cannot await action by Synod 2021, and a special meeting of the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America will take place in June 2020 to decide on those matters.

Other matters in this agenda will be deferred to the agenda for Synod 2021.

*Called*

# Agenda for Synod 2020



Christian  
Reformed  
Church

June 12-18, 2020  
Covenant Fine Arts Center  
Calvin University  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2020 will begin its sessions on Friday, June 12, at 10:15 a.m. in the Covenant Fine Arts Center Auditorium on the campus of Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Encounter CRC in Kentwood, Michigan, will serve as the convening church. Reverend Dirk M. vanEyk, pastor of Encounter CRC, 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 Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 14, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. at Encounter CRC, 4620 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Kentwood, Michigan.

Prior to arriving at synod, *all* delegates and advisers to synod are encouraged to take time to view the orientation segments accessed on the synod site—designed as a secure site for delegates and advisers only. The orientation will assist first-time delegates and advisers in understanding the nature of synod and will provide helpful reminders for returning delegates and advisers to synod. In addition, orientations will be held for advisory committee chairs and reporters and their alternates on Thursday, June 11; and orientation for advisers and delegates to synod will take place on June 12, prior to the convening of synod (see the proposed daily schedule on pp. 9-11 for more information).

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 7 and 14. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church in unity, growth, and renewal.

At the time of this writing, our world, our country, and our respective states and provinces are all experiencing the threat of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. Our continuing prayer is that this circumstance will result in God's people drawing ever closer together as the body of Christ—though this closeness may not be physical. May we, through the use of technologies that God has granted, be united in prayer, compassionate conversation, collective communion, and a sense of unity with the broader church.

May each of us serving at Synod 2020 follow the words of Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Colin P. Watson, Sr.

Acting Executive Director of the CRCNA





## I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2020. 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 rewarding and blessed experience. We come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as representatives of the classes that delegated and appointed you to serve. 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 engagement at synod.

The synodical services staff, under the leadership of Dee Recker, is available to assist you as you prepare for, arrive at, and serve throughout the week of synod. Please feel free to contact the Office of Synodical Services, if you need information or have any questions, by writing [synod@crcna.org](mailto:synod@crcna.org) or calling 800-272-5125 or 616-224-0833.

## II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Council of Delegates calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2020 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 the recordings.

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 2020:

*Thursday*

5:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Orientation supper for chairs and reporters, and alternate chairs and alternate reporters of advisory committees
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Supper
8:30 p.m.	Welcome reception/ice cream social

*Convening Friday*

8:15 - 10:00 a.m.	Orientation for delegates and advisers
10:15 - 11:45 a.m.	Opening session of synod Election of officers Finalization of committee assignments
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 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.	Supper
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings

*Saturday*

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 9:15 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.	Picnic hosted by President Le Roy
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Tentative plenary session

*Sunday*

Morning worship at area CRC churches	
5:00 p.m.	Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise
6:15 - 7:15 p.m.	Supper
7:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Synod workshops

*Monday – Wednesday*

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Supper
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Plenary session

*Thursday*

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 3:00 p.m.*	Final session

\*Synod will adjourn no later than 3:00 p.m. on Thursday.



# DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2020

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Alberta North</b>		
Minister . . .	Thomas S. Baird	Minister. . . Richard J. deLange
Elder . . . . .	Lucinda H.S. Klapwyk	Elder . . . . . Helen M. Doef
Deacon . . . .	Frank W. Kuipers	Deacon . . . . Jesse E. Edgington
Other . . . . .	Michelle J. Kool	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Alberta South/Saskatchewan</b>		
Minister . . .	Matthew D. Vanden Heuvel	Minister. . . Brian D. Kuyper
Elder . . . . .	Rob M. Nagtegaal	Elder . . . . . Albert Cramer
Deacon . . . .	Hilary Perry	Deacon . . . . Ian R. Parkinson
Other . . . . .	Paul W.T. Verhoef	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Arizona</b>		
Minister . . .	David A. Reynolds	Minister. . . _____
Elder . . . . .	Dennis W. Preston	Elder . . . . . Jeffrey A. Dykema
Deacon . . . .	John T. Simon	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Rodney J. Hugen	Other . . . . . José Rayas
<b>Atlantic Northeast</b>		
Minister . . .	William M. Hanchett	Minister. . . Anthony T. Selvaggio
Elder . . . . .	Henry J. Lane	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Michael J. DeGraaf	Deacon . . . . Patricia H. Ten
Other . . . . .	Brent A. Pennings	Other . . . . . Michael R. Saville
<b>B.C. North-West</b>		
Minister . . .	Willem J. Delleman	Minister. . . Kevin J. VanderVeen
Elder . . . . .	Kevin D. Laarman	Elder . . . . . Deanne Arnott
Deacon . . . .	Shelley Hempstead	Deacon . . . . Elizabeth A. Gysbers
Other . . . . .	Dena Nicolai	Other . . . . . Kenneth M. Vander Horst
<b>B.C. South-East</b>		
Minister . . .	Michael B. Koot	Minister. . . Thomas W. Bomhof
Elder . . . . .	John Bron	Elder . . . . . Heather I. Postma
Deacon . . . .	Angela L. Nierop	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Steven J. Berkenpas	Other . . . . . Natalie Cooper
<b>California South</b>		
Minister . . .	Man Sub Kim	Minister. . . John Poortenga
Elder . . . . .	Brian R. Kamps	Elder . . . . . Steve P. Kok
Deacon . . . .	Daryl L. Switzer	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Ralph E. Mack	Other . . . . . Reginald C. Norman, Jr.
<b>Central California</b>		
Minister . . .	Kenneth D. Boonstra	Minister. . . Paul H. VanderKlay
Elder . . . . .	Fernando L. del Rosario	Elder . . . . . Peter E. Douma
Deacon . . . .	Cynthia J. Fair	Deacon . . . . Carol J. Smith
Other . . . . .	Sandra L. Baerwald	Other . . . . . Nicholas W. Monsma

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Central Plains</b>		
Minister . . .	Jianlou Xu	Minister. . . . Brad J. Bierma
Elder . . . . .	Thomas J. Vos	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Marie M. Vanourny	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Richard W. Loerop	Other . . . . . Thomas R. Wolthuis
<b>Chatham</b>		
Minister . . .	Norman J. Visser	Minister. . . . David S. Van Berkel
Elder . . . . .	Diane Plug	Elder . . . . . Jake Bentum
Deacon . . . .	Bernarda Nicolai	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Mark Verbruggen	Other . . . . . John Moelker
<b>Chicago South</b>		
Minister . . .	Timothy S. Bossenbroek	Minister. . . . _____
Elder . . . . .	Matt Mulder	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	James E. Hofman	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Samuel J. Boldenow	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Columbia</b>		
Minister . . .	Thomas J. Kok	Minister. . . . _____
Elder . . . . .	Beth D. Andre	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Janet L. Samples	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Carl J. Leep	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Eastern Canada</b>		
Minister . . .	Andrea M. Baas	Minister. . . . Daniel C. Zylstra
Elder . . . . .	Ron P. Hosmar	Elder . . . . . Dick C. Van Veldhuisen
Deacon . . . .	Cor Dykstra	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	John F. Vedder	Other . . . . . Aaron M. Thompson
<b>Georgetown</b>		
Minister . . .	Matthew A. Palsrok	Minister. . . . Richard W. Visser
Elder . . . . .	David W. Dykstra	Elder . . . . . Jeanne B. Kallemeyn
Deacon . . . .	Kathy Jelsema	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Samuel J. Krikke	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Grand Rapids East</b>		
Minister. . . .	Shannon J. Jammal-Hollemans	Minister. . . . Karen Campbell
Elder . . . . .	Christopher G. Eakin	Elder . . . . . Janice L. VanderKooy
Deacon . . . .	Kristin G. Strydhorst	Deacon . . . . Carol L. Rienstra
Other . . . . .	Thea N. Leunk	Other . . . . . Randall J. Buursma
<b>Grand Rapids North</b>		
Minister . . .	Benjamin D. McKnight	Minister. . . . _____
Elder . . . . .	Sarah Behm	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	_____	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Kory L. Plockmeyer	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Grand Rapids South</b>		
Minister . . .	David A. Struyk	Minister. . . . Ruth A. Boven
Elder . . . . .	Dan L. Buist	Elder . . . . . Ken A. Boersma
Deacon . . . .	_____	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Christopher L. Bouma	Other . . . . . Robert L. Boersma
<b>Grandville</b>		
Minister . . .	Joseph VandenAkker	Minister. . . . Cedric W. Parsels
Elder . . . . .	Jerry A. Sikkema	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Wanda K. Kunzi	Deacon . . . . Mary J. Wood-Agents
Other . . . . .	Katy Pastoor	Other . . . . . _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Greater Los Angeles</b>		
Minister . . .	Matthew M. Le	Minister. . . Zachary E. Vandenberg
Elder . . . . .	Aaron D. Solomon-Mills	Elder . . . . . Terry R. Van Dyk
Deacon . . . .	Annette L. Biggs	Deacon . . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Alexander H. Haberbush	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Hackensack</b>		
Minister . . .	Sheila E. Holmes	Minister. . . Paul J. Van Dyken
Elder . . . . .	Karen J. Walker	Elder . . . . . Violetta A. Diamond
Deacon . . . .	Sarah Hofman-Graham	Deacon . . . . Piet de Dreu
Other . . . . .	Petr Kornilov	Other . . . . . Margaret J. Jenista Kuykendall
<b>Hamilton</b>		
Minister . . .	William T. Koopmans	Minister. . . Willem de Vries
Elder . . . . .	Jacob Ellens	Elder . . . . . Bob De Haan
Deacon . . . .	Gwen C. Bosveld	Deacon . . . . Stuart Bootsma
Other . . . . .	Benjamin J. Ponsen	Other . . . . . Michael W. Bootsma
<b>Hanmi</b>		
Minister . . .	Sang Myeun Moon	Minister. . . _____
Elder . . . . .	_____	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Sung Yong Kim	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Sung Hyun Hur	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Heartland</b>		
Minister . . .	Jesse L. Walhof	Minister. . . Aldon L. Kuiper
Elder . . . . .	Duane L. Walhof	Elder . . . . . Harvey G. Obbink
Deacon . . . .	Scott T. deBoom	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Todd M. Zuidema	Other . . . . . John C. Klompier
<b>Holland</b>		
Minister . . .	Daniel J. Walcott	Minister. . . Darwin K. Glassford
Elder . . . . .	Donald A. Bemis	Elder . . . . . Allyn J. TerHaar
Deacon . . . .	Dwayne L. Nienhuis	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Darren C. Kornelis	Other . . . . . Christina L. Brinks Rea
<b>Hudson</b>		
Minister . . .	Mary B. Stegink	Minister. . . Kendall Everett
Elder . . . . .	Linda S. VanLenten	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	_____	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	_____	Other . . . . . _____
<b>Huron</b>		
Minister . . .	Vicki B. Verhulst Cok	Minister. . . Timothy Leferink
Elder . . . . .	John A. Tamming	Elder . . . . . Rick DeGraaf
Deacon . . . .	Jane Vander Velden	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	John C. Medendorp	Other . . . . . Amanda C. Bakale
<b>Iakota</b>		
Minister . . .	John R. Lee	Minister. . . Clifford D. Hoekstra
Elder . . . . .	_____	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	Trevor M. Mouw	Deacon . . . . Richard Bordewyk
Other . . . . .	Douglas J. De Groot	Other . . . . . Calvin Hoogendoorn
<b>Illiana</b>		
Minister . . .	Calvin J. Aardsma	Minister. . . Richard T. Vanderwal
Elder . . . . .	Charles S. Carlson	Elder . . . . . _____
Deacon . . . .	_____	Deacon . . . . _____
Other . . . . .	Daniel R. Svendsen	Other . . . . . David J. Feddes



Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Kalamazoo</b>	Minister . . . Derek M. Zeyl Elder . . . . . Matthew B. Van Dyke Deacon . . . . Deborah L. Nieboer Other . . . . . David L. VanDerWiele	Minister . . . Michael D. Koetje Elder . . . . . Scott M. VanDyke Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . _____
<b>Ko-Am</b>	Minister . . . Sungjin Kim Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . Myunghee Choi Other . . . . . Sung Chul Lee	Minister . . . Jonathan J. Kim Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . _____
<b>Lake Erie</b>	Minister . . . Alex D. Snider Elder . . . . . Mary B. Smith Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . Benjamin W. Van Arragon	Minister . . . _____ Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . _____
<b>Lake Superior</b>	Minister . . . Brian W. Bolkema Elder . . . . . Gaye A. Hanson Deacon . . . . Carol A. Vande Kraats Other . . . . . David Zigterman	Minister . . . Aaron J. Greydanus Elder . . . . . Leslie J. Kuiper Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . Michael L. Ten Haken
<b>Minnkota</b>	Minister . . . Brian M. Kornelis Elder . . . . . Ryan D. Blom Deacon . . . . David D. Bosma Other . . . . . Roger W. Sparks	Minister . . . Bryan A. Dick Elder . . . . . Brian F. Busker Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . David J. Weemhoff
<b>Muskegon</b>	Minister . . . Drew K. Sweetman Elder . . . . . Janice R. Zuidema Deacon . . . . Paul M. LaMaire Other . . . . . John S. Huyser	Minister . . . Jeffery A. Hough Elder . . . . . Ronald D. Bielema Deacon . . . . Birdella W. Cleveland-Hawkins Other . . . . . Kenneth T. Krause
<b>Niagara</b>	Minister . . . Robert J. Loerts Elder . . . . . Joan M. Kooger Deacon . . . . Blair C. Schiebel Other . . . . . Michael J. Vandyk	Minister . . . Steven J. deBoer Elder . . . . . Tena Dykxhoorn Deacon . . . . Ingrid A. Beck Other . . . . . Mark W. DeVos
<b>North Cascades</b>	Minister . . . Jonathan D. Young Elder . . . . . James Vis Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . Kyle P. Kloostra	Minister . . . _____ Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . _____
<b>Northcentral Iowa</b>	Minister . . . Jin Young Lee Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . Philip J. Boender	Minister . . . Norman D. Underland Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . David J. Prince
<b>Northern Illinois</b>	Minister . . . Eric D. Schlukebir Elder . . . . . Manuel A. DeLosSantos Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . Mark W. van Stee	Minister . . . _____ Elder . . . . . _____ Deacon . . . . _____ Other . . . . . _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
<b>Northern Michigan</b>		
Minister . . .	John P. Kostelyk	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Nathaniel J. Beelen	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Garry J. Reisch	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	James Zwier	Other . . . . .
<b>Pacific Northwest</b>		
Minister . . .	Kyle D. Sanford	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Tamara N. Kuklenski	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Eric Lamfers	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Summer A. Mohrlang	Other . . . . .
<b>Quinte</b>		
Minister . . .	Daniel G. Brown	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Ronald P. Rupke	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Lenie M. Rhebergen	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Michael D. Nanninga	Other . . . . .
<b>Red Mesa</b>		
Minister . . .	John W. Dykhuis	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Timothy J. Eisenga	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Mitzie Begay	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Debra L. Chee	Other . . . . .
<b>Rocky Mountain</b>		
Minister . . .	Andrew R. Sytsma	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Barry R. Meyer	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Donn Hansum	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Barb Bulthuis	Other . . . . .
<b>Southeast U.S.</b>		
Minister . . .	Mark A. Knetsch	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Duane A. Terpstra	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	_____	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Karlos Palacios	Other . . . . .
<b>Thornapple Valley</b>		
Minister . . .	Robert C. Van Zanen	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Phyllis J. Moes	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Jennifer L. Settergren	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Casey Jen	Other . . . . .
<b>Toronto</b>		
Minister . . .	Samuel Cooper	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Jill M. Lise	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Curtis M. DeBonte	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Hendrik P. Bruinsma	Other . . . . .
<b>Wisconsin</b>		
Minister . . .	Jason S. Ruis	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	Henry Perez	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Kolby K. McIntyre	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Andrew D. Zylstra	Other . . . . .
<b>Yellowstone</b>		
Minister . . .	Jonathan S. Owens	Minister. . . . .
Elder . . . . .	_____	Elder . . . . .
Deacon . . . .	Beverly Triemstra	Deacon . . . . .
Other . . . . .	Peter J. DeVries	Other . . . . .



# COUNCIL OF DELEGATES



# COUNCIL OF DELEGATES REPORT

The Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) began its service of interim governance on behalf of the CRC's annual synods after being appointed by Synod 2017. COD delegates represent the CRC's forty-nine classes. There are also four at-large members. Together they gather to address the mission and ministry of the CRCNA on behalf of synod. The COD addresses agency matters with regard to Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) and Resonate Global Mission, along with matters concerning Congregational Services ministries of the CRCNA—each of the entities being governed by the COD.

The COD presents the following report as a summary of its work in the interim since the meeting of Synod 2019.

## I. Introduction

### A. *Governing on behalf of synod*

The COD functions with a constituent-representative model of policy governance. Policy governance suggests a board's role is to see that the organization achieves what it should, avoiding the unacceptable (via the concept of limitations), all on behalf of its constituents. (Read more about the constituent-representative model in the COD Governance Handbook at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org), search "COD Governance Handbook.")

This constituent-representative model of policy governance provides a "link between the organization's board and its constituents. The constituents are represented on the governing board and participate in policy development and planning."<sup>1</sup> For these purposes, the term *constituents* refers to CRCNA members.

Similar to all forms of policy governance, there is clear differentiation between board activity and staff/administrative activity. Those serving on the COD are not invited into management functions. Staff/administrative members do not chart the direction and set the policies for the denomination, but they serve as implementers, working within the contours of COD-set policies toward the goals and limitations identified by the COD in conjunction with the CRC constituency. Moreover, as the COD sets direction and evaluates the effectiveness of outcomes, staff and administration are always attentive to context, making recommendations and providing analysis to the COD in ways that consider national context, diversity, and the like.

This model flows from CRC church polity as described in Church Order Article 27-a: "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated."

<sup>1</sup> Bradshaw, P., R. Hayday, R. Armstrong; "Non-profit Governance Models: Problems and Prospects," paper originally presented at ARNOVA Conference, Seattle, Washington, 1998.

In other words, ecclesiastical authority begins with congregations and is delegated to classis and then to synod. Church Order Article 27-a is balanced by Article 27-b: “The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis”—emphasizing the authority of the broader assemblies, which are made up of officebearers who represent Christ’s authority in those assemblies as they make decisions for the broader church. The role of officebearers in each of these assemblies is significant in Church Order Article 1-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 officebearers are ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (Eph. 4:12), and to do so ‘in a fitting and orderly way’ (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities.”

As an ecclesiastical governance entity serving in the interim of synod, the COD provides governance by means of the authority delegated to it by synod and with its synodically elected membership representing classes or serving in at-large capacities.

(COD Governance Handbook, section 1.1: Governance)

The mandate and functions of the Council of Delegates as adopted by synod are outlined in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook (at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org), search “Council of Delegates”).

COD members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA Canada Corporation, the CRCNA U.S. Corporation, the BTGMI Canada Corporation, and the BTGMI U.S. Corporation. These legal entities (Canada and U.S.) interact via joint ministries agreements to govern ministry that is shared across the border between the BTGMI corporations and the CRCNA corporations. In fall 2019 the directors of the CRCNA and BTGMI Canada corporations were alerted to organizational implications of charitable laws in Canada, which necessitated immediate interim action in December 2019 to comply with the Canada Revenue Agency. More with regard to these changes is found in section I, D of this report.

The Council of Delegates has met two times since Synod 2019 (October 2019 and February 2020), and is scheduled to meet again in May 2020. The COD’s agenda is processed both by the legal corporations mentioned above and by the full ecclesiastical body of the COD. The agenda items are first reviewed by one of five committees: Congregational Ministries; Global Missions Ministries; Mercy and Justice Ministries; Ministry Plan, Communication, and Synodical Services; or Support Services. These committees hear and study reports regarding the mission, vision, and values of our various ministries; the ways our ministries are integrated into a ministry (strategic) plan and are evaluated; the financial status, administrative leadership, and organizational health in each ministry-priority area; and the ways in which the COD responds both to synod and constituents. Committees present their recommendations for review and feedback first to the four corporations (CRCNA and BTGMI Canada corporations, and CRCNA and BTGMI U.S. corporations) and then to the full COD for information and any required action. In addition, the COD oversees the work of the executive director.

Nearly all of the matters addressed by the COD affect the full CRCNA as one denomination in two countries. In compliance with Canadian regulations, the Canadian corporations review and approve all actions relative to providing effective national direction and control for collective ministry

activities and, as necessary, address the nonecclesiastical matters that relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The same is done by the U.S. corporations. The COD, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

*B. Tasks carried out on behalf of synod*

A significant part of the COD's work over the past year has been in response to synodical instructions directed to either the COD or the executive director in conjunction with the COD. An outline of the various instructions, organized by ministry-priority area, is provided in the following.

1. Faith formation

**New City Catechism** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763): "That synod instruct the executive director to refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum review and potential use by the churches." *Note:* This review is in process by Faith Formation Ministries. One of their objectives is to provide a guideline for reviewing other potential materials so that congregations may be more readily equipped to consider curriculum options that are fitting from a Reformed theological perspective and suitable to their respective contexts. (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

2. Global mission

*Note:* The COD received no assignments in 2019 in this ministry-priority area.

3. Gospel proclamation and worship

**Bible Translation** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 764): "That synod establish a standing committee of the Council of Delegates (COD) for the purpose of reviewing Bible translations for potential use in the CRCNA, with a mandate and composition as outlined in section II, A, 16. . . . Give the COD power to act in the appointment of additional committee members to fulfill the requirements of the mandate and composition in COD Report section II, A, 16 after consultation with Calvin Theological Seminary." (See section II, A, 17.)

**Definition of Heresy** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 819-20): "That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report back to Synod 2020. This committee would be best composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary." (See section II, A, 15.)

**Immigrant Churches, Pastors, and Their Families** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 777-78): "That synod recognize the ongoing work in response to synod's instruction related to enfolding immigrant churches and commend the Assisting Immigrant Churches document . . . to the classes and churches," and "that synod instruct the executive director, in consultation with the appropriate CRC agencies, to identify and communicate appropriate legal and financial resources to assist churches and classes with the immigration of pastors and their families." (See section II, B, 12.)



**Worship Practices** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 770): “That synod affirm the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord’s Day and instruct the Council of Delegates to ensure that Worship Ministries and/or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

4. Mercy and justice

**Addressing Abuse of Power** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-99)

- a. **Code of Conduct:** “That synod mandate the committee appointed by action in Recommendation b to draft a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. The draft code of conduct will be presented to Synod 2020 for approval and with recommendations for implementation for the denomination, classes, and churches.” (See section II, A, 20, b.)
- b. **Counseling Services:** “That synod encourage all classes to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services,” and “that the annual report of each classis for the CRC *Yearbook* include information about a counseling fund or other arrangements to ensure access to counseling services for abuse survivors.” (See section II, A, 20, d.)
- c. **Guardian Committee:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- d. **Monitoring by the COD:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by . . . monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD . . . making necessary adjustments in specific plans . . . and reporting to synod. . . .” (See section II, A, 20, k.)
- e. **Nondisclosure Agreements:** “That synod direct the executive director to . . . review the history of nondisclosure agreements within the CRC . . . develop a policy . . . develop good practices and protocols . . . [and] develop a reporting and accountability mechanism. . . .” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- f. **Prevention of Abuse in CRCNA Offices and Conflict of Interest Dynamics:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.” Further, “that synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)

- g. **Record Keeping:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of any level of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.” (See section II, A, 20, i.)
- h. **Resources for Culturally Diverse Churches:** “That synod mandate the executive director to give a high priority to providing information about existing policies and mechanisms for abuse prevention and response in forms that use the language, examples, and styles of learning that are culturally appropriate for all communities including but not limited to the Korean, Latino, Chinese, African American, and Indigenous communities, through Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources. In each context, the tools shall be developed with input from members of the community to ensure they will be accessible and useful for members of the community.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- i. **Role of Regional Pastors and Church Visitors:** “That synod refer this report to the Classis Renewal Advisory Team to consider how the role of regional pastors and church visitors might be strengthened to foster a respectful culture and support churches with early assistance in situations that may give rise to concerns about abuse of power.” (See section II, A, 20, j.)
- j. **Strengthening Safe Church Ministry:** “That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse-prevention ministry.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)  
 “That synod mandate the executive director to oversee the development of appropriate measures for responding effectively to emotional abuse. Such measures will include definition, inclusion in relevant CRC policies, and appropriate responses through restorative practices and the safe church advisory panel process.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)
- k. **Training Programs:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College (because of available expertise).” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)  
 “That synod encourage all classes to develop a strategy to train officebearers and key church leaders to be alert to power dynamics within the communities they serve and to be equipped to prevent abuse of power. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that all officebearers receive initial training and refreshment through ongoing

educational initiatives.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

**Diversity Report** (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829): “The executive director will continue to request an annual diversity report from each agency and ministry and will include a summary of these reports in the report to the [COD] each February.” (See section II, A, 6.)

**Goals and Priorities** (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 634-35): “That synod (1) take note that the above proposal arises in response to a decision of Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829), instructing ‘the executive director to encourage the Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) collaboration group to continue to prioritize goals and assign resources for all of our justice and mercy denominational issues,’ and (2) instruct the executive director to pursue other possible priorities as well as to plan and implement the program described in recommendation a, 4, [adopted by synod; *Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633] and report the results to synod annually through 2020.” (See section II, B, 10, a.)

**Israel and Palestine** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 817): “That synod encourage the work of addressing peace in the Middle East already being done, acknowledging the awareness of injustice, and commend with thanks the work being done,” and “that synod (with the COD) recognize and encourage our staff and churches to continue to strive for increased partnership that seeks a third way between mainline and evangelical approaches and fosters increased reconciliation on all sides.” (See section II, B, 10, b.)

**Judicial Code** (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 529; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763): “That synod instruct the executive director and the Council of Delegates to explore how to improve the gender and ethnic diversity of the Judicial Code Committee,” and “that synod instruct the Council of Delegates to review the Judicial Code every five years, seeking input from the Judicial Code Committee, the Office of Safe Church Ministry, and Church Order experts, to ensure that the Judicial Code continues to function as intended, and to assess whether updates and/or modifications are needed. (See section II, A, 16.)

**Office of Social Justice U.S. Advisory Committee** (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 527-28): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to create a U.S. committee to provide guidance and support to the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action.” (See section II, B, 13.)

**Political/Justice Statements** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to do historical research on synodical decisions and the defining rationale for making those decisions in dealing with political and/or justice matters, and to report through one of the COD committees and/or an ad hoc group. The Council of Delegates will report back to Synod 2020.” (See section II, A, 19.)

**Reconciliation** (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 473): “That synod urge the executive director to work with the appropriate agencies and ministries to publicize existing resources addressing unresolved conflict in our history and the need for reconciliation.” (See the report of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, section VII, C.)

**Safe Church Reporting** (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 476): “That synod instruct the executive director to have Safe Church Ministry report annually

through the Council of Delegates to synod regarding the number and names of classes with and without Safe Church teams, and the number of congregations with and without Safe Church teams and policies.” (See the report of Safe Church Ministry, section III.)

5. Servant leadership

**Offices of Elder and Deacon** (*Acts of Synod 2015*, pp. 669-70): “The executive director of the CRCNA shall report to synod on the annual progress of the . . . efforts of denominational agencies and ministries as all seek to work together for the revitalization of the offices of elder and deacon.” (See section II, A, 18.)

6. Other areas

**Evaluation and Prioritization** (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 455): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates and the executive director to continue the important work of evaluation and prioritization by working together to implement a robust evaluation strategy whereby in a five-year cycle all agencies and ministries will be continually evaluated through the framework of the five ministry priorities.” (See section II, B, 5.)

**Heritage Hall and Historical Committee Mandate** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761): “That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

**Ministry Plan** (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630): “That synod give ‘concept endorsement’ to the goals and strategies attached (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 54-61), which the agencies will use to work toward implementation of the strategic plan.” (See sections II, B, 1-2.)

**Reimagining Ministry Shares** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90): “That synod instruct the COD to provide a communication giving guidance to the churches as they consider their pledge. The guidance should consist of the following: (1) Material to communicate the denomination’s vision for ministry enabled through ministry shares; (2) Examples of possible methods to consider in determining the church’s pledge amount, including but not limited to (a) percentage of income, (b) rate per person based on average worship attendance, (c) percentage increase above the prior year gift.” (See section II, C, 2.)

“That synod instruct the COD to encourage possible additional revenue enhancements for a variety of denominational ministries (e.g., fee for service possibilities, ministry-specific fundraising) and report back to Synod 2020 regarding such potential enhancements.” (See section II, C, 2.)

**Themed Synod** (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 814): “That synod instruct the COD to periodically recommend a plan for a ‘themed agenda’ or ‘themed synod’ in which, alongside indispensable components of a typical synod agenda, the primary focus would be on a visioning or leadership theme germane to the health and growth of the entire denomination.” (See section I, H.)

C. *Meetings of the Council of Delegates*

When Synod 2015 adopted the recommendation of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture for a transition from the Board of Trustees of

the CRCNA to the Council of Delegates, with an expanded classically based membership, the hope was for at least one meeting per year to be held online to keep meeting costs at a minimum. The COD looked into the possibility of holding some meetings online but decided that unless there were no other choice, meeting in person would be preferred, given the amount and type of work the COD is tasked to do. Though some committees could meet part of the time online and thus save costs, the quality of plenary meetings would suffer, and the COD would lose valuable interpersonal relationship time.

*Note:* For its meeting this coming May, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the COD will be meeting entirely by video conference.

#### *D. Addressing structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements*

Having received queries from a few Christian Reformed congregations in Canada about how well we have been living up to our responsibility to meet Canadian legal requirements, the directors of the Canada Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America retained legal counsel to review Canada Corporation procedures and to assist in improving them where appropriate.

Together with the legal counsel, who specializes in charitable law, the directors carefully reviewed the CRCNA's corporate structures and processes and decided to take necessary steps to ensure that both our corporate structure and cross-border practices are compliant with all of Canada's requirements for Canadian charitable organizations. These initial measures have been put into place for a one-year period to give us all time to work through the details of what additional changes are needed before final action is taken. This also gives us time to properly align these decisions with appropriate ecclesiastical procedures, including synod. These measures include the following:

- identifying distinct leadership for each ministry in each country
- defining distinct budgets for each ministry in each country
- creating structures so that human resources, including staff recruitment, are managed within the relevant country

A joint group of COD members and senior leadership has begun meeting to bring recommendations to the COD in May and then to synod, addressing the ecclesiastical, structural, and legal implications of the recent Canada Corporation actions, including how they relate to the appropriate denominational governance protocols and rules. The Canada Corporation's decisions should be seen as part of a process that will continue to the denominational level using ecclesiastical channels. These steps include processing through synod.

#### *E. COD membership*

The members of the Council of Delegates from the classes include B. Bernard Bakker (Eastern Canada), Bev Bandstra (B.C. South-East), Jesus Bayona (Southeast U.S.), Gary D. Bos (Columbia), Timothy Bosscher (Grandville), Wayne Brower (Holland), J. Harold Caicedo (California South), Paula Coldagelli (Wisconsin), Samuel Cooper (Toronto), Heather Cowie (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Wendell Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), Fernando L. del Rosario (Central California), Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Adrian

de Lange (Rocky Mountain), Andy de Ruyter (B.C. North-West), Paul R. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), Peter J. DeVries (Yellowstone), Christopher W. deWinter (Niagara), Donald G. Draayer (Lake Superior), Sherry Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Laurie Harkema (Lake Erie), Emmett A. Harrison (Grand Rapids East), Sally Haywood Larsen (Illiana), Susan B. Hoekema (Muskegon), Sheila E. Holmes (Hackensack), Melvin O. Jackson (Greater Los Angeles), Stanley W. Jim (Red Mesa), Michael D. Koetje (Kalamazoo), Michelle J. Kool (Alberta North), William T. Koopmans (Hamilton), Jose Antonio (Tony) Lara (Arizona), John R. Lee (Iakota), Theodore Lim (Ko-Am), Gloria Melenberg (Quinte), Daudi Mutisya Mbuta (Grand Rapids North), Brian L. Ochsner (Central Plains), James Roskam (Georgetown), Roger Y. Ryu (Hanmi), Roger W. Sparks (Minnkota), Arnie J. Stolte (Northern Illinois), David A. Struyk (Grand Rapids South), Samuel D. Sutter (Atlantic North-east), Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland), Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron), Jei Wilson (Chicago South), and George R. Young (Hudson). Arie Vander Zouwen is serving as interim delegate from Classis North Cascades until Synod 2020 acts on his appointment.

Four at-large members also serve the COD. They include Elsa Fennema (U.S.), Ashley Medendorp (Canada), and Aaltje Van Grootheest (Canada); and Greta Luimes is serving as interim Canada at-large member until Synod 2020 acts on her appointment.

The denomination's executive director (Colin P. Watson, Sr., currently serves as acting executive director) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee of the CRCNA and BTGMI U.S. corporations and as a member of the Council of Delegates (without vote). The executive director and the Canadian ministries director are invited as guests to the meetings of the CRCNA and BTGMI corporations based in Canada.

In addition, two guests from the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees (Victor Chen and Henry Lane) and two guests from the World Renew Board of Delegates (Hyacynth Douglas-Bailey and Jim Joosse) attend the COD meetings and serve on a COD committee. These nonvoting COD guests are given privilege of the floor during meetings. COD member Fernando L. del Rosario from Classis Central California also serves as a member on the Calvin University Board of Trustees, providing a valuable link to this CRCNA institution.

The following serve as officers of the COD and of respective corporations for the 2019-2020 term:

1. COD officers: Paul R. De Vries, chair; Andy de Ruyter, vice chair; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary.
2. Corporation officers
  - a. CRCNA Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Donald D. Draayer, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Gloria Melenberg, treasurer.
  - b. CRCNA U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Elsa Fennema, secretary; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer.



- c. BTGMI Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Donald D. Draayer, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Gloria Melenberg, treasurer.
- d. BTGMI U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Elsa Fennema, secretary; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer.
3. Executive Committee: Tim Bosscher; Andy de Ruyter; Paul R. De Vries, chair; Laurie Harkema; Susan Hoekema; Michelle J. Kool; Ashley Medendorp; and Aaltje van Grootheest. Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves ex officio.

#### F. COD nominations

The nominee presented to synod for the Canada at-large position was unable to accept the appointment. The COD was pleased to identify and appoint in the interim Greta Luimes, who was present as a guest until her appointment in October 2019. The COD recommends Greta Luimes for appointment as a Canada at-large member to serve a modified first term through June 30, 2022, eligible for reappointment.

*Greta Luimes* is a member of Barrhaven Fellowship CRC in Ottawa, Ontario. She is a certified financial planner, working as general manager of the Canadian National Christian Foundation. Ms. Luimes served on the synodical Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force, the board of the CRCNA-Canada Foundation, and the CRWRC review committee. In addition, she has served as chair of the local Ottawa Christian School and Redeemer Christian High School boards. She has served as worship director for Barrhaven Fellowship CRC and is currently serving as chair of the church's property and finance committee. Ms. Luimes has served as an elder and as chair of council.

With the implementation of the new Classis North Cascades as of January 1, 2020, the COD received the nomination of and appointed in the interim Arie Vander Zouwen as the COD delegate from the classis. He began service in February 2020. The board recommends Arie Vander Zouwen for appointment as the Classis North Cascades delegate to serve a modified first term through June 30, 2022, eligible for reappointment.

*Arie Vander Zouwen*, a member of Third CRC, Lynden, Washington, is employed as a construction inspector for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). He has served on the Everson (Wash.) CRC council as chair and as deacon. In addition, he has served on the board of All About Kids Day Care and on the following WSDOT committees: quality assurance team, arbitration board member, disaster and emergency service regional operations center, hazardous materials advisory board. Mr. Vander Zouwen has served on the Classis Pacific Northwest finance, safe church, and classis renewal committees. His local church experience includes service as an elder and deacon, in outreach (including as chair), and in discipleship. He has also served his church as the financial officer, church administrator, and as a catechism/Sunday school teacher.

Prior to the fall meetings of the Council of Delegates, the COD received the resignation of Beth Fellinger (Chatham). Classis Chatham submitted the following nominee for appointment by synod. The COD recommends Mark Verbruggen for appointment as the Classis Chatham delegate to serve a first term of three years, eligible for reappointment.

*Rev. Mark Verbruggen* is the pastor of Living Hope CRC in Sarnia, Ontario. Rev. Verbruggen has previously served as a church visitor and as chair of classis. He has also served as a chairperson of the University of Toronto Campus Ministry Committee, as adjunct professor of theology at Dordt University, and as a delegate to synod. He had the privilege of serving as president pro tem of Synod 2015. While serving as pastor of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa, Rev. Verbruggen led the weekly Bible story time for the local Friendship ministry and taught biblical studies at the South Dakota state prison. He served as a founding member and as part of the executive committee of the Prairie Grass Film Challenge at Dordt. Currently he serves as chair of the Fanshawe College Campus Ministry in London, Ontario.

The COD Nominating Services Committee works from an adopted rotation of concluding terms for the current COD membership—ideally eight or nine members conclude their term of service with the board each year to provide continuity. Over the next two years, some members will be serving out their terms from previous board service (transitioning from the CRCNA Board of Trustees, the Back to God Ministries International board, or the Resonate Global Mission board) with a shortened term rather than two full terms (six years) on the COD.

Concluding service to the Council of Delegates in June 2020 are the following members:

Grand Rapids East	Emmett A. Harrison
Grandville	Timothy Bosscher
Greater Los Angeles	Melvin O. Jackson
Illiana	Sally Haywood Larsen
Lake Superior	Donald G. Draayer
Muskegon	Susan B. Hoekema
Niagara	Christopher W. deWinter
Red Mesa	Stanley W. Jim
Canada at-large	Ashley Medendorp

The COD recommends that synod express its gratitude to these members for their faithful service and significant contributions to the denomination during the inaugural years of the Council of Delegates.

Andy de Ruyter (B.C. North-West) was scheduled to conclude service to the COD in 2020; however, Classis B.C. North-West has submitted his name for reappointment to an additional term of three years. The COD recommends that synod appoint Andy de Ruyter by way of exception to another term of three years (until 2023).

Stanley W. Jim is completing a first term on the COD and has decided not to serve a second term. The COD recommends that synod appoint the nominee below to a first term of three years (rather than serving out the second term of S. Jim).



Classis Greater Los Angeles will be providing a nominee to the COD in May for an anticipated vacancy in the classical delegate position. The name and biographical information will be presented to synod by way of the COD Supplement.

The COD recommends the following nominees from the classes indicated for appointment to a first term of three years on the Council of Delegates:

*Classis Grand Rapids East*

*Jeanne Engelhard*, a member of Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a retired registered nurse with a master's degree in organizational communication. Her previous experience includes service as chair of the Roosevelt Park Ministries board and as a member of the CRC Judicial Code Committee. Ms. Engelhard has also served as a deacon and elder and as chair of council. Currently she serves as secretary for the board of Safe Haven Ministries and is a member of the executive committee of Classis Grand Rapids East.

*Classis Grandville*

*Rachel Bouwkamp* is a member of Lee Street CRC, Wyoming, Michigan. She formerly served as a teacher and presently is an administrator and worship director at Lee Street CRC. She has served as secretary of the parent-teacher organization of Calvin Christian Elementary School, as a GEMS leader, and as a member of the school's theological accuracy and editing curriculum committee. She has served her church as chair of various committees, as director of discipleship, and as coordinator for vision and mission. Currently Ms. Bouwkamp is serving on the Classical Renewal Team for Classis Grandville, the Wyoming Community Foundation board, and an administrative council.

*Classis Illiana*

*Jill Feikema* is a member of New Hope CRC in Lansing, Illinois. She is owner and office manager of Feikema Sanitation and Plumbing. She previously served on the Highland Christian School Foundation board. Currently she is serving as secretary for the Highland Christian School Improvement/Accreditation Team, as a member of New Hope CRC's outreach committee, and as a worship leader.

*Classis Lake Superior*

*Rev. Michael Ten Haken* is the pastor of Pease (Minn.) CRC. He served on the synodical Task Force on Funding for Calvin Theological Seminary Students and on various civic/service organizations such as Kiwanis and the local chamber of commerce. He also served his classis on an Article 75 task force. Currently he is chair of the Classical Interim Committee and Classical Strategic Planning Committee, the Mille Lacs County Family Violence Coordinating Council, and the Community Christian School Foundation. He also serves as treasurer of the Milaca Ministerial Association and is a member of the Community Christian School finance committee and the Community Christian School strategic planning committee.

*Classis Muskegon*

*Rev. Drew Sweetman* is the pastor at First CRC in Fremont, Michigan. He served as a delegate to Synods 2011, 2013, 2016, and 2019, including service as an advisory committee reporter in 2019. He served on the BOT-appointed

Task Force on Financial Sustainability (2016) and on the classis ministerial leadership team. He also served on the local Little League board and with the parent-teacher association of Calvin Christian School in South Holland, Illinois. He currently serves as the stated clerk of Classis Muskegon and on the classical interim committee. He has also served as president of council for both Spring Lake (Mich.) CRC and First CRC in Fremont, Michigan.

#### *Classis Niagara*

*Rev. Robert Loerts* is a pastor at Covenant CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario. He served as president for both the international and Canadian boards for Christian Reformed World Missions. He also served on the Classis Niagara ministry council, the Brock University Campus chaplaincy committee, the Campus Review Task Force, and the following classis committees: student fund committee, covenant relations team, classis restructuring team, vision implementation team. Currently he is serving on the St. Catharines Ministerial Leadership Team.

#### *Classis Red Mesa*

*Rev. Lora A. Copley*, a member of Rehoboth CRC in Rehoboth, New Mexico, is presently employed as a doctrine teacher at Rehoboth CRC. She has served as chair of the church's outreach committee and congregational care committee, as secretary of the Classis Red Mesa teams committee, and as a member of the Grand Rapids (Mich.) Christian School Board. She currently is on the Classis Red Mesa theological education and ministry skills committee and is a consultant for the faith formation/education committee at Rehoboth Christian School.

*Note:* A nominee for the retiring Canada at-large position will be presented for appointment by synod by way of the COD Supplement.

#### *G. Protocol for right of comment*

The COD adopted a protocol intended to inform staff of a ministry, agency, or institution, and to guide CRC boards (namely, the Council of Delegates, World Renew Board of Delegates, Calvin University Board of Trustees, and Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees) and standing committees of synod in consideration of an appropriate response to an overture or report on synod's agenda. The protocol specifically outlines the rules and protocols found in the COD Governance Handbook and in the Rules for Synodical Procedure as a means of clarifying for staff and boards that inquire about communicating with synod.

#### *H. Themed synod or agenda*

In response to the instruction of Synod 2019 that the COD "periodically recommend a plan for a 'themed agenda' or 'themed synod' in which, alongside indispensable components of a typical synod agenda, the primary focus would be on a visioning or leadership theme germane to the health and growth of the entire denomination" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 814), the COD revised the mandate of one of its subcommittees to include synodical services matters that are placed on the agenda of the COD. The mandate of the Ministry Plan, Communication, and Synodical Services Committee now includes giving consideration to proposing a themed synod or themed agenda for synod.

## I. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Council of Delegates reports the following salaries for senior CRCNA, Back to God Ministries International, and Resonate Global Mission staff directly employed by the Council of Delegates:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E1	1	1	0
E2	6	5	1
E3	4	4	0

Synod 2014 adopted a salary administration system that uses a salary range *target* and a minimum of 85 percent of that target. The COD adopted a new salary structure with fewer levels than the previous structure. Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

2019-2020 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range		Canadian Range	
	Minimum	Target	Minimum	Target
E1	\$148,000	\$185,000		
E2	\$133,559	\$166,949	\$127,261	\$159,076
E3	\$113,186	\$141,482	\$111,514	\$139,392
H	\$95,920	\$119,900	\$95,580	\$119,475
I	\$81,288	\$101,610	\$81,924	\$102,405
J	\$68,888	\$86,110	\$70,218	\$87,773
K	\$58,380	\$72,975	\$60,185	\$75,232
L	\$49,474	\$61,843	\$51,586	\$64,482

## II. Activities of the COD

### A. Polity matters

#### 1. Resignation of the executive director of the CRCNA

In light of structural changes between Canadian and U.S. administration and anticipated changes to the role of executive director of the CRCNA, Steven R. Timmermans elected to speed up his intended retirement and resigned, effective February 20, 2020. The Council of Delegates accepted the resignation with deep regret. A time of celebration and thanks for Steven Timmermans' services is being planned to take place in the coming months.

Given the immediate departure of the executive director, the COD appointed Colin P. Watson, Sr., as acting executive director until a search and recommendation for appointment of an interim executive director can be presented to Synod 2020. Updates will be forthcoming by way of the COD Supplement in May. For the coming months, temporary reassignments in supervision and leadership have been made for several of the director of ministries and administration responsibilities held by Colin Watson prior to Steven Timmermans' resignation.

#### 2. Senior leadership retirements

The COD received notices of retirement of the director of ministries and administration, Colin P. Watson, Sr., effective January 6, 2021, and the director of finance and operations, John H. Bolt, effective July 2, 2021. In the event that a new executive director (ED) is not appointed prior to

these retirements, it is anticipated that the COD will appoint interim replacements until the new ED of the CRCNA can participate in the search processes to fill these roles. The COD expressed its gratitude to Mr. Bolt and Mr. Watson for their faithful service to the denomination.

3. Appointment to synodical task forces

To fill two unanticipated vacancies, the COD in October acted on behalf of synod to appoint Joan G. De Vries to the synodical Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and Robert Zoerman to the synodical Consideration of Bivocationality Task Force. Both of these task forces were mandated by Synod 2019 and are scheduled to report to Synod 2021.

4. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the COD has ratified the following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies\* and has appointed the following World Renew board delegates:

Appointment	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Arizona	Rev. Jeffrey A. Dykema		2022(1)
	Pacific Northwest	Rev. Matthew J. Borst	Rev. Douglas E. Fakkema	2022(1)
	Wisconsin	Rev. Mark J. Pluimer	Rev. Michael Winnowski	2022(1)
World Renew	Arizona	Mr. Marv Faber		2022(1)
	Muskegon	Rev. Carl Bergman		2022(1)
	Thornapple Valley	Mr. James Boldenow		2022(1)
	Yellowstone	Rev. Timothy Kuperus		2022(1)

\*Terms of alternate synodical deputies run concurrent with those of the synodical deputies.

5. 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 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.

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

Data for the board diversity report (with regard to gender and ethnic diversity) for the 2019-2020 year has been received from the denominational boards (Council of Delegates, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and World Renew). In addition, data from the World Renew Joint Ministry Council (JMC) is included along with data from the World Renew Board of Delegates. *Note:* The JMC is elected from the membership of the World Renew Board of Delegates.

There are presently 161 denominationally appointed board members (not including the JMC count), and the JMC, elected from the World Renew Board of Delegates, has 15 members. So, among a total of 176 members, 59 (34%) are women, and 29 (16%) are people of color. These amounts reflect an increase of three women delegates (up 2%) and an

increase of two persons of color (% unchanged) on our denominational boards in comparison to the data for the 2019-2020 reporting year. In the joining of the former Board of Trustees with the boards of Back to God Ministries International and Resonate Global Mission to form the new Council of Delegates, each board also is examined individually in light of synod's goal of having at least 25 percent ethnic minority membership. The board membership of Calvin Theological Seminary is 21 percent ethnic minority; Calvin University, 10 percent; World Renew (JMC), 13 percent; and the COD, 23 percent.

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

At the instruction of Synod 2013, each CRC agency, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University are asked to submit to the executive director, as part of their strategic plan, diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams. This annual report was received by the director of ministries and administration on behalf of the executive director, and the compliance and progress were reported to the Council of Delegates in February.

In addition, the director of synodical services regularly reminds and encourages stated clerks and denominational boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve on denominational boards and as delegates to synod. We need to be diligent in continuing to increase diversity.

8. Young adult representatives to synod

For the past ten years, synod has welcomed the engagement of youth and young adults (18- to 26-year-olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and has sought to raise up leadership within the church through the appointment of young adult representatives to 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 COD has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to Synod 2020 (\* indicates service in this capacity in 2019):

* Rebecca Bokma, Kitchener, Ont.	Leah Sweetman, Fremont, Mich.
Daniel Choi, Prince George, B.C.	Luke Yang, Guelph, Ont.
Amy DeJong, Fairview, Alta.	Hope Zigterman,
* William Krahnke, Onamia, Minn.	Grand Rapids, Mich.

9. Joint supervision of ordained CRCNA staff

The COD adopted a protocol, based on Church Order Article 13-b and its Supplement pertaining to the supervision of CRCNA staff who are ordained as ministers of the Word or as commissioned pastors, to help clarify joint supervision and to encourage open communication with the employee's supervising council. The protocol is provided for synod's information in Appendix A.

10. Recognition of the ordination of women

The COD recommends that Synod 2020 adopt the Proposal for Recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women as found in Appendix B.

*Ground:* The 25th anniversary of the ordination of women is a significant milestone in the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

*Note:* The COD asked staff to suggest that the planning team consider recognition of the involvement of nonordained women in ministry as well.

11. Proposed Church Order changes

The COD, on behalf of Synod 2019, presents to Synod 2020 the Proposed Church Order Changes by Synod 2019 in Appendix C for adoption.

12. Report by moderator for formation of the new Classis North Cascades

Synod 2019 instructed the executive director to “appoint a neutral moderator” to assist in the formation of the new Classis North Cascades (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 758). Louis Korf served the denomination in this special role and presented the ED and the COD with a report as a fulfillment of his responsibility. The COD expressed appreciation to Rev. Korf for his service and here provides the following from his report as information:

“I hereby submit my report as the synodically appointed neutral moderator for the formation of Classis North Cascades out of a segment of Classis Pacific Northwest. Yesterday at the last regular meeting of Classis PNW . . . the recommendation to split the assets of Classis PNW on a 60/40 ration were resoundingly adopted along with the recommended guidelines of allocation. Also, Classis PNW, which included the members of the new classis, adopted the recommendations of joint support for Northwest Hispanic Ministries, which will function in collaboration and support of both classes. What was of tremendous help was the input and recommendations of the classical treasurer, Jacob Buurma, who will now be the classical treasurer for Classis North Cascades. He provided valuable insight into the allocation of assets and the continuation of support for Northwest Hispanic Ministries. I extend much appreciation for his expertise. It made my job as neutral moderator of this division much easier.

“What also made my task as neutral moderator amenable was the spirit of collaboration throughout the whole process, from initial email conversations to the actual meeting together as a task force and the final decisions made at the classis meeting yesterday. I am hereby happy to report that as of January 1, 2020, a new classis, Classis North Cascades, will officially be part of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.”



13. Classis ministry plans

Synod 2018 encouraged “all classes to develop and share their ministry plan . . . with the Classis Renewal Advisory Team so that the team can provide the COD with a summary of the plans (to be forwarded to Synod 2020)” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 518). The COD received the report of the Classis Renewal Advisory Team in February and presents the report in Appendix D and its recommendations to synod for consideration.

14. Ministry presentations at synod

For presentations to synod by CRC ministries, a rotation schedule reflecting the denomination’s five ministry priorities was implemented in 2018. Synod 2020 is scheduled to receive presentations on Servant Leadership from the following ministries: Calvin Theological Seminary, Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries. (See also section II, B, 5 of this report regarding ministry evaluations.)

15. Definition of *heresy*

Synod 2019, after declaring Kinism a heresy, instructed “the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report on the matter to Synod 2020. This committee would best be composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 819). Ronald Feenstra (Calvin Theological Seminary), with comment and review by William Koopmans, Kathy Smith (Calvin University/Calvin Theological Seminary), and Karin Maag (Calvin University/Calvin Theological Seminary), served as the primary author of the report on the definition of *heresy* presented to synod for consideration (see Appendix E).

16. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee (JCC) 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 members from both Canada and the United States include people with legal expertise, clergy, and nonclergy.

a. Membership

We are near the final year of implementing the changes to the JCC composition adopted by Synod 2014, staggering the terms of current JCC members. One member of the committee, Henry Wildeboer, resigned from service on the committee in summer 2019. The COD appointed the following new member to the JCC to serve, by way of exception, an expanded term until July 1, 2023, renewable for a second term of three years:

*Rev. Bomsu Kim* is the pastor of Seattle Dream CRC in Seattle, Washington. He earned a bachelor’s degree in law, a master of divinity degree within the Korean Presbyterian Church, and a master of

theology degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Kim served as a member of the Christian Reformed World Missions board and, subsequently, the CRCNA Council of Delegates. He currently is a member of the Seoul cluster oversight committee of Classis Pacific Northwest. He aims to contribute to the work of the Judicial Code Committee with his background in law studies and his experience in classis and on the Council of Delegates.

Orlan Gulker (having served five years) is concluding service on the JCC in 2020. It is recommended that synod express its gratitude for his service to the committee.

The COD Nominating Services Committee, on behalf of the COD, solicited nominees for this vacancy in the nonordained / nonlaw position on the JCC. The COD recommends that synod appoint the following single nominee to the Judicial Code Committee for a first term of three years.

*Ground:* The nominee is presented by the COD in light of Synod 2018's instruction to improve the ethnic and gender diversity of the JCC (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 529).

*Deloris Carter* is a member of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey. She was employed for 29 years with New Jersey's Department for Children and Families, specifically in the field of Child Protection Services. She currently serves as an area quality coordinator, which entails supporting offices to assure that staff are following the policies, procedures, and New Jersey laws relating to child abuse and neglect. Ms. Carter previously served on her congregation's safe church committee, scholarship committee, and pastoral search committees. She is currently serving as a deacon and as clerk for the deacon board.

b. Review of the Judicial Code Committee

Per instruction of Synod 2019 that the COD "review the Judicial Code every five years, seeking input from the Judicial Code Committee, the Office of Safe Church Ministry, and Church Order experts, to ensure that the Judicial Code continues to function as intended and to assess if updates and/or modifications are needed" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763), the COD adopted a process of review of the Judicial Code Committee to begin in 2022 and to be completed in 2024.

17. Bible Translations Committee update

Appointees to the Bible Translations Committee, at the instruction of Synod 2019, identified additional members for the committee to complete the committee composition. The COD made the final appointments in February 2020 to fully constitute the committee, allowing the work of the committee to get under way. Serving on the Bible Translations Committee are Kristine Johnson, William T. Koopmans, Benjamin Ribbens, Sarah Schreiber, and Michael Williams.

18. U.S. diaconal initiative

Synod 2015 requested reporting from the executive director on "annual progress of the . . . efforts of denominational agencies and



ministries as all seek to work together for the revitalization of the offices of elder and deacon” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, pp. 669-70). The executive director reported in February a decision to hire a U.S. diaconate coordinator. The need for such a resource was affirmed by the COD.

19. Historical research on dealing with political and/or justice matters

Synod 2019 instructed “the Council of Delegates to do historical research on synodical decisions and the defining rationale for making those decisions in dealing with political and/or justice matters, and to report through one of the COD committees and/or an ad hoc group. The Council of Delegates will report back to Synod 2020” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22). The COD presents the following recommendation:

That synod appoint a study committee to address the issues raised by Synod 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22) regarding historical research on synodical decisions and rationale for making decisions dealing with political and justice issues. The composition of the committee must include a healthy representation of God’s diversity in the church (i.e., Indigenous and other ethnic minorities). The outcome should also include a robust process of communication oriented toward the church at all levels (i.e., Faith Formation Committee conversation re Children at the Lord’s Supper—“the shepherding model”).

*Grounds:*

- a. The issues raised in Article 77 of the *Acts of Synod 2019* (pp. 820-22) are important to the identity and future of our church. Due to the gravity of this issue, the importance of connecting with the church broadly, and a timetable necessary to do the work well, a synodical study committee would be a more appropriate means to address this issue.
- b. While the work of gathering the historical data requested can be done effectively and quickly, the definition of *ecclesiastical matters* is a complex issue that affects more than justice and mercy matters and thus deserves a more complete study than the COD is equipped to make.
- c. Any study into proposing a Supplement to Church Order Article 28 should be undertaken through a synodical study committee, not by the COD, which is not set up to direct study committees.

20. Addressing Abuse of Power—responses to Synod 2019 directives (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-99)

The COD provides the following as updates to the various decisions of Synod 2019 in its response to the Addressing the Abuse of Power report. We are pleased to report that many of the tasks are completed while some of the work is still in process, as noted.

a. Training of pastors

The proposal for the training of pastors is under way by means of a group formed by the Ministries Leadership Council under the COD’s direction. We anticipate that a final report and proposal will be presented to the COD in May to be forwarded to synod by way of the COD Supplement.

b. Code of Conduct

The COD recommends to synod, for adoption, the proposed Code of Conduct report (Appendix F) in response to the instruction of Synod 2019.

c. Training at classis and local levels

The directive for classes to develop training of officebearers to be alert to power dynamics and to monitor the training await development of strategies found elsewhere before bringing such strategies to classes. Safe Church Ministry is taking the lead in developing a resource toolkit for training officebearers and leaders, and Pastor Church Resources is helping to assess what we have and what we need for such a toolkit.

d. Counseling services

Classes were encouraged “to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services.” The COD encouraged its classis delegates to return to their classes with a reminder to ensure that counseling services for victims of abuse become a part of each classis budget.

e. Strengthening Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry is taking the lead to assess what we have and what we need to effectively respond to emotional abuse. The COD encouraged Safe Church Ministry to continue to explore the use of restorative practices in the church.

An ad hoc group has been appointed to address the instruction “to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.” The COD anticipates an update report in May.

f. Prevention of abuse in CRCNA offices

The ad hoc group appointed as mentioned in subpoint e above will also be bringing a report on the prevention of abuse in the CRCNA offices.

g. Policy on nondisclosure agreements

The development of a policy on nondisclosure agreements is under way by CRCNA staff.

h. Abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches

The strategy development of abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches will be addressed after earlier work is completed.

i. Recordkeeping

At its February 2020 meeting the COD received an initial report on the proposed system and policies of recordkeeping and anticipates a final report at the May meeting to forward to synod.

j. Creating a culture that prevents the abuse of power

Points 1 and 2 of the “creating a culture” decision of synod are being held for strategy development after earlier work is completed.

Regarding point 3, a report on the strengthening of the role of regional pastor and church visitors by the Classis Renewal Advisory Team has been forwarded to Pastor Church Resources, specifically in regard to classes.

Point 4 of the decision, about establishing “a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service,” is being referred to the ad hoc group noted in subpoint e above.

k. Implementation and monitoring

The COD continues to monitor the progress and ensure implementation of the decisions of Synod 2019 to aid in the prevention of the abuse of power in CRCNA leadership. The preceding information is presented as a progress report on addressing abuse of power matters as of February 2020.

21. Terminology for partnerships

The COD considered the use of terms referring to partner ministries and organizations and adopted new terminology: *affiliated nondenominational agencies* are now referred to as *partnerships*. The CRCNA will no longer have need to differentiate between *denominationally related agencies/ministries*, *affiliated nondenominational organizations*, and *nonaffiliated nondenominational organizations*. The changes have also been incorporated into the policy regarding accreditation of organizations for denominational financial support.

22. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The CRC *Yearbook* is made available in print, as a downloadable PDF (available at [faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org)), and in online format ([crcna.org/Yearbook](http://crcna.org/Yearbook)) near the beginning of each calendar year. This publication reflects an extensive information-gathering process of denominational and local-church information as of approximately August 31 of each calendar year preceding the annual publication. Data received from the churches, classes, and ordained personnel throughout the rest of the year is continually updated in the online *Yearbook* (at [crcna.org/Yearbook](http://crcna.org/Yearbook)). The online format includes the Church Finder feature, which provides maps, church service times, membership information, and links to church websites, among other helpful information. Classis and denominational statistics can also be downloaded at [crcna.org/Yearbook](http://crcna.org/Yearbook). Minister service history, special days to be observed in the church calendar, and denominational ministry-share information are all linked via the online *Yearbook*.

Among some of the statistics available in the online *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. This data continues to present a historical record of our church and ministry together through the years.

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

The *Church Order and Its Supplements 2019* reflects the updates adopted by Synod 2019. The latest version, published by the Office of Synodical Services, was distributed to each of the churches in early fall 2019 and has been translated into Korean and Spanish. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, also updated following the decisions of Synod 2019 and translated for Spanish-speaking and Korean-speaking churches, is available in electronic format only. Both the Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure are available in digital format at [crcna.org/SynodResources](http://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.

Synod 2019 decided that in order to improve the connection between synod and classes and churches, a summary of the *Agenda for Synod* should be sent to delegates and church council clerks with an encouragement to pass it along to church members. Watch for a summary document to be available in mid-spring 2020.

d. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and the stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in summer 2019 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2019. Anyone desiring to access or download a copy of this tool for the classes may do so by going to the stated clerk and synodical deputy webpage at [crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies](http://crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies).

e. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*

A very helpful tool for churches and classes, the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* was updated by Henry DeMoor in fall 2019 to reflect decisions through Synod 2019 that have been incorporated into the Church Order. We are grateful to Dr. DeMoor for his contribution of providing a tool for use by classes, churches, and many others working and advising on polity matters. This resource is intended as a companion to the CRC's Church Order, offering commentary and explanation of guidelines set forth and decisions made by synod over the years. The manual is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library ([crcna.org/DigitalLibrary](http://crcna.org/DigitalLibrary)), and print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive ([faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org)).

f. *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*

Also recently updated in 2020 is Henry DeMoor's *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, last printed in 2010. This invaluable resource, providing the context for the rules of the church—the

“why” behind the rules—is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library ([crcna.org/DigitalLibrary](http://crcna.org/DigitalLibrary)), and print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive ([faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org)).

#### B. *Program matters*

A significant part of the Council of Delegates’ 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, institutions, and ministries and via this section of the COD’s report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix K to this Council of Delegates Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Financial and Business Supplement* that will be distributed just prior to synod. The final budget and the ministry-share request will be presented to synod by way of the COD Supplement report and synod’s financial matters advisory committee.

The COD provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the COD and the denomination’s ministries. Serving within the office of the ED are the director of ministries and administration (DMA), the Canadian ministries director (CMD), the director of finance and operations (DFO), the director of Back to God Ministries International, the director of Resonate Global Mission, the director of synodical services (DSS), and the director of communications and marketing (DCM).

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), convened by the executive director of the CRCNA, has responsibility for implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (*Our Journey 2020*), for the collaboration of the ministries, and for the review of program matters. The binational membership of the MLC is made up of executive leadership, directors of agencies, presidents of the educational institutions (or their designees), and others representing specific offices and functions. The Canadian Ministries Team, convened by the Canadian ministries director, provides leadership to the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Canada.

The program and financial matters processed by the COD 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. Current: *Our Journey 2020* – The Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church

The Council of Delegates 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 in North America. The plan provides a framework for the COD’s supervision of the management of the agencies and ministries; 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.

After listening carefully to members and leaders of Christian Reformed churches across North America in previous years, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA identified (and the COD recognizes) a set of

mutually desired futures. These desired futures, endorsed by Synod 2015, include the following:

**Desired Future 1: Church and Community.** We want to participate with each other, and with the people in the communities where we live and work, to discover where God's Spirit is already active and to bear witness to Christ in a way that invites others to accept him and become part of his family.

**Desired Future 2: Discipleship.** Our congregations will be vibrant communities, shaped by grace, that proclaim the gospel and are engaged in evangelism and lifelong discipleship with people of all generations.

**Desired Future 3: Leadership.** Our congregations and ministries at all levels—local, regional, and denominational—will be places where leaders, both ordained and lay, are identified, equipped, and empowered to serve effectively in today's diverse and challenging world.

**Desired Future 4: Identity.** We will understand deeply, embrace fully, and express freely what it means to be the Christian Reformed Church in North America in this time and place.

**Desired Future 5: Collaboration.** We will work together—locally, regionally, nationally, and binationally—to live out our fivefold calling in ways that are effective, efficient, responsive, cross-culturally competent, accessible, and sustainable.

*Our Journey 2020* has provided a set of strategic and integrated directions for the agencies, ministries, and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church by focusing on what we believe God was calling congregations to be and to do in ways unique to the ministry contexts and opportunities of each. Short videos about these desired futures—meant to inspire and encourage congregations and classes—have been developed and are available at [crcna.org/welcome/our-journey-2020](http://crcna.org/welcome/our-journey-2020). In addition, assistance is provided for congregations and classes in using the desired futures and strategic goals of *Our Journey 2020* in ways that resonate with the needs and opportunities of each.

*Our Journey 2020* officially launched in July 2016. Measures have been developed to track (a) denominational agency and ministry efficacy in the provision of assistance and resources, and (b) the attainment of the desired futures through surveying Christian Reformed churches and their members across North America.

## 2. Proposed: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

The COD adopted a timeline for developing the next ministry plan (including listening sessions during national and binational gatherings during 2019 to gather input), for receiving a draft plan for endorsement, and for presenting a revised ministry plan to Synod 2020. The COD reviewed a draft of the proposed *Our Journey 2025* at its February 2020 meeting and anticipates a final version to present to synod by way of the COD Supplement in May.



### 3. Our Calling

Proposed by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to Synod 2014, the term *Five Streams*—changed to “Our Calling” in 2016—became a focus of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in its collaboration, programs, and reporting. Synod 2015 adopted the five themes of Our Calling of the Christian Reformed Church (included below) to function as “ministry priorities to strategically focus and adaptively organize the work of the Christian Reformed Church in North America while respecting and building on our previous mission efforts, history, and legacy of relationships and member support” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

#### **Faith Formation**

As a community of believers, we seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to nurture their faith through all ages and stages of life.

#### **Servant Leadership**

Understanding that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish, we identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God.

#### **Global Mission**

Called to be witnesses of Christ’s kingdom to the ends of the earth, we start and strengthen local churches in North America and around the world.

#### **Mercy and Justice**

Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God.

#### **Gospel Proclamation and Worship**

Believing that faith comes through the hearing of God’s Word, we proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do.

Consistent with prior actions of both adopting the five features and then relabeling them as “Our Calling,” we note that these ministry priorities are being utilized to communicate more effectively what the CRC members and ministers, congregations and classes, and ministries and agencies are called do. The *Annual Ministry Report*, the *Agenda for Synod*, and introductory brochures all utilize this categorization. Further, the Council of Delegates committee structure and committee mandates reflect these priorities.

### 4. CRC agency, institution, and congregational services reports

The Council of Delegates is responsible for submitting a *unified* report to synod composed of individual segments 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 these materials, we invite

you to praise God for ministry opportunities and for the thousands of staff and volunteers throughout the church who are living and sharing the gospel.

5. Ministry evaluation

Synod 2018 instructed the COD and the executive director “to continue the important work of evaluation and prioritization by working together to implement a robust evaluation strategy whereby in a five-year cycle all agencies and ministries will be continually evaluated through the framework of the five ministry priorities” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 455).

In response to this directive, the COD adopted a policy to ensure continual evaluation of all agencies and ministries over a four-year cycle according to the five ministry priorities. The agencies and ministries are required to have comprehensive and strategic program goals and objectives and, by means of fitting evaluation and assessment approaches, to provide annual outcomes in their reporting year.

Synod 2020 will review and is asked to approve evaluation reports with regard to Servant Leadership from the following ministries: Calvin Theological Seminary (Appendix G), Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries (Appendix H).

6. New Policy for Program and Personnel Reduction

The COD in October adopted a new Policy for Program and Personnel Reduction to add to the COD Governance Handbook. The policy provides guidelines to staff in the event of an economic turndown that might require immediate action for program or personnel reductions.

7. Proposed name change for Back to God Ministries International

The COD presents to synod a recommendation that synod approve changing the name of Back to God Ministries International to *ReFrame Ministries*, with the tagline *God’s Story. Today’s Media*.

8. Faith Formation Ministries

The COD presents on behalf of Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) the following recommendations for consideration by synod (see also the Faith Formation Ministries report, pp. 143-46):

- a. That synod encourage CRC congregations to consider/reconsider using the *Dwell* children’s ministry curriculum as a vibrant, Reformed resource for faith formation among children.

*Grounds:*

- 1) Starting in the new ministry year, a *Dwell Digital* subscription will be available free to all CRC congregations as a benefit of our ministry-share resources.
  - 2) The *Dwell* curriculum has an established track record of being a beneficial faith-formative curriculum.
- b. That, in connection with Synod 2018’s affirmation of an ongoing need for Reformed curriculum, synod encourage congregations to consult with their FFM regional catalyzers or Faith Formation Ministries



office staff concerning their particular needs and opportunities for faith formation-related resources for all ages.

- c. That synod encourage all classes to partner with FFM in appointing a volunteer Youth Ministry Champion to serve the congregations of their classis.
- d. That synod encourage all congregations to recognize how critical the church/home relationship is for discipleship, and to take steps to strengthen the faith formation partnership between church and home.
- e. That synod encourage CRC members to consider supporting Faith Formation Ministries with their personal gifts. (We are very grateful for the many congregations that now include Faith Formation Ministries for an annual offering.)

#### 9. Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal

The CRC and Reformed Church in America received a generous grant from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation to be used over a five-year period to establish a “third space”—not entirely within the RCA, and not entirely within the CRC—where churches from either denomination can access resources and support for congregational renewal. A steering committee, consisting of at least two senior staff members and one nonstaff member from each of the two denominations, successfully established the Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal (RPCR); this partnership has now been renamed Vibrant Congregations and is being led by Larry Doornbos. For more information on this initiative, see [ReformedPartners.org](http://ReformedPartners.org).

#### 10. Justice and mercy efforts

- a. As fulfillment of an instruction from Synod 2017, a follow-up report regarding renewed mercy and justice efforts in response to global humanitarian crises is provided in Appendix I.
- b. The COD referred the following encouragement by Synod 2019 to the Center for Public Dialogue and Office of Social Justice: “That synod encourage the work of addressing peace in the Middle East already being done, acknowledging the awareness of injustice, and commend with thanks the work being done,” and “that synod (with the COD) recognize and encourage our staff and churches to continue to strive for increased partnership that seeks a third way between mainline and evangelical approaches and fosters increased reconciliation on all sides” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 817).

#### 11. Church planting goals

The Council of Delegates has endorsed an interim report of the Collaborative Church Planting Team led by Resonate Global Mission staff and composed of church planters and CRCNA staff members. The interim report presented a grid of strategies that can be used to support three different styles of church planting in the CRC: classic and multi-site (emphasis on Sunday gathering), micro-church (community and house church), and macro-church (church planting hubs). The grid lays out the various resourcing needs (human, financial, and logistic)

for these styles of church planting. The Collaborative Church Planting Team will be suggesting further recommendations to the COD in May. In addition, the Global Missions Committee of the COD is grateful for the helpful feedback received from the twenty-one classes that responded to the survey on church planting.

12. Immigration resources

Synod instructed “the executive director, in consultation with the appropriate CRC agencies, to identify and communicate appropriate legal and financial resources to assist churches and classes with the immigration of pastors and their families” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 778). The COD reviewed the list of immigration resources for pastors and churches and noted that the resources could be enhanced by including a list of individuals who have gone through the immigration process in the past. However, the COD considered the synodical commitment to provide immigration assistance for pastors and churches and decided not to list publicly (i.e., on the crcna website) the names of individuals who have been processed through the immigration system.

*Grounds:*

- a. Privacy laws in Canada would need to be considered.
- b. Given the current environment in the U.S. regarding visas, permanent residency, and the like, it would be unwise to post the names of any individuals currently or recently involved in immigration processes or decisions.
- c. The website directs the user to the Human Resources department; when such contact is made, the professional judgment of HR personnel (by permission of the intended person) could lead to personal contact (see [crcna.org/resources/church-resources/immigration-resources](http://crcna.org/resources/church-resources/immigration-resources)).

13. U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice

The COD received an update that the U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice, appointed in 2019, has convened its first meeting. Work is under way to support this ministry of the CRCNA.

14. Ministry Support Services

a. Shared services

The staff of Ministry Support Services (MSS) is responsible for *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Libros Desafio (Spanish-language resources), and a number of professional services that support CRC ministries. These services include marketing, order and subscription processing, call center, editorial services, translation, rights and permissions management, design and web services, purchasing, and distribution. At any one time, more than 100 projects are in process, and thousands of words are being combined with design elements for publication via paper or pixels. The call center handles about 20,000 phone calls per year, in addition to processing online orders, email, and live chats on various CRCNA websites.

In the interest of consistent style, branding, and quality presentation, MSS has supported CRC communications staff in creating guides for Brand Standards ([crcna.org/Brand](http://crcna.org/Brand)) and Editorial Style ([crcna.org/Style](http://crcna.org/Style)).

As we plan for major construction in the Grand Rapids office, we have been exploring options for how to drastically reduce warehouse space. These options include inventory reduction, outsourcing to a third-party provider, and warehouse reconfiguration. The plan is to convert most or all of our upper warehouse into offices.

b. *The Banner*

*The Banner*, the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, currently prints and distributes more than 75,000 copies of its paper version. Website pageviews average about 48,000 per month, and more than 3,000 people have signed up to receive the weekly *Banner* email. Our efforts on social media also help to ensure that *Banner* content is available to anyone in a variety of forms.

*The Banner* app is available for free download on iPhone and Android devices ([thebanner.org/App](http://thebanner.org/App)); monthly, the app is receiving more than 6,500 pageviews.

We are most thankful for a huge show of support from *Banner* readers, as nearly 6,000 donors gave almost \$450,000 for the annual appeal fundraiser in 2019.

c. Faith Alive and Libros Desafio

Although Synod 2013 approved the dissolution of the Faith Alive Christian Resources board and noted the necessary transition regarding critical functions of Faith Alive, MSS continues to sell and reprint resources that were already published. As those products grow older, and without new products to take their place, sales continue to decline. Sales are currently just under \$1 million per year, compared to about \$3 million in 2013. Similarly, Libros Desafio has ceased publishing new titles but continues to sell and reprint the backlog; sales are about \$180,000 per year.

Christian Reformed congregations continue to receive a special “CRC discount” in comparison to what churches of other denominations pay. In addition, the CRC Digital Library allows anyone attending a Christian Reformed congregation free access to most Faith Alive titles online. And, new this year, CRCs will receive free, online access to *Dwell Digital* resources (other churches pay up to \$500 per year to access these Sunday school curriculum resources). All of these initiatives are intended to help Christian Reformed churches make full use of these resources that they helped publish.

d. The Network

Launched in 2010, the Network ([crcna.org/Network](http://crcna.org/Network)) is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. Over the past decade the Network has become one of the CRC’s most-visited websites where people involved in their local church can connect—with each other and with denominational staff—about the “nuts and bolts” of ministry. Ministry Support Services oversees the site with a half-time community manager.

Use of the site continues to increase, with double-digit growth in each of the past five years and now over 100,000 pageviews per month. CRC members have posted thousands of blogs, discussion topics, and ministry questions. In addition, more than 2,000 ministry resources are now online and searchable from [crcna.org/resources](http://crcna.org/resources).

### C. *Financial matters*

#### 1. Introduction

In order to assure that synod has the most up-to-date and accurate financial information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Business and Financial Supplement*, which will be made available to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), and the recommended ministry-share amount for the first six months of calendar year 2021, in anticipation of synod’s adoption of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report. 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 Council of Delegates Supplement report later in May.

#### 2. Reimagining Ministry Shares update

Synod 2019 adopted *in principle* the Reimagining Ministry Shares report and commended it to the churches for consideration. The COD presents the Reimagining Ministry Shares—Process Update report and the recommendations within it (Appendix J) to Synod 2020 for adoption.

Synod 2019 instructed the COD “to encourage possible additional revenue enhancements for a variety of denominational ministries (e.g., fee for service possibilities, ministry-specific fundraising) and report back to Synod 2020 regarding such potential enhancements” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 790). The COD reports that it found no additional revenue that would generate significant incremental revenue.

#### 3. Remodeling and repurposing of the Grand Rapids facility and property

The COD in October 2019 endorsed a proposal to proceed with a radical remodeling and repurposing of the Grand Rapids, Michigan, facility and acreage, with costs not to exceed \$11.7 million, including but not limited to the following changes:

- demolishing the north wing (two stories)
- reclaiming some of the existing warehouse space for offices
- providing a range of improvements in existing office space
- addressing all deferred maintenance
- entering into real estate sales for three parcels along 28th Street
- participating in a possible three-way buy-sell arrangement for the south parcel

The COD adopted a revenue plan that includes \$3 million in donations, \$2.5 million in property sales, and \$5.6 million in self-financing.

*Note:* In mid-March the administration made the difficult decision to postpone the remodeling project of the Grand Rapids facility for up to a year due to the COVID-19 crisis and stay-at-home orders.

### **III. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Paul R. De Vries, chair of the Council of Delegates; Andy de Ruyter, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Colin P. Watson, Sr., acting executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, Back to God Ministries International, or Resonate Global Mission are discussed.

B. That synod grant all requests for privilege of the floor by the COD, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2020.

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 2020.

D. That synod by way of the ballot appoint persons previously appointed as interim COD classical delegates to a modified first term (I, F).

E. That synod by way of the ballot elect new members to the COD from the nominations presented to a first term of three years (I, F).

F. That synod by way of the ballot elect Andy de Ruyter by way of exception to an additional term of three years (until July 1, 2023) (I, F).

G. That synod thank retiring COD members for their faithful service and significant contributions to the denomination (I, F).

H. That synod take note of the appointment by the COD of Colin P. Watson, Sr., as acting executive director of the CRCNA until such a time as synod can appoint an interim executive director. The appointment was due to the immediate departure of Steven R. Timmermans as executive director on February 20 (II, A, 1).

I. That synod take note of the planned retirement of the director of ministries and administration (Colin P. Watson, Sr.), effective January 6, 2021; and the director of finance and operations (John H. Bolt), effective July 2, 2021; and express its sincere gratitude to Mr. Watson and Mr. Bolt for their service to the denomination (II, A, 2).

J. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD to the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and the Consideration of Bivocality Task Force on behalf of synod (II, A, 3).

K. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD for synodical deputies, alternate synodical deputies, and the World Renew Board of Delegates (II, A, 4).

L. That Synod 2020 recommend that Synod 2021 allow time in its schedule (up to 30 minutes) for recognition of the 25th anniversary of the ordination

of women and adopt the proposal to recognize this event as presented in Appendix B (II, A, 10).

*Ground:* The 25th anniversary of the ordination of women is a significant milestone in the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

M. That synod adopt the following Church Order changes proposed by and presented on behalf of Synod 2019 (indicated by ~~strikethrough~~ and *italics*; see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 357-59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 768-71, 812) (II, A, 11; Appendix C):

## 1. Categories of affiliation

*Supplement, Article 8, G*

*G. Joint Ministry of Ministers from Churches in ~~Ecclesiastical Fellowship~~ Communion*

Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded the right of delegation to classis and participation in classical committee work for the duration of their time of service in the Christian Reformed Church. This right of delegation and participation shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the classis.

The Christian Reformed Church will by way of exception allow its ministers to be called by a congregation of a denomination in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion if such a minister jointly serves in a congregation of the denomination in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 663)

(*Acts of Synod 2020*, p. \_\_\_\_)

*Articles 38-g and -h*

g. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may unite to form union congregations with one or more particular congregations of churches in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion, with the approval of classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g

h. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion, with the approval of classis and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

*Supplement, Article 38-h*

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to affiliate with one or more denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion:

*Article 49*

a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church so that the Christian Reformed Church may



exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

b. Synod shall designate the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~, ~~the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue~~, *communion or in cooperation*, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

#### Article 59-e

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

#### Articles 66-a and -b

a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~*communion* are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~*communion* shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

#### Article 67

Members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church and no church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~*communion* may, upon their request, either retain their membership in the church of their former residence, or have their certificates sent to the nearest Christian Reformed church.

## 2. Tasks of synod

#### Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the ~~hymnals~~*Psalter Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

## 3. The Lord's Day

#### Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b

a. The congregation shall assemble for worship, ~~ordinarily twice~~ on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

b. *Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.*

*Note: The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.*

a. The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions.

b. ~~At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the creeds and confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism.~~

N. That synod receive the Classis Ministry Plans report as a fulfillment of the request from Synod 2018 and instruct the COD to request that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team report to Synod 2021 regarding (1) new resources being developed for creating or refining a classis ministry plan and (2) an update on which classes have a ministry plan, since many are currently in process (II, A, 13; Appendix D).

O. That synod adopt the report on the definition of heresy as a fulfillment of the instruction of Synod 2019, consider its recommendations, and express gratitude to the authors of the report for their work and contribution (II, A, 15; Appendix E).

P. That synod express gratitude to Orlan Gulker and Henry Wildeboer for their service to the Judicial Code Committee (II, A, 16, a).

Q. That synod approve the COD's interim appointment of Bomsu Kim to the Judicial Code Committee by way of exception for an expanded term until July 1, 2023, renewable for a second term of three years (II, A, 16, a).

R. That synod by way of the ballot elect a new member to the Judicial Code Committee, as presented, to a first term of three years (II, A, 16, a).

S. That synod appoint a study committee to address the issues raised by Synod 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22) regarding historical research on synodical decisions and rationale for making decisions dealing with political and justice issues. The composition of the committee must include a healthy representation of God's diversity in the church (i.e., Indigenous and other ethnic minorities). The outcome should also include a robust process of communication oriented toward the church at all levels (i.e., Faith Formation Committee conversation re Children at the Lord's Supper—"the shepherding model") (II, A, 19).

*Grounds:*

1. The issues raised in Article 77 of the *Acts of Synod 2019* (pp. 820-22) are important to the identity and future of our church. Due to the gravity of this issue, the importance of connecting with the church broadly, and the timetable necessary to do the work well, a synodical study committee would be a more appropriate means to address this issue.
2. While the work of gathering the historical data requested can be done effectively and quickly, the definition of *ecclesiastical matters* is a more complex issue that affects more than justice and mercy matters and thus deserves a more complete study than the COD is equipped to make.
3. Any study into proposing a Supplement to Church Order Article 28 should be undertaken through a synodical study committee, not by the COD, which is not set up to direct study committees.



T. That synod attend to the following with regard to addressing the abuse of power in response to decisions of Synod 2019:

1. That synod adopt the proposed Code of Conduct report in Appendix F and instruct the COD to devise a plan for implementation for the denomination, classes, and churches per the instruction of Synod 2019 (II, A, 20, b).
2. That synod take note of the COD's progress report on the implementation of the decisions of Synod 2019 regarding abuse of power (section II, A, 20).

U. That synod approve the evaluation reports presented by Calvin Theological Seminary and the following ministries with regard to Servant Leadership: Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries (II, B, 5; Appendices G and H).

V. That synod approve changing the name of Back to God Ministries International to *ReFrame Ministries*, with the tagline God's Story. Today's Media (II, B, 7).

W. That synod address the following with regard to Faith Formation Ministries (II, B, 8; see also FFM report, pp. 143-46):

1. That synod encourage CRC congregations to consider/reconsider using the *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum as a vibrant, Reformed resource for faith formation among children.

*Grounds:*

- a. Starting in the new ministry year, a *Dwell Digital* subscription will be available free to all CRC congregations as a benefit of our ministry-share resources.
  - b. The *Dwell* curriculum has an established track record of being a beneficial faith-formative curriculum.
2. That, in connection with Synod 2018's affirmation of an ongoing need for Reformed curriculum, synod encourage congregations to consult with their FFM regional catalyzers or Faith Formation Ministries office staff concerning their particular needs and opportunities for faith formation-related resources for all ages.
  3. That synod encourage all classes to partner with FFM in appointing a volunteer Youth Ministry Champion to serve the congregations of their classis.
  4. That synod encourage all congregations to recognize how critical the church/home relationship is for discipleship, and to take steps to strengthen the faith formation partnership between church and home.
  5. That synod encourage CRC members to consider supporting Faith Formation Ministries with their personal gifts. (We are very grateful for the many congregations that now include Faith Formation Ministries for an annual offering.)

X. That synod receive the follow-up report in Appendix I regarding renewed mercy and justice efforts in response to global humanitarian crises as fulfillment of an instruction from Synod 2017 (II, B, 10, a).

Y. That synod consider the following with regard to Reimagining Ministry Shares (II, C, 2; Appendix J):

1. That Synod 2020 implement the content of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, adopted by Synod 2019 in principle.
2. That synod adopt changes to the Church Order Supplement as follows (additions noted in **bold**; deletions noted by ~~strike-through~~):

*Proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 45, section a*

a. Denominational Funding

- 1) The synod shall annually review the unified denominational budget as ~~proposed~~ **adopted** by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA and approve a ministry-share ~~assignment~~ **guidelines** to provide the revenue for that budget.
- 2) Synod shall review the annual budgets of the denominational agencies.
- 3) Following each annual synod, the executive director shall ~~inform the classical treasurers as to their respective denominational ministry shares~~ **send to the churches an annual letter of guidance as they consider their denominational pledges.**

*Ground:* The term *guidelines* (rather than *assignment*) better reflects the changes adopted by Synod 2019 (see section 2, c included in Background [Appendix J]).

3. That synod instruct the executive director to make appropriate updates where necessary to the following Church Order Supplements referring to ministry shares in connection with *assigned* ministry-share amounts: Church Order Supplement, Articles 35-a; 38-b, section c; 38-g, section o; and 38-h, section k.
4. That synod take note that the instruction to consider additional revenue sources has been fulfilled; no additional revenue sources were identified.
- Z. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements of the agencies and educational institutions (Appendix K).

Council of Delegates of the  
Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Paul R. De Vries, chair

## Appendix A

### Joint Supervision for Ordained CRCNA Staff

#### I. Background

Church Order Article 13-b states:

A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, when applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

Supplement, Article 13-b states, in part:

If any council, agency, or institution of the CRC involved in the cooperative supervision of a minister of the Word learns about significant deviation in doctrine, life, or duties, it shall officially inform in writing its partner(s) in that supervision about such deviation before any action is taken that affects that minister's status and future. A similar communication officially informing its partner(s) in supervision is expected from an agency or institution when a minister's status is altered at a time of downsizing or position elimination. . . .

As noted, for ministers of the Word employed by an agency/ministry of the CRCNA, the agency/ministry has *primary* responsibility for supervision of duties for the position held by that minister, and the council of the calling church has *primary* responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. Supervision of these two areas is not mutually exclusive, so it seems important to have appropriate communication between the council and the agency/ministry related to the minister's work, doctrine, and life.

Supervision for a commissioned pastor is addressed in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook: "The classis shall ensure that commissioned pastors, especially those working at some distance from their calling congregations, will have proper supervision and support for their ministry." Further instruction is given that the job description needs approval of the classis and synodical deputies, and that a "good job description" should include a description of the supervision and lines of accountability for the position.

#### II. Protocol

For ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors called to serve in a ministry, agency, or institution of the CRCNA, the CRCNA supervisor is responsible to provide a formal written performance review for the staff member on an annual basis (currently in June/July). At least one month prior to the review, the CRCNA supervisor should invite the calling church council to provide a communication related to their supervision of the person's doctrine and life. When the written performance review is completed, the agency/ministry supervisor will share a brief summary of that review (shared with the staff member in advance) with the council leadership of the calling church. This process will provide both the council and the agency/ministry an annual opportunity for communication.

If significant concerns are noted throughout the year by either the calling church council or the agency/ministry regarding performance of duties, the observing party will summarize those concerns for the other party, and

the two parties may decide to hold a joint meeting with the staff member to address the concerns. This protocol is not intended to interfere with the agency/ministry's right (and potential need) to take immediate employment action when necessary for compliance with applicable laws, protection of other staff, or other compelling reasons.

This protocol (e.g., to request feedback from the calling church and to share a brief summary of the performance review) would be specified in writing for the staff member at the beginning of their employment with the CRCNA agency/ministry, and the staff member would be required to authorize the sharing of information with the council as a condition of employment with the agency/ministry.

*Note:* This pertains to all ordained ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors currently serving as CRCNA staff as well as for all new hires.

Adopted by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA  
October 2019

## **Appendix B**

### **Recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women**

#### **I. Proposal**

The following proposal is being submitted to the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA for endorsement and recommendation to Synod 2020, that the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women in the CRC be recognized throughout the coming year and that Synod 2021 include time in its schedule (up to 30 minutes) for recognition of this significant milestone in the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

#### **II. Overview**

The CRC has increasingly welcomed the gifts of a variety of leadership positions in its churches and ministries, locally and around the world. In 1995 synod approved the ordination of women to the office of minister of the Word and ratified that decision in 1996. Marking several milestones with ideas for churches to observe in 2020 and 2021, including a time of recognition at Synod 2021, would help our denomination reflect on and recognize in a variety of ways how women use their gifts in our churches, ministries, and denomination.

#### **III. Suggested ways for churches, classes, and individuals to participate**

Synod 2020 would initiate the planning of several opportunities beginning in September 2020 through December 2021. Our denominational offices would be encouraged to develop resources and suggestions inviting our churches and classes to commemorate this occasion during these 15 months. These include the following, beginning in September 2020 through August 4, 2021:

- Provide stories in honor of those who have gone before us and in recognition of women who are currently in all levels of leadership, as well as women who are in seminary training. The stories would include

- individuals and groups working toward bringing about diversity in leadership. These stories would be presented in printed or video media.
- Share a new resource we plan to have completed by September 2020. It is not named yet, but a working title could be *Ten Ways for Men and Women to Thrive Together in Ministry*.
  - Encourage setting aside 60-90 minutes for men and women in a gathering of your church or classis to share their stories in person or via video-conference, using a roundtable-style format and three prompt questions to guide the discussion. The focus will be on honoring women in your church and classis. Serve refreshments as well!
  - Provide opportunity to purchase a t-shirt celebrating women in the CRC, perhaps as a fundraiser for future events.
  - Provide a suggested litany with Scripture and songs/hymns. Designate a Sunday in March 2021 (or some other designated time) for a service that includes a lament for any hurts caused concerning theological differences.
  - Consider recruiting a diverse group of men and women writers to develop a devotional guide with a common theme.

#### **IV. Suggested recognition**

At Synod 2021 we would hear the voices of at least three CRC women representing three generations of clergy, elders, and deacons (20 minutes via recorded video):

- past – early ordained women
- present – more recently ordained women
- future – seminarians (Calvin Theological Seminary and affiliates)

We would then close with words from a denominational representative, an inspiring song, and prayer (10 minutes).

We would continue our recognition by inviting all women clergy to a one-day Inspire 2021 pregathering on Wednesday, August 4, at Tinley Park (Ill.) Convention Center. Inspire 2021 is currently being planned at that location from August 5-7.

#### **V. Additional considerations**

A. Suggested theme (with Scripture): To be determined by the planning team

B. Seek potential partnerships, select a planning team, and raise funds for lodging and/or transportation of women clergy to attend pre-gathering in August 2021. The Leadership Diversity office will attend and support classical or group events, as needed.

C. Budget: To be determined

- Honorarium for the speaker at pre-Inspire 2021 gathering
- Printed materials
- Decorations and a small commemorative gift for attendees
- Production of video
- Lodging and/or transportation of women clergy to attend pre-gathering

## VI. Conclusion

The Christian Reformed Church has a long history of wrestling with tough issues such as women's ordination. By God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women are thriving in kingdom work in our churches, classes, and communities throughout the world. Your willingness to consider this proposal is deeply appreciated.

Denise L. Posie  
Leadership Diversity

## Appendix C Proposed Church Order Changes by Synod 2019

On behalf of Synod 2019, the COD presents to Synod 2020 the following Church Order changes proposed by Synod 2019 for adoption (indicated by ~~strike through~~ and *italics*; see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 357-59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 768-71, 812):

### A. Categories of affiliation

*Supplement, Article 8, G*

G. Joint Ministry of Ministers from Churches in ~~Ecclesiastical Fellowship~~ Communion

Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded the right of delegation to classis and participation in classical committee work for the duration of their time of service in the Christian Reformed Church. This right of delegation and participation shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the classis.

The Christian Reformed Church will by way of exception allow its ministers to be called by a congregation of a denomination in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion if such a minister jointly serves in a congregation of the denomination in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 663)

(*Acts of Synod 2020*, p. \_\_\_\_)

*Articles 38-g and -h*

g. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may unite to form union congregations with one or more particular congregations of churches in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion, with the approval of classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g

h. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion, with the approval of classis and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

*Supplement, Article 38-h*

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to affiliate with one or more denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion:

*Article 49*

a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

b. Synod shall designate the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue, communion or in cooperation, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

*Article 59-e*

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

*Articles 66-a and -b*

a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

*Article 67*

Members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church and no church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion may, upon their request, either retain their membership in the church of their former residence, or have their certificates sent to the nearest Christian Reformed church.

**B. Tasks of synod**

*Article 47*

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the ~~hymnals~~ *Psalter Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.



## C. The Lord's Day

*Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b*

a. The congregation shall assemble for worship, ordinarily twice on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

b. *Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.*

*Note:* The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

*Proposed deletion of Article 54-b*

a. The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions.

b. ~~At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the creeds and confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism.~~

## Appendix D Classis Ministry Plans

### I. Background

Synod 2018 received the report of the Classis Renewal Group and adopted the following:

That synod encourage all classes to develop and share their ministry plan (cf. Church Order Art. 75, adopted by Synod 2015) with the Classis Renewal Advisory Team so that the team can provide the COD with a summary of the plans (to be forwarded to Synod 2020).

*(Acts of Synod 2018, p. 518)*

This report is presented as a fulfillment of the request of synod, sharing a summary of the ministry plans that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team has received from classes.

We have found that synod's encouragement has been helpful for generating conversation around the purpose of classis and the value of having an intentional ministry plan. In several cases, classis leaders who were not aware of Article 75 of the Church Order saw this as an opportunity to open up conversation in their own contexts. In other places it has led to classes' revisiting their ministry plan to ensure it is up to date and still purposeful. As such, the information that follows is a snapshot from January 2020. Some of the information will undoubtedly be out of date as you read this.

Copies of ministry plans can be found at [crcna.org/classis](http://crcna.org/classis).

### II. Status of classis ministry plans

#### A. *Classes with ministry plans*

Following is a list of classes that have supplied the Classis Renewal Advisory Team with copies of ministry plans. The date of the ministry plan



is also noted if made available to the team. Some classes are currently in the process of updating their ministry plan.

Alberta North (2019)  
Arizona (2016)  
Atlantic Northeast  
B.C. North-West (2019)  
California South (2016)  
Central Plains (2019)  
Chicago South (2018)  
Eastern Canada (2015)  
Georgetown  
Grand Rapids East (2019 draft)  
Grand Rapids South (2011)  
Greater Los Angeles (2014)  
Heartland (2012)  
Holland (2018)  
Illiana (2019 draft)  
Ko-Am (2019)  
Muskegon (2018)  
Niagara (2016)  
Northcentral Iowa (2019)  
Quinte (2014)  
Southeast U.S. (2018)  
Thornapple Valley (2010)  
Toronto (2019)  
Zeeland (2010)

*B. Classes with ministry plans in process*

The following classes do not currently have a defined ministry plan but have indicated they are discussing or in the process of developing one:

B.C. South-East  
Chatham  
Grand Rapids North  
Grandville  
Hamilton  
Hackensack  
Hudson  
Huron  
Lake Superior  
Minnkota  
Northern Michigan  
Pacific Northwest  
Red Mesa  
Rocky Mountain  
Wisconsin  
Yellowstone

*C. Classes with no ministry plan*

The following list of classes includes those that have indicated they do not currently have a ministry plan, and those for which our team has not been able to determine whether they have a plan:

Alberta South/Saskatchewan  
Central California  
Columbia  
Hanmi  
Iakota  
Kalamazoo  
Lake Erie  
North Cascades  
Northern Illinois

*D. Observations about current ministry plans*

Classis ministry plans are not uniform. They represent a variety of classis structures, as well as perspectives on what a ministry plan should be. In order to collect the ministry plans, we simply asked classes to provide what they had on file that would best constitute a current ministry plan. Themes that the team noted include the following:

1. Some ministry plans are generally descriptions of current organizational structure. For example, these ministry plans may be as simple as a list of the existing classis committees with their mandates. In these cases, the ministry plan primarily acts to clarify the overall activities of the classis in a helpful summarized way.
2. Some ministry plans define specific values and/or goals. This seems to be a trend particularly in some newer ministry plans, with five values/goals being a common number of values named.
  - a. In some of these classes, an extensive discernment process occurred to name these values; in other cases the leadership of one classis saw the ministry plan of another and simply decided to adopt it with some adaptations.
  - b. It is also common in these classes to build a set of teams around the values/ goals. These teams are responsible for ensuring the value finds root within the classis structure. It is also common that the team is involved or responsible for developing an educational component of a classis meeting around their specific value.
  - c. While some classes have these teams and their values as an additional structure in the classis, in other cases the teams make up the structure of classis itself, and the leaders of the teams are part of the overall leadership team of the full classis.
  - d. In some cases a classis requires all agenda items, new ministries, educational opportunities, funding, etc. to be connected to one of the values. In other cases, the values exist alongside the preexisting structure and methods of decision making.

3. Some ministry plans have defined goals with timelines. This may be similar to what is called a *strategic plan*. In this case, a goal is named, a target date is set, and a person or position is named to accomplish the goal. This seems more rare for a classis to have this; but when it works, it can provide a helpful way forward if a classis is moving intentionally into a new reality.
4. Some classes do not have a ministry plan. In these cases, it might not be clear how a ministry plan could be helpful, or it might not be clear what a ministry plan might actually entail. Or, in some cases, a ministry plan has just not developed yet, and asking the question has moved some classes to start exploring what it might take to develop a ministry plan. In these cases, there is a desire for a process to be laid out.

*E. Some examples of named values and/or teams within classes*

1. Classis Niagara – prayerful dependence on God, authentic community, disciples making disciples, leadership development, covenantal relationships
2. California South – discipleship, leadership development, church identity, collaboration, community engagement
3. Thornapple Valley – church planting, church renewal
4. Classis Atlantic Northeast – leadership development, church multiplication, church renewal (with a classis interim committee)
5. Classis Grand Rapids South – growing our classis/reversing the decline, improving classis communication, promoting ministry partnerships, improving pastoral health, defining the ministry/polity balance of classis
6. Other

Some classes are exploring the use of the four key purposes listed in the Classis Renewal Group report to Synod 2018 that are also now reflected in Church Order Article 39. For example, several classes are structuring their meeting agendas using the following four purposes:

- a. A place of discerning the Spirit in community
- b. A network of support and accountability
- c. Living into a collective calling
- d. A connection to the wider church

*F. Other observations about ministry plans in general*

1. Expectations of a ministry plan

It seems to be a common understanding that a ministry plan is designed around moving people into greater collective ministry. In this case, the idea of developing a ministry plan feels like a requirement to do more. However, our support for classes developing ministry plans is more based on ensuring the goals, whatever they may be, find alignment and a structure to support them. So a ministry plan, while it may lead to doing *more*, may also be just as effective in helping a classis do *less* as the ministries, networks, meetings, etc. come into better alignment.

2. In several cases, ministry plans and organizational structure are not in intentional alignment, or they are actually out of alignment. An example would be a classis with a ministry plan that specifies core values and new priorities without addressing the current rules of procedure or committee structures. So there may be additional teams created, but the mandates of the existing committees might not be folded into those of the new teams or might not be intentionally reconfigured to anchor their work in the core values. This is also true when it comes to the budget, which often is developed with the ministry plan in mind but is not shaped by and accountable to it.

3. Little imagination for local church experience to directly inform ministry plans

A classis may have a majority of its churches engaging in renewal journeys or pastors participating in peer support or learning opportunities. And yet there is often little attention paid to expanding the impact of these experiences into a classis setting.

4. Lack of value or even a sense of competition

While it is our desire that church members and leaders should be able to say their church is better off because it is part of a classis, this is not the common feeling. Rather, many see the collective ministry of classis as something that is in competition with local church ministry, particularly in terms of finances or participation availability.

5. The value of a leader

Classis renewal seems to thrive best when there is a champion in place.

6. Exposure to others

It is easy for a classis to function in isolation from other classes and only work together for larger denominational engagement (e.g., synod). We are finding that creating space for classis leaders to hear what is happening in other classes can spark imagination and create significant opportunities for developing ministry plans that are informed by their colleagues. It also allows bridging the gap between those things that are truly unique to a classis and that which they might find in common, also creating opportunities for local adaptation.

7. Measuring

Other than in a ministry plan that is written like a strategic plan, it is easy for a ministry plan to define activities and structure but not necessarily to provide measurements to show the classis is faithfully living into the plan.

8. Ongoing refinement

Ministry plans are not static. Some classes have ministry plans that have been in existence for many years and may benefit from a revisit/refresh. Some classes have started having a more stable ministry plan that defines their structure, but they are also creating time-based strategic plans to go alongside the ministry plan.

## 9. Article 75

Church Order Article 75 mentions ministry plans that advance diaconal and evangelical witness, as well as drawing on the roles of both elders and deacons. Many ministry plans lean into these matters but could perhaps consider ways to more clearly articulate both of these aspects of witness.

### III. Recommendations

A. That synod receive this report as a fulfillment of the request from Synod 2018.

B. That synod instruct the COD to request that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team report to Synod 2021 regarding (1) new resources being developed for creating or refining a classis ministry plan and (2) an update on which classes have a ministry plan, since many are currently in process.

## Appendix E

### What Is *Heresy*, and When Should This Term Be Used?

#### Outline of the Report

- I. Introduction
- II. Observations from Synod 2019
- III. The New Testament on *heresy*
- IV. The early church on *heresy*
- V. The Reformed tradition on *heresy*
- VI. Roman Catholic teaching on *heresy*
- VII. Contemporary usage of the term *heresy*
- VIII. What is heresy?
- IX. When should the term *heresy* be used?
- X. Recommendations

#### I. Introduction

Synod 2019 adopted several sections of an overture from Classes California South and Hackensack to declare aspects of Kinist teaching to be “a grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy.” Among the grounds for this declaration, the overture included these statements: “The CRCNA has declared both apartheid and the theological reasoning that supports apartheid to be heresy” and “A heresy is a serious deviation from sound doctrine” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 501-502; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818).

Immediately after making this declaration, Synod 2019 also approved a recommendation from its advisory committee to clarify the meaning and application of the term *heresy* (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 819-20):

That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report on the matter to Synod 2020. This committee would best be composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary.

#### Grounds:

- a. Overture 7 to Synod 2019 links to a 1984 synodical report on apartheid in South Africa. That report defines *heresy* as follows: “By ‘heresy’ we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604). Our advisory committee deems this definition too broad, especially for a denomination that prides itself on its ecumenical involvement with other believers.
- b. The use of *heresy* in Overture 7 is unclear in the context of the 1984 synodical use of *heresy*. The clarity and precision of Overture 7 would be greatly strengthened by a well-researched definition of how the church has historically defined *heresy*.
- c. A more precise and clear definition of *heresy* and its use will benefit future work of the CRCNA in its ecclesiastical assemblies.

#### Mandate

That synod direct the committee appointed to research, determine, and define *heresy* and its application. This committee would be mandated to provide a precise and clear definition of *heresy* and its appropriate use. This mandate would help future discussions in the assemblies of the CRCNA when determining what heresy is and what heresy is not.

#### Composition

That the committee include at least a professor of theology from Calvin Theological Seminary, a professor of church history, an expert in CRCNA church polity, a minister of the Word, and other individuals the Council of Delegates deems appropriate.

After Synod 2019, the executive director asked Ronald J. Feenstra (heritage professor of systematic and philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary) to draft this report. That draft was reviewed by the Council of Delegates in October 2019 and subsequently revised based on input from Karin Maag (director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, adjunct professor of the History of Christianity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and editor of *Calvin Theological Journal*), from Kathy Smith (associate director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, adjunct professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and adjunct professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin University), and from William T. Koopmans (pastor of Hope CRC, Brantford, Ont., and chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA).

## II. Observations from Synod 2019

The synodical advisory committee that recommended to Synod 2019 that the term *heresy* be clarified also offered the following observations in the preface to its recommendations:

The advisory committee humbly acknowledges that, while the label *heresy* is easy to use, it has proven far more difficult to actually define and apply. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) has given a helpful warning for all: “It is highly important that people should go to work with the greatest caution when it comes to declaring anything heretical.”

As an advisory committee, we think the definition given in the 1984 decision on apartheid is too broad. That definition reads as follows: “By ‘heresy’ (heretical) we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions.” This definition seems too broad for a denomination that is committed to ecumenical relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. It seems to our committee that every heresy is a theological error; but it is not true that every

theological error is a heresy. As such, we do not consider our Baptist brothers and sisters who disagree with our Reformed confessions on baptism to be heretics. Therefore, we desire clarity and precision regarding the definition of *heresy*.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 819)

These observations point out some of the problems in defining and using the term *heresy*. Synod 2019 recognized the wisdom of its advisory committee in that, although some theological claims count as heresy, the church does not consider every deviation from the Reformed confessions to be a heresy.

In order to clarify the meaning and appropriate uses of the term *heresy*, it will help to gather input from Scripture and the history of the church about what counts as heresy.

### III. The New Testament on *heresy*

The term *heresy* (Greek: *hairesis*) or its derivatives is used several times in the New Testament. At a basic level, the term *heresy* is derived from a Greek word meaning “to choose” and can designate a religious group or sect (e.g., within Judaism). Thus Acts describes the “party (heresy) of the Sadducees” (Acts 5:17) and calls the Pharisees “the strictest sect (heresy) of our religion” (Acts 26:5; also 15:5). In these passages, the term *heresy* or its derivatives seems to be descriptive rather than a term of condemnation.

Other passages cast *heresy* in a more negative light. For example, Christianity (called “the Way” at the time) was apparently seen by some as a Jewish sect when Paul was brought before governor Felix and accused of leading the “sect (heresy) of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). But in his response, Paul seems to distance himself from the term, presumably because of negative connotations (Acts 24:14). Then, showing that the term has negative connotations in some contexts, Paul himself uses the term *heresy* to speak about “factions” or “differences” that threaten church unity (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19). Titus 3:10 uses the same term to encourage Titus to avoid continued relations with anyone who causes “divisions (heresies)” among believers. And 2 Peter 2:1-2 speaks of false prophets and false teachers who “secretly introduce destructive heresies” and whom many will follow, thus bringing the truth into disrepute. In contrast to other New Testament usages, 2 Peter 2:1-2 focuses less on the faction or division than on the false teachings that produce factions and divisions. Each of these New Testament passages uses some form of the word *heresy* to suggest that heresies are a threat to unity or truthful witness.

In short, the New Testament sees a heresy as a group or faction, whether within Judaism or within the followers of Jesus Christ. Although the term *heresy* is sometimes used as a neutral description of a specific group, more often it appears to suggest a faction that threatens the unity of believers, with some uses also referring to the false or destructive teachings associated with a faction or divisive group. The most negative uses of the term suggest that heresy can be covert, leading to the destruction of its adherents and bringing disrepute on the truth of the gospel.

### IV. The early church on *heresy*

Like the New Testament, some in the early church use the term *heresy* rather neutrally to describe a group or a school of thought. But *heresy* is more



commonly used to describe false teaching that claims to be true and therefore can mislead Christian believers. The term *heresy* was generally reserved to describe a serious distortion of Christian truth, and those who promote such heresy (“heretics”) are seen as traitors to the faith.

The understanding of heresy in the early church has been controversial in recent years, following the 1934 publication of Walter Bauer’s *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Bauer rejected the idea that a general sense of orthodox teaching prevailed in the early church and that heresy was a departure from that orthodox consensus. He argued instead that the original form of Christianity included and accepted a variety of views, many of which were later declared heretical when the church of Rome established one view and suppressed others. Although Bauer’s thesis continues to be advocated (for example, by Bart Ehrman), the scholarly consensus is that most of Bauer’s thesis has been discredited, except for the important point that the earliest Christianity was characterized by serious differences of belief. We can see some of those differences already in the New Testament, especially in the letters by Paul and others. But we can also see in the New Testament and in early Christian writings a deep understanding that some teachings are faithful to the gospel and others are not.

In order to understand the concept of *heresy* in the early church, it is worth noting that early Christians saw a difference between heresies and other divisive movements such as schisms. Schisms were seen as church divisions in which both sides held to the same basic essentials of the faith, but differed over something less essential such as church government or church discipline. Thus those entering the church from a schismatic body did not need to be baptized, since they had been baptized in the triune name, albeit outside of the orthodox church. But heresies were seen as church divisions in which the essentials of the faith were denied. So those entering the church from a heretical group needed to be baptized, just as if they had come from paganism, since they had not been baptized into the one true faith. Still, many in the early church saw both heretics and schismatics as counterfeit religious movements outside the true church.

In his *City of God*, Augustine describes heretics as people who profess to be Christian and use Christian sacraments, yet also stir up dissension from orthodox teaching that causes potential converts to hesitate in their faith and provides evidence for unbelievers to criticize Christianity. In effect, heretics cause spiritual suffering in those who want to live genuine Christian lives but are misled or confused by heresy (book 18, chap. 51).

Although heresy involves serious theological error, the early church spoke less about what teachings counted as heresy and focused instead on heresy’s sinfulness, with its proud isolation from the church, its rejection of church discipline, and its tragic effects on the spiritual life of the believer. In subsequent eras, both in the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestant churches, the focus has been less on the moral fault of heresy and more on heresy’s unorthodox teaching.

## **V. The Reformed tradition on *heresy***

Accusations of heresy were not uncommon in the Reformation era. The Roman Catholic Church saw the Protestant Reformers as schismatics, some of whose views were heretical. In the 16th century, those deemed heretical



might be in danger of losing their lives—and indeed some were put to death for promoting heresy. For example, when the well-known antitrinitarian and opponent of infant baptism, Michael Servetus, entered Geneva, John Calvin advocated his execution as a heretic. Calvin's role in Servetus's execution stands as a stain on Calvin's record and serves as a warning to Calvin's theological heirs to be careful in how we treat theological opponents, including those we deem heretical.

Despite frequent use of the term *heresy* during the Reformation era, the confessions of the CRCNA refer to heresy on just two occasions. Article 18 of the Belgic Confession affirms the incarnation over against "the heresy of the Anabaptists who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother." The Canons of Dort speak of "the proud heresy of Pelagius" that holds that conversion results from our own free choice (Pt. III/IV, Art. 10). On both occasions, the teaching that is rejected as heretical is seen to strike at the heart of the gospel. And the Canons suggest that heresy involves prideful rejection of Christian truth. But the confessions give no guidance on how to define heresy or when to apply the term.

The confessions do provide a helpful precedent showing that we can disagree with others, even quite vigorously, without calling them heretics. Thus, although the Canons of Dort use the term *heresy* only once, they regularly include explicit rejections of certain teachings. In each main point of doctrine, after stating orthodox Reformed teaching on a number of points, the Canons include a section rejecting certain errors ("the Synod rejects the errors of those . . . who teach that . . ."). So the Canons reject a number of theological errors without calling each one a heresy. Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism sharply criticizes Roman Catholic teaching and practice regarding the Mass (Q. and A. 80) without describing the Roman Catholic Church as heretical.

## **VI. Roman Catholic teaching on *heresy***

Traditionally, Roman Catholicism has seen heresy as a spiritual movement often rooted in individualism that threatens the foundations of the church. So Protestantism's focus on the individual was seen as indicative of heresy. Yet it seems absurd to designate all of Protestantism as heretical, so—especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)—the Roman Catholic Church no longer uses the term *heretical* to describe all Protestants.

Roman Catholics see heresy as often being embedded in an affirmation of Christian teaching. Those who do not affirm Christian teaching in any way are not heretics, but instead are in apostasy, paganism, or simple unbelief. So heresy arises as a difference of belief among fellow Christ-followers. What makes something heresy, then, is that heretical teachings dispute truths that are significant for salvation and thus endanger the ultimate basis of Christianity and the unity of the faith. Heresy is dangerous because it combats or subverts Christian truth even though it claims the name of Christianity. Heresy is also seen as dangerous because any elements of Christian truth that a heresy affirms are in danger of being pushed out by the heretical errors that are mixed in with that truth.

According to Roman Catholic Canon Law, someone who is baptized and claims to be Christian but obstinately denies or doubts any essential or obligatory Catholic teaching is a heretic. The marks of heresy, for Roman Catholics, include denial of central doctrines of the Catholic Church, stubborn

adherence to that false teaching, and use of that false teaching to turn against the church and form one's own spiritual community. But Catholic Canon Law distinguishes between those who perpetrate such heresies and those who receive such teachings from others. Perpetrators are, formally, heretics. Those who are misled by heretics but who continue to seek the truth might materially accept heretical teachings, but because of their ignorance they are not formally heretics.

## VII. Contemporary usage of the term *heresy*

In our contemporary world, people use the word *heresy* in a wide variety of ways, some of which are quite colloquial and others of which are based on thoughtful reflection. On a popular level, people might use the term *heresy* to describe almost any teaching or proposal that deviates from the norm. Divergences in hymnody, worship style, practices around the sacraments (e.g., offering children the Lord's Supper), the roles of women and men, or some other significant matter could result in accusations of heresy. Although the term *heresy* might be used colloquially in such cases, typically the differences involved do not actually qualify as heresy.

Still, Reformed churches have on rare occasions in recent years identified certain teachings as heresy. After a church in ecclesial fellowship, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC/NGSK) of South Africa, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared apartheid to be a sin and the theological defense of apartheid to be a heresy in 1982, Synod 1984 of the CRCNA took action. Based on an extensive study by the Interchurch Relations Committee, Synod 1984 adopted a recommendation that includes the following:

Any church that supports or warrants such an ideology [the ideology of apartheid] in the name of the Word of God is untrue to the Word of God, and the teachings it propounds in support or defense of such ideology must be judged heretical. And any church that does not vigorously oppose such an ideology must be judged guilty of disobedience to God's Word and to Christ its Lord.

(*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604)

The accompanying statements and grounds offered by Synod 1984 make clear that the judgment of heresy was arrived at only after determining the depths of apartheid's evils and the ways in which the theological justification of apartheid, which affected life both inside and outside the church, compromised the unity of the new reconciled humanity in the body of Christ and seriously impaired the integrity and witness of Reformed Christianity around the world.

Again, in 2019, synod declared something to be a heresy, this time focusing on Kinism, a movement that emerged in a group associated with the CRCNA and has many resemblances to the theological underpinnings of apartheid. In this case, Synod 2019 declared Kinist teachings that "interracial marriage is sinful" and that "God has ordained separation in a religio-ethnstate," including the theological reasoning supporting those teachings, to be "a grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy" (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 501-502; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818). As in 1984, Synod 2019 noted the seriousness of Kinism's deviations from sound biblical and Reformed teaching and its distortion of Reformed doctrine.

### VIII. What is *heresy*?

Synod 2019 wisely noted the importance of understanding the concept of *heresy* and discerning when the term is appropriately used. In common speech, people often describe almost any alternative or nonstandard theory on any topic as *heretical*. But such usage is not adequate for the church.

As the brief survey above shows, in understanding what *heresy* is, it is important to distinguish *heresy* from other similar concepts:

- schism: Although heresy might lead to a schism in the church, it also might not. Not every heresy leads to a schism. And just because a person or group is schismatic, it does not follow that their views are heretical. Their views might even be wrong in significant ways without yet being heretical.
- apostasy: Although heresy might lead people to reject the Christian faith in some form of apostasy, it need not do so. And a key difference between apostasy and heresy is that apostasy no longer makes a claim to be Christian, whereas heresy does. Still, the line between heresy and apostasy can be hard to discern. It is not always clear when someone is a heretical Christian as opposed to a person who has fallen into apostasy.
- paganism: Whether in ancient or modern forms, paganism is far from Christianity and not really connected to heresy. Paganism typically affirms belief in a number of deities and holds a non-Christian view of God, creation, and human persons. Of course, a heresy might adopt some views from pagan sources (as Gnostic Christianity did in the early church), but paganism itself makes no claim to be Christian and therefore is not itself heresy.
- unbelief: Like apostasy and paganism, unbelief does not claim to be Christian and therefore does not count as heresy. Still, heresy can discredit the church or the Christian faith in ways that dissuade people from seriously considering Christian faith and leave them in unbelief.
- theological or confessional difference: As the advisory committee to Synod 2019 observed, “It seems to our committee that every heresy is a theological error; but it is not true that every theological error is a heresy. As such, we do not consider our Baptist brothers and sisters who disagree with our Reformed confessions on baptism to be heretics.” Here the 2019 synodical advisory committee disagreed with the following statement by Synod 1984: “By ‘heresy’ (heretical) we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions” (see *Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604). More broadly, any number of theological ideas and errors might be contrary to Scripture, the creeds, and the confessions, but not count as heresy.

In short, the term *heresy* needs to be used carefully, and only in appropriate situations. Using the term when it does not properly apply can be confusing to the church and also to people outside the church, including those whose views are rejected as heretical.

So when does a theological or doctrinal view or teaching count as heresy? What criteria must be met for something to count as heresy? In order to understand what heresy is, it is important to note that the concept of heresy

assumes a contrasting standard of orthodoxy. Ordinarily, a heresy distorts or rejects central Christian teachings such as those in a creed or confession and threatens to divide the church and compromise the gospel message. Still, we can say a bit more to help the church know when the term is appropriately used.

Based on the survey above, it appears that heresy often includes several characteristics, many or all of which should be present before people or movements are identified as engaging in heresy:

1. Heresy typically involves serious distortion or rejection of basic or core Christian doctrines, including core Christian teachings about God, creation, humanity, or God's dealings with creatures.
2. Heresy typically contradicts doctrines that have been defined by an official church body (such as a creed or confession).
3. Heresy typically is embedded in an affirmation of Christianity, claiming to be Christian while at the same time distorting or twisting central teachings of Christianity.
4. Heresy typically involves not just an individual, but a group or a faction that threatens the unity of the church and the Christian faith. Even if heretical teachings are initiated by an individual, those teachings typically do not reach the status of heresy until sufficient numbers of people are swayed by them.
5. Heresy typically leads its adherents away from genuine faith in the triune God. In contrast, other differences (even what we would regard as errors, such as not baptizing infants or holding a non-Reformed view of the roles of God and humanity in salvation) typically do not lead people away from faith in God.
6. Heresy typically causes inquirers and other believers to be confused about Christian teaching and thus led astray in their belief or discouraged from believing. In this way, heresy presents a special danger to the church that goes beyond its effect on its adherents.
7. Heresy typically ends up bringing disrepute on the truth of the gospel. Because it confuses people about what the gospel really is, heresy can lead those outside the Christian faith to mistakenly believe that heretical teaching is actually genuine Christianity.
8. Heresy typically involves a stubborn refusal to be corrected by patient and gracious engagement with the church. Even when the church thoughtfully shows biblical and theological problems with heresy, proponents of heresy refuse to change their views.
9. Heresy typically involves a moral failing as well as a theological or doctrinal one. Heresy misleads others about Christianity and threatens to introduce division into the body of Christ. In this way, heresy is a moral as well as a theological problem.

## IX. When should the term *heresy* be used?

As the survey above shows, the church needs to have the concept of *heresy*. If the Christian faith is to be clear and have boundaries, then some beliefs and behaviors will be outside the permissible bounds of belief and action and may need to be identified as heresy.

But it is important to distinguish between doctrinal or confessional disagreements among authentic Christians and heretical doctrines that insidiously deny or undermine key elements of the Christian faith. The church needs discernment on when to use the term *heresy*. Although it can be hard to identify the boundaries that distinguish heresy from other departures from basic Christian teaching or our confessions, and therefore hard to identify what counts as heresy, that does not mean that there are no boundaries or that nothing counts as heresy.

So when should the church say, “Those who hold this view should be regarded as heretics”? When many or all of the characteristics identified in the previous section are present, then it seems reasonable for the church to consider declaring that people or movements are engaging in heresy. Still, making such a declaration should be done carefully and with due consideration. Thus, for example, the church should be careful to note that the proponents of heretical views are more deserving of the term *heresy* than those who may hold those views unthinkingly or while they are still earnestly searching for Christian truth.

Also, the church should not be quick to designate people or movements as heretical. When dealing with people who promote views that may fall under the category of heresy, the church should make all reasonable attempts to reconcile with the proponents and to help them see genuine Christian truth. Using the term *heresy* should be a last resort, not the first option in responding to theological error. Then, even after resorting to the term *heresy*, the church should be open to forgiveness and reconciliation with those whose teachings have been branded heretical, hoping that God’s grace and truth will prevail even after such a serious breach.

## X. Recommendations

- A. That synod receive this report on heresy as fulfillment of the mandate of Synod 2019 to define heresy and clarify when the use of the term is appropriate.
- B. That synod commend this report to the churches as a helpful guide to what heresy is and when it might be appropriate to use the term.
- C. That synod take note that there is currently considerable diversity of understanding of the term *heresy* in society and in the church.
- D. That synod urge caution in using the term *heresy*.

### *Grounds:*

- 1. Diverse understandings of the term *heresy* in both popular culture and the church make it a term easily susceptible to misunderstanding.
- 2. There are often other acceptable ways to identify and reject aberrant or false teachings—ways that are less susceptible to ambiguity or misunderstanding.

E. That synod urge any future synod, if it judges a teaching or movement to be heretical, to identify which of the characteristics noted in this report as typically associated with heresy lead to the judgment of heresy.

*Grounds:*

1. The exercise of sorting through the characteristics typical of heresy will be helpful in knowing whether the term *heresy* is appropriate in any given case.
2. Identifying the characteristics that lead to the judgment of heresy will help to inform members of the church and other interested parties why the church offers this strong rejection.

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## Appendix F

### CRC Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders

#### Preamble

In Philippians 2 the apostle Paul brings to his Philippian readers the words of a hymn in which Christ Jesus is acknowledged as being, in his very nature, God. Among other things, this means that Christ is the one to whom all power belongs.

The hymn goes on to say that Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage. In fact, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, and humbling himself toward a life-sacrificing kind of obedience. In other words, he used his power for the thriving of others.

All of us who are united to Christ by faith and who serve in the life of the church are called, in this passage and others, to this way of being. Jesus himself, in response to the desire for power expressed by his disciples, called them (and us) to use power to serve people, a way of holding power that confronts and contrasts with the ways that the world uses power.<sup>1</sup>

Not only do we have this call from Christ, but we actually have Jesus living and growing within us (Gal. 2:20). As a result, we find ourselves being transformed into the kind of people who hold and use power in a Christlike way.

That being said, until Christ returns and brings us to perfection, we will continue to wrestle with the urge to misuse power and abuse others. Ugly realities such as verbal, emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse are found among us. The power that we hold by virtue of our person or our position can always be twisted into the project of building our own kingdoms at the expense of others. This is true for pastors, lay ministry leaders, and church members alike.

In awareness of these ugly realities and in the beautiful hope of Christ's transforming work, the following code of conduct is offered for ministry leaders. It is shaped by Scripture and by commitments found in our confessional statements and contemporary testimonies.<sup>2</sup> It emerges out of a

<sup>1</sup> See Mark 10:35-45. Note that there are other Scripture texts that address the use of power to bless, such as 1 Peter 5:1-4. In addition, there are texts that describe abuses of power and the damage that such abuses cause (see, for example, 2 Sam. 11 and Ezek. 34).

<sup>2</sup> See Belgic Confession, Article 28, and Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 55, 107, 111. See also the statement in the Confession of Belhar that says, "We believe . . . that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others" (Confession of Belhar, Article 4). Further, in *Our World Belongs to God*, we read that the church is a "new community," gathered by God, in which "all are welcome" (para. 34); that the church's mission in this broken world is a mission of proclaiming the gospel and its implications for life today (para. 41); and that, "restored in Christ's presence, shaped by his life, this new community lives out the ongoing story of God's reconciling love, announces the new creation, and works for a world of justice and peace" (para. 39). Such statements describe the mission of the church in general and provide foundation for the specific code of conduct presented here.

response by Synod 2018 to patterns of abuse that had been brought to its attention<sup>3</sup> and is aimed at preventing such abuse in the future. May God's peace be among us.

### **Code of Conduct**

Abuse of power is a misuse of position, authority, or influence to take advantage of, manipulate, or control. Abuse of power occurs when a person with power, regardless of its source, uses that power to harm and/or influence another for personal gain at the other's expense. All abuse by faith leaders within the church is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts that often heighten the harm caused to individuals and to the family of God. (For more background, see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 587-615).

As a ministry leader, I commit to the following:

#### *Confidentiality*

I will use confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.

I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.

My use of confidentiality will also be guided by mandatory reporting as required by law.

#### *Relational*

I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2).

I will conduct myself with respect, love, integrity, and truthfulness toward all—regardless of position, status, race, gender, age, or ability.

To the best of my ability, I will contribute to an environment of hospitality.

#### *Financial*

I will ensure that funds are used for their intended ministry purposes.

In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability.

I will appropriately use accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits.

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<sup>3</sup> Bev Sterk's overture to Synod 2018, titled "Address Patterns of Abuse of Power That Violate the Sacred Trust Given to Leaders and Recognize How These Hinder Due Process and Healing," and appendices specifically related to it, can be found in the *Agenda for Synod 2018*, pp. 282-307 (see [crdna.org/Synod Resources](http://crdna.org/SynodResources)). The subsequent action of Synod 2018 was to form an "Abuse of Power Committee" to study "how the CRCNA can best address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 523-24). The work of Synod 2019 related to this overture can be found in the *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-96 (see [crdna.org/Synod Resources](http://crdna.org/SynodResources)). The particular recommendation calling for a code of conduct is recommendation 3, c (p. 795).



### *Intimate Relationships*

I will maintain standards and appropriate boundaries in all relationships, which are informed by the Scriptures.

I will keep all of my professional relationships free from inappropriate emotional and sexual behaviors. This includes not engaging in inappropriate intimate contact or a sexual relationship, unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

### *Safety*

I will actively promote a safe environment where all persons are respected and valued, where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.

I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors to the proper government authorities.

I will support adults who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that appropriately empowers the person who has been victimized.

### *Spiritual*

I will acknowledge the use of Scripture and the Spirit's work in the community of the church and, therefore, refrain from presuming to be the sole "voice of God."

I will use my position as a way to serve the body of believers, rather than myself, for the common good and the cultivation of the gifts of the Spirit.

### *Additional Commitments*

I will work within my professional competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.

I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.

I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.

In all that I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly and in nonexploitive ways.

In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, as a ministry leader, I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of others to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

### *Preamble and Code prepared by*

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## Appendix G

### Calvin Theological Seminary Evaluation

*Calvin Theological Seminary Goal: To identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God by means of the candidacy process, including the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy.*

*Calvin Theological Seminary assesses this goal by means of regular academic appraisal, evaluation components of continuing education programs, and exit interviews with graduating students—as evaluated by faculty.*

When students enter into a master of arts (M.A.) program or the master of divinity (M.Div.) program at Calvin Theological Seminary, they begin a process of identifying or clarifying their call to ministry, assessing strengths for ministry, and reviewing feedback as to their academic, spiritual, and vocational formation. Following is an outline of some key elements in this evaluation process:

1. Undergo a psychological assessment and follow-up visits with a counselor.
2. Participate in peer-to-peer Formation Groups led by experienced ministry leaders (four semesters for the M.A.; six semesters for the M.Div.).
3. Serve on assignment in a local church ministry for a two-year period to complete required contextual-learning internship hours.
4. Undergo a Birkman assessment as a means of raising self-awareness in areas of both individual strengths and needs as each relates to ministry leadership.
5. Receive mentor reports and complete reflection assignments throughout required contextual learning and cross-cultural learning opportunities.
6. Participate in a semester of training and evaluation regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A parallel process is in place for the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) as outlined in the EPMC Handbook: [calvinseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/EPMC\\_Handbook.pdf](http://calvinseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/EPMC_Handbook.pdf)

As part of the academic program at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), all M.A. and M.Div. students also complete two “capstone” markers for their degree. One is the oral comprehensive exam that is meant to integrate learning, and the second is a case-study presentation meant to show application in learning. All panels of review have a pastor as participant as one way to link the work of the seminary and the church. The Association of Theological Schools’ (ATS) recent reaccreditation visit to CTS (resulting in a ten-year renewal of accreditation) affirmed the oral comprehensive and case-study approaches as effective ways to measure student outcomes that focus on person, message, context, and goals.

Persons who enter into the candidacy process of the CRC enter into a coordinated partnership process of the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary. As part of that process, the faculty make recommendations on students that are then forwarded to the Candidacy Committee,

which conducts its own interview and evaluation process with candidates as part of its presentation of candidates at synod each year for their final endorsement to the church.

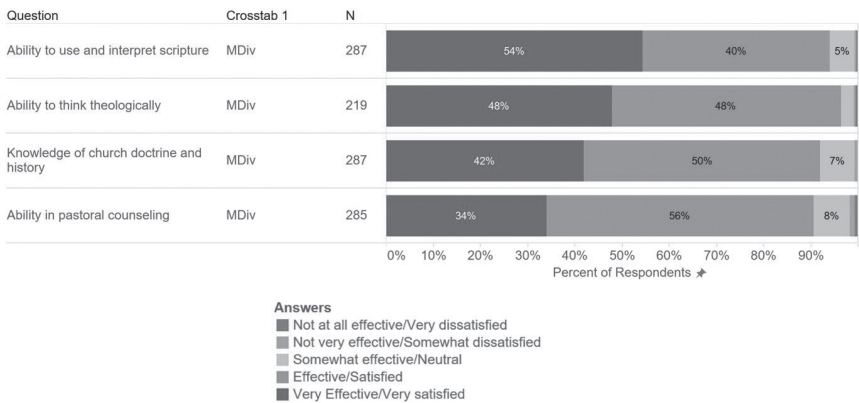
At the completion of their education, students have the opportunity to complete an exit interview with regard to their training. Currently a CTS team of interviewers, composed of faculty and academic staff who received training from the Calvin Social Research Center, continues to conduct exit interviews and to present the results to faculty at the last regular faculty meeting of the academic year.

In addition to what CTS does in this area of evaluation, we join other ATS schools in a Graduate Student Questionnaire (GSQ) and an Alumni Questionnaire (AQ). These data points are reviewed by the CTS administrative team and particularly become part of the focus of work for the director of admissions and enrollment management. Data from 2006 to the present has been imported into an interactive Tableau database, enabling CTS to easily look at trends over time and to “slice” the data according to a range of factors, such as gender, degree program, or citizenship.

Included here are two charts from the overall comprehensive reports from the GSQ and the AQ to illustrate this ongoing work of evaluation.

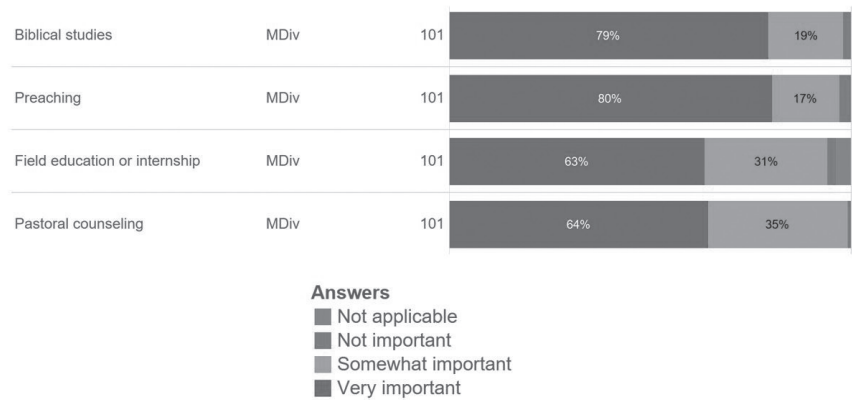
**GSQ – How effective was your education in facilitating the following skill areas? How satisfied are you with your progress in skills that relate to your future work?**

*As the chart below demonstrates, data from graduating M.Div. students in 2013-18 reveals high student satisfaction with the biblical, theological, and pastoral training received at CTS for their future work.*



**AQ – As you think about the perspectives, knowledge, and skills that have enabled you to do your professional work since seminary, how important were the following areas of study to your professional life and work?**

*Alumni complete the AQ survey five years after graduating from CTS. The chart below confirms that recent CTS alumni (graduating 2005-13) continue to point to the importance of the biblical, theological, and pastoral training that they received at CTS. Three other notes to highlight at this time:*



1. Candidates in the Christian Reformed Church need to complete a classical exam as part of the final process toward ordination. These exams are also heard by synodical deputies from three neighboring classes. The ATS site visit team remarked that this process clearly shows the integration of evaluation from seminary to church and complimented our polity for this type of integration.
2. The Candidacy Committee of the CRCNA (on which the CTS president serves ex officio) is currently completing a review of the EPMC process; we are now more than a decade into this particular pathway to ordination for students who primarily attend a seminary other than CTS. We (Candidacy Committee and CTS) anticipate reporting on this review process and recommended adjustments as part of an update to Synod 2020.
3. CTS received approval from the ATS to begin offering a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree program ([calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry](http://calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry)). This is an outcome of our continued reflection on how we might provide continuing education for the church and church leaders, in line with the request of Synod 2016 (see *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 850). Our Center for Excellence in Preaching and our partnership with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship continue to serve the church and church leaders. Feedback from this work has helped our continued efforts in post-graduate education options. In addition, we are looking at other areas of service. For example, we are working on a learning module approach with the classis renewal coordinator that may be helpful for commissioned pastors and other church leaders.

## Appendix H

### Servant Leadership Ministries Evaluation

#### I. Introduction

This report is a program evaluation of Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). These five ministries are all part of what is known as Congregational Services and are specifically focused on serving and supporting congregations in the area of Servant Leadership.

The CRCNA has five ministry priorities that we believe God has led us to follow. The specific calling of Servant Leadership highlights that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish.

As the CRCNA, we identify, recruit, encourage, and train leaders to be servants of the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. So that the church may exercise good stewardship of these leadership gifts, we resource our leaders for health and flourishing, and we trust that this will bless the church and all those with whom we walk. And when there is brokenness, we aim to minister with truth and grace as we walk alongside individuals and churches.

As a denomination, we receive these gifts for leadership as the Spirit's way of equipping the body of Christ to be healthy, vibrant, and a delightfully real incarnation of Jesus himself in our world. To that end, the five Congregational Services ministries highlighted in this report engage in recruiting, credentialing, resourcing, celebrating, and pastoring leaders.

These include ministers of the Word, commissioned pastors, chaplains, elders, deacons, other congregational leaders, and persons in leadership roles at classis and synod. On the following pages, we share some of the stories of the impact that these ministries are making and also identify areas for future growth.

#### II. Candidacy

David Koll, director

*Credentialing Pastors for the Christian Reformed Church*

The Candidacy Committee is charged by synod with the task of overseeing processes toward pastoral ordination, serving classes, congregations, and potential pastors as they engage with these processes. Toward that end we partner with classis leaders and synodical deputies, and we engage various groups of persons who are seeking pastoral ordination.

Among these groups are students at Calvin Theological Seminary, students at other seminaries, pastors ordained in other denominations who seek affiliation with the CRCNA, and persons not yet ordained and not even in seminary who sense a call to serve in pastoral ministry.

Programs administered through the Candidacy Committee include the following:

- The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidates (EPMC) is an accredited program operating in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary to facilitate orientation to the CRC for those who have earned

a master of divinity (M.Div.) degree from another seminary. Nearly 20 persons have completed this program in each of the past five years.

- Learning plans for already ordained pastors affiliating with the CRC:
  - The Modified EPMC (MEPMC) is used in certain cases for a very rigorous orientation. Six persons, representing five classes, are currently enrolled in this program.
  - Informal Mentor Driven Plans—approximately 15 people are actively working through such a program with a one-on-one mentor.
  - Korean Institute in Ministry (KIM) is a Korean-language orientation to the Christian Reformed Church. This program is in its 13th year and has had over 120 participants. Six persons completed the program in 2019.
  - Spanish Language Institute in Ministry (SLIM) is a Spanish-language orientation to the Christian Reformed Church. This is a new program, and interest in it has been significant. More than 20 persons have participated in SLIM in the past two years.
  - English Language Institute in Ministry (ELIM) is aimed at English-speaking ethnic minority pastors, allowing them an opportunity to learn in a group context where the minority is in the majority. This program is also new, and we have had 15 participants in the past three years.
- Learning plans for commissioned pastors—As men and women become commissioned pastors, a facilitated learning plan helps them gain the orientation to the CRCNA that they need. These learning plans often make use of programs mentioned earlier.

### *Reflecting on Our Calling*

In all the candidacy processes that lead toward ordination, discernment is an essential goal. Persons who have never been ordained are discerning whether their character, knowledge, and skills match those needed for ministry. Persons who have been ordained in settings outside of the Christian Reformed Church and who now seek to affiliate with the CRC are discerning whether a suitable affinity and connection exists between themselves and this denomination.

The broader CRCNA community around these individuals must also discern whether they think these men and women are ready and suitable for the ministry opportunities being considered. The Candidacy Committee walks alongside these persons and ministries in an attempt to help them discern whether an internal call is matched with an external call.

### *Connecting with Churches*

The Candidacy Committee's relationship with classis teams is integral to the successful completion of their work. We are grateful for the faithful work of many people across the denomination who serve the processes in regional, classis roles. Those who serve in these roles routinely testify to the privilege and joy of helping persons along the journey toward ordained service in the CRC.

More than 90 new persons have been ordained into CRC pastoral ministry in each of the past five years (either as a minister of the Word or as a commissioned pastor). Each person has a story of God's grace, provision, and direction, and each has made significant connections with currently ordained CRC colleagues.

Here are a few trends from the past decades that may be of interest:

- The number of Calvin Theological Seminary M.Div. candidates has held steady since the 1990s, with a slight dip in the past three years.
- There is significant growth in the number of persons becoming candidates after attending other seminaries (via use of the EPMC). These numbers have grown from 12 persons in the 1970s, to 51 persons in the 1990s, to 180 persons in the past decade.
- As a result of the above two trends, there has been a significant change in the number of new pastors within the CRCNA who have received their primary theological education at Calvin Theological Seminary (from 97 percent in the 1970s, to 46 percent in the past decade).
- In the past four decades the office of commissioned pastor has grown from its initial recognition to an office that now represents over 20 percent of our active ordained clergy.

### *Looking Forward*

As we look to the past, we rejoice in some significant trends, and as we look to the future we also note some significant challenges. Some of these joys and challenges were discussed by Clay Libolt in an article titled “A Slow Train to the Future of CRC Leadership” (*The Banner*, July / August 2019, p. 29):

- Our diversity of congregations is growing, and our processes are adapting to welcome, include, prepare, and even learn from these leaders. In some sense, this is perhaps more aspirational at present than actual, but encouraging and facilitating this diversity is one major goal of the Candidacy Committee.
- As old forms of building trust and connections are disappearing, new strategies for connecting and building trust will be needed. This impacts the work of the Candidacy Committee, and also impacts the work of many other denominational and regional structures.
- In a related challenge, our task of articulating a unified definition of a Reformed and denominational identity becomes increasingly important. This is a concern of both the Candidacy Committee and the broader denomination. Unity and uniformity are not identical, and the diversity of perspectives shown in the past decade will likely only increase in the coming decade. As Libolt said in his article, “The work might be harder, but the payoff could be greater.”
- The increasing use of the office of commissioned pastor has certainly been a blessing to many ministry settings, and to many persons who have sensed a call to ministry. Yet it also brings challenges as we seek to continue to value the gift of accredited theological education. As we move forward, we will need to find new ways to support and deepen the Reformed theological training of all those in ordained ministry, both before and after their initial ordination.

The Candidacy Committee is keenly aware of the trends identified here. We look to the Lord and to his church for wisdom and guidance as we navigate the future. We are grateful for the support of many partners in this task, representing the classes and congregations across the denomination. We continue to covet your prayers as we move into the future.



### III. Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Sarah Roelofs, director

*Being There in Moments That Matter*

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM) endorses 148 CRC ministers and pastors (10 percent of all CRCNA clergy). These chaplains serve in institutions such as prisons, hospitals, hospice, long-term care facilities, counseling centers, industrial and workplace locations, and military sites. Chaplaincy is a healing, reconciling ministry of God, an expression and extension of God's activity and mission in the world to those who are hurting or in crisis, uprooted or dislocated.

CCM's mission is to implement, regulate, and develop the denomination's commitment to chaplaincy through the following:

- overseeing the denominational endorsement process
- providing pastoral support and advocacy for endorsed chaplains
- facilitating shared supervision with chaplains' calling churches
- informing and educating the CRCNA on chaplaincy and related ministries
- administering training grants
- recruiting chaplains
- conducting training
- promoting the development of chaplaincy
- participating in national endorsement-related organizations

In the past few years CCM has undergone great change. In 2017, our staff underwent total turnover due to the retirements of former director Ronald Klimp and part-time administrative assistant Beverly Koetje. Sarah Roelofs stepped into the role of director of Chaplaincy and Care in spring 2017, and in January 2018 Matt Hubers was hired as a full-time communications specialist.

CCM continues to faithfully develop a program that equips servant leaders, enables faith formation, and proclaims the gospel. Through supporting chaplains' training and spiritual well-being, CCM has enabled chaplains to provide ministry in a wide variety of settings.

#### *Reflecting on Our Calling*

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry supports chaplains to become servant leaders. Endorsed chaplains are required to have a minimum of 800 hours of specialized training (i.e., Clinical Pastoral Education or military chaplaincy training). Over the past five years, CCM has awarded 66 grants totaling \$128,862 for specialized chaplaincy training. These grants were funded through the generous gifts of chaplains and churches separate from ministry-share giving.

One student shared, "Thanks to the fund, I can fully focus on patient care and the chaplain education curriculum. I feel secure receiving the funding because it shows me I am not alone [in ministry]."

Because of these grants, chaplains acquire the spiritual grounding, experience, tools, and theological reflection to be able to meet diverse spiritual care needs in highly specialized, pluralistic ministry settings.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is dedicated to helping chaplains in faith formation and proclaiming the good news of Jesus. Each year, we continue to encourage and enfold our chaplains through over 3,000 significant interactions,



including email, phone calls, video calls, in-person visits, and five-to-six director visits to chaplain cluster groups throughout North America.

We host an annual three-day chaplains training event that averages 120 attendees and provides mentorship, learning, and worship. One chaplain who attended this event recently reflected, “I resonated with the pastoral themes, such as being known and loved, and it helped me to recall the deep meaning of my ministry.”

In addition, CCM coordinates regional educational events, chaplain cluster gatherings, and monthly video meetings. Through these interactions, CCM enables chaplains to provide pastoral care to over 2 million people throughout North America and overseas each year. Because they influence so many lives, chaplains have significant potential for introducing and strengthening faith far beyond the walls of the church.

### *Connecting with Churches*

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry connects chaplains with churches through endorsement and joint supervision. Endorsement is an ongoing process of supervision by the chaplain’s calling church in partnership with CCM that provides accountability, empowerment, and support for chaplains. This arrangement is formalized and clarified through the Covenant of Joint Supervision, which ensures that chaplains and churches support each other. Chaplains engage with their local church through preaching, leadership, and annual reports on their ministry. Calling churches support chaplains through recognizing them as ministers and inviting them to participate in congregational ministry.

In the past five years, CCM has further implemented the Covenant of Joint Supervision and endorsement renewal for chaplains and churches. We have renewed 75 endorsements and initiated 104 Covenants of Joint Supervision. In doing so, we interact with hundreds of churches and dozens of classes each year. We aid in the calling of chaplains, assessing pastors’ readiness for chaplaincy, providing specialized support and resources, and sharing the impact of chaplain ministry.

### *Looking Forward*

While we are excited about what God has done so far in chaplaincy, there are many challenges and opportunities for growth. One main development is an increase in people who are interested in becoming chaplains. In five years of active recruitment, we have seen growth from 32 to 66 college and seminary students interested in chaplaincy, as well as growth from 30 to 158 other inquiring persons.

This growth has required our ministry to update our current tracking system, implement software applications, and create resources (brochures, Network posts, social media updates). We have supported this growth by connecting with prospective chaplains through four to eight college and seminary visits per year and through hundreds of individual interactions via email, phone, and in-person meetings. Since 2015, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry has endorsed 69 new chaplains, and we expect this trend of growth to continue.

An increase in chaplains has required CCM to implement creative ways to be more stewardly with our resources while continuing to provide high-quality ministry for our chaplains. The isolating nature of their work

makes it imperative that chaplains are supported by the church and have the proper resources to be effective in their ministry. This year we have focused on bolstering our communications strategy to keep chaplains up to date with what our ministry, the denomination, and chaplain professionals are doing, as well as opportunities for chaplains to share resources and support one another. We are implementing more opportunities to connect via social media, monthly meetings, and prayer networks. CRCNA chaplains will be more connected with our office, their calling churches, and each other, creating more community support for their ministry.

CCM continues to advocate for chaplains and our denomination within seven major professional chaplaincy organizations and the institutions in which chaplains work. Through advocacy, CCM will continue to uphold professional standards of pastoral care, identify high-quality specialized training programs, and call out pastoral and ethical concerns in the places where chaplains work.

It is more crucial than ever that we have chaplains providing pastoral care beyond the walls of the church. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 29 percent of Canadians are increasingly becoming “religiously unaffiliated,” and about half seldom (25%) or never (24%) go to church or other worship services. In the U.S., only 36 percent attend worship services once a week, and only 30 percent attend once a month to a few times per year. More people are leaving organized religions and are no longer associated with local churches. When they encounter a crisis in their lives, they have no faith to fall back on and no one to talk to about spiritual questions. For this reason, we must continue to support CRCNA chaplains throughout North America so that they can bring Christ’s love, healing, and peace in the moments that matter.

#### **IV. Leadership Diversity**

Denise Posie, director

*Connecting, Collaborating, Capacity Building*

In 2017, the Leadership Diversity initiative (formerly Leadership Development: Women’s and Ethnic Ministry) began with a mandate to affirm and support women in all levels of leadership—ordained and unordained—in local churches and denominational offices. Our staff includes a full-time director and a part-time assistant. Together we help churches and ministries create a culture in which men and women thrive in pursuit of God’s mission in the world together.

We also affirm and support ethnic minority leaders in churches and ministries within the structure and mandate of a catalytic staff group called the Ethnic and Diversity Functional Team. We create opportunities for these leaders to meet together for times of mutual support, networking, and to present a unified voice to the broader denomination.

The strategic direction set for Native American and First Nations, Latino, Korean, South East Asian and Pacific Islander (SEAPI), Chinese, and Black/ African American ethnic minority ministries includes six people serving as liaisons for their respective leadership teams. The Leadership Diversity office specifically serves as a liaison for the Black/ African American ministry (Black and Reformed Leadership Network).

### *Reflecting on Our Calling*

Two things unify Leadership Diversity's work: the denomination values biblical diversity, and we also value the variety of gifts given to the body of Christ for God's mission. In the book of Revelation, God's servant John testifies, "I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). This is not a homogeneous description. No, it is an "eschatological vision" of a great multitude of ethnically diverse people.

In addition, each person is given unique gifts for the good of the body. Women and ethnic minority leaders bring gifts according to God's will to advance the kingdom. In Romans 12:5-6 the apostle Paul teaches, "In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."

In Leadership Diversity, we understand our calling to identify, affirm, and support church leaders and emerging leaders in their callings and giftedness while recognizing gender and ethnic challenges in Christian leadership. These two biblical passages form the basis for our work.

### *Connecting with Churches*

In 2017 we discovered, through many conversations with church and denominational staff and through learnings from previous leadership initiatives, the importance of a grassroots approach versus a top-down approach when it comes to growing leaders. As a result, the way we connect with churches is different from the way it was in prior years, when there was a designated staff person working on ethnic leadership development within the former Home Missions. We continue to take significant steps in building relationships by connecting, collaborating, and identifying leadership challenges. Some of these steps include the following:

- A Women's Ministry website, a bimonthly e-newsletter, and a CRC Women Facebook page. We have also piloted a virtual leadership learning cluster to create a sacred space for female leaders to be vulnerable with each other and explore topics that emerge from their ministry experiences. Each cluster includes up to eight people. After several meetings, we asked participants to identify the most transformative part of being in the clusters. One woman said, "To see other women in leadership; in my area they don't allow women to be ordained (now deacons), but to see women being a part of things is so refreshing. Just seeing each other has been awesome."
- A plan to recognize women in leadership and the 25th anniversary for ordained women clergy in 2021. We recognize that within the CRCNA there are two different perspectives and convictions on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. Yet in all of our churches there are women who provide leadership in some capacity. We work to eliminate feelings of isolation and disconnectedness by connecting women leaders. The synod women's gathering hosted for three consecutive years has positively supported and encouraged women delegates, youth advisors, and nondelegates. The attendance increases each year, and nearly 70 persons participated in 2019. At Inspire 2019, clergywomen met to network, share stories, and pray together. As one woman leader

stated in a Network post, “It continues to be important for women to feel supported in leadership, the CRC, and at synod. You are helping with this.” A group of women spouses of church planters with Resonate Global Mission expressed a disconnect with the denomination in a recent listening event. This provided an opportunity for collaboration.

- A diverse Women’s Advisory Team of eight women in various geographical locations, including a Calvin Theological Seminary student, help to shape this ministry. We offer a SheLeads Summit annually in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, and we have committed to strengthening our relationship with the Student Advocacy Association.
- A plan is in place for creating a new Leadership Diversity website that will include Women’s Ministry as well as all six ethnic minority ministry groups. Several of these ministries have regular leadership team meetings, annual or biennial gatherings, and Facebook pages. The intent is to connect respective ministries and the broader denominational community. For instance, in September 2018, Leadership Diversity hosted a vision conference of the Black and Reformed Leadership Network titled *Staying on the Wall: Reclaiming, Renewing, and Reimagining*, based on Nehemiah 6:1-16. The conference served as a place to be reminded about the history of black people in the CRC. Nearly 60 participants from Canada and the United States attended.

#### *Looking Forward*

As we look to the future, the sustainability and fruitfulness of Leadership Diversity for the flourishing of our churches will encompass the following:

- Identifying a comprehensive process for growing women and ethnic minority leaders and securing administrative and resource development support. Current capacity is limited.
- Facilitating healthy conversations concerning different views about women in leadership and ecclesiastical office is critical. There is limited capacity at this point to engage in these types of conversations; however, there is a need.
- Walking alongside our six ethnic ministry groups — Native American and First Nations, Latino, Korean, South East Asian and Pacific Islander (SEAPI), Chinese, and Black / African American — affirms the beauty and strength of biblical diversity. There is an immediate need for pursuing opportunities for further growth and intentionality in contextualization, cross-pollination, and creating a unified voice to the broader denominational community. Of critical concern is the need to cultivate and retain future leaders through internal and external pipelines in response to changing demographics.

#### **V. Pastor Church Resources**

Lis Van Harten and Cecil van Niejenhuis, codirectors

*Discernment, Encouragement, Relationships*

Pastor Church Resources serves pastors, churches, and classes as they seek to promote healthy relationships, encourage one another in ministry, and discern next steps in seasons of growth, transition, or challenge (PCR’s mission statement).

### *Reflecting on Our Calling*

In 2016, Pastor-Church Relations changed its name to *Pastor Church Resources* (PCR). This change reflects the broad array of initiatives gathered in the ministry of PCR. We support pastors; we support councils; we support classes; we support the relationships between these leaders and leadership groups. The current name also reflects the intentional trajectory of focusing as much as possible on support that fosters the health and flourishing of church leaders, and of the churches within which these leaders function. Attention to the well-being of leaders and churches provides the context for the individual programs, personal interactions, and consultations that PCR staff undertake. While we continue to respond when relationships are strained or broken, our framework for responding is the goal of healthy relationships. What can we learn? How can we grow? How can the wounded find healing?

At our Pastors' Conference in September, an attendee commented: "I was proud of PCR when our conference speaker, who was from outside of our denomination, commended the work that the CRC is doing in this area: pastor wellness. It's good for us to be made aware of how rich we are in having PCR available to us. Well done." Flourishing pastors. Flourishing churches. The focus on wellbeing is significant and shapes everything we do.

### *Connecting with Churches*

Pastors—Funding *continuing education (CE) grants* has been a long-standing feature of PCR's support for pastors. Between 2015 and 2019, 198 CE grants (up to \$750 each) were awarded to pastors and ministry leaders. A second long-standing program has been the awarding of *peer learning (PL) grants*. Since 2003, 910 pastors representing 739 congregations have been in a PL group, with a total of 314 PL groups formed. This represents \$1.5 million dollars of both Lilly Endowment grant money and denominational ministry shares spent encouraging, supporting, and resourcing pastors with their peers. A recent group, focusing on the parallels between first-century paganism and contemporary culture as it impacts the call to holy living, said, "In a time when many pastors and churches are going through difficult Article 17 separations, the fact that the six of us are thriving in ministry and enjoying good relationships with our congregations is, in significant part, due to our peer group."

Until 2017, PCR held an *annual retreat for pastor couples*, including one for *double-ordained couples*. After one event, a couple shared, "It made us feel valued and appreciated by our denomination and our Lord to have such an opportunity to learn and be cared for all at the same time." Every two years since 2006, PCR has hosted a *conference for pastors' spouses*. An attendee articulated the value of these conferences by saying, "I loved being with other pastors' wives who totally 'get' this ministry life, being able to share, cry, laugh, and encourage one another." Ninety pastors' spouses attended the San Diego conference in 2016; 79 attended at Calgary in 2018.

For the first time in 2019, PCR hosted a *conference specifically for pastors*. Titled *Refreshed for the Call*, 50 pastors enjoyed connecting, with a focus on well-being. An attendee's spouse said, "My husband attended the conference and can't stop talking about how wonderful it was. He says it will take him six months to get through all the tools and material from the retreat, and he is excited to apply it."



The focus on pastoral well-being has intensified and expanded in the past few years. In collaboration with Faith Formation Ministries, PCR developed an online *Spiritual Vitality Toolkit* for pastors. Available in English since September 2017, this toolkit became available in Korean in early 2019, and will soon be available in Spanish. Copies of the *User's Guide* have been mailed to every CRC, and Faith Formation has done workshops with a focus on this toolkit. PCR intends to encourage church leaders across the CRCNA to make use of this toolkit as a means toward essential self-care and health.

Another way in which pastoral health is being promoted is through *Flourishing in Ministry*, a Notre Dame well-being study. In 2017, 340 CRC pastors participated in this study and received a personal well-being profile. Opportunity was provided again in September for CRC pastors to join in this study. Going forward, participants will be encouraged to update their well-being profile every six months. An app is being developed for smartphones, so that pastors will be asked at random moments about their experience of wellness. Data from this study will provide helpful input for the kind of support pastors require, and for the areas that need attention. Results from the 2017 study reveal that CRC pastors' top two scores were in the areas of person-job fit and spiritual well-being. Our two lowest scores were in the areas of burnout/emotional exhaustion (meaning this is a significant difficulty for CRC pastors) and satisfaction with work-life. Well-being in the latter area is lower than in satisfaction with life—a result that is consistent with the national average.

After two pilot projects (2013-15) that focused on vocational assessments, PCR hired a half-time vocational ministry consultant, Samantha DeJong-McCarron, in 2016. She has provided an additional means of supporting pastors by using the Birkman Assessment. Many CRC pastors have already engaged in this assessment with some significant results. One example is a pastor who was ready to leave ministry but discovered that he was in the wrong type of ministry setting. Once he made a switch, ministry work was fulfilling again.

Since fall 2017, the assessment is required for every incoming M.Div. or M.A. student entering Calvin Theological Seminary. It is being provided for every CRC regional pastor—about 75 pastors. The benefits of utilizing this assessment tool are varied: a common language is being developed for pastors throughout the denomination; self-awareness is growing in our pastors; and a corresponding increase in attention to ministry fit is being realized.

The Birkman process includes a one-on-one debrief. As well, it is used in staff settings to build deeper understanding of workstyles and the capacity to function as teams. To this point, and with assistance from Calvin Theological Seminary staff, over 600 ministry leaders, pastors, and students have engaged in the Birkman process, with nearly 300 of those being engaged with through PCR.

For more than two decades, PCR has overseen the implementation of the synodical recommendation of mentorship for newly ordained CRC pastors during their first five years of ministry. Particularly in the past two years, we have made a robust attempt to ensure that this stipulation is being followed. We've done so because isolation in ministry is a significant challenge to well-being. Of the 36 pastors who were newly ordained into CRC ministry in 2019, 18 are involved in active mentoring relationships. For those who are new in ministry, and for those who are new to ministry in the Christian

Reformed Church, engaging in a relationship with a colleague is an essential ingredient for good health. In fact, PCR believes that mentoring relationships should be engaged by every pastor at *every* stage of their ministerial career. The benefits of having an other—a significant, similar other—speaking into our lives is a vital experience of collegiality, accountability, and servant-leader humility. PCR’s training tool *Toward Effective Pastoral Mentoring* (3rd edition) is almost out of print and will soon give way to a revised fourth edition.

The value of mentoring and engagement with peers is now being expanded quite dramatically through the Thriving Together program funded by a Lilly Endowment grant of \$1 million for the five-year period of 2019-2023. Thriving in pastoral ministry requires relationships in which one can explore a developing sense of pastoral vocation. This is true throughout a pastoral career, but particularly during seminal transitional moments in which an integrated sense of vocation is challenged or disrupted.

The Thriving Together program intends to create a stronger, more vital culture of mentoring around three undersupported, almost “invisible” transition moments: early in a second call, in later career, and while privately wrestling with the question “Should I stay, or should I go?”

Through gatherings, resourcing, assessments, and developing mentoring relationships, Thriving Together crystallizes a trajectory already begun by PCR, sharpening the focus on pastoral relationships. The cultivation of wisdom by way of mutually respectful relationships with significant, similar others, will provide traction in fostering hospitable giving and receiving between colleagues, which leads to thriving. In this first year of implementation, six mentoring groups have been formed, two later-career gatherings have been held (in Des Moines, Iowa, and Waterloo, Ont.), a special regional pastor conference took place in February, four videos have been created, and about 300 books have been distributed. We anticipate this program to develop good traction toward a healthier and more resilient core of Christian Reformed pastors.

Finally, our support of pastors continues to include consultation with individual pastors. Sometimes this involves precisely the kinds of invisible transitions targeted by the Thriving Together program as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. It also includes navigating difficult situations, relationships, and issues that challenge ministry leaders. Sometimes we provide a listening ear, sometimes we ask probing questions, and sometimes we offer words of advice or encouragement. Each year the PCR office has personal contact ranging from questions for information to heart-wrenching dilemmas—with literally hundreds of pastors.

Churches—Our involvement in resourcing churches began some 35 years ago in the development of profiles for congregations as well as for pastors. More recently, the process for connecting churches and pastors interested in extending and receiving calls has undergone a significant development. In 2012, PCR staff produced a training tool titled *More Than a Search Committee*. Almost 3,000 hard copies have been distributed to date—in addition to downloads of the online PDF version. Search committees use the tool to assist them in navigating the process of finding their next pastor.

Since June 2017, ministerial profiles have been available through an online portal, *PastorSearch*, with access given to search committees. Increased filtering capacity and improved usability features were added this fall. *PastorSearch*, which is supported by coaching from PCR staff, has proved to be a very positive step for churches. Churches are also encouraged to post their profiles on the Church Positions page on the Network.

Besides the training tool for search committees, PCR has developed a series of training tools for churches. These include *Effective Leadership in the Church* (2008) and *Evaluation Essentials for Congregational Leaders* (2010). What has now become a priority for PCR is the development of training materials for church councils, and in particular for elders. Requests for this kind of support have become widespread. In collaboration with the Office of Social Justice and their initiatives in developing training for deacons, PCR is collaborating with Faith Formation Ministries to produce an online toolkit and a curriculum of sorts. In September, devotions for councils were posted on the Network.

Until now, pastors have received most of PCR's attention and energy. What has become clear is that local congregational leaders need and have expressed interest in better support so that they too may flourish. Flourishing local leaders will bless congregations as well as those who pastor in these congregations. Support for the larger system is vital.

Until 2018, PCR administered Health & Renewal Grants for smaller congregations through the Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) program. During the existence of SCE, 293 grants were provided to 209 CRC congregations—and with real appreciation, as evidenced in these responses: "I believe the SCE grant was simply instrumental in changing the momentum of this congregation, and people wanted to be a part of it," and "The greatest reward the congregation has experienced from the project is an awakening and revival of the men of the church." SCE had several other programs that saw 75 percent of smaller CRC churches (520 churches) participating in one way or another. This program has now ended, but churches are encouraged to connect with *Ignite: Funding Ministry Innovation* for similar grant opportunities.

Developed in 2009, the Healthy Church Discernment Process (HCDP) has become a part of PCR's repertoire in connecting with congregations. An executive survey process was developed as a tool to assist in church visiting practiced by classes, and this is useful in a variety of circumstances as part of discernment processes. To date, 69 congregations have engaged in the HCDP. One church shared, "The process of going through the HCDP allowed our congregation to work together on a common platform or goal; just providing this common goal was a great help for getting our congregation on a 'healing' journey."

One of PCR's most long-standing and essential means for supporting churches is through the circle of Specialized Transitional Ministers (STM). There are typically between 15-20 endorsed STMs serving across the denomination. These are seasoned, trained, interim pastors who walk alongside congregations for periods of one to two years. Typically this occurs after a time of challenge, hurt, or loss—or after a long-term pastorate that leaves a congregation struggling with their identity apart from their pastor. Each November this group gathers for conversation, learning, encouragement,



and support. During the year, smaller cohorts function as learning communities, and they connect by way of video-conferencing. The ultimate goal for an STM is to ready a congregation for the arrival of their next pastor.

A recent initiative in PCR, in collaboration with Resonate Global Ministry staff, is to produce a discernment process designed to assist congregations unsure about their future. When membership dwindles or ages (or both), when a community transitions, or whenever a congregation begins to consider their viability, there are a multitude of questions, emotions, and realities to consider. Our hope is to provide a resource that will serve as a useful process guide. It will attend to pastoral care and the reality of losses, use of physical and monetary assets, and the well-being of members, moving forward. It will aim to discern whether a congregation can gain a fresh Spirit wind or whether it might need to conclude its chapter. And it will attend to practical questions of facilitation. We hope to have this online toolkit ready by Synod 2020.

Finally, we continue to provide direct consultation to churches via their leadership. Each year we engage in over 350 consultations, ranging from continuing education seminars to in-depth conversations, to Church Order navigation, to video and telephone conference calls, and to on-site visits. Occasionally we engage congregations in listening groups. The work of consultation often involves us in stressful situations: conflict, misconduct, and brokenness of many kinds. It is the part of our work that is at times the best and at times the worst. It is rewarding, exhausting, fascinating, and exasperating. It brings us to our knees and reminds us that if Jesus doesn't hold the church in hand, we are—to put it plainly—without hope. But Jesus does hold the church in hand, so we persist in being hopeful!

Classis—PCR has long been focused on pastors, churches, and the inherent relationships that exist there. However, in a number of ways, we have always had some focus on the surrounding system within which pastors and congregations function—classis. We have a long history of appointing regional pastors, often viewed as an extension of our office in their care for pastors and their well-being. Through regional pastors, PCR also encourages the mentoring program for newly ordained pastors in the CRC. Some of our training material, in particular *Toward Effective Pastoral Mentoring*, was designed to assist with ministry occurring at the classical level. And our *More than a Search Committee* training tool, designed to assist with the calling process, has been a benefit not only to local churches but also to the counselor or appointed by classis to ensure that Church Order protocols are followed in that process.

Attention to the surrounding system within which pastors and churches live—namely, classis—has intensified sharply in the past five years since the Better Together report was prepared by PCR. The report was developed in response to Synod 2013's request that PCR find ways to become involved earlier in situations of stress, so that the tide of Article 17 separations might be stemmed somewhat. One of the strategies suggested for addressing this situation was to better resource classis functionaries.

This effort has been led by Al Postma, appointed to encourage and facilitate classis renewal. This work officially became part of PCR in 2015 and has gained traction since Al began his work in 2016. In the past three

years, classis renewal efforts of some kind, ranging from agenda adjustments to actual restructuring, have been undertaken in 33 of our 49 classes. The goal is to empower classis groups to own their own renewal rather than to have it dictated or directed by the denomination. Similarly, regional pastors, mentors, and stated clerks have all been gathered in group settings for conversation, encouragement, and sharing of best practices. Church visitation practices and dynamics are also being explored. We anticipate resourcing classis counselors more fully as well.

Connections—The Connections Project, focusing on regional resourcing, ran from January 2016 through June 2019. Congregations in three regions (southern Ontario, the U.S. Midwest, and southern California) and from 12 classes, engaged with a variety of ministry topics of their choosing with the goal of enhancing ministry. Regional staff provided opportunities for gatherings and coaching as well as a myriad of resources for those topics. During the three-year project, staff connected with 227 churches and 545 ministry leaders. The project led the way in beginning a significant shift in how the denomination resources its congregations. In July 2019 the Connections II Project began. This new five-year project will build on what has taken place to date as it seeks to engage all 49 classes. It will focus on equipping congregations by forming regional teams with the existing personnel of ministries such as Resonate, Faith Formation Ministries, and others. Funding for both Connections projects has been provided by grants from Lilly Endowment Inc.

#### *Looking Forward*

In the past few years, PCR has intentionally shifted its primary focus toward the well-being and flourishing of pastors, ministry leaders, congregations, and classes. We are excited and encouraged by the new and fresh ways we can engage in this work, and we look forward to walking alongside leaders on their ministry journeys. We keep the request of Synod 2013 before us: to “get involved sooner” as we look for effective ways to foster health in both pastors and congregations.

We will continue to respond to the hurt and brokenness that are so real and painful, and to encourage pastors and churches to be good stewards of the pain they experience. Learning to interact more fully and deeply as brothers and sisters in Christ, and practicing the kinds of spiritual disciplines that allow for flourishing, will benefit us all. To be full of truth and full of grace—simultaneously—will make for a more Christlike experience of each other. So will being hospitable toward one another, listening well, and being open to being enriched by the other. Reaching for this kind of community is the hope in which PCR persists. It fits, we think, with the story that Scripture tells, incorporating all that is broken and painful, but with an eye to the goodness of God that will triumph. May the kingdom of shalom come quickly.

## **VI. Raise Up Global Ministries**

Sam Huizenga, director

*Developing Christian Leaders around the World*

Raise Up Global Ministries engages with Congregational Services to equip leaders so that the church and its community flourish. Raise Up’s programs—Coffee Break/Discover Your Bible (CB/DYB), Timothy Leadership

Training (TLT), and Educational Care (EC)—use training and materials to (1) resource Word-centered small group leaders and participants for evangelism and discipleship, (2) prepare global pastors to be shepherds to care for God’s people and teach the Christian faith, and (3) equip Christian teachers with training that centers on a Christian worldview. Raise Up equips CRC leaders—as well as church leaders around the world from many denominations—using three programs that reflect the heart and gifts of Christian Reformed leaders.

### *Reflecting on Our Calling*

Raise Up Global Ministries’ unique calling is to join with God to develop servant leaders in churches and schools through nonformal facilitated learning and materials. Raise Up equips leaders through partnership with churches—the CRC and many other denominations across North America. Globally, Raise Up works through local partnerships. Theological Education Extension of Zambia utilizes TLT to develop church leaders in Zambia. The CRC of the Philippines equips churches with Coffee Break training and materials. Several Resonate missionaries use EC as a means of serving communities in Africa and Asia. Raise Up remains guided by the following values: biblically grounded, gospel driven, Spirit led, relationally focused, accessibly delivered, contextually appropriate, transformationally oriented, reciprocal ministry.

### Coffee Break/Discover Your Bible

*New program manager beginning February 2020*

Peace CRC in South Holland, Illinois, started Coffee Break (CB) in 1970 to introduce people to Jesus through his Word in a safe, small group environment. Since then Coffee Break, utilizing the Discover Your Bible method of Bible study, has spread to twenty-three countries. In 2019, we estimate, more than 10,000 groups around the world met together to discover God through his Word. Joining with God, the CB/DYB team serves churches and small group leaders around the world with vision, training, and resources for relational, small group Bible discovery in order that people may come to faith in Christ and together grow in him. The power of CB is demonstrated in the testimony of Teo Han, who came to know Christ in a men’s CB group and now serves as the Korean CB representative. He says, “Coffee Break was a safe place to learn and ask questions.”

We are revitalizing a well-loved program that has proven effectiveness. CB has a unique opportunity to resource the global church and immigrant churches of North America. As one pastor noted, “Coffee Break does all three aspects of our mission [to love God and each other, and to serve the world], which is unique among ministries.”

### Timothy Leadership Training

*Albert Strydhorst, program manager*

Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) began in the 1990s in Africa and has produced a full set of seven manuals to train Christian pastors and lay leaders worldwide. In ministry year 2018-19, 5,429 people attended TLT trainings; 470 completed all seven manuals to become advanced trainers; and 740 completed three manuals to become basic trainers. The events took place in

five continents and 32 countries. The action-oriented learning is intended to multiply leaders who have the capacity to train others in their local church and, in turn, transform communities.

The Raise Up director was able to see TLT in action as she attended a Malawi TLT graduation of 102 trainers in October 2019. She also visited a fish farm and vegetable garden in Zambia. Inspired by his TLT training, the local owner, Peter, built these to feed and employ his vulnerable neighbors. Through TLT, Peter learned that God cares for all people and had given him the resources to help his neighbors experience God's love by eating good fish and vegetables.

### Educational Care

#### *Interim Leadership Team*

Educational Care (EC) developed from Synod 2005's mandate to study the "relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of world missions" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 773). EC has been used in 24 countries in ten languages. Al Persenaire, former EC program manager, retired in October 2019. Raise Up formed an EC Interim Leadership team of eleven representatives from EduDeo, Christian Schools International, the VanLunen Center, and EC practitioners from North America, Asia, and Africa. Work continues. Steve Timmermans, CRCNA executive director at the time, led an EC in-service training for teachers in Ethiopia. They hope to use EC in hundreds of schools across Ethiopia. Other trainings continue in many African countries and in lands where Christians face opposition to the gospel.

#### *Connecting with Churches*

God is growing the global church, and Raise Up is a vessel to connect with churches locally and internationally. CB and TLT directly resource the church and its mission by equipping leaders with training and materials. EC equips Christian educators in the church and in the school to teach children. The Christian worldview flows from the church, to the teacher, and then to the student, home, and community. For example, EC highlights the connection between faith and life. After a teacher in Africa attended an EC training, she stopped beating her students as a form of discipline. A student later asked his mother why she still beat him, even though his teacher no longer did. The parent asked the teacher, who was able to share alternative discipline methods. This was so effective in her family that the parent shared it with her coworkers. Seeing children in the image of God made a practical difference in these families!

#### *Looking Forward*

Coffee Break begins 2020 celebrating 50 years. The first celebration took place in Korea, with 350 CB leaders. These 50 years have given us a rich past to draw from as we recognize the importance of prayer-centered, relational, small group Bible discovery for evangelism and discipleship for this time in history. We will hire a new program director and content coordinator to help meet CB leaders' top-identified need of new resources. We will increase access to training and coaching through launching an interactive online learning space for leaders from around the world. We also will develop more workshop leaders/coaches in hubs around North America.

TLT is responding to the needs of the global church. A team is writing a new manual to address the crucial issue of spiritual powers. Initial field-testing will begin in May 2020. A trainer's care network has been set up to encourage people who are using TLT to train others. This began with an initial trainers' retreat held in India in 2019. Two more are scheduled: in Guatemala in 2020 and another (location to be determined) in 2021. The purpose of these retreats is to encourage trainers and spur multiplication. TLT is developing a WhatsApp network to encourage and learn from international pastors.

Looking to the needs of the global and future Christian community, the EC team will improve the curriculum and training process guided by wisdom from the experienced interim team. We will add new partners and develop new funding strategies utilizing the fresh eyes and collaboration of the interim team. A new program manager will be hired in ministry year 2020-21 to continue moving this program forward in God's strength.

We continue in the Spirit: Raise Up is Spirit led, as facilitated learning around the Word with a group always involves the Spirit: "One ear on the Spirit and one ear on the group." Each training group is holy ground: it is the very Spirit of God who orchestrates faith, growth, and transformation as servant leaders humbly gather around God's Word to discover together what God desires for his church.

## **VII. Conclusion of Servant Leadership Ministries Evaluation**

Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries, along with other agencies and ministries such as Resonate Global Mission, provide various ways to meet the leadership needs in our churches and classes.

Based on our churches' responses in the Desired Futures leadership section in the *Our Journey 2020 Survey Report* (see Addendum), the Servant Leadership ministries anticipate an increase in effectiveness in providing resources to help churches grow leaders spiritually, understanding how to meet the needs of their local ministry context, developing skills, and encouraging women to develop and use their leadership gifts.

The program evaluation report draws upon a narrative different from that of our past, as we continue to learn what it means to be a servant leader in today's society.

As author and pastor Ed Stetzer says in a *Christianity Today* article, "7 Principles to Lead as Jesus Led" (Sept. 27, 2017),

Jesus did not come to be your leadership guru. He came to die on the cross, for your sin, and in your place. Yet, he did lead. And we can learn from how he led. If we look closely, we see that his leadership was wrapped in humility and servanthood. Even for those in high leadership positions, we all ultimately submit to one Person, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This statement emphasizes the necessity of both servant and leadership. It is our intent as ministries to demonstrate servant leadership as we connect with and help churches to fulfill the calling of servant leadership.

## **Addendum**

### **Servant Leadership Ministries Evaluation**

Here follow some examples of ways in which Servant Leadership ministries' mission, goals, and staff development embody partnering with other CRCNA ministries for the purpose of strengthening congregations. These include past, present, and future ideas for service in partnership with other CRCNA ministries.

#### *Candidacy Committee*

- An intimate partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary in the candidacy process.
- Frequent consulting with Chaplaincy and Care Ministry and Resonate Global Mission relative to the ordination processes appropriate for various individuals.
- Connections with each ministry in the CRC when offering orientation to persons who are moving through our various ordination processes.
- Work done hand-in-hand with classis functionaries, and ready consultation with local churches.

#### *Chaplaincy and Care Ministry*

- Chaplains have a diverse set of specialized skills, additional training, and work experience that greatly benefits the church. Frequently our ministry is asked for names and specialized resources from our chaplain community to enhance various CRCNA initiatives, programs, and ministries.
- Serve on the Inspire 2021 planning team to provide a unique perspective and ministry experience.
- Serve on the advisory team for Leadership Diversity and provide feedback and encouragement.
- Collaborate with Resonate Global Mission's Campus Ministry to share best practices and resources, enhance regional clusters to learn from one another, and collaborate together for our annual conferences.
- Coordinating with Candidacy Committee during our endorsement process and as candidates are meeting their ordination requirements.
- Utilizing the vocational assessment from Pastor Church Resources during our endorsement process. We are also providing additional support and mentorship for newly ordained ministers who are working as chaplains.
- Working together with Centre for Public Dialogue and Disability Concerns around the Death with Dignity and Medical Assistance in Dying legislation. Our ministry provides pastoral care training, resources, and support for chaplains. Chaplains have begun to hold adult education classes in their churches as the implementation of euthanasia/suicide is becoming more prevalent in Canada and in some states in the U.S.
- Worship Ministries is working with both of our staff to enhance our electronic communication practices and provide specialized resources for *Reformed Worship*.
- Working with Safe Church Ministry to provide training for chaplains as they pastorally respond to abuses of power in their work and church. We have provided self-care resources for caregivers as Safe Church creates additional resources for their ministry.



## *Leadership Diversity*

- Strengthening relations with Calvin Theological Seminary in developing women and men leaders at training events, such as SheLeads Summit and Student Advocacy.
- Along with Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, and Classis Renewal, seeking suggestions to help make the calling process work well for women and ethnic-minority clergy.
- Supporting Resonate Global Mission in helping to equip church planting advocates to support, encourage, and connect church planters, their families, parent churches, and classes throughout the church planting process.
- Equipping ethnic-minority leaders with Resonate Global Mission for local and global missions at the Global Summit.
- Creating a congregational resource in the future with Faith Formation Ministries for churches and classes about how men and women should thrive together in ministry.
- Exploring a pathway forward in recognizing the 25th anniversary of the ordination of CRC women.

## *Pastor Church Resources*

PCR has had and /or anticipates collaborations . . .

- with Diaconal Ministries in the development of resources for deacons.
- with Chaplaincy and Care Ministry to ensure that chaplains can have a recognized and valued place within the classis settings.
- with Resonate Global Mission in training and endorsing coaches for pastors and congregations, creating a resource for legacy churches, consultations with churches/pastors, supporting church planting initiatives, and integration in classis settings.
- with Worship Ministries in potential training of coaches.
- with Faith Formation Ministries in creating the Spiritual Vitality Toolkit, assistance in the creation of new toolkits, and speaking at pastors' / pastors' wives' conferences.
- with the Financial Shalom Project as a resource, when needed.
- with World Renew and the Office of Social Justice in diaconal work in the U.S.
- with Candidacy in assisting new candidates looking for their first church and hosting dinners for EPMC students.
- with Connections in resourcing congregations, pastors, and ministry leaders.
- with Safe Church Ministries in consultations and abuse of power materials.
- with Disability Concerns in caring for pastors' mental health.
- with Canadian ministries in welcoming new pastors to Canada and strengthening classis leaders.
- with Calvin Theological Seminary in training church visitors, development of learning resources for commissioned pastors, "readiness for ministry" seminars, and supporting pastor self-awareness using the Birkman Assessment.

### *Raise Up Global Ministries*

- Equip Resonate Global Mission missionaries with tools for developing local leaders, including translated materials, training methods, and ongoing support.
- Equip World Renew global staff with tools for developing local leaders, including translated materials, training methods, and ongoing support.
- Equip Back to God Ministries International with tools for developing local leaders, including translated materials, training methods, and ongoing support.
- Going forward, offer support to Leadership Diversity by providing more than 31 translations of leadership development resources.
- Going forward, offer support to Candidacy by providing nonformal training for pastors in more than 31 languages.
- Going forward, offer support to Pastor Church Resources by providing training and materials that equip elders, deacons, and evangelists.
- Provide on-campus staff through office presence to teach, mentor, and interact with faculty, staff, and students.

One major ministry highlight from each ministry area . . .

#### *Candidacy Committee*

Candidacy work, done well, will be an asset to our churches as aspiring pastors are encouraged and equipped to minister within a denominational context of increasing diversity and ongoing Reformed commitment.

#### *Chaplaincy and Care Ministry*

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is a healing, reconciling ministry of God, an expression and extension of God's activity and mission in the world. Chaplains provide pastoral ministry in hospitals, hospice settings, prisons, counseling centers, military installations, and businesses to people who have lost hope, are hurting, and are in crisis.

#### *Leadership Diversity*

Leadership Diversity helps identify, affirm, celebrate, and support church leaders and emerging leaders in their callings and giftedness while recognizing gender and ethnic challenges in Christian leadership.

#### *Pastor Church Resources*

Pastor Church Resources serves pastors, churches, and classes as they seek to promote healthy relationships, encourage one another in ministry, and discern next steps in seasons of growth, transition, or challenge. We're currently focusing on resources for elders, deacons, and councils, churches who are wondering about their future, classis renewal, and mentoring groups for pastors during times of transition.

#### *Raise Up Global Ministries*

Raise Up is committed to equipping global church leaders—in North America and worldwide—with accessible, interactive, Word-centered materials and training. Coffee Break equips small groups and their leaders. Timothy Leadership Training equips pastors, evangelists, and key congregational leaders. Educational Care equips Christian educators.



## Appendix I Justice and Mercy Efforts

February 2020

### I. Background

Synod 2017 adopted the following proposal (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 633-34, 696):

Endorse and support a renewed and revised multiple agency, collaborative program that would build on our existing ministry capacities to exercise the following within a healthy biblical Reformed worldview:

- a) Increase our efforts to educate CRC members, congregations, agencies, and educational institutions on how best to serve people who are poor and hungry.
- b) Continue and increase our effective relief, development, and justice ministries with people who are suffering from drought, famine, war, climate change, trafficking, and persecution.
- c) Increase our understanding of the root and systemic causes of hunger, poverty, oppression, and injustice.
- d) Improve and broaden our ability to be active and engaged Christian citizens, standing with and advocating for the rights and welfare of those whom the world would disdain and discard.

— *Adopted*

- e) Increase the financial support for World Renew's yearly World Hunger Sunday.

— *Recommitted*

Revised and adopted later at Synod 2017 (p. 696): That synod encourage our local churches to increase their financial support for World Renew's yearly World Hunger Sunday.

— *Adopted*

- f) Increase collaborative peace, justice, and reconciliation education and mobilization efforts of the Office of Social Justice, Canadian Ministries, Worship Ministries, Faith Formation, and other Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) ministries.

— *Recommitted*

Revised and adopted later at Synod 2017 (p. 696): That synod instruct the executive director to oversee an increase of collaborative peace, justice, and reconciliation education and mobilization efforts by the Office of Social Justice, Canadian Ministries, Worship Ministries, Faith Formation Ministries, and other Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) ministries.

— *Adopted*

Synod then decided the following in connection with the preceding actions (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 696-98):

That synod (1) take note that the above proposal arises in response to a decision of Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829), instructing "the executive director to encourage the Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) collaboration group to continue to prioritize goals and assign resources for all of our justice and mercy denominational issues," and (2) instruct the executive director to pursue other possible priorities as well as to plan and implement the program described in recommendation I, C, 3, a, 4 adopted by synod (see Article 31) and report the results to synod annually through 2020.

*Grounds:*

- 1) This proposal offers a timely and urgent response to the increase in suffering we see in a world where the recent progress made in alleviating poverty, hunger, and oppression at home and abroad is threatened by expanding violence, changing climate, and mass migrations.
- 2) This proposal recognizes the effective poverty response, educational, and advocacy resources our denomination has already developed and encourages CRC members to utilize those ministries and resources (e.g., World Hunger Campaign, *Live Justly*, Good Soil, *Churches Between Borders*, Dance of Racial Reconciliation, Journey with Me, Blanket Exercise, social justice mobilizers in Canada and the United States).
- 3) This proposal strongly reaffirms the findings of previous study committees and ministries that demonstrate that an effective antihunger and antipoverty response must be holistic. To be effective, we must weave together direct ministry action, education on root causes, and advocacy. (This could include, for example, development and agricultural programs; immigration reform; combating racism and discrimination; responding to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; creation care, including adaptation and mitigation of climate change; and refugee resettlement.)
- 4) This proposal reaffirms that an effective response to poverty and hunger must include holding our governments and international bodies accountable so that they devote sufficient resources to ending violence, preventing famine, trading fairly, reducing the causes of climate change, improving refugee and immigration policy, and paying attention to racism and discrimination endemic to our societies.
- 5) This proposal has strong continuity with previous synodical actions on hunger, poverty, and their root causes, including the World Hunger recommendations passed by Synods 1978 and 1979, the Freedom to Serve recommendations of 1993, endorsement of the Micah Challenge in 2004, the Migration of Workers report of 2010, and the Creation Stewardship climate recommendations in 2012.
- 6) This proposal responds to synod's instruction (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829) by providing significant and integrative prioritization, relying on synodical decisions of the past to chart a direction for current challenges, and to do so in a collaborative, multiple agency /ministry approach utilizing existing resources as much as possible.
- 7) This proposal is in sync with a recent request from Christian Churches Together (CCT) to call our churches to prayer for the U.S. Congress as it considers budget cuts to major antipoverty programs. In addition, it supports ongoing advocacy by coalitions of which we are a part: Bread for the World, Circle of Protection, Micah Challenge/Network, Alliance to End Hunger, and others.
- 8) This proposal implements and significantly prioritizes several ministry plan goals from Our Journey 2020, particularly in the area of Mercy and Justice:

*Step 4.4.1 Congregations identify and set goals to address local/national/global justice issues—discerning unique steps they can take to make an impact from their own communities.*

*4.4.4 Congregations engage in active citizenship and **advocacy** that encourages them and their leaders to be accountable for developing and implementing just policies.*

*—Adopted*

Last year, Synod 2019 received the following update by way of the Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 46):

In connection with a directive from Synod 2017 to prioritize justice and mercy goals (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 633-35, [696-98]), the COD's Mercy and Justice

Ministries Committee developed the following list of priorities and presented them to the COD:

- a. Reconciliation of communities within the Reformed fellowship and family who have a history with the CRC but have left our denomination.
- b. Care and consideration for unwed pregnant women and their inclusion in churches for support.
- c. Care and consideration to how ministry connects locally in terms of support (i.e., grants) to pursue justice and mercy.
- d. Formation of regional teams to help regions and classes contextualize the expression of justice and mercy in their area.

## II. Current status – report of the executive director

### A. *CRC agencies and ministries excel at addressing the issues noted above*

In this summary report, it is impossible to list all of the agencies' and ministries' activities, but be assured that the seeming increase in crises, disasters, and displaced people around the world continues to challenge World Renew and its many individual and congregational supporters to even greater engagement, and that other CRC ministries continue to hold biblical values high during a season where leaders in the highest governmental offices (U.S.) demean women by patterns of adultery and suggestive comments, mock the disabled, diminish traumatic brain injury to the category of a headache, demonstrate a bias against people of color in immigration issues (e.g., negative comments about the Diversity Lottery, mention of s\*\*\*hole countries, etc.), and deny the racial fueling behind events such as occurred in Charlottesville and El Paso.

### B. *Prioritization of goals/assignment of resources*

Updates to the list provided in the report to Synod 2019 (see above) are as follows:

1. This priority (reconciliation of communities) continues to be on the agenda of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. The EIRC report in the *Agenda to Synod 2020* provides the latest status of these efforts.
2. This year the Office of Social Justice materials (justice.crcna.org/sanctity-human-life) prepared in advance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (U.S.), January 19, 2020, related to the specific foci of unwed pregnant women and their inclusion in churches, albeit in a holistic way:
  - a. The theme based on the full body of Christ, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:26-27, included unwed pregnant women as well as those who have experienced abortion, as well as those of us who sit in pews and pull levers in voting booths.
  - b. The entire effort was to encourage local congregations to be caring and supportive.
3. The last two items—regarding local ministry connections and regional teams—continue to be utilized where possible.

### C. *Pursuit of other priorities; planning and implementation of the recommended program*

A quick review of the instruction by Synod 2017 (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633) uncovers words such as *broaden* and *increase* (the latter used five

times). On behalf of the ministries and agencies implicated by this synodical instruction, consider the following observations and actions being taken:

1. While instructions to broaden, improve, and increase are full of hope and even urgency, follow-up is difficult when no additional resources are provided.
2. Even more importantly, when a minority of the church continues to bombard these ministry leaders (and the executive director) with messages that such efforts are wrong and inappropriate, our souls lose their courage and we grow lonely. The authority of synod is diminished, and our Reformed witness is compromised. Consider one such message recently received from a U.S. congregation, indicating they are withholding all ministry-share dollars except for causes that directly support the advancement of the gospel, noting that they “are saddened by the recent direction of the CRCNA . . . It is evident that our denomination has positioned the social gospel in a place of primacy over and above faithful gospel ministry. . . .”
3. As indicated elsewhere, the Office of Social Justice is being changed to restrict its activity to within the United States (pursuant to actions taken by the CRCNA Canada Corporation Board of Directors); further, (a) in light of the 2017 desire for “a renewed and revised multiple agency, collaborative program that would build on our existing ministry capacities” (p. 633) and (b) in order to be more effective (but not necessarily in increased and broadened ways) in the tasks illustrated in the 2017 series of synodical instructions (pp. 696-97), more of the advocacy work is in the process of being shared with World Renew, allowing the Office of Social Justice and the Office of Race Relations to focus more on equipping congregations. The rationale for the reallocation of costs and responsibilities for advocacy efforts and equipping efforts relates to the direction of Synod 2017 to “increase our efforts to educate” (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633).

## Appendix J

### Reimagining Ministry Shares—Process Update

#### I. Background

Synod 2019 adopted a number of actions related to reimagining the CRCNA ministry-share system—an assignment given by Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 857-59). The following recommendations were adopted by Synod 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90):

1. That synod adopt the Reimagining Ministry Shares report as presented in Appendix J [*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 110-18].
2. That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the report (II, C, 2).
  - a. That synod (1) move the ministry-share year from a calendar-year setting to that of the fiscal year July 1 through June 30, effective July 1, 2021, and (2) that Synod 2020 adopt a ministry-share rate for the period January 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, to facilitate the transition to a July 1 through June 30 fiscal year.

- b. That synod (1) request church councils to prayerfully consider their response to the ministry-share request for the period July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, and (2) instruct the classes, beginning at their fall 2020 meetings, to dedicate sufficient time to consider the ministry-share contributions projected by each church for the coming fiscal year; and, working with the assembly, determine the best way to maximize the pledged support for denominational ministry. The level of pledged support is to be reported to the denominational offices not later than February 1, 2021. This process should be repeated annually.
- c. That synod instruct the COD to provide a communication giving guidance to the churches as they consider their pledge. The guidance should consist of the following:
  - 1) Material to communicate the denomination's vision for ministry enabled through ministry shares.
  - 2) Examples of possible methods to consider in determining the church's pledge amount, including but not limited to (a) percentage of income, (b) rate per person based on average worship attendance, (c) percentage increase above the prior year gift.
- d. That synod encourage the churches to commit to support Calvin College [University] and the four regional, Christian higher-educational institutions (Redeemer University College, The King's University, Trinity Christian College, and Dordt University) at the same or greater amount as the support previously requested through ministry shares and direct gifts. Gifts to Calvin College [University] would continue to be processed as part of the ministry-share system, while gifts to the area educational institutions would continue to be contributed directly to the schools.
- e. That synod instruct the executive director to circulate the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, as presented by the COD and adopted by synod, along with the suggested guidance, to congregations and classes and to encourage its study with assistance available from the appropriate denominational staff for each context.

The following note followed these decisions in the *Acts of Synod 2019*: "Please refer to the timeline in the *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 117-18; synod adopted the report *in principle* for consideration by the churches. Responses are encouraged through the usual processes to Synod 2020 per the Rules for Synodical Procedure."

## II. Recent activity

Engagement with congregations and classes (see adopted action in point 2, e above) has been the focus of recent months. At this writing, visits to over thirty U.S. classes have been made, as well as visits to the twelve Canadian classes. In summary, responses were positive, and most often questions focused on implementation, not questioning the wisdom of synod's adoption of the report *in principle*.<sup>1</sup> The congregations and classes were reminded about the option to send communications to synod with concerns. The COD and administration will address the action in point 2, c (guidance as churches consider their pledges) following implementation of the new ministry support system by Synod 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Staff received a note from the council of Willoughby Church in Langley, B.C., indicating a number of concerns, including this: "A final concern is that, given the above, Canadian churches have not yet heard from the Canadian Board of Directors. We would like to hear their perspective prior to moving ahead with a reimagined scheme." Staff responded, indicating that the CRCNA Canada Corporation Board of Directors was companion to the proposal at two COD meetings and that the proposal received unanimous support.

Staff, along with the COD, also addressed point 2, f—the encouragement of possible additional revenue enhancements for a variety of denominational ministries (e.g., fee for service possibilities, ministry-specific fundraising). By way of Recommendation D below, the COD provides a response to Synod 2020 regarding this instruction by Synod 2019.

### III. Recommendations

A. That Synod 2020 implement the content of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, adopted by Synod 2019 in principle.

B. That synod adopt changes to the Church Order Supplement as follows (additions noted in **bold**; deletions noted by ~~strike-through~~):

*Proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 45, section a*

#### a. Denominational Funding

1. The synod shall annually review the unified denominational budget as ~~proposed~~ **adopted** by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA and approve a ministry-share ~~assignment~~ **guidelines** to provide the revenue for that budget.
2. Synod shall review the annual budgets of the denominational agencies.
3. Following each annual synod, the executive director shall ~~inform the classical treasurers as to their respective denominational ministry shares~~ **send to the churches an annual letter of guidance as they consider their denominational pledges.**

*Ground:* The term *guidelines* (rather than *assignment*) better reflects the changes adopted by Synod 2019 (see section 2, c included in Background).

C. That synod instruct the executive director to make appropriate updates where necessary to the following Church Order Supplements referring to ministry shares in connection with assigned ministry-share amounts: Church Order Supplement, Articles 35-a; 38-b, section c; 38-g, section o; and 38-h, section k.

D. That synod take note that the instruction to consider additional revenue sources has been fulfilled; no additional revenue sources were identified.

# Appendix K Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

## Back to God Ministries International Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2019-----			
	Unrestricted	(note 2) W/ Board Restriction	(note 3) W/ Donor Restriction	Total
Cash	\$ (294)	3,296	179	3,181
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	767	-	-	767
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments:				
Bonds	335	-	-	335
Equities	4,002	-	-	4,002
Partnerships	-	-	1,075	1,075
Property (non-operating)	6	-	-	6
PP & E (note 1)	222	-	-	222
Other	533	-	-	533
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>5,571</b>	<b>3,296</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>10,121</b>
Accounts Payable	360	-	-	360
Notes/Loans Payable	269	-	-	269
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	263	-	-	263
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>892</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 4,679</b>	<b>3,296</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>9,229</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>				
Note 1: List details of property not in use.				
Note 2: List details of board designations.	<p>Funds set aside by the board for future projects, particularly related to larger capital and new program needs. As well, Estate Gifts received above budgeted amounts are included in the Stewardship fund to be used over 10 years</p>			
Note 3: List details of donor designations.	<p>Donor designated endowments and memorial funds such as the Isaac Jen &amp; Media Reach Endowments and the Jim Van Drunen Memorial fund</p>			



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

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
Ministry Share	\$	2,918	\$ 2,795
% of Total Income		29.8%	28.8%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,522	\$ 3,259
Estate Gifts	\$	2,207	\$ 3,281
Total Gift Income		5,729	6,540
% of Total Income		58.6%	67.5%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	1,133	\$ 357
Total Other Income		1,133	357
% of Total Income		11.6%	3.7%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>9,780</b>	<b>9,692</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
English	\$	2,282	\$ 2,257
FTEs		13	13
International	\$	3,367	\$ 3,094
FTEs		6	6
Education	\$	168	\$ 165
FTEs		2	2
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,817	\$ 5,516
Total Program Service FTEs		21	21
% of Total \$		71.4%	69.5%
% of Total FTEs		66.3%	68.4%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	940	\$ 880
FTEs		4	3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	1,395	\$ 1,538
FTEs		7	7
Total Support Service \$		2,335	2,418
Total Support Service FTEs		11	10
% of Total \$		28.6%	30.5%
% of Total FTEs		33.7%	31.6%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	\$	<b>8,152</b>	\$ <b>7,934</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	\$	<b>1,628</b>	\$ <b>1,758</b>

Calvin University  
Balance Sheet (000s)

	June 30, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 10,860		-		10,860
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,427	-	-	-	2,427
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	3,002	-	-	-	3,002
Investments (note 1):	36,762				36,762
Bonds	-		-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-		-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>53,051</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>53,051</b>
Accounts Payable	10,696	-	-	-	10,696
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	2,860	-	-	-	2,860
Other	39,794	-	-	-	39,794
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>53,350</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>53,350</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ (299)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(299)</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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.					

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

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,349	\$ 2,221
% of Total Income	2.3%	2.1%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 3,258	\$ 3,451
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	3,258	3,451
% of Total Income	3.2%	3.3%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 92,332	\$ 92,175
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,409	\$ 5,803
Total Other Income	97,741	97,978
% of Total Income	94.6%	94.5%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>103,348</b>	<b>103,650</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 86,491	\$ 85,880
FTEs	548	529
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 86,491	\$ 85,880
Total Program Service FTEs	548	529
% of Total \$	82.7%	82.9%
% of Total FTEs	80.6%	78.8%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 7,604	\$ 7,460
FTEs	40	44
Plant Operations	\$ 7,597	\$ 7,493
FTEs	63	69
Fund-raising	\$ 2,860	\$ 2,817
FTEs	29	29
Total Support Service \$	18,061	17,770
Total Support Service FTEs	132	142
% of Total \$	17.3%	17.1%
% of Total FTEs	19.4%	21.2%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 104,552</b>	<b>\$ 103,650</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>671</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$ (1,204)</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

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

	-----June 30, 2019-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,752	-	\$ 1	-	1,753
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	5,216	-	-	-	5,216
Receivables & Advances	42	-	1,569	-	1,611
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	48	-	-	-	48
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	10,838	-	10,838
Equities	-	-	11,690	14,734	26,424
Partnerships	-	-	-	9,408	9,408
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	1,050	1,050
PP & E	9,892	-	-	-	9,892
Other	137	-	4,278	-	4,415
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>17,087</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,376</b>	<b>25,192</b>	<b>70,655</b>
Accounts Payable	412	-	-	-	412
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	108	-	108
Capital Leases	47	-	-	-	47
Annuities Payable	-	-	133	-	133
Deferred Income	-	-	77	-	77
Other	5,547	-	-	-	5,547
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>6,006</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,324</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>11,081</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,058</b>	<b>25,192</b>	<b>64,331</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Office building in endowment - investment income.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Accounts payable: 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 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
Ministry Share	\$	2,405	\$ 2,277
% of Total Income		32.3%	30.1%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,295	\$ 1,366
Estate Gifts	\$	210	\$ 171
Total Gift Income		1,505	1,537
% of Total Income		20.2%	20.3%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,397	\$ 2,525
Grants	\$	1,018	\$ 998
Miscellaneous	\$	119	\$ 225
Total Other Income		3,534	3,748
% of Total Income		47.5%	49.6%
TOTAL INCOME		7,444	7,562
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Instructional	\$	2,716	\$ 2,762
FTEs		20	20
Public Service	\$	43	\$ 106
FTEs		1	1
Academic Support	\$	1,266	\$ 1,200
FTEs		5	5
Student Services	\$	644	\$ 692
FTEs		5	5
Student Aid	\$	323	\$ 317
FTEs		1	1
	\$	-	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,992	\$ 5,077
Total Program Service FTEs		32	32
% of Total \$		68.9%	68.7%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	66.7%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,003	\$ 1,007
FTEs		9	9
Plant Operations	\$	689	\$ 742
FTEs		2	2
Fund-raising	\$	557	\$ 568
FTEs		5	5
Total Support Service \$		2,249	2,317
Total Support Service FTEs		16	16
% of Total \$		31.1%	31.3%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	33.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	7,241	\$ 7,394
TOTAL FTEs		48	48
Post-retirement benefit costs >		-	-
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	203	\$ 168

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

	December 31, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 173	-	-	-	173
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	305		-	-	305
Equities	5,345		-	-	5,345
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	126		-	-	126
Property (nonoperating)			-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>5,949</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,949</b>
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 5,949</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,949</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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)**

		2018 Actual	2019 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>			
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	\$	477	\$ 501
Participant Contributions	\$	68	\$ 83
Investment Earnings	\$	(189)	\$ 788
Total Other Income		356	1,372
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		356	1,372
<b>DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	414	\$ 714
FTEs		-	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	414	\$ 714
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		95.6%	96.7%
% of Total FTEs			
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	19	\$ 24
FTEs		-	-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		19	24
Total Support Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		4.4%	3.3%
% of Total FTEs			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	433	\$ 738
TOTAL FTEs		-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(77)	\$ 634



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

	December 31, 2019				
	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	6,605		-	-	6,605
Equities	20,622		-	-	20,622
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	3,259		-	-	3,259
Diversified	8,040		-	-	8,040
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>38,526</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38,526</b>
Accounts Payable	6	-	-	-	6
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 38,520</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38,520</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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)**

		2018 Actual	2019 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>			
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	\$	2,321	\$ 2,536
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Investment Income	\$	(1,922)	\$ 7,166
Total Other Income		399	9,702
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>		<b>399</b>	<b>9,702</b>

**DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):**

Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	4,193	\$ 4,529
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,193	\$ 4,529
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		96.6%	97.2%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	146	\$ 131
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		146	131
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		3.4%	2.8%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>4,339</b>	<b>\$ 4,660</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTION)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>(3,940)</b>	<b>\$ 5,042</b>

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

	June 30, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 5,407	-	-	-	5,407
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	15,944	-	-	-	15,944
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	12	-	-	-	12
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>21,363</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>21,363</b>
Accounts Payable	38	-	-	-	38
Notes/Loans Payable	15,232	-	-	-	15,232
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>15,270</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15,270</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 6,093</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,093</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
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	\$	863	\$ 856
Total Other Income		863	856
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>863</b>	<b>856</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	313	\$ 306
FTEs		1	1
Total Program Service \$	\$	313	\$ 306
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		45.4%	48.7%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	50.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	377	\$ 322
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		377	322
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		54.6%	54.6%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	0.5%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>\$ 628</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>\$ 228</b>

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

	-----December 31, 2019-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 2,185	390	-	-	2,575
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,057	10	-	-	1,067
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	12,150	-	-	-	12,150
Equities	50,819	-	-	-	50,819
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Real Estate (nonoperating)	2,657	-	-	-	2,657
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>68,868</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>69,268</b>
Accounts Payable	220	16	-	-	236
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 68,648</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>69,032</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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		MPF		SAF		SAF	
	2018		2019		2018		2019	
	Actual		Actual		Actual		Actual	
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	95	\$	85
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		93.1%		93.4%
Other Gift Income:								
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:								
Participant Assessments	\$	1,147	\$	2,582	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Investment Earnings/(Losses)	\$	328	\$	11,125	\$	7	\$	6
Total Other Income		1,475		13,707		7		6
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		6.9%		6.6%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		1,475		13,707		102		91
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):								
Program Services:								
Distributions	\$	3,093	\$	2,943	\$	174	\$	23
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,093	\$	2,943	\$	174	\$	23
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		77.2%		76.8%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				
Support Services:								
Management & General	\$	911	\$	891	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		911		891		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		22.8%		23.2%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	4,004	\$	3,834	\$	174	\$	23
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(2,529)	\$	9,873	\$	(72)	\$	68

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

	-----December 31, 2019-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 5,210	217	-	-	5,427
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	166	1	-	-	167
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	19,581	-	-	-	19,581
Equities	75,777	-	-	-	75,777
Diversified / Alternative	5,136	-	-	-	5,136
Real Estate (nonoperating)	11,464	-	-	-	11,464
PP & E	157	-	-	-	157
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 117,491</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>117,709</b>
Accounts Payable	51	48	-	-	99
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 117,440</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>117,610</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
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 2018 Actual	MPF 2019 Actual	SAF 2018 Actual	SAF 2019 Actual
<b>ADDITIONS:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 176	\$ 162
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	98.9%	98.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 5,174	\$ 5,117	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ (4,138)	\$ 21,122	\$ 2	\$ 2
Total Other Income	1,036	26,239	2	2
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	1.1%	1.2%
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONS</b>	<b>1,036</b>	<b>26,239</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>164</b>

**DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):**

Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 10,268	\$ 10,271	\$ 153	\$ 105
FTEs	-	-	-	-

Total Program Service \$	\$ 10,268	\$ 10,271	\$ 153	\$ 105
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.4%	89.7%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		

Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 1,223	\$ 1,176	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	1,223	1,176	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	-	-
% of Total \$	10.6%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		

<b>TOTAL DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>\$ 11,491</b>	<b>\$ 11,447</b>	<b>\$ 153</b>	<b>\$ 105</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

<b>NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)</b>	<b>\$ (10,455)</b>	<b>\$ 14,792</b>	<b>\$ 25</b>	<b>\$ 59</b>
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**Resonate Global Missions  
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2019-----			
	Unrestricted	(note 2) w/Board Restriction	(note 3) w/Donor Restriction	Total
Cash	\$ 7,691	-	-	7,691
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	181	-	-	181
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	257	-	-	257
Investments (note 1):	-	-	-	-
Bonds	1,641	-	-	1,641
Equities	2,132	5,122	1,964	9,218
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	335	-	-	335
Other	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	12,237	5,122	1,964	19,323
Accounts Payable	2,401	-	-	2,401
Notes/Loans Payable	37	-	-	37
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	186	-	-	186
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	670	-	-	670
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	3,294	-	-	3,294
<b>Net Assets</b>	\$ 8,943	5,122	1,964	16,029
<b>Footnotes:</b>				
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Funds set aside by the board for future projects, particularly related to larger capital and new program needs.			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Donor designated endowments and memorial funds such as the te Velde, Vanden Berg and Huizenga Endowments and the Van Thoff Trust.			

**Resonate Global Missions  
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
Ministry Share	\$	7,116	\$ 6,792
% of Total Income		38.3%	32.9%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$	9,807	\$ 9,924
Estate Gifts	\$	766	\$ 3,132
Total Gift Income		10,573	13,056
% of Total Income		56.9%	63.2%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	909	\$ 794
Total Other Income		909	794
% of Total Income		4.9%	3.8%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>18,598</b>	<b>20,642</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Ministry Teams - N. America	\$	2,399	\$ 2,671
FTEs		18	18
Ministry Development - Mission Innovation	\$	1,866	\$ 1,923
FTEs		5	12
Africa & Europe	\$	2,586	\$ 3,169
FTEs		18	19
Eurasia-reclassified 17-18			\$ -
FTEs		14	-
Latin America & Asia	\$	3,660	\$ 4,499
FTEs		19	26
Global/other Int'l program	\$	2,279	\$ 2,119
FTEs		40	3
Mission Educ Engagement/Vol	\$	964	\$ 847
FTEs		2	5
Total Program Service \$	\$	13,754	\$ 15,228
Total Program Service FTEs		116	83
% of Total \$		76.7%	79.3%
% of Total FTEs		85.9%	77.6%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,585	\$ 1,642
FTEs		6	7
Operations and Logistics/PLC	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Mission Support & Fund-raising	\$	2,592	\$ 2,338
FTEs		13	17
Total Support Service \$		4,177	3,980
Total Support Service FTEs		19	24
% of Total \$		23.3%	20.7%
% of Total FTEs		14.1%	22.4%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	\$	<b>17,931</b>	\$ <b>19,208</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs**</b>		<b>135</b>	<b>107</b>
**Ptnr & Vol fte est. incl above		30	30
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	\$	<b>668</b>	\$ <b>1,434</b>

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

	-----June 30, 2019-----			
		(note 2)	(note 3)	
	Unrestr.	Temp. Restr.	Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,917	3,373	-	6,290
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	3,807	1,180	-	4,987
Inventory	797	-	-	797
Prepays & Advances	63	-	-	63
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	282	-	-	282
Equities	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	7,251	-	-	7,251
Other	50	-	-	50
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>15,167</b>	<b>4,553</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19,720</b>
Accounts Payable	4,609	-	-	4,609
Notes/Loans Payable	57	-	-	57
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	41	-	-	41
Other	436	-	-	436
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>5,143</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,143</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 10,024</b>	<b>4,553</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>14,577</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>				
Note 1: List details of investments currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.			
Note 2: List details of restrictions.	Includes: \$? AOYC, \$2,193,000 Lilly, \$201,000 Bi-natl Gathering, Chaplaincy 102,000, \$213,000 other.			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.				

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

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	2,561	\$	2,300
% of Total Income		69.3%		54.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	322	\$	306
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		322		306
% of Total Income		8.7%		7.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	63
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	812	\$	1,554
Total Other Income		812		1,617
% of Total Income		22.0%		38.3%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>3,695</b>		<b>4,223</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services	\$	1,368	\$	2,202
FTEs		5		4
Communications				
FTEs				
Ecumenical Relations	\$	111	\$	95
FTEs		-		-
Inspire	\$	755	\$	35
FTEs		1		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	2,234	\$	2,332
Total Program Service FTEs		6		4
% of Total \$		56.3%		56.0%
% of Total FTEs		46.2%		36.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,078	\$	940
FTEs		4		3
D.M.A.	\$	332	\$	364
FTEs		2		2
Fund-raising	\$	443	\$	528
FTEs		1		2
Total Support Service \$		1,845		1,832
Total Support Service FTEs		7		7
% of Total \$		46.5%		44.0%
% of Total FTEs		53.8%		63.6%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	\$	<b>3,968</b>	\$	<b>4,164</b>
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>		<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	\$	<b>(273)</b>	\$	<b>59</b>

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

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>			
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	\$	-	\$ -
Services & Misc	\$	6,644	\$ 6,818
Total Other Income		6,644	6,818
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>6,644</b>	<b>6,818</b>
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>			
Program Services:			
Advancement	\$	829	\$ 522
FTEs		9	5
Finance & Payroll	\$	2,506	\$ 2,607
FTEs		22	22
IT and Phones	\$	1,520	\$ 1,585
FTEs		7	7
Human Resources	\$	367	\$ 420
FTEs		2	3
Coordinated Services	\$	177	\$ 173
FTEs		2	2
Plant Operations	\$	1,245	\$ 1,511
FTEs		2	2
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,644	\$ 6,818
Total Program Service FTEs		42	39
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,644</b>	<b>\$ 6,818</b>
<b>NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ -</b>

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

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	5,088	\$	4,960
% of Total Income		43.8%		46.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts & Offerings	\$	970	\$	885
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		970		885
% of Total Income		8.4%		8.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	5,278	\$	4,809
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	268	\$	63
Total Other Income		5,546		4,872
% of Total Income		47.8%		45.5%
TOTAL INCOME		11,604		10,717
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Lead-Chaplaincy Services	\$	261	\$	316
FTEs		2		2
Lead-Pastor-Church Relations	\$	939	\$	823
FTEs		6		6
Lead-Candidacy	\$	221	\$	215
FTEs		2		2
Lead-Leadership Diversity	\$	-	\$	141
FTEs		-		1
Justice-Race Relations	\$	510	\$	504
FTEs		4		4
Justice-Safe Church Ministry	\$	235	\$	266
FTEs		2		2
Justice-Disability Concerns	\$	233	\$	257
FTEs		2		2
Justice-Social & Restorative Justice	\$	549	\$	633
FTEs		5		5
Justice-Ministries in Canada	\$	1,046	\$	1,157
FTEs		5		5
Bridge App	\$	139	\$	142
FTEs		2		1
Faith Formations	\$	666	\$	733
FTEs		4		9
MSS-Agency services	\$	3,469	\$	3,431
FTEs		24		13
MSS-Faith Alive	\$	1,049	\$	979
FTEs		6		4
MSS-Banner	\$	1,139	\$	1,131
FTEs		4		5
MSS-Libros Desafio	\$	267	\$	238
FTEs		3		1
Worship	\$	392	\$	388
FTEs		3		3
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,115	\$	11,354
Total Program Service FTEs		74		65
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	11,115	\$	11,354
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	489	\$	(637)

**Grants****Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
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	\$	1,006	\$	3,225
Services & Misc	\$	-	\$	-
Total Other Income		1,006		3,225
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,006		3,225
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Vibrant Congregations	\$	340	\$	120
FTEs		-		-
Connections	\$	307	\$	294
FTEs		-		-
Connections II	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Thriving Together	\$	-	\$	103
FTEs		-		-
Financial Shalom	\$	75	\$	220
FTEs		1		1
Total Program Service \$	\$	722	\$	737
Total Program Service FTEs		1		1
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	722	\$	737
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	284	\$	2,488



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

	-----June 30, 2019-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 622	3,243	18,895	-	22,760
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	4,420	6,000	-	-	10,420
Receivables & Advances	903	-	-	-	903
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	977	-	-	-	977
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	883	-	99	-	982
Other		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>7,805</b>	<b>9,243</b>	<b>18,994</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>36,042</b>
Accounts Payable	1,059	-	-	-	1,059
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	142	-	-	-	142
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>1,201</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,201</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 6,604</b>	<b>9,243</b>	<b>18,994</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>34,841</b>
<b>Footnotes:</b>					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Term endowments as stipulated by board = \$9,243				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$99; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$17,827;				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$1,068				

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

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		-		-
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	21,307	\$	28,042
Estate Gifts	\$	2,008	\$	4,168
Total Gift Income		23,315		32,210
% of Total Income		68.1%		92.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	10,094	\$	1,712
Miscellaneous	\$	835	\$	842
Total Other Income		10,929		2,554
% of Total Income		31.9%		7.3%
TOTAL INCOME		34,244		34,764
<b>EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):</b>				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	13,044	\$	11,244
FTEs		40		40
North American programs	\$	108	\$	312
FTEs				-
Disaster relief programs	\$	825	\$	1,778
FTEs		13		13
Above-budget relief costs	\$	9,991	\$	12,643
FTEs		3		3
Education	\$	2,629	\$	1,441
FTEs		13		13
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$		26,597		27,418
Total Program Service FTEs		69		69
% of Total \$		84.9%		85.1%
% of Total FTEs		68.3%		66.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General		1,717		1,879
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations		-		-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising		3,012		2,922
FTEs		25		28
Total Support Service \$		4,729		4,801
Total Support Service FTEs		32		35
% of Total \$		15.1%		14.9%
% of Total FTEs		31.7%		33.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		31,326		32,219
TOTAL FTEs		101		104
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		2,918		2,545

# REPORTS OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

## Introduction

It is the responsibility of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA to submit a *unified* report to synod composed of ministry updates provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and congregational service ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The reports of the ministries are organized and presented in alignment with Our Calling—five ministry priorities endorsed by synod (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 610; *Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 563): Faith Formation, Servant Leadership, Global Mission, Mercy and Justice, and Gospel Proclamation and Worship. Supplementary reports will be provided by denominational boards and standing committees of synod, if needed, prior to the time synod convenes.

These reports provide helpful information. Some of the material supplies significant background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. Much of what is written provides the transparency necessary for our life together as a denomination. Together these reports present the story of how God is blessing and guiding our ministry through the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. As you read the material that follows, I encourage you to respond with gratitude for what God is doing through the Holy Spirit, transforming lives and communities worldwide, by means of the Christian Reformed Church.

Colin P. Watson, Sr.

Acting Executive Director of the CRCNA



### Calvin University

#### I. Introduction

Calvin University's guiding mission is to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

What began nearly 150 years ago in a single classroom on Williams Street in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, with one faculty member, one academic discipline, and just seven students, is now a university sprawled across a 400-acre campus, offering more than 100 academic options to 3,700 students each year. It's an institution of 250 Christ-centered faculty who are leaders in their fields. And it includes an alumni network of more than 65,000 who are expressing Calvin's mission around the world.

By becoming a university (in July 2019), Calvin is expanding its global influence, growing as a trusted partner for learning, and deepening its commitment to the Reformed Christian faith.

#### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Calvin University equips its more than 3,700 students from 45 U.S. states, 65 countries, and five Canadian provinces to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Calvin is proud to offer 100+ majors and programs, including graduate-level offerings in accounting, education, and speech pathology and audiology. Calvin also promotes Christian thought and action on an international stage in key areas of education and culture through its 12 centers and institutes.

Calvin students engage in intensive internships, community-based service learning, and significant research that results in publishing and presenting alongside world-class faculty.

Calvin University partners with the CRCNA in living out the denomination's five ministry priorities.

##### A. Faith formation

- The 2019 campus-wide Bible study incorporated the public reading of Scripture. Calvin community members met weekly to open with prayer, listen to Scripture, have a guided conversation about it, and pray for direction and provision in the week ahead.
- In conjunction with the Bible study, Calvin partnered with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to offer a free subscription to the *Dwell* app so that members of the Calvin community could listen to Scripture, taking on the challenge to listen to the entire New Testament over the semester.
- Upperclass students serve as discipleship assistants to oversee Christian formation in the residence halls, serving with Barnabas program student leaders who serve on each floor.

### *B. Servant leadership*

- The unique Calvin LifeWork program continues to prepare students for servant leadership in work and life after earning their university degree.
- Service-learning spring break trips allow students to practice slowing down, looking others in the eyes, and learning from God and the people they meet, serve, and are served by.
- Community Partnership Coordinators facilitate residence hall partnerships with local organizations for ongoing service-learning opportunities.

### *C. Global mission*

- Calvin University is an intentionally global community, from the student body to faculty and staff to alumni.
- Calvin's global pursuits are exemplified through centers and institutes and special projects, including the Clean Water Institute of Calvin University, the Nagel Institute, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, the Faith and International Development Conference (international studies), the Umm el-Jimal project (archaeology), and the university's close partnership with the International Network for Christian Higher Education.

### *D. Mercy and justice*

- Calvin University partners with World Vision every year through LOFT (Living Our Faith Together) to recruit runners for the Grand Rapids half-marathon to raise money for clean water.
- Plaster Creek Stewards (PCS) is dedicated to returning health and beauty to one of the most contaminated urban waterways in West Michigan. Now in its tenth year, PCS has involved students, staff, faculty, community members, and partners in education, research, and many different on-the-ground restoration efforts. In 2019 the Urban Waters Learning Network, Groundwork USA, River Network, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency awarded PCS the Learning Network Signature Award.
- The Calvin Prison Initiative continues to provide a Christian liberal arts education to inmates at the Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. This five-year program results in a bachelor of arts degree from Calvin University in Faith and Community Leadership.

### *E. Gospel proclamation and worship*

- In April 2019, Calvin welcomed teachers and students from Zuni Christian School as worship leaders in chapel.
- In fall 2019, Calvin had 59 people involved on six worship leadership teams. Ten percent of those on worship teams are AHANA (Asian, Hispanic/ Latino, African, and Native American) students, and 27 percent are international students.
- New pastoral partners serve alongside chaplains to connect the university more deeply with local churches, and to offer preaching and pastoral care support on campus.

### III. Academic initiatives

At Calvin, academic pursuits reveal truth and knowledge about the world God created. The following details select developments since the university's previous report to synod:

- We are grateful that *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Calvin University as number 3 overall among Midwest regional universities in its 2020 *Best Colleges Guidebook*. (In previous years, Calvin was ranked in the Midwest regional colleges category.) In addition to this ranking, Calvin also placed as number 5 among Midwest regional universities on *U.S. News's* "Best Undergraduate Teaching" list, number 18 on its "Best Value Schools" list, and number 3 for total percentage of international students.
- Two Calvin students have been named Goldwater Scholars for 2019–20. Calvin has been a national leader in producing Goldwater Scholars. Since 2009, 20 Calvin students have been recognized as Goldwater Scholars, and 14 have received honorable mention. Student and faculty research at Calvin generates more than 125 publications annually.
- In January 2019, Calvin's Entrada Scholars Program became the third recipient of the Dr. Clifton Rhodes, Jr. Community Recognition Award, conferred annually by the Baptist Fellowship of Grand Rapids to organizations whose work improves the quality of life of African Americans in Grand Rapids. The Entrada Scholars Program invites high school students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds to experience the Calvin community through a month of living and learning on campus in the summer. While on campus, students take a class, have access to academic coaching, and engage in a number of community activities with their peers, including service projects.
- Calvin is one of only thirteen higher education institutions nationwide to be awarded a Beckman Scholars Program in 2019. The prestigious and exclusive award is given by the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, recognizing institutions that excel at providing undergraduate research opportunities for students. Calvin has received the award twice before—in 2008 and 2014—with a total of eight Calvin students previously being selected as Beckman Scholars. The 2019 award provides Calvin \$104,000 to fund four students in carrying out specialized, long-term research in chemistry or biology over the next three years.
- In October 2019 Calvin cohosted the Second Global Congress on Sport and Christianity, an ecumenical gathering of sports administrators, coaches, athletes, pastors, theologians, and others who seek to explore the mutual impact of belief and sport and want to effect a cultural shift in modern sport and the role it plays in a life of faith.

### IV. Finances

Calvin University continues its pursuit of a sustainable financial model, using both natural and financial resources to pursue our mission and make a positive impact on our world. *Vision 2030* provides the following principles to guide our work:

- Embody a faithful and engaged Reformed Christianity.
- Grow student enrollment by diversifying academic offerings.
- Collaborate to enhance learning.
- Build spaces that inspire learning and promote community.

Thanks to generous donors, we were pleased to open the first Peet's licensed coffee shop in Michigan on the main floor of the Hekman library. This spot has become a hub of conversation, laughter, and community for students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Due to a generous gift and much planning, we were able to renovate spaces at the renamed Calvin Ecosystem Preserve and Native Gardens, including adding new educational garden beds to share information about native plant species. Visitors will also be able to find the space more easily, thanks to a beautiful new sign visible from the East Beltline and more spacious visitor parking.

We have also continued our planning work on the Commons Union project. This new space will provide consolidated dining for our students in the center of campus, providing a "living room" space. It will also create spaces for welcoming alumni and guests, as well as employer partners via the Career Center space.

The following developments have increased institutional and financial efficiencies within and across departments:

- Purchase and implementation of Workday, a new enterprise resource planning software
- Transition to becoming Calvin University, along with new entry signage at the Burton Street entrance and at the other entrances across the campus
- Cross-divisional work to identify a partner in online education as we work to make a Calvin education accessible to new populations of students

Calvin is also working each year on infrastructure maintenance, including new donor-funded projects such as educational and functional improvements to the Design Hub, a maker space for collaborative teamwork by art, business, and engineering students—as well as others—in the lower level of the Spoelhof University Center. We are also excited about enhanced nursing labs, bringing new technology and learning tools to our nursing students.

Calvin's outstanding debt is \$74.2 million as of December 31, 2019, and the university is reducing its principal each year through an amortization schedule.

Charitable contributions to Calvin continue to strengthen student learning. Donors have continued to provide financial support for student scholarships, centers, institutes, and our general endowment. As of June 30, 2019, the university's endowment was \$177 million. These funds help keep Calvin affordable to students across all fields of study.

It is a pleasure to announce the appointment of Jim English as Calvin University's new vice president for finance. Jim was appointed after a rigorous national search, which included diverse and highly qualified candidates. We share our deep gratitude for Sally Vander Ploeg's devotion and service to Calvin in that role over many years.

## **V. Board matters**

### *A. Board officers*

Board officers for the 2019-2020 year are Craig Lubben, chair; Bruce Los, vice-chair; Janice Buikema, secretary; Jim English, treasurer (vice president



for finance); and Sharolyn Christians, assistant secretary (executive assistant to the president).

*B. Board membership*

The following nominations for new delegates from the regions are presented for election to the Calvin University Board of Trustees.

1. Region 11

Ray Vander Kooi will be completing his second term. The board presents the following single nominee to the classes in Region 11 for vote as the trustee to be presented to Synod 2020 for ratification:

*Rev. Nate DeJong McCarron* is a 2006 political science graduate of Calvin University who earned an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2009. He has served as lead pastor at Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, since January 2014. In that role, Rev. DeJong McCarron helps his church to best follow God's vision and share the good news of the gospel. He presents messages at Sunday worship services, cares for hurting members of the congregation, leads the staff toward gospel ministry, and oversees a variety of church ministries. He has served churches in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; and Orland Park, Illinois. Rev. DeJong McCarron is passionate about the good news found in Jesus, developing leaders, and preaching the Scriptures. The Classis Grand Rapids East stated clerk, Al Mulder, describes him as an "up and coming pastoral leader with experience in new and established churches and in both the western and midwestern U.S."

2. Region 12

David Cok will be completing his second term. The board presents the following single nominee to the classes in Region 12 for vote as the trustee to be presented to Synod 2020 for ratification:

*Rev. Edward Wayne Coleman* was ordained in the CRC in 2012 after receiving an M.Div. degree from Western Theological Seminary. He served at Imagine Fellowship CRC in Holland, Michigan, and was the first African American pastor at Millbrook CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, until it closed in 2018. He was elected in 2018 to serve as a regional delegate on Calvin's Board of Trustees; however, he accepted a call to Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey (outside the region), where he currently serves as pastor. He has also previously served with Christian Reformed Home Missions and Resonate Global Mission.

3. Additional board membership updates will be included in the Calvin University supplemental report to synod.

## **VI. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Craig Lubben, and to the president of Calvin University, Michael K. Le Roy, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.

B. That synod ratify the following faculty reappointments with tenure, effective September 1, 2020:

Brendan D. Looyenga, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry  
Elizabeth R. Oommen, Ph.D., associate professor of speech pathology and  
audiology  
Jill R. Risner, DBA, associate professor of business  
Derek C. Schuurman, Ph.D., professor of computer science  
Samuel R. Smartt, MFA, associate professor of communication  
Debra L. Snyder, Ph.D., professor of business  
C. Renee Sparks, Ph.D., professor of geology

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 University Board of Trustees.

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

Calvin University  
Michael K. Le Roy, president

## Faith Formation Ministries

*“Helping churches grow faith for life”*

### I. Introduction

Synod 2015 launched Faith Formation Ministries as a new denominational initiative. We are now marking our fifth birthday as we seek to strengthen and expand our ministry within the CRCNA. Faith Formation Ministries encourages and equips local Christian Reformed ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their contexts. We seek to deepen church culture and to cultivate faith formative practices so that a resilient faith takes root and flourishes within the whole church. In pursuing this vision, we form partnerships with CRC pastors and ministry leaders (paid and volunteer) who are responsible for faith formation within their local contexts. We serve them by listening, by developing relationships, by providing coaching and workshop facilitation, and by curating and creating adaptable resources to design and build a framework for lifelong faith formation that fits their respective settings.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

In his letter to the early Galatian churches, Paul describes being “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). This embodied longing expresses the underlying motivation within Faith Formation Ministries. Our deep desire for the CRCNA—and indeed for all people—is that Jesus Christ is formed within us. As 1 John 2:6 teaches us, this formation is evident when we “live as Jesus did.”

Following Jesus Christ until his character and his ways become our character and way of life is both a gift to receive and a calling to embrace. Our faith is a gift that the triune God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Fulfiller, grows within us. Our faith is also a calling that God invites us to embrace so that every area of our lives is shaped and formed by God’s grace extended to us in Jesus Christ.

We are convinced that the faith God is growing within us is intergenerational (we grow best in community), life-broad (emerges in every area of our lives), and lifelong (we are called to grow continually in Jesus Christ from cradle to grave). In short, Faith Formation Ministries helps churches grow faith for life.

#### A. Vision implementation

During the past year we have specifically engaged this vision by doing the following:

1. Facilitating more than 80 workshops and leading other retreats and gatherings for church ministry teams, councils, pastors, and classis leaders.
2. Coordinating our fourth cohort of churches (this time on family faith formation) and launching a new regional-based cohort in southern Ontario to encourage mentoring with youth and emerging adults.
3. Developing and releasing new resources, such as *Everyday Family Faith* (both English and Korean editions) and *Dear Parent*, to support faith formation in the home, recognizing that collaborative efforts between church

and home serve to encourage an immersive and more holistic approach to faith formation.

4. Giving attention to the *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum, including launching *Dwell Digital*, creating an online community for *Dwell* users, expanding the number of churches utilizing the *Dwell* curriculum, and taking the first steps in a refresh of the curriculum.
5. Developing and equipping a classis-based network of youth ministry champions, who support and encourage youth ministry in the congregations of their classes.
6. Piloting a partnership with Sioux Center Christian School to explore ways in which Christian schools can encourage and resource parents to create consistent faith-forming language, principles, and practices between home and school.

*B. What we are hearing from churches and ministry leaders*

Our first priority in our work is to listen well to the ministry leaders and pastors with whom we interact. This posture has also helped us discern priorities for training and resource development that will best serve churches. As in previous years, we continue to hear a desire

- for more resources related to children and youth ministry, especially connected to the creeds and confessions.
- to learn how to do intergenerational ministry well, particularly with engaging emerging adults in the whole life of the church and with equipping families for faith formation in the home.
- to assist members 55 years old and older to navigate the faith-related questions that surface during this “third third” of life.

Additionally, ministry leaders have expressed desires for

- resources to be made available in multiple languages, particularly Spanish and Korean.
- new and expanded resources for catechism teaching.
- navigating faith formation opportunities and challenges within rural, urban, and multiethnic contexts.
- faith formation resources that are experiential and make wider use of current technologies and communication tools.
- resources to equip deacons, elders, and pastors for their own faith formation as they serve in leadership roles within our churches.

### **III. Connecting with Churches: Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)**

Reflecting on 1 John 2:6, we desire that our faith formation efforts will lead to more and more people living as Jesus did in grateful response to the mercy and love God has lavished on us in Jesus Christ.

*A. Faith Formation convictions*

Our convictions about faith formation lead us to focus on a more transformational approach to serving churches and ministry leaders. As we have noted in previous years, we have learned that:

1. It is easy to become busy with ministry activity. Discerning what ministry efforts will truly bear kingdom fruit often requires a deliberate process of reflection and dialogue.
2. We can coordinate inspirational events and resources fairly easily. However, a commitment to transformational relationships and experiences requires a steadfast listening posture over periods of time.
3. There are quite a few faith formation concepts and terms that can sound unfamiliar to people in CRC congregations and their wider communities. We have an ongoing task to make the language, framework, and resources for faith formation accessible and relevant to the everyday life of people in our congregations.

#### *B. Faith Formation connections*

With these learnings in mind, we seek to connect with churches in the following ways:

1. We seek to form long-term relationships with church leaders, listening to them, resourcing them, following up with them, encouraging them.
2. We engage with classis meetings and other leadership gatherings to introduce our resources, facilitate mini-workshops, and—upon request—lead longer workshops on topics related to faith formation. These gatherings also serve as opportunities for multiple informal conversations with church leaders.
3. We offer workshops on a wide variety of topics for council and church leadership retreats, structuring them with the capacity to form long-term “after the workshop” relationships with those who attend.
4. We post regularly on The Network and elsewhere to share stories of transformation, to highlight beneficial resources and best practices, and to make the terms and concepts of faith formation more familiar and accessible.
5. We facilitate year-long cohorts for churches to dive into specific faith formation concepts and practices.
6. We curate and create resources to address a wide range of faith formation topics, often in collaboration with other ministry teams.
7. We engage with leaders from other ministries and denominations to continue learning how other Christian communities are navigating challenges and opportunities related to faith formation.

#### **IV. New City Catechism**

Synod 2019 requested that the executive director refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries “for curriculum review and potential use by the churches” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763). This review is in process, and one of our objectives is to provide a guideline for reviewing other potential materials so that congregations may be more readily equipped to consider curriculum options that are fitting from a Reformed theological perspective and suitable to their respective contexts.

## V. Staffing transitions

In the past year Faith Formation Ministries has navigated significant staffing transitions while positioning for its next season of ministry. After faithfully guiding Faith Formation Ministries from its inception into a fruitful ministry, Syd Hielema retired from his role as team leader in June 2019—and Christopher Schoon joined our team as its new director. We also added two new regional catalyzers—Joel DeBoer (Iowa) and Kristen Rietkerk (Southern California)—to help us more effectively walk alongside churches in those regions. We also brought on Jill Benson as our new *Dwell* curriculum coordinator to lead the continuing development of our *Dwell* curriculum community and resources. Additionally, Paula Fuentes Gleghorn, our communication coordinator, accepted a position with another ministry organization in January 2020. The communication coordinator position is shared with the Office of Social Justice, and we are currently engaged in the hiring process to find a new team member for this role. We give God thanks for all who have served faithfully and for the willingness of new members to step into these roles.

Faith Formation Ministries  
Christopher J. Schoon, director

## **Chaplaincy and Care Ministry**

### **I. Introduction**

For over 100 years the CRCNA has become increasingly invested in chaplains. In 1917, Rev. Leonard Trap became the first CRC chaplain as a volunteer in the U.S. Army. Since then, the CRCNA has called 337 chaplains to serve in the military, hospitals, prisons, hospices, workplaces, and other institutions. The denomination supports this work through Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM), which provides endorsement, training, and advocacy for chaplains in their various ministries.

Chaplaincy has grown particularly fast recently, as the number of endorsed chaplains has increased by 25 percent in just the past five years. Today the CRCNA endorses 144 active chaplains who minister to an estimated 2 million individuals each year. This growth is projected to continue in the coming years in light of a growing number of people pursuing careers in chaplaincy and an increased need for chaplains and other spiritual care providers in institutions and communities throughout North America.

*A. Mandate*—“Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional and specialized settings” (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 685).

*B. Mission*—Chaplaincy and Care Ministry’s mission, overseen by the Council of Delegates, is to implement, regulate, and develop the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy. We carry out this mission in the following ways:

- overseeing the denominational endorsement process for chaplains
- providing pastoral support and advocacy for endorsed chaplains
- facilitating shared supervision with chaplains’ calling churches
- informing and educating the CRCNA on chaplaincy and related ministries
- administering training grants
- recruiting chaplains
- conducting training
- promoting the development of chaplaincy
- participating in national endorsement-related organizations

### **II. Reflecting on Our Calling**

#### *A. Servant leadership*

CCM has seen a large increase in the number of people inquiring about chaplaincy, specialized training, and endorsement. In the past five years the number of inquiring individuals has more than tripled. In 2019, CCM encouraged this through six college and seminary visits, personal meetings with 42 individuals, and interactions with 180 others who were interested in chaplaincy. Through these connections, CCM guides individuals as they apply for endorsement, complete specialized training, and connect with others working in their field of interest. Interested individuals represent a diversity of backgrounds, ministry experiences, and vocational goals.

Chaplain leaders are specially trained for their ministry. To work in clinical settings, chaplains complete a minimum of 800 hours of Clinical Pastoral Education or equivalent training. This is in addition to formal theological and biblical training, and it requires time and energy to acquire. CCM supports these new and future chaplains through a donor-driven development fund. In 2019, CCM granted \$30,613 in funds to 27 individuals for specialized training.

Through endorsement, chaplains are taking opportunities to become leaders in their communities. Thirty-seven CRC chaplains are board certified through several professional chaplaincy organizations; the certification process demonstrates their advanced skills and enables them to step into leadership and specialized roles in their workplaces. Four chaplains are clinical educators, training dozens of new chaplains annually. Fifteen military chaplains are field-grade officers who have significant responsibility leading others and advising their commanders in matters of spiritual wellness and moral responsibility. Many more serve in important roles on ethics committees, advising managers and advocating for peoples' needs on a large scale. Through the leadership of chaplains, the church has a significant influence in the communities and institutions around them.

#### *B. Gospel proclamation and worship*

Chaplains proclaim the gospel through their work with individuals every day. They enter into the lives of people in crisis, bringing the peace, healing, and grace of Christ to many whom the church cannot otherwise reach. This work is different from other forms of ministry, and it has unique challenges that can be isolating for chaplains. CCM addresses these challenges in three major ways: an annual conference, monthly video conference meetings, and meaningful individual interactions.

CCM supports chaplains by hosting an annual Chaplains Training conference. In 2019, 131 people attended this event. Several main speakers gave opportunities for further learning in specialized areas. Daily worship and breakout groups enabled chaplains to have fellowship and to share about their lives and ministry. In addition, Chaplains Training 2019 included a new session titled "Tools for Care," in which four CRC chaplains gave brief, TEDx-style presentations, dynamically presenting a tool, experience, or resource from their particular ministry. Chaplains can attend other conferences, but many choose to come to this one because it is deeply rooted in their faith tradition and community.

In addition to an annual gathering, chaplains benefit from connecting with one another on a regular basis. Since October, CCM has been hosting monthly video conference meetings. These hour-long meetings focus on unique topics relevant to various areas of chaplaincy ministry. Endorsed chaplains are invited to attend, share stories, trade resources, and offer encouragement to one another in their ministry. Over a three-month period, 32 different chaplains have attended a meeting, with seven people attending multiple times. Through these meetings, CRCNA chaplains are connecting across great distances, finding support and encouragement from each other.

While enabling chaplains to connect with one another, CCM provides individual support throughout the year. In 2019, Chaplaincy and Care totaled 2,835 distinct interactions with chaplains, including 384 meetings and visits



to individuals in Michigan, Ontario, Texas, Iowa, Alberta, Germany, and Italy. For further communication, CCM provides regular updates through a bimonthly newsletter, email conversations, and phone and video meetings. A closed Facebook group and the Network are used almost daily for posting resources, sharing stories, and providing encouragement. Through these ministry activities, CCM encourages chaplains to provide spiritual and emotional care in contextually appropriate ways to those whom God has entrusted to their care.

### *C. Faith formation*

Chaplains serve throughout our communities, hospitals, prisons, long-term care facilities, and workplaces. Chaplains also serve in the military, hospice care, veterans administration, pastoral counseling, and more. These communities need chaplains for their ability to handle crises, have difficult yet meaningful conversations, and care for people from many different backgrounds.

Chaplains are trained to provide care to people in difficult situations. In a given day, a military chaplain may provide counseling to a soldier having suicidal thoughts. A hospital chaplain may care for someone who has just received a devastating diagnosis, helping them to process their purpose and trajectory in life. A pastoral counselor may help someone through a relationship crisis. A chaplain in a nursing home will regularly visit with dementia patients who feel as if the world has forgotten them. CRCNA chaplains touch the lives of around 5,500 individuals each day, meeting them in any situation they face. They help people struggling with dying, addiction, depression, stress, grief, and more. They are there when people need to ask hard questions about life and faith. They pray with people and direct them to helpful resources and faith communities. In these and many other ways chaplains embody Christ's grace in the world.

As North American communities become more secular, the presence of chaplains becomes more crucial. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 29 percent of Canadians are increasingly becoming "religiously unaffiliated," and about half seldom or never go to church or other worship services. In the U.S., only 36 percent attend worship services once a week, and 30 percent attend only once a month to a few times a year. While fewer people are going to church, spiritual needs abound. People struggle to find meaning in a world that is constantly changing and filled with death, grief, and fear. Chaplains go beyond the walls of the church to meet people in spiritual crises, bringing them hope and offering the support of the church.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

Chaplains connect with the church through calling, resources, and support. Local churches empower chaplains to serve in specialized settings. CCM facilitates the relationship between the chaplain and their calling church, enabling chaplains to get much needed support in their ministry and connecting churches with important spiritual resources. Through this relationship, the church can effectively extend their mission into unique areas of their surrounding community.

The CRCNA endorses 144 chaplains representing 107 individual CRC churches. Endorsement is an essential process for a denomination to ensure

that their chaplains have the training, experience, and skills to flourish in specialized ministries. CCM oversees the endorsement process, reviewing a prospective chaplain's life and ministry, and giving them the tools to ensure that they are ready for chaplaincy ministry. Endorsements are renewed every five years, ensuring that chaplains continue in their work and are sustained by their local churches.

CCM supports the relationship between the calling church and chaplain through a Covenant of Joint Supervision. This document, signed by the chaplain, church council, and the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, demonstrates the church's commitment to support and supervise the chaplain's life and doctrine. The chaplain agrees to report regularly on their ministry and to participate in the church through pastoral care or leadership. CCM agrees to assist in the supervision of the chaplain while also providing specific resources, tools, and support for their ministry.

Beyond its work with local churches, CCM ensures that chaplains have a meaningful relationship with the denomination. Chaplains share their unique skills and experiences, providing greater depth into challenging topics such as death and dying, caring for the elderly, and facing addiction. The denomination's support is also crucial for chaplains to be successful in their ministry. Every November churches observe Chaplaincy and Care Sunday. On this day congregations recognize and support the work of chaplains in their community through education, prayer, and financial gifts to Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Chaplains are invited to preach and share about their work. It is a meaningful experience for everyone involved, and it reinforces chaplains' faith and passion for their ministry.

#### **IV. Chaplaincy statistics**

The Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Advisory Council and the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry present the following statistics:

1. Total CRCNA endorsed chaplains: 144 (full-time, 92; part-time, 41; endorsed and seeking employment, 11); in the United States, 120; in Canada, 24
2. Thirteen chaplains were newly endorsed in 2019: Abigail De Zeeuw, Steven Agler, Israel Alvaredo, Sea Ho, Chantal Huinink, Peter Janssens, Kenneth Krause, Derrick Lee, John Luth, Victor Perez-Ballesteros, Amie Spriensma, Paul Van Dyken, and Scott Van Voorst
3. The CRCNA supports 26 military chaplains: 14 on active duty in the United States; 2 on active duty in Canada; 4 in the US National Guard and Reserves; 1 in Civil Air Patrol; 5 military chaplain candidates
4. Eight chaplains retired in 2019: Douglas Einfeld, Carol Flietstra, Edward Hommes, Frederic Koning, Louis Korf, Barbara Schultze, Siemen Speelman, and Perrin Werner
5. In the past year military chaplains who have served or are currently serving overseas are Jon Averill, Richard Hill, David Jeltema, Joseph Kamp-huis, Lloyd Wicker, and Sang Joon (Tim) Won

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry  
Sarah Roelofs, director

## **Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.**

### **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 CRCNA.

### **II. Board of directors**

Loan Fund board members are eligible to serve for two three-year terms. Members of the board of directors are James Brewer (2021/2), Brad Bruinsma (2020/1), Barb De Boer (2022/1), Jeff Feikens (2022/1), Jack Meyer (2020/1), and Howard Van Den Heuvel (2021/1).

The board requests that synod appoint Jack Meyer to a second term. The board requests that synod appoint Nancy Wiesman to a three-year term to replace Brad Bruinsma, who has decided not to serve a second term.

*Nancy Wiesman* is a member of Center Grove CRC in Greenwood, Indiana, where she has served as church treasurer for twenty-eight years and is employed as a business manager. She has served on the Womens' Christian Fellowship Committee and as president of the Center Grove Elementary School PTO. Ms. Wiesman was formerly employed as an accounting manager at Westview and Columbus Regional hospitals in Indiana. She earned accounting and business degrees from Indiana State University.

### **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 2019 fiscal year (June 30, 2019), a total of \$15,232,000 in interest-bearing Investment Certificates held by investors was outstanding. Interest rates vary from 2.50 percent to 3.50 percent. Including the Flexible savings accounts, the overall weighted average interest paid was 2.46 percent. The variance in interest rates reflects the terms of the certificates and market conditions at the times the certificates were issued.

C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated more than two hundred loans totaling over \$70 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2019, the Loan Fund had \$15,872,000 in loans and interest outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are very low. The fund maintains a loan loss reserve

to help cover potential losses. We are blessed to have experienced minimal loan losses throughout the Loan Fund’s history.

D. Financial operations are also reflected in the following data:

	2019	2018	2017
Cash and equivalents	\$5,407,381	\$3,618,933	\$6,102,071
Net loans and interest receivable	15,943,762	17,297,235	17,563,541
Other assets	<u>11,611</u>	<u>42,587</u>	<u>70,606</u>
Total assets	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755	\$23,736,218
Certificates, interest, and fees payable	\$15,270,398	\$15,094,334	\$18,044,395
Net assets	<u>6,092,356</u>	<u>5,864,421</u>	<u>5,691,823</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755	\$23,736,218

E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2019, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2020 – 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 states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- B. Gifts and bequests made to the Loan Fund.

**V. Staff**

The Loan Fund is served by Alice M. Damsteegt, customer service specialist, and David E. Veen, director.

**VI. Recommendations**

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund director or any members of the Board of Directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.
- B. That synod reappoint Jack Meyer to the Board of Directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., for a second three-year term and appoint Nancy Wiesman to a first term of three years.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.  
David E. Veen, director

## Pastor Church Resources

### I. Introduction

Synod 1982 approved the formation of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR). Included in the original mandate were three key initiatives—namely, regional pastors within each classis, mentors for newly ordained CRC ministers of the Word, and pastoral relations committees in local congregations. The regional pastor and mentor initiatives continue to be key components of our work. The pastoral relations committees occasionally were helpful but generally proved problematic and thus are no longer promoted.

Synod 2016 approved a name change to *Pastor Church Resources*, reflecting the broad array of initiatives gathered in the ministry of PCR. It is worth noting that while the range of ways in which PCR seeks to accomplish its work has increased and developed, the original mandate continues to serve as an apt description of our work: PCR seeks to provide encouragement and support that fosters health and flourishing. It also attends to relationships that are strained and broken. As much as possible, our energy is directed toward the positive. Our vision/mission statement reads as follows: “Pastor Church Resources serves pastors, churches, and classes as they seek to promote healthy relationships, encourage one another in ministry, and discern next steps in seasons of growth, transition, or challenge.”

A review of PCR from its beginning in 1982 (and the history of the Ministerial Information Service, beginning in 1972) reveals a common thread: concern for the well-being of pastors and their families, concern for the well-being of congregations, and concern for the challenges that are intrinsic to the relationship of pastor and church. Synod has addressed these concerns in a variety of ways over the years by introducing the regional pastor program and the mentoring program, encouraging continuing education and sabbatical time for pastors, promoting pastor peer groups, reviewing the calling system, experimenting with pastor exchanges, introducing term calls, revising Church Order Articles 16 and 17, and encouraging the use of minister and church profiles and support for pastor-search committees to provide better “fit” capability. More recently, attention to the systemic health of classes and the resourcing of classis functionaries has been added, as well as the capacity for vocational assessments.

Our efforts are directed toward strengthening the health of pastors, congregational leaders, and the classis that surrounds them. All of this attention to the well-being of pastors and churches provides the context for the individual programs, personal interactions, and consultations that PCR staff undertake. While we often deal with situations of strain and brokenness, we do so as tenderly and truthfully as we can, trusting that the Spirit of God is at work ahead of us, with us, in us, and through us—and will continue to be at work after us. Our desire to resource pastors and churches so that they may flourish is an attempt to reflect our God, who resources the church with all the gifts necessary for flourishing.

*Staffing notes:* In January 2020, we were blessed to welcome Rev. Sean Baker to the PCR team. Sean serves as a ministry consultant. After serving the ministry of PCR for eleven years, Rev. Cecil van Niejenhuis anticipates retirement in June 2020. Cecil’s steady and wise pastoral leadership has been a rich blessing to the CRC.

## II. Reflecting on our calling – servant leadership

In the desire of the CRCNA to see congregations flourish, the ministry of Pastor Church Resources plays a role in supporting, training, encouraging, and challenging congregational pastors and congregational leaders. This work occurs in a variety of ways and situations: through direct interactions with individual pastors and council leadership, systemically by way of interactions with classis functionaries, and with the encouragement of classis renewal. The typical entry point for engaging congregations—no matter what challenges may be under way—is by way of PCR’s work with those serving in leadership roles.

## III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

### A. *Ongoing ministry initiatives*

1. The staff of PCR respond to various questions and requests from congregational leaders. This includes **consultation/intervention** in times of difficulty or transition; we suggest resources when congregations are adding staff or considering a change in organizational structure, and we help with processes by which challenging congregational conversations can be planned and implemented. In 2019, PCR had interactions with 325 pastors, 130 congregations, and 25 classes. Much of this work is accomplished over the phone or through email, but PCR staff also work on-site with congregations and classes when circumstances warrant doing so. **Educational and retreat activities** for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to be a focus of PCR activity.
2. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with **persons entering ordained ministry**. Each year PCR hosts a dinner for graduates of the M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary as well as for those enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). The work of PCR is explained, and relationships are initiated in a context of community.
3. On behalf of synod, Pastor Church Resources 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.
4. **Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs)** are seasoned pastors trained to help congregations experiencing challenges during transitions between pastors, challenges related to conflict or to the impact of a lengthy tenure of an outgoing pastor. PCR endorses pastors for this ministry and supports them through the cultivation of peer learning groups, through annual training events, and through helping to connect them with churches seeking an STM. At this time, there are 25 STMs either endorsed by PCR or discerning whether the STM role is a good fit for them.
5. PCR maintains a list of **supply pastors**, most of whom are retired. Inclusion on this list is voluntary, and pastors desiring to be on this list can contact PCR. Supply pastors serve congregations for a limited time during periods of vacancy.



6. PCR *extends* its work through **regional pastors** at the classis level who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses (including commissioned pastors and spouses). Regional pastors also assist in setting up **mentoring relationships** for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff persons within a congregation. Regional pastors gather biennially for a conference of encouragement, support, and training. Our most recent conference was in November 2019.
7. PCR provides grants for **pastor peer groups** and biennial **conferences for pastors and pastors' wives**. Since peer group grants were launched in 2003, *just over 900 pastors* have participated in 319 groups. Our first-ever **pastors conference** was held in September 2019 in Calgary, Alberta. The next pastors' wives conference (male spouses have not shown interest in such events) is planned for October 2020 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
8. In the **pastor-search** process, PCR assists search teams in the basic procedures of calling a new pastor. The PCR training tool *More Than a Search Committee* is a recommended starting point, and it can be downloaded from the PCR webpage ([crcna.org/pastor-church-resources](http://crcna.org/pastor-church-resources)) or ordered through Faith Alive ([faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org)). It provides guidance for the various steps of a healthy search process. **Minister profiles** are accessible to search teams through a special portal into the denominational database. There is some capacity for filtering, and PCR staff provide support in navigating the portal. **Church profiles** are posted on the Church Positions page of the Network, where pastors can review those materials with a degree of anonymity. PCR staff also support pastors during seasons of discernment.
9. **Vocational discernment**—Since 2016 a half-time vocational ministry consultant has worked with ministry leaders. A primary tool that is utilized is the *Birkman Assessment*. More than 300 pastors and ministry leaders have engaged in the Birkman process through Pastor Church Resources. In conjunction with Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) over 600 ministry leaders, pastors, and students have engaged in the Birkman process. Since the fall of 2017 the assessment is required for every incoming M.Div. or M.A. student entering CTS. Through PCR's Thriving Together Program the Birkman process is offered to every regional pastor. The benefits are vast: increased levels of self-awareness, the equipping of individuals to communicate their needs, and raised levels of job satisfaction. The process includes a one-on-one debrief with a certified consultant with the option of ongoing coaching and/or the exploration of team dynamics.
10. **Training tools** developed by PCR and related ministries include *More Than a Search Committee*, *Evaluation Essentials*, and *Effective Leadership in the Church*. The second edition of *More than a Search Committee* was made available in the spring. Congregations can access all of these materials by downloading them at the PCR website ([crcna.org/pcr](http://crcna.org/pcr)) or by ordering printed copies through Faith Alive ([faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org)). PCR has also developed a one-page tool titled "Resilience to Risk" for congregational self-reflection. Drawing on recurring patterns that emerge in congregational consultation, this tool can help to forewarn congregational

leaders when their church is trending toward risky conditions—such as difficulties in the pastor / congregation relationship. Becoming aware of such trends can prompt earlier and more effective responses.

11. **Healthy Church Discernment Process**—For eleven years now the Healthy Church Discernment Process (formerly known as the Healthy Church Initiative) has brought the gift of conversation about congregational health to the churches of the CRC. This discernment process has been developed within the CRC and is marked by prayerful attentiveness to God and attentiveness to the congregation's voice through a congregational survey and continual conversation. Aided by trained coaches, congregations develop at least one major initiative that is designed to set the stage for the ongoing deepening of congregational health. An executive version of the congregational survey is also being used by a number of classes in a church visiting format.
12. **Continuing Education**—Grants are available for pastors and ministry staff to engage in learning opportunities that enhance their work in the local congregation. Over the past year 35 grants have been awarded for education on topics such as preaching, homeless ministry, church planting, clinical pastoral education, youth ministry, spiritual formation / direction, and pastoral care. In the summer of 2019 the Continuing Education Committee (created at the request of Synod 2016) was dissolved. Its tasks will be taken up by the new Pastoral Formation Advisory Team. The team will provide input for PCR's overall ministry of supporting the ongoing, career-long formation of pastors beyond their ordination. This includes attention to continuing education of various kinds and support for personal and professional health and well-being by way of conferences and peer group support.
13. **Classis Renewal**—The ongoing work of classis renewal continues to encompass two broad categories: direct engagement and supportive infrastructure. Regarding direct engagement, PCR has given varying levels of coaching and consultation support to a variety of classes in the past year. We recently started a church visitor cohort, which began with an in-person gathering in Detroit, Michigan. Regarding supportive infrastructure, we have been working collaboratively with various ministries to ensure that classes are receiving the support they need. This includes participation in the current church planting initiative endorsed by the COD. The work of strengthening support for other classis functionaries, as related to the "Better Together" initiative, is also ongoing.

*B. Special ministry initiative projects*

1. **Thriving Together program**

Thriving Together is in its second year of a five-year program. It is funded through a nearly \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The overall purpose of this program is to create a stronger, more vital culture of mentoring around three undersupported, almost "invisible" transition moments experienced by pastors: early in a second call, late in career, and while privately wrestling with the question "Should I stay or go?" Through gatherings, resourcing, assessments, and developing mentoring



relationships, the Thriving Together initiative crystallizes a trajectory already taking shape in the CRC, sharpening the focus on pastoral relationships. In 2019 we hosted multiple gatherings for pastors in transition and have approved the funding for multiple peer-mentoring groups.

## 2. Connections project

In mid-2019, the initial Connections project wrapped up its 3.5-year plan of focusing on the regional resourcing of congregations in twelve classes within three regions (southern Ontario, the U.S. Midwest, and southern California). During the project, staff members connected with 545 churches and/or ministry leaders. In July 2019 the Connections II project began. This new five-year project will build on what has taken place to date as it engages all 49 classes of the CRCNA. It will focus on equipping congregations by synergizing regional networks made up of the existing personnel of ministries such as Resonate Global Mission, Faith Formation Ministries, and others. Connections II is leading a significant shift in how the denomination supports and resources its congregations. Funding for both Connections projects has been provided by grants from Lilly Endowment Inc.

## 3. Council/elder/deacon training

Our work to develop focused support for church councils continues. This focus began in 2018 with a goal to bring much-needed help to elders and deacons across our denomination. We are developing a bank of resources that we call the Leading Together Toolkit as well as a curriculum for beginning officebearers. We are aided by a small team of elders and deacons from a diversity of churches in the CRC.

## IV. Conclusion

Over the past few years, PCR's work has focused as much as possible on being proactive in working toward the well-being of pastors and churches. Synod 2012 asked PCR to develop ways in which it could get involved "more quickly in situations where tensions are developing within a congregation" (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 755). The "Better Together" initiative (2013-2015) was a first significant step. The recommendations from that report continue to be implemented by both PCR and Classis Renewal. In 2015, after a two-year pilot project, Vocational Ministry Assessments became available for pastors. Almost two years were spent on the Spiritual Vitality for Pastors Project (2015-2017) resulting in the *Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit*. (This has been translated into Korean and Spanish.) A Flourishing in Ministry Study began in summer 2017 and will continue for some years to come. The Thriving Together program builds on the recognized importance of creating space for pastors to be in relationships with colleagues, particularly in the disruptions that transitions can bring. Learnings from the ongoing data will be key to PCR's work with pastors and congregations and the request made by Synod 2012.

There is no formula to ensure pastoral health or congregational health; no formula can protect against strains and stresses in relationships. We encourage healthy practices such as spiritual disciplines, Sabbath-keeping, and ongoing conversations between pastors and church councils that are both gracious and candid.

Most of all, we encourage a spirit of hospitableness, in which pastors seek the flourishing of a congregation, and congregations seek the flourishing of a pastor. To have the best interests of the other in view, and then to use available resources for the well-being of the other, makes for a way of being church together that reflects the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This requires a posture of graciousness, a commitment to prayerful support and encouragement, and a willingness to be both honest and kind.

Church communities that evidence the capacity to receive each other with thanks, and to be enriched by the challenge and reality of differences—these are church communities that are full of truth and grace, bearing witness to the reconciling work of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Church Resources

Lis Van Harten, codirector

Cecil van Nijenhuis, codirector

**Pensions and Insurance**

**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. Board of Pensions and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

Lloyd Bierma is completing his first term on the U.S. Board of Pensions in 2020 and is eligible for reappointment. The board recommends that synod appoint Bierma for a second three-year term.

**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, 2019, 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 where they have residence.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	692	270	962
Ministers receiving benefit payments	599	154	753
Spouses and dependents	191	46	237
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	106	22	128
Total	1,588	492	2,080

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 \$133.6 million for the U.S. plan (as of December 31, 2016) and approximately \$45.9 million for the Canadian plan (as of December 31, 2018). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2019	December 31, 2018
United States (U.S. \$)	\$116,563,000	\$101,720,000
Canada (Can. \$)	67,179,000	58,464,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings along with contributions to the plans 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 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 in recent years including those approved by synod are as follows:

2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine the annual benefit accrual 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.)

2019 Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2016 level and adjusted current benefit payments previously frozen at the 2010 levels to reflect the new amounts as appropriate.

### 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 2020 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, or 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.

#### *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. Beginning January 1, 2020, the denomination introduced an additional defined-contribution plan for commissioned pastors and staff at U.S. churches. The plan is a 403(b)(9) plan that offers a housing allowance tax benefit for pastors upon retirement. Commissioned pastors in the denominational agencies and ministries have become participants in this new plan. In the United States, contributions are paid to the plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries 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. U.S. churches with staff participating in the 403(b)(9) plan set the contribution rates independently. 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 or provincial 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 Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, and Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan's assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan's assets.

As of December 31, 2019, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$38,521,000 in the United States and \$5,948,000 in Canada. As of that date,

there were 351 participants in the U.S. plan and 89 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	228	87
Inactive	123	2

C. *Nonretirement employee benefit programs*

Oversight of the denomination’s nonretirement employee benefit programs is provided by the Council of Delegates.

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 337 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 230 pastors and employees of local churches, 106 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and one retiree. 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 562 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 206 pastors and employees of local churches, 208 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 148 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. 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 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 Pension Trustees and the U.S. Board of Pensions and to John H. Bolt when matters pertaining to insurance and to pension or retirement plans are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister’s early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2020 as housing allowance for

United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod, by way of the ballot, reappoint Lloyd Bierma to a second three-year term on the U.S. Board of Pensions beginning July 1, 2020.

Pensions and Insurance

John H. Bolt, director of finance and operations

## Raise Up Global Ministries

### I. Introduction

Raise Up Global Ministries is the coming together of three programs that reflect the heart and gifts of Christian Reformed leaders. Using the Word of God, we (1) resource Word-centered small groups for evangelism and discipleship, (2) prepare global pastors to be shepherds to care for God's people and teach the Christian faith, and (3) equip Christian teachers with training that centers on a Christian worldview. Sam Huizenga started as the new director for Raise Up in April 2019.

#### A. *Coffee Break/Discover Your Bible*

##### 1. Where we are

Coffee Break (CB) began in 1970 in Peace CRC in South Holland, Illinois, as a way to introduce people to Jesus. It emphasized using the Word in the context of a safe, small group environment using Discover Your Bible (DYB) study materials. Alvin Vander Griend introduced the phrase "The Word does the work." Today the CB team summarizes the ministry this way: "Joining with God, the CB/DYB team serves churches and small group leaders around the world with vision, training, and resources for relational, small group Bible discovery in order that people come to faith in Christ and together grow in him." Teo Han, currently serving as the Korean CB representative, came to know Christ in a men's CB group. He says, "Coffee Break was a safe place to learn and ask questions."

We are revitalizing a well-loved program that has proven to be effective. CB has a unique opportunity to resource the global church and immigrant churches of North America. As one pastor noted, "Coffee Break does all three aspects of our mission [to love God and each other, and to serve the world], which is unique among ministries."

##### 2. Going forward

Coffee Break begins 2020 celebrating 50 years. One celebration took place in Korea with 350 CB leaders. Standing at this 50-year mark, we sense there is a great need for prayer-centered, relational small-group Bible discovery for evangelism and discipleship. To respond to that need, we will

- hire a new program director to support and grow Coffee Break.
- hire a content coordinator to develop and revise studies.
- increase access to training and coaching through launching an interactive online learning space for leaders from around the world.
- develop more workshop leaders/coaches in hubs around North America.

#### B. *Timothy Leadership Training*

##### 1. Where we are

Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) began in the 1990s in Africa and has grown to develop a set of seven manuals to train Christian pastors and lay leaders worldwide. It is action-oriented learning designed to develop church leaders and transform communities. The Raise Up director



saw TLT in action as she attended a Malawi TLT graduation of 102 trainers in October 2019. She also visited a fish farm and vegetable garden in Zambia. Inspired by his TLT training, the local owner, Peter, built these to feed and employ his vulnerable neighbors. Through TLT, Peter learned that God cares for all people and had given him the resources to help his neighbors experience God's love by eating good fish and vegetables. In the past year as well, Luis Pellecer was added to the TLT team to further develop relationships in Latin America.

## 2. Going forward

Currently, by God's grace, TLT is being used in over 30 countries and provides manuals in over 38 languages, working through partnerships with churches and ministry organizations. Meeting the needs of the global church, we are writing a new manual to address the crucial issue of spiritual powers. Initial field-testing will begin in May 2020. In light of the conditions of ministry in challenging areas, TLT is focusing on trainers' care. This began with an initial trainers' retreat held in India in 2019. Two more are scheduled: in Guatemala in 2020 and another (location to be determined) in 2021. The purpose of these retreats is to encourage trainers and to spur multiplication. TLT is developing a WhatsApp network to encourage and learn from international pastors.

## C. Educational Care

### 1. Where we are

Educational Care (EC) developed from Synod 2005's mandate to study the "relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of world missions" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 773). Eighty-one educators have completed six manuals and are equipped to train others. EC has been used in 24 countries in 10 languages. Al Perse-naire, former EC program manager, retired in October 2019. Raise Up formed an EC Interim Leadership Team of twelve representatives from EduDeo, Christian Schools International, the VanLunen Center, and EC practitioners from North America, Asia, and Africa. Work continues. Steve Timmermans, CRCNA executive director, led an EC in-service training for teachers in Ethiopia. They hope to use EC in hundreds of schools across Ethiopia. Other trainings continue in many African countries and in lands where Christians face opposition to the gospel.

### 2. Going forward

Looking to the needs of the global and future Christian community, we will improve the curriculum and training process guided by wisdom from the experienced interim team. We will add new partners, richly informed by TLT and CB's partnership models. New funding strategies will be developed with the fresh eyes and collaboration of the interim team. A new program manager will be hired in ministry year 2020/2021 to continue moving this program forward in God's strength.

## II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Raise Up Global Ministries joins with God to develop servant leaders in churches and schools through nonformal facilitated learning and materials. Raise Up equips leaders through partnership with churches in the CRC

and in many other denominations across North America. Globally, Raise Up works through local partnerships. For example, Theological Education Extension of Zambia utilizes TLT to develop church leaders in Zambia. The CRC of the Philippines equips churches with Coffee Break training and materials. Several Resonate missionaries use EC as a means of serving communities in Africa and Asia. Raise Up remains guided by the following values: biblically grounded, gospel driven, Spirit led, relationally focused, accessibly delivered, contextually appropriate, transformationally oriented, reciprocal ministry.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

God is growing the global church, and Raise Up is a vessel to support churches locally and internationally. Coffee Break and Timothy Leadership Training directly resource the church and its mission by equipping leaders with training and materials. Educational Care equips Christian educators in the church and in the school to teach children. The Christian worldview flows from the church to the teacher and to the student, home, and community.

Raise Up is Spirit led, as facilitated learning around the Word with a group always involves the Spirit—with “one ear on the Spirit and one ear on the group.” Each training group is holy ground: the very Spirit of God orchestrates faith, growth, and transformation as servant leaders humbly gather around God’s Word to discover together what God desires for his church.

Raise Up Global Ministries  
Sam Huizenga, director

**Back to God Ministries International****I. Introduction—Mission and Mandate**

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. With ten indigenous ministry teams that reach nearly every country in our world, BTGMI looks much different than when it launched as an English radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, in 1939. Still, over 80 years later, BTGMI has the same three goals it had in its original mandate: proclaim the gospel, disciple believers in their faith, and strengthen the church. BTGMI thanks you, as members and leaders in the Christian Reformed Church, for your partnership in making this possible.

The mission of Back to God Ministries International is to share the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen local churches worldwide through our six core strategies:

1. As an agency of the CRCNA mandated to communicate the gospel within and across diverse cultures, we commit to developing and practicing the principle of contextualization. What we say will be clearly and efficiently communicated in the cultural context in ways that ensure that the gospel is truly heard.
2. As an agency charged by the CRCNA to serve the church, we commit to affirming, strengthening, connecting to, and working with and through local gatherings of Christ's body and denominations—to see churches as both sending and receiving, serving and being served.
3. Because we are a witness to the unity of Christ's body, and because we value stewardship of resources, we commit to working in a variety of partnerships with like-minded organizations wherever and however that serves to build capacity, sustainability, and efficient use of resources.
4. We are stewards of God's good gifts, including the gifts of partner organizations and gifts entrusted directly to us. We commit to prayerful, thoughtful, wise allocation of resources, appropriate financial practices, and faithful assessment of both internal and external systems of programs.
5. We commit to creating an excellent staff that stresses participation and development. Our preferred way of working together is in teams where issues can be explored safely and thoroughly, in which decisions are clear and their follow-up is effective. Team leaders are held responsible for processes that ensure effective, efficient, decisions and accountability in follow-up with high morale.
6. We commit to pray together—that God will be glorified through our work, that we may faithfully discern and follow the Spirit's leading, that we may be empowered by the Spirit's presence in our organization and in our lives, and that God's kingdom may come on earth as in heaven.

## II. Reflecting on Our Calling

The main focus of Back to God Ministries International is global mission. All of our work is guided by the words of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Naturally, though, much of our work also falls under other parts of the CRCNA's fivefold calling as we seek to work alongside churches and ministries worldwide.

### A. *Global mission*

BTGMI carries out ministry in ten major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Using media, BTGMI is uniquely positioned to provide gospel outreach in nearly every country of the world, even in places where Christian missionaries are not allowed. By proclaiming the gospel through radio, television, Internet, mobile apps, and social media, we are able to reach people who may not otherwise have access to a community of believers or a safe way to ask life's difficult questions. We regularly receive responses from people around the world who testify that they heard about Jesus for the first time through the media resources produced by BTGMI.

1. BTGMI employs about 150 indigenous staff members working around the world. BTGMI has a ministry presence in 55 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution. In addition, BTGMI reaches people in nearly every country through Internet and mobile app resources.
2. BTGMI's international ministry teams have developed 29 ministry websites in 10 languages supported by 67 social media sites. BTGMI produces 54 radio/audio programs and 24 TV/video programs.
3. We distribute more than one million printed devotional booklets each year in five languages. In general, the number of print daily devotional guides has decreased as we are able to reach more people in more places digitally through email, Facebook, and smartphone apps. More than three million people globally receive our digital devotions—and this number increases every day.
4. A network of more than 6,500 prayer partners in North America and throughout the world pray regularly for people who respond to our media outreach.
5. 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. In addition to collaborations within the CRCNA, BTGMI works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations worldwide:

Reformed Church in America, Reformed Church in Japan, Presbyterian Church of Brazil, National Presbyterian Church in Mexico, Indonesian Christian Church, and Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe, Africa, and India and surrounding countries, and with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

### *B. Faith formation on the global mission field*

BTGMI provides faith formation resources in the English language, primarily for North American audiences, under the name ReFrame Media. To learn more about those resources, see section III (Connecting with churches) below or visit [ReFrameMedia.com](http://ReFrameMedia.com).

Culturally relevant discipleship resources are also available in the other nine major languages in which BTGMI works. Produced and distributed in print, online, via social media channels, and through smartphone apps, devotions and faith formation resources are bringing God's Word to people around the world.

1. Audio and video programs apply God's Word directly to people's lives through Bible teaching programs that offer Reformed, biblical perspectives on current cultural issues within the context of the nations in which we do ministry.

In China, BTGMI recently began using a new "check-in" feature on our online devotional platform. Lan uses this feature to "check in" to her daily devotions app for the sake of accountability and to grow her sense of community with other readers. "I have often been very encouraged by things my brothers and sisters in this group have shared, especially when I have been particularly down," she writes.

2. BTGMI offers print resources including devotions in nearly every language ministry. In total, BTGMI mails or hands out about 2.1 million devotional guides and other gospel-centered material every year. Much of this content is also available online. In all of our ten language ministries, we regularly hear from people who are grateful to receive meaningful reflections on God's Word.

For example, a man named Heykel sent a message from Cuba on behalf of his family: "Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing, which comes to us in one of our greatest times of need. Your daily devotions nourish us every morning. I've kept every booklet that you've sent and share them with others. God bless you in your work."

3. In 2018, BTGMI began working with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt Synod of the Nile (EPCE) and Words of Hope, the media ministry associated with the Reformed Church in America, to expand ministry around the Arabic-speaking world. In 2019 the EPCE appointed Martin Nathan as the leader for this ministry, and BTGMI and EPCE worked together to develop a ministry website, appoint staff, and distribute print copies of the devotional book *Seeking God's Face*.
4. In Haiti nearly 343 new believers enrolled in our Bible study by correspondence course in 2019.

### *C. Servant leadership on the global mission field*

Back to God Ministries International is blessed to work with indigenous leaders gifted in both ministry and media. These leaders and their teams provide culturally relevant outreach in each of our ten language ministries.

1. International ministry leaders include Pastor Martin Nathan (Arabic); Pastor Jerry An (Chinese); Robin Basselin and Justin Sterenberg (English codirectors); Rev. Masao Yamashita (Japanese); Rev. Arliyanus Larosa

(Indonesian); Rev. Hernandes Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Sergei Sosedkin (Russian); and Rev. Huascar de la Cruz (Spanish). French ministry coordinators include Rev. Marc Nabie in Burkina Faso, Rev. Jacky Chéry in Haiti, and Rabo Godi in Niger.

Several of these leaders are new to these positions since last year, and these transitions bring on a time of celebrating and thanking God for years of service and looking to him for guidance in the future.

- a. Rev. Larosa's appointment comes after five years of searching and discernment from the board of our partner ministry in Indonesia, YKB. Rev. Larosa brings a wealth of pastoral, media, and administrative experience and has already implemented new programs that we pray will bring the ministry forward.
  - b. The appointment of Robin Basselin and Justin Sterenberg as English-ministry codirectors came in Fall 2019. At that time, Rev. Steven Koster stepped down after thirteen years of building the six ReFrame programs currently in place.
  - c. Rev. Huascar de la Cruz became the Spanish media ministry leader at the end of October 2019. Rev. Guillermo Serrano, our Spanish ministry leader for almost thirty years, stepped back from full-time service. Rev. de la Cruz is working to develop a new Spanish-language ministry partnership with the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico.
2. Pastor Jerry An facilitates symposia for church leaders in both Asia and North America to promote the use of media for gospel outreach.
  3. The goal of all BTGMI-related training events is to equip leaders for sharing the gospel in the context to which God has called them. A few additional international leadership training events included the following:
    - a. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie expanded Timothy Leadership Training Institute events in several West African nations.
    - b. In India and nearby countries, BTGMI's Hindi ministry leader conducted training events for pastors, church leaders, media producers, and VBS teachers.
    - c. Rev. Sergei Sosedkin and his team provided leadership seminars for Russian-speaking students and future church leaders, who are attending universities in Russia and Ukraine.

#### *D. Mercy and justice on the global mission field*

While the mission of BTGMI is primarily global media missions, ministry teams and partners have opportunities to provide comfort and assistance to people who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and disadvantaged. Many BTGMI programs provide messages of hope for people who are living in incredibly difficult circumstances—questioning their beliefs in places where it could be dangerous to do so, living in physical poverty, or suffering from sickness. In these ways we also address issues of social justice through our various programs in several languages.

1. Our ministry partners in India practice a holistic approach, providing for physical as well as spiritual needs. The team ministers to women and

children in poverty, providing a health clinic, tutoring for children, and job skills training for women. This outreach meets the practical needs of our listening audience and community members.

2. Our Japanese ministry team launched its *Words of Hope* audio program for people who suffered devastating loss after the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Northern Japan in 2011. Although the ministry team no longer produces new episodes of this program, they began sharing the messages in parts of Japan affected by severe floods and landslides in recent years.
3. Our *Family Fire* staff (see section III, A, 4 of this report) produces materials for English speakers experiencing pain and brokenness in their lives.
4. With the goal of teaching and encouraging Christ-followers to live out their faith, ReFrame Media also produces the *Think Christian* online blog and the *Groundwork* audio program, which regularly offers discussions on issues related to biblical justice.

For example, in late 2019, when *Watchmen*, a popular television show based on a comic-book series, premiered, *Think Christian* posted an article that draws comparisons from the show's plot to the book of Jeremiah: "All of us—perhaps particularly those of us who identify as Christian activists—need to come to terms with our own past and find paths toward healing if we are to pursue justice in healthy ways. We must be like the one who cries out in Jeremiah 17:4, 'Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed.'"

#### E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

The core mission of BTGMI is gospel proclamation through a variety of media, sharing the gospel with people wherever they are in the world. BTGMI continually seeks out culturally relevant and effective ways to proclaim the gospel and call people into relationship with God.

1. We have increasingly moved to a model of partnership with local denominations and organizations in our international ministries. This provides a greater opportunity for local ownership and sustainability. In Brazil, for example, we partner closely with congregations in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil to distribute biblical content for church members and the communities they serve in missions—reaching all the way to Angola, West Africa.
2. As our world transitions to using less paper, BTGMI expands the CRC's use of digital outreach for sharing the gospel: developing new apps, growing email and social media audiences, and sharing almost all content online, even if it is also available offline.

### III. Connecting with churches

#### A. *ReFrame Media*

BTGMI's English ministry, ReFrame Media, offers a family of programs to help people of all ages and stages of faith reframe their lives in the light of God's Word. Resources available to churches, families, and individuals include the following and can be found at [ReFrameMedia.com](http://ReFrameMedia.com):



1. The *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, are available in print, on the web at [TodayDevotional.com](http://TodayDevotional.com) by email subscription, Facebook posts, and digital apps. We print and distribute about 210,000 *Today* booklets six times each year and more than 211,000 people have signed up to access *Today* emails; in addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.

*Today* is also received by more than 13,500 prisoners throughout North America. We receive numerous comments from inmates whose lives have been changed by God through *Today* devotional readings. Verna receives *Today* in prison and wrote recently, "I am born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. I am free on the inside even though I am incarcerated. Please pray for me and send this devotional guide to my sister."

2. *Kids Corner* is a children's program for 6- to 12-year-olds. This program has transitioned from a single audio program to a growing collection of online resources delivered across North America for children's spiritual growth. *Kids Corner* launched a new website in 2018, making all 20 seasons of its audio series more readily available and—using online episode guides—more interactive. *Kids Corner* launched new videos in 2019 along with a graphic novel that tells the story of the Bible with illustrations.
3. *Groundwork* is a 30-minute audio program and podcast that builds biblical foundations for life. *Groundwork* is produced in partnership with Words of Hope, a ministry of the Reformed Church in America. Pastors Scott Hoezee (Calvin Theological Seminary) and Dave Bast (Words of Hope) guide listeners in casual but thoughtful conversations about practical applications of God's Word in today's world. You can listen on the air or online at [GroundworkOnline.com](http://GroundworkOnline.com).
4. *Family Fire* is an online community (through Facebook and the website [FamilyFire.com](http://FamilyFire.com)) that provides resources to strengthen families through articles, devotions, email and social media interaction, and live retreat events.
5. *Think Christian* is a collaborative online magazine in which authors consider how popular culture and its cultivators interact with God's story. Rooted in the Reformed tradition, *Think Christian* recognizes that all of culture falls within God's sovereignty, and that by his common grace believers and unbelievers alike are capable of creating beautiful things.
6. *Church Juice* helps churches be intentional about how to use the wide variety of media tools available to them in order to effectively communicate with their congregations and communities. Whether it is through marketing, social media, internal communications, website development, or other avenues, *Church Juice* can equip you to energize your church's communications.

*Church Juice* staff also organize virtual and in-person opportunities for church communicators to come together, learn from, and encourage one another. These in-person opportunities included a workshop at Inspire 2019 on "The Effective Church Website."

Visit [ChurchJuice.com](http://ChurchJuice.com) for all of *Church Juice*'s free resources, including the following:



- Guides on how to use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media.
- Real-life examples and case studies from churches that have improved their communication strategies over the years.
- Free images that you can use on your church’s website or to inspire your own creativity.
- Links to the *Church Juice* podcast episodes for on-the-go discussions and guides on church communications.

If you have questions about how your church can improve its communications, start a conversation with *Church Juice* producer Bryan Haley. Email him anytime at [bryan@churchjuice.com](mailto:bryan@churchjuice.com).

*B. Other examples of BTGMI resourcing local churches over the past year*

1. Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) has partnered with the CRC’s Korean Council since 2008 to publish the bilingual Korean-English version of *Today*.
2. ReFrame Media has produced 33 ebooks as downloadable pdfs. Several are also available in print for group discussion or personal growth. Topics from the newest resources include theology in the TV series *The Office*, bullying, *Our Only Comfort: a Devotional Series for Hard Times*, and *Facebook for Churches*.
3. BTGMI provides videos, bulletin inserts, and ministry update letters. See [BackToGod.net/churches/resources](http://BackToGod.net/churches/resources) for a list of church resources.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

*A.* That synod grant Kurt Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International, the privilege of the floor when BTGMI matters are discussed.

*B.* That synod encourage congregations to use BTGMI media materials to support their own local ministries and outreach.

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

Back to God Ministries International  
Kurt Selles, director

## Resonate Global Mission

### I. Introduction

Over 100 years ago, Johanna Veenstra took a leap of faith in becoming our denomination's first international missionary. Johanna's example continues to inspire and encourage us as we seek to answer God's call in our own lives. As your mission agency, Resonate Global Mission is committed to equipping the Christian Reformed Church to continue to follow God wherever he places us.

This year we celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Johanna's answering God's call by examining the priorities that marked her ministry, and these priorities are still important today:

- *Encouraging young leaders*—Johanna was an advocate for all Christians, especially the young, to consider what missional calling God has for them. She wrote to her supporters to remind them of the importance of mission. For her, young people preparing for mission-focused ministry are “unspeakably precious.”
- *Empowering women*—Johanna worked to raise up female leaders in ministry—not only the young women she recruited to Nigeria from her own church, but also in the villages and towns of Nigeria. She announced that the good news of Jesus was for the women as well as the men, which often surprised the people she met. She encouraged new Christian women to lead others to Christ!
- *Following God's call*—Living out her exhortations to others to follow God's leading, Johanna wrestled with his will through prayer, devotions, and listening carefully to the words of her pastors, teachers, and counselors. Reflection on God's leading, she wrote, “is a most valuable part of a missionary's preparation for service.”

Synod has given Resonate the mandate to “give leadership to the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.”

Our denomination has a long history of working to bring the gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)—work we have done imperfectly, but with a desire to be faithful to the Great Commission. We are seeking a future with this vision inspired by the past.

Like Johanna, we can be confident that God has a role for us to play in his mission. Wherever the members and churches of our denomination may be, Resonate is ready to walk alongside. Resonate wants to equip and support our churches for whatever work God has called them to—whether into the known or the unknown.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Of the five ministry priorities, Resonate's main focus is global mission. We are charged with providing leadership to the CRC in its work of proclaiming the gospel, and we are pleased to report a more refined focus on action and outcomes.

This past year, Resonate completed a two-year review of the vision, mission, and strategy that launched this mission agency. Looking back at the past two years as Resonate Global Mission, we see God leading and forming this new agency. Looking forward, we seek to follow the Holy Spirit into the future.

We are confident in embracing and implementing the vision that brought Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions together as Resonate in 2017. Now, after two years of working together, we have a better sense of how God is calling Resonate to equip the Christian Reformed Church for mission.

Resonate Global Mission will continue to pursue three overarching outcomes: missional leadership, mission-shaped congregations, and holistic mission networks. In addition, we are learning to measure this work by the actions that clarify Resonate's role, and director Zachary King will report on these developments at Synod 2021.

#### *A. Mission-shaped congregations*

God calls everyone to join him on mission. We want to see an increasing number of diverse, locally rooted, and globally connected congregations and ministries bearing faithful witness to Christ's reign and actively making disciples who live in the way of Jesus.

Together with you, Resonate is continuing to build God's church by walking alongside our congregations. Your support for Resonate means more churches that live out the gospel and become shaped by God's mission. A mission-shaped church not only proclaims but also lives out the life-transforming power of the gospel so that all people know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Our work to help congregations become mission-shaped is as follows:

1. Church planting—Starting new churches is a vital part of Resonate's ministry. New churches are the most effective tool we have to reach new groups of people. Resonate is investing in recruiting, training, coaching, encouragement, and resources for new churches.
2. Strengthening churches—Our local congregations are one of the richest resources for mission. Resonate helps established churches to discover and unleash God's plan for their time and place. Resonate is investing in strengthening churches for mission both locally and globally.
3. Discipleship—The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of Christians worldwide, calling them into a deeper life of faith. Resonate is investing in discipling and training Christians who are discovering God's plan for their lives.
4. Evangelism—The work of church planters and missionaries has grown the global church in amazing ways, but more than 1.5 billion people still have not heard the gospel! Resonate is investing in training people to witness and proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ.

*Example and Story: "Maybe You Are the Answer"*

"The Indo-Pak community is scattered in southern California," said Eric Sarwar, pastor of Artesia City Church, a church plant supported in part by Resonate Global Mission.

As a result, many believers don't have the opportunity to worship God in ways that express their heart—and people seeking faith don't have the opportunity to hear the Word of God in a language that speaks to their heart.

With Sarwar's leadership, Artesia City Church is changing that.

Born and raised in Pakistan, Sarwar realized there were no Indian-Pakistani churches in the CRC when he enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Dr. John Witvliet, his mentor and professor, said: "Maybe you are the answer." Sarwar felt a strong sense of calling to plant a church.

After graduating, he moved to southern California. During a time of searching out first- and second-generation Indian-Pakistani newcomers scattered throughout the area, Sarwar learned of a congregation that had been started in another denomination but was languishing because it needed a pastor. Sarwar was called by Bethany CRC in Bellflower, California, to pastor that congregation, Artesia City Church, and he was ordained in the CRCNA in December 2016. With Sarwar's leadership and support from Resonate, Artesia City Church is becoming a strong and vibrant congregation.

The church plant seeks not only to provide a welcoming space for believers but also to invite people who don't know Christ into the community.

We thank God for working through Resonate church plants and ministry leaders like Sarwar to provide spaces where all people can worship in their heart languages! "I see it is God's hand and direction that led me to connect with the CRCNA," said Sarwar.

Read more at [resonateglobalmission.org/eric](http://resonateglobalmission.org/eric).

#### *B. Missional leaders*

Missional leaders cast vision, set direction, and equip people to follow where the Holy Spirit is leading them. We want to see an increasing number of diverse leaders equipped to participate in God's mission of saving the lost and renewing all things.

Resonate joins with the leaders God is calling from among our congregations to send the good news of Jesus Christ out like an expanding, amplifying sound. As each leader invites others to join who, in turn, invite still others, our church can bring fresh energy to mission work—together.

1. **Campus Ministry**—Resonate engages universities and colleges in ministry on more than 35 campuses across North America. Resonate is investing in training and supporting campus ministers to be a faithful presence on campuses and to help students discover God's will for their lives.
2. **Leadership development**—We are all missionaries, and our mission field is all around us! Resonate is investing in identifying and equipping individual leaders and teachers worldwide through initiatives like seminary education and training leaders to work alongside others in their communities—whether in North America or overseas.
3. **Global mission education**—Our staff walks alongside congregations to encourage them in fulfilling God's mission. Resonate is investing in training mission committees, forging partnerships, and working with young adults whom God is calling to mission work.

*Example and Story: "I Want to Make This Christian Walk My Own"*

Albina grew up in an Orthodox Christian home. Two or three times a year, she and her family would go to church in their small Ukrainian town.

"It was mostly a religious or cultural thing rather than a relationship with the living God," said Albina.

But when she started studying at Resonate Global Mission partner LCC International University in Lithuania, God showed her that faith wasn't only about going to church. God showed Albina that she could have a relationship with him.

Albina became immersed in a new lifestyle at LCC, where Resonate missionaries work alongside other faculty and staff to support and encourage an environment where students can grow in relationship with God. Students, faculty, and staff gather regularly for chapel, Bible study, and times of worship, and Albina decided to join them.

She also became friends with some girls who went to church every week. One week, she went to church with them and sensed the Holy Spirit's presence in a way she never had before.

"I understood that I had to make a decision," said Albina. "I said . . . 'Let's do it for real. I want to make this Christian walk my own, and I want to live it out, whatever the cost.'"

Albina said that she's learning more every day about what it means to commit her life to Christ.

Praise God for bringing Albina into a deeper relationship with him through the LCC community that you support through Resonate! Please pray for students like Albina, who are owning their faith and growing as leaders in God's mission.

Read more at [resonateglobalmission.org/albina](https://resonateglobalmission.org/albina).

### *C. Holistic mission networks*

As more people join God on mission, we want to see an increasing number of diverse and inclusive local networks that unite God's people to work for spiritual and social transformation of their communities.

By working with others in ministry, Resonate seeks to start a movement that reverberates across North America. Joining God's mission is hard work, and no one church or organization can do it alone. Resonate's work connecting churches in holistic mission networks is as follows:

1. Coaching leaders of holistic mission networks to help local churches come together and accomplish more than they could alone.
2. Sending holistic mission network developers and community chaplains in partnership with local congregations.
3. Developing new experiments and methods of mission work so that networks around the globe can learn from one another.
4. Connecting pastors, church planters, and ministry leaders who need support with those who have vital resources to offer, like experience, coaching, and encouragement.

*Example and Story: Uniting for Gospel Transformation*

Churches in Rockwood, Oregon, would rarely interact, let alone work together. It's a familiar problem—one that Resonate helps churches address

with support from people like you, because we can do more ministry together than we can alone.

Four years ago, a group of people from the neighboring churches in Rockwood came together with a vision to unite their congregations in order to better serve the local community. They started with a worship service: Rockwood United Worship (RUW).

Today, Pastor Pete Armstrong, a local mission leader for Resonate, helps lead RUW and encourage the participating churches to see it as more than just a worship service. RUW exists to inspire action! When churches come together, the networks they form help to drive the work of God's mission.

"In a place like Rockwood . . . we need to be linking arms with other bodies of believers to serve the city," said Armstrong. This ministry has been able to grow by linking arms not only with their neighbors but also with Resonate.

The first RUW hosted eight churches—and this year, there were nearly twenty. "It really encouraged me to get outside of myself . . ." said Tyler, a member at Parklane CRC who is part of RUW, ". . . and build relationships for the sake of the gospel of Christ to be glorified in Rockwood."

Resonate wants to see more people living in relationship with Christ—and more communities transformed by the gospel. Individual and community transformation can take a long time, but RUW is uniting churches and believers with a vision for God's mission. That's the power of working together!

"Pray for the churches in the Rockwood area, that we would live the life of Jesus," asks Tyler. "I know that if we do that and stay true to that, our communities will change."

Read more at [resonateglobalmission.org/rockwood](https://resonateglobalmission.org/rockwood).

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

Resonate exists to be an extension of the local church—a partner in the work of God's mission. We accomplish this through two primary ways: first, by organizing a staff distributed by region, and, second, by mobilizing the people in our congregations and equipping them for service.

Our relationship with churches is vital, and we have adopted the postures of prayer, listening, serving, learning, peacemaking, and care and accountability.

#### *A. Regional mission teams*

With six regions in North America and eight internationally, Resonate's regional mission teams are made up of missionaries, pastors, and others doing embedded ministry within several regions. Resonate's regional structure exists to serve the church by offering these ministry leaders with their skills and expertise. These teams are not only spreading the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ but also multiplying ministry by cultivating new mission leaders and partnerships. A list of the regions and their leaders follows:

Eastern Canada: Beth Fellingner

Western Canada: Rich Braaksma

Eastern U.S.: Marco Avila

Great Lakes: Amy Schenkel

Central U.S.: Peter Kelder

Western U.S.: Ben Katt  
Central America: Steve Holtrop  
East and Central Asia: Paul Yu  
Eastern and Southern Africa: Mike Ribbens  
Europe: Steve Van Zanen  
Mexico and the Caribbean: Luis Pellecer  
Middle East: Name withheld  
South and Southeast Asia: Joyce Suh  
West Africa: Sosthene Maletoungou

#### *Example and Story: God's Call to the Small Towns*

After years working as an ironworker, carpenter, and dairy farmer, Resonate local mission leader David Katsma heard God's call to rural ministry. He and his family planted MarshView Ministries CRC in Horicon, Wisconsin, in 1998, and now, as he continues to serve there as lead pastor, he helps small-town churches discover God's plan for them.

"We're in it for the long haul," said David, who sensed from the beginning that having a long-term pastor would be the best fit for a small-town church.

Churches that serve country communities and farming towns are an important part of God's work through Resonate, and Resonate is looking for new ways to strengthen them. Leaders like David know that church planting and church ministry look a little different out in the country.

"There is such a need for a strong presence in the community that's not just doing church but really wants to transform lives," said David. "There's a large field to work in, but sometimes we don't see that—we see rural communities as being 'churched' already."

David's blue-collar background serves him well in his work as a pastor and a local mission leader to rural communities. He is able to relate to people and make better connections, and sometimes unique opportunities are presented that combine both types of work.

An important area of common ground for David and his community is a strong work ethic. He recognizes the importance of putting in time and effort to lead his church and to equip other churches for ministry.

"I've always said that dairy farming isn't just a job; it's a lifestyle," said David. "The same is true for ministry."

For more information, see [resonateglobalmission.org/central-usa](http://resonateglobalmission.org/central-usa).

#### *B. Mobilizing congregations*

At Resonate we believe that the best way to spread the gospel is through the work of a healthy church. That's why we aim to help each congregation in the Christian Reformed Church discover God's plan for their neighborhood and join in. Resonate works with congregations in several key areas:

##### **1. Engaging younger generations**

Resonate provides volunteer opportunities to work alongside Christian leaders around the world. Young members of the CRC can explore their calling through these opportunities and grow in their relationship with Christ. Short-term volunteer opportunities provide discipleship for young adults that includes mentorship as well as local and international service experiences.



## 2. Cohort

Resonate provides college-age participants with a yearlong experience in which they are immersed as a cohort in a new culture to serve with local mission organizations. These participants live out their faith by worshipping with the international church, learning from community leaders, and loving God and their neighbors. Cohort opportunities are expanding, with sites planned in Central America, the Middle East, and Detroit, Michigan.

## 3. Preparing missionaries and volunteers for service

Hundreds of Christian Reformed members serve as missionaries and volunteers with Resonate, and our orientation team is there to make sure they are prepared and connected to their sending and supporting churches. Resonate staff prepare missionaries and volunteers in spiritual care, conflict management, relationship development, support-raising, diversity and antiracism, communication, and other topics important in cross-cultural living.

## 4. Missions advocates

Missions advocates serve as church-appointed volunteers who fuel interest for the church in international missions and act as a link between the congregation and the ways they are engaging in God's mission in the world.

## 5. Church renewal for mission

Resonate staff and coaches work with Christian Reformed congregations through initiatives like Go Local and Churches Learning Change, which cultivate change and renewal for mission. Through these initiatives we seek to help churches discover God's plan for their congregation and local community.

## 6. Church communication and engagements

Resonate shares how God is working through emails, mailings, and online postings that our staff share with classis committees and present at classis meetings. Staff members also preach at churches and present at events.

### *Example and Story: Building God's Kingdom*

This past spring, Ken Herfst and students from Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, walked the narrow streets of a slum on the outskirts of the main dump in Guatemala City, the capital of Guatemala.

Herfst and his students were on a mission trip with Resonate Global Mission—but they didn't build any houses, paint any church buildings, or facilitate any trainings or programs. "Those projects have their place," said Herfst, "but our purpose was to listen, observe, and reflect together."

They asked themselves: What does it look like to join God in mission and build his kingdom?

Students were invited into communities, homes, and churches. They visited a slum, joined a family for a traditional meal, and crowded into a church office to hear stories of Guatemala's history. In every conversation, students were encouraged to think about ministry not just in terms of talking about the gospel but also in practicing what Jesus did and said.



It helped grow the way I think about mission,” said Adrian Faber, a student who participated in the vision trip. “Going on the trip to Guatemala opened my eyes to how mission work is rooted. . . . It’s about working with people, knowing people. . . .”

Faber graduated from Redeemer this past year and is returning to Central America as part of Resonate’s Cohort—a year-long mission experience designed specifically for young adults to explore their calling while gaining experience working with local mission organizations at the grassroots level.

These trips may just be a few days long, but they help to equip students to live out the gospel for the rest of their lives.

Read more at [resonateglobalmission.org/redeemer](https://resonateglobalmission.org/redeemer).

#### **IV. Recommendations**

*A.* That synod grant the director of Resonate Global Mission, Zachary King, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Resonate Global Mission are addressed.

*B.* That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, and the second and third Sundays in September.

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

Resonate Global Mission  
Zachary King, director



### Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue

#### I. Introduction

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), 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 works to encourage active Christian citizenship, studies critical issues facing Canadian society from a Reformed perspective, and interacts with policy makers and shapers in a constructive manner. Our focus issues are currently refugee rights and resettlement, Indigenous justice and reconciliation, and climate justice. We also strive to be nimble and responsive on critical issues that come up—for example, providing resources to churches during the 2019 election.

#### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

##### A. Faith formation

We seek to work with local churches in an effort to live into the call to seek God's justice and peace in every area of life. We do this in the following ways:

1. Providing liturgical and devotional resources connected to Indigenous justice, refugee rights, and climate care via our website and social media. We support binational efforts like the CRCNA's Day of Justice (August) and provide devotional and action resources for justice for Indigenous children in connection with our Lenten challenge and offering Sunday. This year more than one hundred churches across Canada marked our offering Sunday (Justice and Hope Sunday in March).
2. Gathering local church members to tell stories and think together about Christ's call to justice through our *Do Justice* blog ([dojustice.crcna.org](http://dojustice.crcna.org)). Through our *Do Justice* columnists' initiative, CRC and RCA writers from across North America have regularly shared the ways in which they are wrestling with the call to do justice in their own local contexts. Thirteen regular columnists (including six people of color) focus on specific issues from poverty to climate change to Reformed theological reflections to refugee sponsorship. We also regularly run series to dig deeper into specific issues. Series topics this year have included religious persecution, climate change, immigration, power, and abortion.
3. Working closely with the Canadian Ministries justice mobilizer, Cindy Stover, to develop and animate learning opportunities on justice and reconciliation. This currently includes a collaboration with Resonate Global Mission, Faith Formation Ministries, Diaconal Ministries Canada, World Renew, and the Canada justice and reconciliation team to animate communities of learning and to practice on justice and reconciliation among congregational leaders.
4. The intensifying political and cultural turbulence of our day (related to populism, the digitization and consumerization of political decision-

making, and digitally driven cultural individualism) requires a faithful liturgical (public good / service) and prophetic salt-and-light response. For this reason, and inspired in part by synodical deliberations, CCG engages in regular discernment and dialogue on biblical and theological principles for public discipleship. For example, we facilitated a workshop at Inspire 2019 titled “Hopeful Citizenship in a Time of Division” and provided related blog materials.

*B. Mercy and justice*

We assist local churches in loving mercy and doing justice as follows:

1. Communicating with government through direct interaction with policy makers and shapers from our office in Ottawa and through mobilizing Christian citizens to interact with their elected representatives. We continue to work closely with partners to help local churches respond to urgent issues of justice and reconciliation. These partnerships include World Renew, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Canadian Council of Churches, KAIROS, and Citizens for Public Justice. This year we encouraged and supported church members throughout the election season to be active citizens. Our series of questions for candidates reached over 5,700 people. We continue to work with the Climate Witness Project to encourage local responsibility and citizen advocacy for climate justice.
2. Responding to requests for information from churches and members on current issues of concern.
3. Working with CRCNA partners to bring justice-themed workshops to churches. We have worked with World Renew and refugee service providers to refresh *Journey with Me*—a tool that invites churches to hear and respond to the stories of refugees. *Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy* is a practical citizen-action and reflection tool that we have launched with the Canadian Ministries justice mobilizer. Further, we conducted several pilots of *Demystifying Justice*, a workshop about the biblical principles of justice.
4. We continue to connect with churches through our Education Together campaign. Building on churches’ understanding of the importance of community involvement in education, we advocate with them to support this essential right for Indigenous youth.

*C. Gospel proclamation and worship*

Doing justice and reconciliation is gospel proclamation—we know and celebrate that Christ is renewing all things and that he calls us to be collaborators in this task. When the church does justice, our witness is stronger and has more integrity. As such, the work and partnerships mentioned above are an element of gospel proclamation and are motivated by a conviction that justice and worship are integrated.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

*A. Engaging younger members*

Young people make up the largest portion of our *Do Justice* blog audience: just under one-third of our readers are under age 34, and more than 50 percent are under age 44. In addition, a quarter of our social media followers

are under age 44. We continue to seek new ways of connecting with younger members, including the development of a YouTube channel.

*B. Assisting churches within their local contexts*

We regularly connect with churches across the country to help them seek justice. This year we facilitated the *Faith in Action* workshop six times across the country to help churches advocate for their local issues. We supported other regional events such as the creation care lecture series “Understanding Our Climate Crisis” to promote advocacy as an important avenue for caring for creation. Justice Mobilizer Cindy Stover supported additional events for local churches such as “Spark!” held in Truro, Nova Scotia.

Committee for Contact with the Government /  
Centre for Public Dialogue

Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager

## Disability Concerns

### I. Introduction

#### A. *Mandate*

The Office of Disability Concerns (DC) 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.
- break barriers of communication, architecture, and attitude.
- establish ministries with, for, and by people with disabilities and their families.

#### B. *Vision*

Since 2009, CRC DC has been working in close cooperation with the Disability Concerns office of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Our vision together can be summarized briefly: “In healthy churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.”

#### C. *Mission*

DC’s mission 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. We have four areas of focus:

1. Network – Strengthen the network of disability advocates both in quantity and quality.
2. Awareness/ education – Help churches prioritize the full inclusion of people living with disabilities.
3. Resource/ consultation – Provide churches with the tools they need to engage in ministry with people who have disabilities in congregation and community.
4. Ministry promotion – Enhance and promote the future growth and development of Disability Concerns for the purpose of serving communities and societies more effectively.

As of January 2020, DC has two employees totaling 1.5 FTE: a full-time director, Mark Stephenson, who works from the CRC’s Grand Rapids office, and a volunteer and communications specialist, Becky Jones, who shares her time with Disability Concerns and Safe Church Ministries (20 hours/ 10 hours) and works from the CRC’s Burlington (Ont.) office.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Although our work is reflected in all five of the CRC’s areas of calling, we give primary focus to the Mercy and Justice area.

### A. Faith formation

We work on the faith formation of God's people primarily in partnership with two other ministries: Friendship Ministries, which focuses especially on faith formation with persons who have intellectual disabilities, and Faith Formation Ministries. Though Friendship is a separate ministry from the CRC, DC's director, Mark Stephenson, serves on the Friendship Ministries board and executive committee, and he assists Friendship in the development of their inclusive small group curriculum *Together* (togethersmall-groups.org). DC also promotes the sales of Friendship Ministries materials and encourages the formation of Friendship groups. In 2018, Disability Concerns began working closely with Faith Formation Ministries in assisting churches in their ministry with adults in the "third third" of life (age 55 and over). This work has included two conferences, the production of two Ten Ways tools, and the *Third Third of Life Toolkit* (see [crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation/toolkits)). We pray that this work will equip churches to grow as communities among whom *all belong and all serve*, no matter people's ages or abilities.

### B. Servant leadership

CRC and RCA DC ministries work in a variety of ways to develop people's leadership skills. Identifying and equipping disability advocates is the primary way that we go about our work. We help recruit and equip hundreds of volunteers across both denominations to serve churches and classes to accomplish the mandate, mission, and vision of Disability Concerns. As of January 2020, 425 church disability advocates and 34 regional disability advocates are serving Christian Reformed churches and classes.

All disability advocates and many churches have received our *Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*, which helps church leaders and members welcome and engage people with disabilities in the life of the church. In 2019 over 2,000 church and regional advocates as well as many others from across North America received training from DC at connection and training events that took place in Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Virginia, Alberta, and Ontario. To network and encourage the volunteer advocates, DC staff meet quarterly (virtually or in person) with six regional groups of disability advocates across North America for networking and encouragement.

DC volunteers and staff help to equip church leaders by speaking at churches, classis meetings, conferences, webinars, and seminary classes, and by consulting with church leaders about engaging people with disabilities in church life. The CRC DC Advisory Committee and the RCA DC Guiding Coalition serve as one team that advises both ministries through meetings several times per year. DC staff provide advice and assistance to other CRC staff on issues related to disability and ministry.

The DC web and Network pages continue to attract additional users, with more than a 10-percent increase in pageviews in 2019 as compared to 2018. The Associated Church Press honored the Disability Concerns newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, with a first-place award in the newsletters category, and the DC Network blog received a second-place award.

### C. Global mission

In addition to the worldwide outreach made possible by our web and Network pages, DC staff regularly consult with other ministries. Agency

disability advocates, who are CRC agency and educational institution staff, meet several times per year to discuss ways in which all CRC ministries worldwide can engage with people who have disabilities.

#### *D. Mercy and justice*

The mercy and justice aspect of our denomination's calling animates and drives the day-to-day work of Disability Concerns. A person with a disability lives not only with an impairment but also with the discrimination that favors able-bodied people (ableism) and marginalizes and stigmatizes anyone living with an impairment. Therefore, DC strives to promote and foster relationships, communities, and societies where *everybody belongs and everybody serves*.

As one way to measure progress in this work, we look at numbers in the accessibility section of the annual *Yearbook* survey. For example, 302 CRC congregations (29%) worship in barrier-free facilities, and another 643 have partially accessible facilities; so a total of 91 percent of CRC church buildings are fully or partially accessible. In addition, 567 churches (55%) have barrier-free sound, and 454 (44%) have barrier-free books / materials in print. Further, 562 churches (54%) offer transportation for people who cannot drive themselves, and 37 percent of congregations have adopted a church policy on disability. As well, in *Breaking Barriers*, on our Network pages, and in CRC Communications and *Banner* articles, DC tells stories of people in CRC and RCA churches who are engaging in disability advocacy and embracing positive change.

Of the four offices identified in the CRC Church Order, our work aligns most closely with that of deacons, who are called to "be compassionate to those in need and treat them with dignity and respect" and to "be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society" (Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, 2016). Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) and CRC DC recently reviewed and updated their Memorandum of Understanding. The two ministries work together so that communities and churches in Canada will be enriched and strengthened by engaging with people who have disabilities and so that churches will work to provide for the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being of persons and families with disabilities.

This past year, our director was elected president of the board of Pathways to Promise, a parachurch organization founded in 1988 by CRC Disability Concerns and other ministries to help churches minister with people and families with mental illnesses.

RCA and CRC Disability Concerns ministries are members of the Inter-faith Disability Advocacy Coalition, which works on public policy priorities in Washington, D.C.

With the RCA coordinator for DC, Terry DeYoung, our director wrote a journal article on the shared work of CRC and RCA DC ministries over the past ten years and presented this article at a symposium for scholars and practitioners of Disability and Ministry at Wheaton College, at a Calvin Theological Seminary town hall, and at a workshop at the Inspire conference in August 2019.

#### *E. Gospel proclamation and worship*

Many RCA and CRC regional advocates, church advocates, and members of the CRC / RCA DC Advisory Team wrote brief devotions for a Lenten



series that the RCA organizes each year. These devotions give visibility to RCA/CRC advocates and to the work of DC.

Synod has asked CRC congregations to celebrate Disability Week each year to raise awareness about the gifts and needs of congregational and community members who have disabilities. This year Disability Week will be celebrated October 12-18, 2020. DC provides worship leaders with a variety of online resources, including litanies, prayers, and sermons. In appropriate settings, we have been promoting the large-print edition of the hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts*. DC consults with worship leaders on the best ways to include people who have disabilities in the church's life, including worship life.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

#### *A. Desired Future 1—Ministry in Communities*

DC places the highest priority on a network of church and regional disability advocates, connecting our work directly to churches and classes by identifying and equipping local people to minister within their local context. These ministry leaders help churches and classes better reflect the body of Christ, especially as described in Luke 14:15-24 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Congregations that do this well are strongly equipped to connect with members of their community, 15 to 20 percent of whom live with disabilities.

#### *B. Desired Futures 2 and 3—Faith Formation and Leadership*

See sections II, A and II, B above. In addition, DC provides a variety of resources for congregations to engage children and young people with disabilities in all of congregational life. The Mental Health Task Force is also working on resourcing congregations for ministry with youth who have mental health challenges.

#### *C. Desired Future 4—Identity*

In the Reformed understanding of vocation, God calls all of his people to serve in his kingdom as God has gifted them. For this reason, we cast the vision of *everybody, including people with disabilities, belonging to and serving God in church and community*.

#### *D. Desired Future 5—Collaboration*

Through our work with RCA Disability Concerns and other ministries, through the Network, through regular gatherings of disability advocates, and through direct connections with churches, Disability Concerns seeks to foster collaboration that will enhance the ministries of congregations and advance the work of God's kingdom.

Disability Concerns  
Mark Stephenson, director

## Indigenous Ministries (Canada)

In the past few years, our Indigenous ministry entities in Canada have been walking an increasingly intentional journey of reconciliation in their work due to a sharpening focus across the country in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, completed in 2015 (see [nctr.ca](http://nctr.ca)). Through ministries of compassionate community, awareness raising, and advocacy, ministry with Indigenous persons in Canada and the connection to local churches continues to grow faithful and stronger. This they have done in concert with both the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee (CIMC). Key to this movement and maturation among all of our Indigenous ministry efforts have been their thoughtful review and evaluation throughout 2018-2019. CIMC now has an annual plan that is affirmed through the CRCNA Canada Corporation as a way of validating their work and its integration with partnerships at the local church level and beyond. As well, the three Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres have received their updated five-year evaluations. These have also been passed through the governing board of the CRCNA Canada Corporation.

The Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Edmonton, Alberta—all funded by the Christian Reformed Church—help to meet the spiritual and social needs of Indigenous Canadians to help them live dignified and harmonious lives. These ministry centres are highly regarded by the communities they serve. In fact, the United Church of Canada used the Winnipeg Centre as a chief example of positive ministry within which they also participate in ecumenical partnership. Ministry participants value the dignity and respect they experience as they attend and participate in the programs and community activities.

The ministry of **Indigenous Christian Fellowship** (ICF) continues to flourish in Regina, Saskatchewan, the city in Canada with the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples. As a province, Saskatchewan also has the highest number of Canadian Indian Residential School survivors. Regina is home as well to the First Nations University of Canada and the home base (Little Black Bear First Nation) of Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada. Within this context the ministry persists in presenting the gospel of Christ using the gifts of Indigenous peoples.

In April 2019, Indigenous students of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies confirmed ICF's connection to the Indigenous community by raising more than \$2,000 for ICF in an initiative they named "Indigenous Empowerment Project." Their leader in the effort, Sylvia Worm, noted ICF's support for grieving families through its hosting of wakes and funerals for the local Indigenous community. (Over the years, more than 200 wakes and funerals have been held at ICF.)

In October, ICF held its first fund-raising gala. More than 250 people attended, and many were introduced to the work of the ministry for the first time. Stories from speakers highlighted the work of ICF through the theme of "Hurt, Healing, and Hope." A short film by Don List of Birdsong Communications underscored the event's theme. This video and others produced in 2019 are available on the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee website ([crcna.org/indigenous/canadian](http://crcna.org/indigenous/canadian)).

The past year has seen an increasing amount of violence in the ministry's neighborhood. Three recent deaths in Regina occurred within a city block of ICF's front doors. ICF seems like an oasis of peace and sanctuary within what too often can feel like a valley of the shadow of death. The prayers and support of the CRCNA help to remind the ICF council, staff, and volunteers to count on the presence of Christ's Spirit in their ongoing pilgrimage of hope.

The **Edmonton Native Healing Centre** community is a place for people of all cultures, faiths, and financial straits to meet and grow together. We build common ground among people. Further, most of our community and all of our staff are Indigenous, and we strive to speak truth and live out the principles of reconciliation. The following is a brief story of how our ministry tries to build a vibrant community.

Christy came through our doors about ten years ago, while she worked with mentally and physically challenged community members. She transitioned out of that job to become an Edmonton transit bus driver, and then she became ill and became a close family member to our ministry. Christy passed away suddenly on December 12, 2019, and our family table has an empty place, which we continue to grieve. The joy of our ministry journey includes working with people not only during the good times but also in the darkest moments of our earthly journeys. Edmonton Native Healing Centre became Christy's family because she had only one brother, who lived in Texas, with whom she spoke only once or twice a year. Christy participated in our collective kitchen program and brought her sense of humor to lighten the workload. She would whine and complain to staff because she was among family and felt safe to do so. Christy would volunteer to open up the ministry center in the mornings, help clean up after soup and bannock on Wednesdays, and more; she just wanted to feel like she was part of a family.

This brief story demonstrates how we seek to create moments of sitting at the well with Jesus and to let the Holy Spirit lead us into right relationships with our friends and family.

Winnipeg's **Indigenous Family Centre** again had a very difficult year because of the crystal-meth crisis the city is experiencing. We have adapted in this way by providing a Christ-centered location to do a sweat.

This new year has brought a renewed focus on healing ministries—one-on-one counseling, sharing circles, and times of healing prayer, as well as activities that promote healing in body, soul, mind, and spirit. Intergenerational trauma has been a cause of many ills within our community, but we believe that intergenerational love is stronger. As we are led by God's love and Spirit, we are experiencing renewed hope, healing, and restoration.

The Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee consists of key volunteers, the Urban Indigenous Ministry directors, and other ecumenical partners (Reformed Church in America and Presbyterian Church Canada) who continue to urge churches to grow in structuring their ministry toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

CIMC works on educating churches about colonialism and its negative influences on Indigenous peoples and how the church and Indigenous peoples need reconciliation with one another. Educational resources, studies, and

other tools are increasingly available. A highlight this year included the pilot of a Truth and Reconciliation book club facilitated by justice and reconciliation mobilizer Shannon Perez.

CIMC's key hope is for all churches to access the many tools and resources available as reconciliation becomes a stronger theme in our churches—not only reconciliation with God through Christ but also reconciliation within in our nation. Given the history of the church in Canada, the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is an important way in which the Canadian CRC can work toward shalom.

Together with the Centre for Public Dialogue and KAIROS, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise is a workshop being shared 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 Indigenous ministry in Canada. The work on Indigenous education reform carried out by the Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue ([crcna.org/publicdialogue](http://crcna.org/publicdialogue)) 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.)

## Race Relations

### I. Introduction

The Office of Race Relations continues to meet the challenges of assisting the congregations, classes, agencies, congregational ministries, and institutions of the CRCNA in embracing and living out our identity as God's diverse and unified family through continued and growing partnerships and collaborations. Race Relations is privileged to continue its responsibilities in (1) antiracism and racial reconciliation initiatives that provide education, training, and resources; (2) Inspire regional gatherings; (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.

### II. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

Within our mandate for antiracism and racial reconciliation, we are called to provide education and resources to equip our denomination not only to eliminate the effects of the sin of racism but also to facilitate reconciliation through workshops, materials, and coaching. We provide several workshops: Looking Back, Moving Forward (U.S.), The Act of Re-membering (Canada), and Churches between Borders. In partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice we have also collaborated in conducting the Blanket Exercise throughout the year. First developed in Canada and later contextualized for use in the United States, the Blanket Exercise provides an interactive telling of the shared history of Indigenous peoples in North America. This is a history from a perspective not often heard, and it speaks to the profound urgency of reconciliation.

### III. Reflecting on Our Calling

#### A. *Servant leadership*

In the past year we helped to support servant leadership in the following ways:

- consulting with Classes California South, Arizona, Greater Los Angeles, Columbia, and Red Mesa on leadership development, minority candidate assessments, and strategic planning
- coaching Consejo Latino in Phoenix, Arizona, on multiethnic leadership development
- coaching and consulting the Canadian Ministries Team in the Burlington (Ont.) offices as well as Classis Hamilton in Canada
- coaching on conflict resolution in Classis California South
- sponsoring four students who attend CRC-endorsed institutions through the Race Relations Scholarship Program. More information is available, including the application forms, on our website at [crcna.org/race/scholarships](http://crcna.org/race/scholarships).

### *B. Mercy and justice*

We promote mercy and justice efforts in many ways. In 2019 we accomplished the following:

- led racial reconciliation workshops and trainings with Grant (Mich.) CRC; Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Coit Community CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Fellowship CRC, Traverse City, Michigan; the All Ontario Youth Conference; Inspire 2019; and the Glocal Conference
- made presentations to Classis Chicago South; City Kidz in Hamilton, Ontario; Grand Valley State University (Mich.); Inspire 2019 (Black History tour); and the CRCNA offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan
- led healing circles at Tapestry Church, Oakland, California
- assisted Classes Hackensack and California South in creating overtures to Synod 2019 that led to declaring kinism a heresy
- wrote an apologetic tool to refute the sin of kinism for use in churches
- sponsored the first Sankofa trip in October with Congregations Organized for Racial Reconciliation and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- held conversations with the Reformed Church in America's race relations team to work on future projects
- assisted Back to God Ministries International in recording Bible stories for a children's ministries website
- submitted columns for *The Banner* and the *Do Justice* blog
- maintained an active social media presence online with articles and other educational materials

### *C. Gospel proclamation and worship*

In the past year we supported gospel proclamation and worship in the following ways:

- cosponsoring a Stand against Racism service in April with the Office of Social Justice at Woodlawn CRC ministry center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with over a hundred people in attendance
- preaching at and connecting with twenty-one churches
- coleading the Grand Rapids (Mich.) CRC staff Christmas Chapel with the Office of Social Justice in December
- providing bulletins and bulletin covers for All Nations Heritage celebrations scheduled for the first Sunday in October. The 2020 All Nations Heritage Week runs September 27 through October 4. Many of our materials are translated into several languages.

## **IV. Conclusion**

The racial climate has become toxic, and the power and witness of the gospel are increasingly vital today. 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. We are grateful that synod took strong action in declaring kinism a sin and noting, "The Bible makes clear that God's ideal is a family of every tribe and nation being considered equal in every way. Kinist principles and praxis distort this truth" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818).

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 in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. To this end, we covet your prayers. For more information on Race Relations matters, please visit our website at [crcna.org/race](http://crcna.org/race) and our Facebook page at [facebook.com/crcracereactions](https://facebook.com/crcracereactions).

Office of Race Relations  
Reginald Smith, director

## Safe Church Ministry

### I. Introduction

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness prevention and response, to help build communities where the value of each person is respected and protected, where people are free to worship and grow free from abuse, and where the response to abuse is compassion and justice, which foster healing.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

#### A. *Mercy and justice*

Safe Church Ministry reflects the calling of the CRCNA in its focus on God's mercy and justice as a core part of our identity. Our congregations are filled with people who have experienced the dehumanizing and devastating effects of abuse. We must do our part to prevent future harm and to respond appropriately. Safe Church offers resources and support to people who want to join our Lord in the work of healing and preventing harm.

#### B. *Leadership development*

The sustainable strategy for Safe Church is to invest in volunteer and paid leaders at all levels of ministry across the United States and Canada. Therefore we align our ministry with the stated goal of servant leadership, knowing that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish. The role of a Safe Church coordinator in each classis is a key to overall ministry effectiveness. We are working with our coordinators to build networks of support and encouragement, as we also offer resources for the work.

### III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)*

Effective safe church ministry involves all of us working together. Our goal is to see active safe church teams in every classis and in every congregation. Recommendations adopted by Synod 2018 require us to keep track and report on the following information. The data below are based on the responses of 859 churches to the annual *Yearbook* survey in 2019 (an increase from 760 respondents in 2018).

- 720 churches, or about 84 percent, have a written safe church or abuse prevention policy (down from 86 percent last year).
- 203 churches, or about 24 percent, require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position (up from 16 percent).
- 107 churches, or about 12 percent, use a prevention program with children and youth (up from 7 percent).
- 401 churches, or about 47 percent, have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct (up from 36 percent).
- 35 percent of churches have a safe church team or committee (up from 28 percent).

Synod 2018 also requested annual reporting on the number of classes that have safe church teams. According to data received from the *Yearbook* questionnaire and input from our safe church coordinators, 23 classes



have a safe church team (up from 12 last year). An additional 15 classes indicate that they are in the process of forming a team. Further, 28 classes indicated that they have a safe church coordinator (up from 24). The newly formed Classis North Cascades is not included in the data for this year. Classes that now have a safe church team are Alberta North, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, Chatham, Columbia, Georgetown, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Greater Los Angeles, Hackensack, Heartland, Hudson, Huron, Iakota, Kalamazoo, Minnkota, Muskegon, Niagara, Northern Michigan, Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain, Southeast U.S, and Yellowstone. *Note that safe church teams structure themselves in different ways, are of different sizes, and have varied levels of activity, experience, and expertise.* Several classes are in the process of team development, usually for one of two reasons. Either they have had an active team in the past, which has faded, and there is progress to revive it; or there is new interest in forming a team, and progress is under way. These include Classes Arizona, Atlantic Northeast, California South, Central Plains, Chicago South, Eastern Canada, Grand Rapids East, Grandville, Hamilton, Illiana, Lake Superior, Northern Illinois, Quinte, Toronto, and Zeeland. We are encouraged to see progress in safe church team development.

Synod 2019 adopted additional recommendations in response to a committee report on the abuse of power at all levels in the denomination. At the time of this writing, work has been done and progress has been made in several different committees assigned with addressing these recommendations. The committees have included various staff members, Council of Delegate members, and other volunteers with particular expertise. The committees will report to synod through the Council of Delegates.

In 2019, Safe Church recorded over 900 interactions with churches and individuals and consulted in over 50 different situations involving abuse. We offered a first-year stipend to five new safe church coordinators through our designated coordinator fund. In addition, we sponsored various safe church related initiatives through our mini-grant program in British Columbia, Illinois, Michigan, and Ontario. Safe Church continues to add and update resources for churches on our website and on The Network. Over 600 people receive our Safe Church newsletter every other month, and over 30 people have committed to pray for Safe Church using our monthly prayer guide.

Safe Church staff includes one full-time director, Bonnie Nicholas, and one part-time associate, Eric Kas, both based in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, office. Becky Jones works as our volunteer and communications specialist in the Burlington, Ontario, office. She works 10 hours per week for Safe Church and 20 hours per week for Disability Concerns. We are assisted by a volunteer advisory committee (six members), which seeks to reflect the diversity of the denomination with regard to location, nationality, gender, and ethnicity. We believe our mission calls all of us to keep working together. The majority of our work happens through safe church coordinators and team members in congregations and classes throughout North America. We are so thankful for each one! Pray with us for more people to find their calling by serving in safe church ministry.

Safe Church Ministry  
Bonnie Nicholas, director

## Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

### I. Introduction

The Office of Social Justice (OSJ) exists to help the CRCNA address the root causes of hunger, poverty, and oppression both around the world and in our own communities. It does this by raising awareness and educating members, integrating justice into worship as an expression of its core value for Reformed faith, and raising the voice of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with people who suffer injustice.

OSJ assists the CRC in responding to social justice issues identified by synod—primarily hunger and poverty, climate change, immigration and refugees, the sanctity of human life, religious persecution, and restorative justice.

The Office of Social Justice equips the CRC to “do justice” and participate in advocacy in three main ways: (1) through individuals or groups in congregations, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions, and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships.

The Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice had its first meetings this year, beginning its work of assisting OSJ, as stated in its mandate, in “effectively addressing all relevant levels of U.S. government on significant and pressing issues of the day from an integrally biblical, theological, and confessional perspective, expressed in terms of a Reformed worldview, emphasizing whenever possible the official positions of the CRCNA as adopted by synod” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 45).

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Our primary calling area is *mercy and justice*, and our instructions from synod have focused on several primary issues to organize this work:

#### 1. Hunger, poverty, and biblical social justice

- OSJ’s primary partner is World Renew—together we seek to ensure that concern for and solidarity with the poor is an integral part of the calling, worship, community, and identity of the Christian Reformed Church. We also partner with Bread for the World, Canadian Food Grains Bank, and other ecumenical organizations that specialize in a Christian response to hunger and poverty.
- OSJ’s unique role is to ensure that advocacy—changing the laws, policies, and systems that contribute to hunger and poverty—is one of the many ways that CRC congregations respond to God’s call to care for the poor. We offer education and opportunities for engagement through social media feeds, blogposts on *Do Justice* ([dojustice.crcna.org](http://dojustice.crcna.org)), and congregational workshops and learning opportunities that focus on the role of policy-making in eliminating hunger’s root causes.
- In partnership with World Renew, we garnered over 500 messages to Congress on the importance of poverty-focused development assistance.
- OSJ partnered with World Renew to create the second printing of the small group Bible study *Live Justly*.

## 2. Climate change

- Our Climate Witness Project—a joint project with World Renew—has ten regional organizers across the United States and Canada to help equip CRC members in their region to learn about the realities of climate change, take steps to better steward resources, and advocate to their elected representatives.
- More than 120 churches are Climate Witness Partner churches.
- CRC members in both the U.S. and Canada had 35 legislative meetings with their elected representatives to urge strong action on climate change, as a matter of creation stewardship and love for our neighbors.
- Together with the Climate Witness Project’s regional representative, Henry Brouwer, OSJ offered a six-week Climate Care Series in Classis Hamilton.
- In partnership with several CRC churches across West Michigan, the Climate Witness Project helped organize the Cooler/Smarter workshop series. This was a seven-session workshop series designed to help individuals and families who wanted to get serious about reducing their carbon footprints. The workshop series brought together over 200 CRC members who made commitments to shrink their personal carbon footprints.

## 3. Immigration and refugees

- In 2019 more than 90 congregations across the U.S. partnered with OSJ to educate and equip themselves to engage in immigration and refugee justice.
- CRC members responded enthusiastically to action alerts in support of refugees and immigrants, with more than 10,299 online advocacy actions taken by people in both the U.S. and Canada.
- In the U.S. we partner with the RCA to equip six immigration organizers who support churches in their regions in loving and advocating with their immigrant neighbors. This team traveled to San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Mexico, for a mobilizing training trip in August, and they have facilitated, presented, and provided resources in their own contexts throughout 2019.
- CRC members across North America tuned in to OSJ’s “Immigration Is Our Story” audio series, which shared the immigration stories of six CRC/RCA members through StoryCorps-style interviews with loved ones. These stories were used to engage congregants in their own families’ immigration stories in our immigration workshops.
- More than 3,600 subscribers from CRC and RCA congregations across the U.S. received our monthly Immigration newsletter in 2019, which provided updates on worship resources, educational opportunities, advocacy actions, immigration news, and the regional mobilizing of congregations with regard to immigration, refugees, and biblical advocacy.
- Nearly 45 CRC congregations were represented at the “Rise for Refuge” event in August in support of a robust refugee resettlement program in the United States. Nearly 270 people participated,

70 postcards and 310 emails were written to elected officials, and dozens of participants signed up to mentor, support, and/or advocate for immigrants and refugees in their West Michigan communities.

- Pastors and congregants from more than 15 Iowa CRC churches engaged with OSJ on immigration and biblical advocacy in November through a pastors coffee hour, an immigration storytelling workshop, and a panel discussion on faith and immigration.
- Members of nearly 30 different CRC congregations across the country put their biblical call to “do justice” into action by participating in meetings with elected officials to advocate for just and humane U.S. immigration policies.

#### 4. Sanctity of human life

- This year’s Sanctity of Human Life Sunday materials, which focused on the intersection of racism and abortion, were used in 322 churches.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about ending abortion and supporting people vulnerable to abortion via social media.
- We shared a series called “Pro-Mama” on our *Do Justice* blog, calling attention to the ways the church can support vulnerable women as a way of protecting the sanctity of human life.

#### 5. Religious persecution

- We made available materials for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, which focused on the plight of Korean Christians.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about persecuted Christians and other religious minorities via social media.
- OSJ staff members were invited to join a gathering of women clergy in Israel and Palestine to better engage with Palestinian Christians, paid for by our partner Churches for Middle East Peace.
- More than 1,000 people read an article in our five-part *Do Justice* series on religious persecution around the globe.

#### 6. Restorative justice

- We shared regular posts and discussion about mass incarceration, criminal justice reform, and restorative practices in criminal justice and in congregations via social media.
- OSJ’s director attended a one-day seminar on restorative practices conducted by Shalem Mental Health Network along with other denominational staff.

B. In addition, OSJ contributes to the CRC’s other calling areas:

##### 1. Faith formation

OSJ naturally engages younger generations. This year we engaged in strong connections with young adults through immigration workshops in Christian elementary and middle schools, consulting with Christian high schools for engagement in social justice issues, growing youth engagement with *Do Justice*, encouraging young-adult leadership in the Climate

Witness Project, supporting youth-led justice initiatives like the Faith and International Development Conference at Calvin University, and expanding our social media coverage of timely issues. Young people make up the largest portion of our *Do Justice* audience: just under one third of our readers are under age 34, and more than 50 percent are under age 44.

Our regular e-newsletter, *OSJ News*, has a subscription list of almost 7,000 people and continues to grow. In it we offer ways to integrate justice and advocacy with the faith commitments of Christians—from worship and prayer to advocacy and education.

## 2. Servant leadership

*Do Justice*, a blog in partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue, is a diverse, Reformed space for thoughtful voices in the denomination about issues of justice and faith today. The blog specifically elevates the voices of marginalized people on justice issues. Of our 13 regular columnists, six are people of color. Overall, 34.5 percent of *Do Justice* writers are people of color.

The Climate Witness Project connected with several congregations about opportunities to add solar and other energy-saving measures to their buildings.

OSJ partnered with Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, Faith Formation Ministries, World Renew, and five congregations to empower a group of young people to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. The students visited with elected officials and learned about the value of using their own faith stories to advocate for justice.

## 3. Global mission

In partnership with World Renew, the Office of Social Justice helped congregations deepen their understanding of the impacts of the climate crisis through a film series and accompanying Bible study titled *Bangladesh: The Canary in the Coal Mine*.

For more than ten years OSJ has partnered with World Renew to equip churches to understand and seek justice by means of the Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project, facilitated by a full-time coordinator. A part-time staff member in Canada also supports the CJM project in partnership with other Canadian ministries. The work of CJM helps to integrate advocacy and systemic-justice work into the spectrum of ways that CRC members are called to engage with poverty and injustice around the world.

Two members of the Climate Witness Project team, in partnership with the Christian Climate Observers Program (CCOP), were able to participate in intergovernmental climate talks in Madrid, Spain. During their visit they also joined with a local congregation for worship and a time of prayer for strength and wisdom for world leaders to act on climate change.

## 4. Gospel proclamation and worship

Our Advent devotional series—a joint effort with World Renew—continues to be our most widely read and shared publication, with over 3,700 subscribers this past year.

We offer fresh content for worship every week through *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly post on our *Do Justice* blog that highlights pressing justice issues from around the world, with written prayers appropriate for individuals, small groups, and congregations. These posts have a subscription list of more than 3,500 people and are viewed on the web by scores more.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

All of OSJ's work focuses on churches connecting with individual members, groups, or church leaders to better provide the resources needed to steward our power in ways that honor the dignity of people who are poor and marginalized. We do this through individual coaching and conversations, providing unique resources for unique requests, and connecting with partners on a myriad of issues.

Our most popular workshops, which were developed at synod's request and are regularly offered throughout the denomination, continue to be helpful to congregations seeking to take steps to engage in justice and advocacy.

- We offered 120 Church between Borders workshops in U.S. congregations this year, educating members about the process for immigrating, the history of immigration policy, Scripture's guidance in considering the issue of immigration, and how to raise a collective voice for justice.
- We shared the Journey with Me experience with two congregations, one Day of Encouragement gathering, and one Partnered Conference in Canada.
- Our Climate Witness Project, conducted in partnership with World Renew, worked with more than 400 congregational members in more than 60 CRC churches across the U.S. and Canada to respond to the biblical call to love our neighbors and be good stewards of creation through film screenings, legislative meetings, and energy efficiency.
- The Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy workshop, with CRC partners in Canada, has equipped over 200 CRC members to engage in biblical advocacy. On the basis of its success, we have adapted it for use in U.S. congregations for 2020.
- We also provide focused training and leadership development through the Blanket Exercise, Advocacy 101 workshops, and restorative justice consultations and trainings.

The Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a rewarding and 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.

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action  
Reginald Smith, director



## World Renew

### I. Introduction

#### A. *Mandate*

In 1950 the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) was formally asked to “consider the advisability of appointing a Synodical Diaconal Committee” (*Acts of Synod 1950*, p. 63). By 1962, synod approved the formation of the denomination’s diaconal agency. Its mandate was “to minister in the name of our Lord to those distressed by reason of the violence of nature, the carnage of war, or other calamities of life, and to relieve the suffering of the needy in the world.”

For 57 years World Renew has fulfilled this important diaconal mandate, reaching out in Christ’s name to people in need around the world. In its essence and existence, World Renew works to respond to God’s call for justice and mercy, for those who live in the daily grasp of extreme poverty, hunger, and disaster. Because we serve a God whose heart is most concerned with those who are oppressed, we seek to bring his renewed hope to a broken world.

#### B. *Mission and ministry*

We give thanks that in 2019 God’s awesome, unchanging power and glory were visible through World Renew’s work—in changed stories, improved futures, and transformed lives. As we worked with local church partners, many people who once struggled with poverty, hunger, and illness now testify to new hope and strengthened faith in God that continues to be nurtured through the church.

Your prayers, involvement, and support created opportunities, through 80 church and outreach partners, for a total of 918,663 participants in 31 countries to develop stories of new-found strength and hope. Many people experienced transformation at fundamental levels through World Renew because they encountered God’s truth about who they are in Jesus Christ.

Through community development programs in 1,330 communities, World Renew reached 241,154 participants in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, community health, and peace and justice. They were able to build new health, agriculture, livelihood, and leadership skills that improved their living situations in the long term. World Renew was also active in disaster response in 24 countries in 2019, assisting 677,509 people with emergency food assistance, clean water, shelter, livelihood rehabilitation, and long-term home repair and rebuilding.

World Renew does not receive CRC ministry shares, but, rather, depends primarily on the generous donations and offerings of God’s people to support its mission in communities of poverty. In 2019, World Renew received more than \$28 million (USD) in gifts from generous individuals and churches. This work was supported by 2,784 volunteers from more than 36 church denominations who donated their time and gifts to people in need, totaling 243,196 hours of time, or the equivalent of 121 full-time employees. In Bangladesh, Honduras, Malawi, Madagascar, and Niger, 12 International Relief Managers volunteered their time to serve in places of greatest need.

Everywhere World Renew works, its goal is to help bring systemic, generational change in five key impact areas. We partner with local churches and organizations around the world to bring holistic programs that transform

communities in food security, economic opportunity, disaster response, community health, and peace and justice. Compelled by God's deep passion for justice and mercy, we work alongside partners and communities, building programs in every area of need, bringing renewed hope to a broken world. This holistic approach to World Renew's mandate, mission, and ministry contributes in various ways to each of the five core ministry priorities of the Christian Reformed Church: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship.

Because of the integrated nature of World Renew's work in addressing the whole person, it touches all five of the CRC's ministry priorities but contributes mainly to the church's mercy and justice ministry and servant leadership development. World Renew's work is not only integrated; it is a fully fledged collaboration by the church of Jesus Christ with Christian partners who help people in need, advocate for justice, train local leaders, and develop biblically based community values that strengthen the message of the local church around the world.

In 2019, World Renew continued to fulfill its mission to "engage God's people in redeeming resources and developing gifts in collaborative activities of love, mercy, justice, and compassion." While the stories of men, women, and children around the world were touched by poverty, disaster, and injustice, the practical ministry of World Renew presented people with opportunities for renewed hope.

Through your prayers, involvement, and financial gifts, you helped World Renew to change the story of poverty so that thousands of people who own very little in this world now have the opportunity to change their lives for the better. And when people change their lives, they can influence others in their communities to make positive, permanent changes to their lives as well. God's love for us is infectious; his good and perfect gifts never fail. Thank you for your involvement that has helped to make these changes—and so much more—possible.

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17).

## **II. Reflecting on Our Calling**

### *A. Faith Formation*

#### **1. North America**

##### **a. Church and family education and classical support**

In 2019, World Renew continued to build on existing relationships with churches and schools and created new connections with educators and church members. As in previous years, World Renew board delegates or staff attended a classis meeting, by-and-large once per year, to discuss World Renew's ministry. Through these conversations, which can take the shape of presentations from a podium or conversations around dinner tables, representatives also informed classes and churches about the agency's work and heard where classes and churches would like World Renew to focus its ministry.

World Renew also continued to develop relationships with deacons by cofacilitating workshops at various classis and congregational



meetings and providing information about interacting in both local and global communities. Several of these “Helping without Harm-ing” workshops were offered last year. In Canada, World Renew and Diaconal Ministries Canada have spent considerable amounts of time together developing structured ways to combine diaconal efforts and engagement, to the point where a memo of understanding has been developed. In the U.S., a church with community coordinator has been hired in collaboration with the Office of Social Justice and Pastor Church Resources to network and equip deacons and other church leaders to engage their communities in transformational practices.

Throughout 2019, World Renew’s church and community engagement team made opportunities to talk personally with churches. Staff, board delegates, and ambassadors met with deacons, council members, and pastors. There were also many opportunities for team members to speak during church services and during various church-related events and activities (small groups, Sunday school, youth groups) to share about the work of World Renew. With respect to church and family education, the World Renew annual gift catalog continues to create new resources that both churches and families can use. These not only increase support for World Renew’s work but also provide educational tools for Sunday schools and families.

The church and community engagement team continued to create an extensive variety of workshops that are available to churches and subchurch groups across North America. Topics for these workshops included evaluating mission trips, understanding poverty, living out justice, learning about disaster response, and walking with refugees. Currently 17 workshops are available for churches and church groups to use. The team has been developing a list of regionally available speakers for churches, subchurch groups, schools, and individuals. The response to these workshop offerings has been very positive. The church and community engagement team has also continued to develop webinars on specific topics.

b. Christian schools, colleges, and universities

Dynamic, vibrant, and growing connections between Christian Schools International (CSI) institutions and World Renew are forming and bearing fruit educationally, spiritually, and financially. Last year World Renew staff visited 82 schools. Many schools also connected with World Renew’s work through our gift catalog, which they used for learning and raising support. World Renew staff made 39 academic presentations on poverty and disaster in elementary, middle, and high schools. World Renew staff also facilitated workshops at several educator’s conventions in 2019.

The King’s University in Edmonton, Alberta, has an emeritus staff member who is supported by World Renew and is instrumental in initiating various constituent events in northern Alberta. World Renew’s Canada director also continues to teach a course on community development at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

In response to a request from schools, World Renew is again facilitating an educator’s learning event in July 2020; the ten-day event in

2019 was particularly successful for Christian educators. Students, particularly those in the senior grades, are involved in implementing justice and advocacy initiatives as they work through *Live Justly*, a study guide available in U.S. and Canadian versions. World Renew will continue to deepen these partnerships and facilitate more learning opportunities in the year ahead.

c. Refugee Office, Canada

In Canada, World Renew's Refugee Program has the privilege of supporting sponsoring churches and groups from coast to coast as they welcome refugees to their communities and walk alongside them during their resettlement.

Over the past fiscal year, 47 Christian Reformed Churches across Canada welcomed 206 refugees through the refugee program. World Renew is grateful for the many ways that churches have extended a generous welcome to displaced individuals and families seeking safety and a new life in Canada.

The global refugee crisis continues to worsen, and there are now over 70.8 million displaced people around the world living mainly in developing countries. The demand for sponsorship remains very high. World Renew receives requests for sponsorships from many different church agencies and individuals from around the world seeking to find solutions for the many refugees in need of protection. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm from Christian Reformed churches in response to this need as this important work continues to be strong in Canada.

2019 marked the 40th anniversary of the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program in Canada and, with it, the 40th anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada's involvement in refugee sponsorship. Celebration events took place in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Churches, sponsored refugees, and communities came together to remember how new friendships were formed and to give thanks to God for his faithfulness in bringing communities together and offering hope and peace to many refugees.

For Rick DeGraff, an event organizer and a member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, the events were an opportunity for both sponsors and refugees to tell their welcome stories: "The celebration of the World Renew refugee program in Ontario not only allowed us to give thanks as sponsors; it allowed the families we brought to Canada to say thank-you in a special way. . . . It affirms that the church can be a relevant community that embraces people who have lost every everything and gives them a new start."

2. International volunteer opportunities

More than 500 global volunteers participated in justice and compassion ministries with World Renew in 2019. Their presence in communities of poverty and disaster was a catalyst for change in their own hearts and in the hearts of the communities where they lived and worked. Their testimonies are a powerful witness to the formation of their own faith in the context of global ministry.

In 2019, World Renew's service opportunities placed people in relationships where they can build each other up, learning and sharing together.

By relating to those who live in poverty as God's imagebearers, people of faith truly serve others. While serving, they grow in Christ, who changes stories by his power and grace.

*B. Servant leadership*

Servant leadership is considered a key outcome of World Renew's activities. World Renew's ministry addresses the pain of a hurting world as the corporate expression of the office of deacon in the church. As such, World Renew raises up and equips servant leaders locally and globally to develop and exercise their gifts so that they can minister in their community, nation, and world.

1. Global Volunteer Program

World Renew's Global Volunteer Program (GVP) offers opportunities for collaborative learning through international internships and long-term volunteer placements. GVP placed 511 volunteers in ministry positions in 2019, offering a variety of opportunities to serve and learn while deepening their relationships with Christ and others.

There are individual placements for people to use their gifts and skills in communities in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Focusing on congregations, World Renew's Global Partnership Program brings together churches that are seeking to develop lasting, in-depth relationships with other Christians internationally.

International opportunities for student and youth groups provided volunteers with one-week service-learning trips. This included the Embark discipleship program and short-term opportunities for individuals and teams. Young adults also engaged in college semester programs and three- to six-month immersion opportunities.

2. Disaster response volunteer programs

a. International relief managers

Each year, individuals choose to serve Christ through volunteering with World Renew's international relief manager (IRM) Program. These volunteers are highly specialized and provide management support to World Renew and local partner organizations in the context of international disaster work.

In 2019, 12 IRMs served in Madagascar, Bangladesh, Honduras, Niger, and Malawi. In Madagascar, IRMs worked with a local organization to implement a project that provided food to 1,350 families experiencing significant drought and crop failure. In Bangladesh, IRMs contributed to World Renew's response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, helping to provide food assistance to over 60,000 refugees. In Malawi, more than 2,500 families were affected by Cyclone Idai last year. World Renew IRMs helped to support the distribution of immediate food assistance, as well as maize and bean seeds to plant for the next harvest. Each family also received a goat.

Without the support of IRMs in these and other countries around the world, these World Renew responses to international disasters could not have taken place. We are incredibly grateful for the service of our IRMs, who continue to make the ministry of World Renew possible.

b. World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers in North America

World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers gave their time and talents to help clear debris, assess needs, and rebuild homes after disasters in North America last year. DRS volunteers from the U.S. and Canada connected with more than 2,300 households in 53 communities to assess their needs. DRS volunteers also rebuilt 290 damaged homes, helping to give families new living spaces and new hope in Christ.

World Renew DRS volunteers are general and skilled laborers, building estimators, construction supervisors, plumbers, electricians, cooks, site managers, and regional, project, and area managers who donate their specific experience and skills to the ministry.

DRS volunteers continue to respond to communities still recovering from six major hurricanes that hit the Gulf and East Coasts of the United States in the past few years—Hurricane Matthew in 2016; Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017; and Hurricanes Florence and Michael in 2018. World Renew DRS completed its response to Hurricane Matthew in 2019 and celebrated this milestone with thankfulness to God.

DRS volunteers helped “elderly widows who were trying to safely navigate warped, uneven flooring in their homes two years after Hurricane Michael struck Florida,” shares DRS director Bob Laarman. “We fixed homes for single parents with little kids who were sick because black mold was growing in their home. We built wheelchair ramps for veterans who were struggling to get in and out of their houses.”

3. International development programs

World Renew's international development programs are strengthened through their implementation by servant leaders from Christian partners and churches in local communities. World Renew comes alongside these partners in ways that strengthen their capacity to lead transformation in their communities. This includes strengthening organizational and board capacity, coaching in nonprofit management and governance, facilitating monitoring and evaluation, and promoting accountability and transparency.

Leaders who follow Jesus Christ, reflecting a servant's heart in their work in their churches and communities, mobilize local congregations to become catalysts for change. World Renew works to empower its partners, pastors, and laypeople so that they are equipped to organize and implement their own community development, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

C. *Global mission*

Though World Renew's work around the world falls primarily into the ministry priority of mercy and justice, it is work done in the context of global mission. World Renew works alongside other CRC agencies, as well as other churches and denominational partners, to accompany each other into the daily living of local communities. While World Renew supports the work of CRC agencies in many countries, we also take an ecumenical approach to our partnerships, extending far beyond traditional CRC relationships. Our disaster response work in Zambia represents collaboration between many churches and denominations.

In Zambia, World Renew works with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), a 15-member organization working to end global hunger and to help alleviate hunger related to the recent drought. In fall 2019 the United Church of Canada (UCC)—a member of CFGB—joined with World Renew to reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and increase food security for 4,000 of the most vulnerable families struggling through the drought crisis in Zambia.

Through CFGB, the UCC is sharing over \$874,000 (CDN) for World Renew's drought response project in Zambia. Working with the United Church of Zambia, a World Renew and UCC partner, this project is addressing local challenges of undernutrition and poverty for the people of the west Zambia province of Mwandi. A monthly ration of maize meal, millet flour, beans, oil, and salt meets immediate nutritional concerns and increases communities' daily food intake. A distribution of millet and cowpea seeds to 4,000 households for the next planting season will address longer-term hunger needs.

A community leader in the tiny, remote village of Kalundu greeted World Renew workers with touching words of gratitude: "The people of Kalundu . . . are grateful for your reappearance in the field, for people were really in need of assistance. You are God-sent; you make us recall . . . when Jesus fed the 5,000." Thanks to the gifts and prayers of believers here in North America, Zambian communities know that God has not forgotten them, and they have found provision for their families and hope for rain.

Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde, general secretary of the United Church of Zambia, stated, "We are so very grateful to have two partners in World Renew and the United Church of Canada who can come to the assistance of Zambians at their time of need." World Renew gives thanks for these special relationships that have allowed us to work together as united organizations to provide food assistance to 24,000 people in Mwandi.

In every place where World Renew works, we partner with Christian denominations and community organizations to reach out to communities with the greatest needs. We are grateful to work with these partners to improve ministry capacity and to create opportunities for people to lift themselves out of poverty.

#### *D. Mercy and justice*

The CRCNA formally acknowledges mercy and justice as integral to its mission, vision, and calling. In World Renew's global ministry of community development and disaster response, mercy and justice are inseparable in experiencing the wholeness that God intends for all people, particularly for those who contend with extreme poverty, hunger, and the effects of disaster.

In all areas of our work, World Renew relies on God's mercy and justice to renew hope for people around the world. God has graciously chosen us to continue the healing work of Jesus Christ as we await his return and the full reconciliation of the creation to God.

#### **1. International community development**

In 2019, World Renew touched the lives of more than 240,000 people in impoverished communities around the world. World Renew's community-based programs in food security, community health, economic opportunity training, and peace and justice helped families and individuals improve their way of life where the basic essentials of life, such as food, healthcare, and education, are often out of reach.

As an essential part of our work, World Renew helps toward providing greater economic opportunity for families through our Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program. World Renew facilitated 400 VSL groups with 10,000 participants in 18 countries. The main goal of this program is to provide financial stability for families by forming community savings and loan groups, which help families gain access to goods, services, resources such as loans, and markets needed to create livelihoods and to provide life's essentials. In these groups, 15 to 30 members make weekly savings deposits into a group fund. They then manage the funds themselves, making decisions about the amount of each loan and helping one another find long-term economic stability. Often, the activities of the VSL groups are integrated with other key areas of impact, such as community health or food security, to provide a holistic approach to poverty alleviation.

In Haiti, World Renew's village savings and loan groups are being integrated by creating economic opportunities for women, who are particularly vulnerable in times of hunger and disaster. World Renew's VSL activities provide loans for women to build their own small businesses and to improve their families' food security. Mireille is one woman whose life has been transformed by this powerful tool.

Mireille is a 56-year-old mother of five children, and she lives in Coraille village in the Leogane area of Haiti. She supports her family by selling rice, sugar, corn, and beans at a nearby market. She is also a member of a World Renew-supported VSLA.

Mireille and her neighbors save money together in a joint savings account, and they can take out small loans with low interest rates and flexible payment terms. Mireille has made huge changes in her life since becoming part of World Renew's VSLA program. "I have been approved for three loans since I started saving money with my group," she said. "I invested it in my business, and it is growing. For the first time, I can feed my children at least twice a day. I am very happy."

Mireille and her group offer each other a strong support network that includes group activities and social events. This broad base of encouragement and accountability helps assure their success. Her family is not only improving their way of life; their community is improving also.

"Women are not entirely dependent on their husbands for income anymore," she said. "Many women in my group now own small businesses of their own, as well. I want to thank World Renew for their commitment to Coraille. I am excited about our future."

World Renew's economic opportunity programs such as village savings and loan groups are powerful catalysts for change because they empower the most vulnerable to make decisions for themselves and to invest in their families' needs. Living in the grip of extreme poverty without banks and other essential services means choices are limited or nonexistent for people in some of the poorest communities in the world. But because of World Renew, thousands of people like Mireille are learning their own value as children of God as they grow in their skills and faith.



## 2. Disaster response

### a. International disaster response

In 2019 more than 70 million people were displaced by conflict, persecution, or disaster. World Renew's International Disaster Response team provided support to many communities worldwide that were affected by these disasters. Women and girls, the elderly, and people with disabilities experienced the effects of many of these crises most strongly. In a world broken by sin, World Renew is privileged to be the hands and feet of Christ in such times of great need. Through the generous support of churches, individuals, organizations, and institutions, World Renew provided assistance to over 677,000 people in 24 countries. The following stories give a glimpse of how faithful prayers and generous support equip World Renew to bring the justice and mercy of Christ to families in crisis.

Amina remembers the life her five daughters once had in Syria—full bellies, a home with olive trees, and a garden. They could play and go to school like any other children. Now war has taken all of that away. As refugees in Lebanon, the girls no longer live in a war zone, but because they are noncitizens, they cannot go to regular schools.

Amina's oldest three daughters (ages 9, 12, and 13) help to support the family as housekeepers or by picking beans alongside their mother. Amina knows her daughters are too young to be working, but the family is barely surviving. Conflict, poverty, and hunger force Syrian families like Amina's to send their children to work. Some parents marry off their young daughters, fearing for their safety. Amina's heart yearns for a better life for her girls.

But World Renew's local church partners in Lebanon are sharing the love of Christ and making all the difference. With this support, Amina and her girls receive food, milk, and other basic necessities. The church also runs an education center so that refugee children can continue their education. Today there is hope for Amina and her daughters as they begin to rebuild their lives. "We are happy with the help that we are getting from the church," shares Amina. "We are thankful for the diapers, milk, and food box—and an education."

When Jeremy Benjamin, a Canadian singer-songwriter, learned about World Renew's work in Nigeria, he was inspired. Violence has forced millions of Nigerians to leave their homes and livelihoods in search of safety. For these displaced families, the challenges of daily life are enormous. Without reliable sources of income, many cannot afford to feed themselves adequately. In 2019, through a Christian partner, World Renew provided 1,200 families with enough cash each month to give them the ability to buy what they needed most. Further, World Renew also provided trauma healing workshops for victims of religious persecution and ongoing internal violence in Nigeria.

World Renew's work in Nigeria inspired Jeremy Benjamin to share stories of transformation with communities in North America from coast to coast, raising money so that World Renew can continue to provide this critical assistance to conflict survivors. By the end of the *I Am Not My Own* tour in the summer of 2019, World Renew had received

\$126,300 (CDN) from the tour, which was designated for World Renew's food security work in Nigeria through CFGB and other partners, as well as for trauma healing. CFGB matched half of these funds 4-to-1, creating a total of \$375,900 (CDN) in ministry dollars.

Throughout the tour (2018-2019), concerts were held at more than 60 churches over 60 weekends. The tour included 150 events and covered 31,000 kilometers of travel. In addition, over 20,000 voices were recorded onto the "I Am Not My Own" track of Benjamin's most recent album. He and his family visited nine of Canada's ten provinces and sang and played at more than 25 percent of all the CRCs in Canada. The impact of this tour on both people in Nigeria and people in Canada has been inestimable, and World Renew is deeply grateful for Benjamin's efforts and support.

Because of the heartfelt and generous support of Christian Reformed churches, church members, and fellow believers in Christ, World Renew has helped to change stories of poverty, grief, and loss into countless stories of hope. We enter 2020 with grateful hearts for all that God has accomplished.

b. Disaster Response Services in North America

In 2019, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) continued to provide volunteer-based assistance in over 50 communities affected by disaster in North America. DRS volunteers traveled to disaster sites to help survivors who were income-limited, disabled, elderly, or otherwise unable to recover on their own, and to help them return to safe, secure housing. The volunteers helped more than 290 homeowners repair, rebuild, or clean up their disaster-damaged homes. The following are messages from World Renew DRS participants whose lives have been changed.

A woman from Dickenson, Texas, whose house was damaged by Hurricane Harvey, left a note: "You don't just fix houses; you helped restore my spirit and gave me hope. Never underestimate the fantastic things you bring to others. Please tell everyone on your crew that there are not enough words to say thank-you!"

Reporting on a needs assessment in Florida after Hurricane Michael, a DRS volunteer wrote: "A woman came back on the last day of the assessment. She raced in, hugged me, and said that since we prayed together earlier that week, she felt a renewed relationship with the Lord. She now knew that she had the strength, with God's help, to move forward."

Through the prayers, involvement, and financial gifts from the Christian Reformed Church and its church members, many people who are struggling to recover from a disaster are now experiencing hope. DRS volunteers not only rebuild roofs, walls, and floors, but they also give people a glimpse of the strength and dignity they will find in the God who loves them.

3. Mobilizing churches for justice

As a CRC agency, World Renew shares in the calling to mobilize congregations to faithfully and effectively pursue "God's justice and peace in every area of life." In 2019, 258 churches in both Canada and the U.S. were involved in justice activities with World Renew. World Renew



collaborated closely with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice to support churches in addressing justice issues in relation to community outreach, poverty alleviation, equity and reconciliation, climate adaptation, peace building, and refugee and immigration policies.

a. United States

In 2019 the U.S. Congregational Justice Mobilization (CJM) partnered with the CRC Office of Social Justice to support 180 congregations, especially in the areas of energy stewardship, creation care, and immigrant and refugee rights, deepening one another's understanding of systemic causes of poverty and advocating on behalf of those who suffer injustice worldwide.

On the topic of creation care, the Climate Witness Project (CWP) mobilized members across the U.S. and Canada to take action to reduce their own energy footprints and to meet with local policy makers to encourage policies that would care for creation at both local and national levels. CWP also empowered an intergenerational group to see the impacts of climate change in person in Eastern Africa, to see how communities in this region are responding, and to return and teach their own communities about what they learned. In response to global climate impacts, sixty member churches of the CWP took action by leading engagement activities in their own communities.

Two members of the CWP team, in partnership with the Christian Climate Observers Program, were able to participate in intergovernmental climate talks in Madrid, Spain. There they also joined with a local congregation for worship and a time of prayer for strength and wisdom for world leaders to act on climate change.

On the topic of biblical social justice, World Renew ran a second printing of the small group study guide titled *Live Justly*. This book leads groups through a journey of growing in the spiritual discipline of social justice as it relates to generosity, advocacy, prayer, creation care, integral mission, and building relationships.

Through a partnership with Accord and the Gates Foundation, World Renew mobilized churches to deliver over 500 messages to Congress, along with in-person meetings, on the importance of poverty-focused development assistance. Participants in the meetings highlighted the work of World Renew with their elected officials and invited their elected officials to strengthen the impact of assistance programs.

b. Justice mobilization Canada

World Renew in Canada is working with the CRC Office of Social Justice, the Centre for Public Dialogue, Diaconal Ministries Canada, and the Canadian Ministries director's office to jointly support a justice mobilizer position. The justice mobilizer successfully completed the three-year pilot for this role, which has now transitioned into a permanent position for justice mobilization in Canada.

Currently the justice mobilizer in Canada is seeking out and nurturing regional and/or congregational justice champions and investing time in listening, coaching, and equipping with resources. The justice mobilizer is working to identify people who are passionate

and effective leaders in the area of justice in churches and regions across Canada. This will help to offer better training and increase their capacity and to give us a ready network of leaders with whom to share justice resources and campaigns. It will also result in better contact and solidarity between people doing justice work regionally, decreasing a sense of isolation and reducing burnout.

The justice mobilizer is also facilitating and organizing regional justice training events. There were 27 justice training events in 2019. These ranged from biblical advocacy workshops that occurred in three provinces and saw advocacy letters sent to dozens of Members of Parliament on issues such as refugee justice, equality for Indigenous education, better support for homelessness, and food security / international aid through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In addition, the justice mobilizer partnered with the Climate Witness Project by supporting Henry Brouwer as he led a six-week climate care lecture series at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario. These events had a record high of attendees (128 throughout the series) from over 23 local churches (about half of which were non-CRC).

The justice mobilizer is leading the pilot project of a Justice and Reconciliation Community of Practice. In this pilot project we want to offer clarity on our calling to pursue justice and reconciliation, to become peacemakers in our everyday lives, and to learn how to do so together practically as we embark on the community-of-practice journey to deepen our mutual understanding and experiences of justice and reconciliation. It is our hope that this twofold approach of *learning* and *practice* will organically become a tool that our Justice and Reconciliation Team can use to coach and mobilize CRC leaders—with the anticipated result that they, in turn, will be able to engage their congregations and regions in the mission and spiritual disciplines of justice, advocacy, mercy, and reconciliation, leading to a greater justice-keeping and peace-making identity within the CRC in Canada. This project is currently at the halfway mark in 2020, and we hope to evaluate and duplicate this model for future use.

A new Justice 101 workshop resource was developed in 2019 and piloted in the fall at a Day of Encouragement event. With some updates, we hope to launch it in spring 2020. This workshop is designed to help churches demystify justice by exploring how the Bible talks about peace and justice, showing how sin leads to injustice, identifying how charity and justice are both valuable but different, and exploring how advocacy and reconciliation are part of how we are called to be peacemakers and doers of justice. Through open discussions on the work being done in local Christian communities to address not only the symptoms of injustice but also the systems and structures that cause it, participants will make personal plans on how they can each take action to do justice!

The Canadian version of the Biblical Advocacy workshop was launched in spring 2019, was downloaded 57 times during the year, and was facilitated in six churches / conferences. The justice mobilizer has been working with the Office of Social Justice to adapt it for use within the U.S. context, aiming for a launch in spring / summer 2020.

c. International justice

World Renew's mandate to alleviate suffering in the world is based on principles of biblical mercy and justice. In justice education, we create opportunities for teaching and learning that are implemented through existing church networks to advance the rights of each person. This includes advocacy action, servant leadership, peace building, and trauma healing.

In Uganda, World Renew is building peace and justice in places of conflict such as the Bidi Bidi refugee camp, where South Sudanese refugees have taken shelter from the war in their country. Phial Dubula Gak, who grew up in South Sudan and fled to the Bidi Bidi refugee camp in Uganda, had used violence to engage with his community and to express himself because that was the only example he had ever seen from leaders in his community background. But when Dubula was chosen to participate in World Renew's trauma healing and peace building training, he started learning another kind of leadership. Through World Renew, Dubula saw how peace building and serving people with compassion and integrity can change a community for good. He also realized that perpetuating stereotypes and prejudice against other tribes is harmful and hurts innocent people.

Now Dubula is a vice youth representative in the Council of the Refugee Welfare System in the Bidi Bidi refugee camp. An eloquent and intelligent young man, Dubula has become known for his courage and kindness. He also serves as a bridge builder and change maker, speaking not only the language of his own tribe but also that of the neighboring Kakwa tribe.

In Uganda and many countries across the world, World Renew seeks to encourage community development based on peace, justice, and equity for every person. Overcoming the trauma, violence, and injustices of the past is critical for individuals and communities to heal and become whole.

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

In communities where the gospel can be preached freely, World Renew openly integrates its Christian faith into its work. In contexts where Christianity is not recognized or welcomed, World Renew establishes common ground through values training that is rooted in our faith, often bringing the first glimpse of salvation into hearts, homes, and communities where hope seems lost.

By working with churches and partners globally, World Renew strengthens both local churches and their denominational structures through essential training that increases ministry outreach capacity and the proclamation of the gospel. In some communities, World Renew works collaboratively with Resonate Global Mission and other CRC agencies worldwide, opening the door to a greater ministry presence through community outreach in development and disaster-response programming.

In other communities, World Renew uses a variety of resources to strengthen churches and community partners through Bible-based teaching. In Niger, World Renew works with churches to empower families to pursue new economic opportunities through village savings and loan groups. For

communities that recently experienced violent persecution, they continued to proclaim the gospel while helping their neighbors overcome poverty.

When a local church in Niger started their partnership with World Renew, they had no idea how much of an impact they would make in their community. In 2015 they had suffered as part of a two-day spree of persecution in which their church building was burned down and their local community became sharply divided. In response, the church organized a village savings and loan association. They hoped to help the whole community to recover.

It was a generous act of hope, and it became a powerful catalyst for change. A woman named Gadji credits the VSLA's solidarity fund—a loan set up for emergencies—with saving her grandson Moussa's life: "Moussa's health was declining rapidly. My husband was very discouraged, saying, 'We will lose him; he will die.' I told my husband that I would go get some money from our group. . . . [Then at] the hospital, we followed the treatment plan, and our grandson was healed!"

Taking out a solidarity loan meant that Gadji and her husband could seek life-saving treatment for Moussa at the regional hospital. Their story is one of hundreds. Today the local church has expanded their reach to include other programs, such as peace building, justice advocacy, and literacy. Once victims of violence, this community of believers is now sharing Christ's love by giving renewed hope to their neighbors.

World Renew's integrated programs represent the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, helping people in need through practical interventions in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, peace and justice, disaster response, and community health—and they also point participants to the saving grace of the Savior who loves them.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)**

#### *A. World Renew church relations program*

##### **1. Offerings**

World Renew does not receive ministry shares from Christian Reformed churches but depends on the generosity of members and congregations who give toward five synodically designated Sunday offerings each year. In 2019 these denominationally approved offerings included the World Hunger Campaign, the Gift Catalog Campaign, Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CDN)/DRS Sunday, Free A Family®/Maternal and Child Health Sunday (CDN), and Thanksgiving Day offerings (CDN, U.S.).

##### **2. Reaching and growing into constituency beyond the CRC**

In 57 years of ministry World Renew has engaged with and blessed many people around the world, from participants to constituents to others involved in the work. As World Renew has grown in vision and scope, it is necessary that the work of this CRC agency is shared, structurally and intentionally, with people beyond our denomination.

In 2019, World Renew continued to develop its strategic planning and research initiative to increase denominational diversity among constituents and partners. The Church and Community Engagement teams in both the U.S. and Canada each have a full-time staff person devoted to increasing participation among "Beyond CRC" (bCRC) churches.

In addition, World Renew continues to partner officially with the Reformed Church in America and the Covenant Order of Evangelical (ECO) Presbyterians.

The goal for World Renew's bCRC program is to identify, connect, and engage bCRC churches with the mission and vision of World Renew, thereby creating long-term church partners in DRS and international program ministries. Church and Community Engagement is working to achieve this goal by doing the following:

- identifying and qualifying partners in the Reformed Church in America, ECO (in the U.S.), independent churches in both the U.S. and Canada, and churches with a history of World Renew Disaster Response Services involvement
- finding networks and partnerships that would lead us to churches and denominations with at least similar organizational structures
- looking for “cluster groups” of receptive churches where our efforts will be most efficient
- creating awareness through marketing, personal contacts, meetings, and conferences of partner denominations and groups
- sharing resources, curriculum, presentations, and access to speakers that provide avenues for education and advocacy for churches that share this affinity

World Renew believes that our ministries help people who live in the deepest levels of poverty to flourish through local Asset-Based Community Development partners, and that our ministries help to provide a necessary response to victims of disaster, so we want to expand these resources to like-minded churches outside the CRC base.

World Renew is also a member of several international collaborative networks, including the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Growing Hope Globally, ACT Alliance, and Integral Alliance. These networks provide access to funding and grants from donors beyond the CRC who also support other member organizations in these networks.

### 3. Events

Throughout 2019, World Renew's church and community engagement team was involved in nine conferences and workshops beyond those planned and implemented by CRC churches or classes, including the Global Leadership Summit, the Hunger Walk, the Calvin University Faith and International Development Conference, the Jubilee Conference, the Wild Goose Festival, the Christian Community Development Association annual conference, and conventions for Christian Schools International.

### 4. Church engagement highlights

The Global Engagement Opportunities (GEO) program seeks to bring the work of World Renew to life for congregations in a meaningful way. There are currently more than 200 active GEO partnerships in North America. With regard to countries and projects in which World Renew works, the GEO program offers churches in-depth information in the following ways:

- GEO offers opportunities for groups to learn more about geographical, political, and other relevant issues in a country they support.
- GEO provides a deeper understanding of how donated funds are put to work.
- GEO updates groups regularly on their chosen region, allowing a more personal relationship with staff in the field and ongoing prayer for the team.
- GEO sends field staff on visits to participating churches so that they can learn firsthand from experts about the work they are partnering in.
- GEO is a great first step toward considering participation in the Global Partnership Program, in which congregations in North America structurally interact with, learn from, and serve congregations and communities in global locations.

In 2019 a dozen Connections tours took place, featuring field staff from all five World Renew ministry teams. These team members participated in approximately 150 visits to churches, schools, and communities across the U.S. and Canada. The GEO team focus in 2019 was to maintain continuity in the program even as a number of field staff transitions took place. In 2020 the GEO team is continuing to plan Connections with churches who appreciate that deeper relationship with the work of World Renew through church services, social events, learning nights, potlucks, school visits, and more.

#### **IV. Board matters**

The World Renew Board of Delegates is a key support of World Renew's ministry. The board's primary function is to set the vision and mission of World Renew and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew's governance structure is made up of delegates from each CRC classis along with as many as 27 members-at-large, who together constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew.

The delegates serve as a vital communication link with CRC classes and churches. They select member national boards, with up to seven members on the U.S. board and up to nine members on the Canadian board. The two boards together form the Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

##### *Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada*

Andrew Geisterfer, president; Edmonton, Alberta

Rebecca Warren, vice president; Edmonton, Alberta

Jason De Boer, treasurer; Jerseyville, Ontario

Margaret Van Oord, secretary; Jewetts Mills, New Brunswick

Lawrence De Graaf, member-at-large; Grimsby, Ontario

Dennis De Groot, member-at-large; Langley, British Columbia

Joseph Hamilton, pastoral adviser; Thunder Bay, Ontario

Sheku Koroma, member-at-large; Brampton, Ontario

##### *Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.*

Charles Adams, president; Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Rachel Conley, vice president; Holland, Michigan



Barry J. Haven, treasurer; Rockford, Michigan  
Monika Grasley, secretary; Merced, California  
Ramon Orostizaga, pastoral adviser; Princeton, New Jersey  
Rebekah Vanderzee, member-at-large; Los Angeles, California  
Shirley VanHeukelem, member-at-large; Denver, Colorado

*A. World Renew board nominations, reappointments, and term completions*

1. Canada member-at-large delegates

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint each of the following nominees to a first term of three years as Canada members-at-large:

*Dr. Gerda Kits* is an associate professor of economics at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta, and is a member of Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, where she has served as a deacon and on the praise team and worship committee. She has served in several ways as a volunteer with World Renew—as part of the Honduras Water Project, as a youth delegate for the global assembly, as a board member and officer, and, more recently, as a member of the Edmonton Caucus that organizes events to promote World Renew's ministry. Gerda has significant expertise as an economist and skills in public speaking that would bless the board in its governance work as well as in engaging with CRC constituents as supporters or moral owners of World Renew. Gerda is recommended to serve as a member-at-large for the region of Classis Alberta North.

*Jane VanderVelden* is a member of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario, where she currently serves as a deacon. She is a recently retired educator with an interest in using more of her time for volunteer service. Her firsthand knowledge of World Renew comes from serving several times as a volunteer with Disaster Response Services. In addition, she has used her gifts within her congregation to organize a SERVE team trip to Muskegon, Michigan, and a mission trip to Manitoulin Island, Ontario, and to provide leadership roles with the praise team and worship committee. Jane is recommended to serve as a member-at-large for the region of Classis Huron.

2. Changing appointment of Canadian member

Mary Blydorp is moving from the member-at-large position to serve as the delegate for Classis Huron.

3. Canada members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members on completing their second term of service: Raymond Prins (Alberta North), Eve Mazereeuw (Huron), Lawrence De Graaf (Niagara), Hans Vink (Quinte), and Rebecca Warren (member-at-large).

4. Reappointment of U.S. classical members

The following U.S. delegates are completing their first term on the board and are recommended for reappointment to a second three-year term: Abbie Schrotenboer (Chicago South), Lynrae Frens (Georgetown), Rod DeBoer (Heartland), Clifford Hoekstra (Iakota), Debra Chee (Red Mesa), Dale Compagner (Zeeland), and LaVonne Koedam (member-at-large).

5. U.S. members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members completing service on the board: Keith Bruxvoort (Illiana), Rachel Conley (Holland), and Larry Stahl (Northern Michigan).

*B. Financial matters*

1. Salary disclosure

In accord with synod's mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E2	2	1	1
H	4	1	3
I	8	4	4

2. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Financial and Business Supplement*.

*C. Human Resources management*

World Renew continually evaluates the excellence of its programs and relies on its human resource (HR) systems to provide support to its teams. World Renew's diverse, professional, skilled staff is expected to meet the goals set around its vision and mission.

World Renew has a rigorous recruiting process and successfully hired more than 30 highly skilled staff last year. We continually expand our recruitment activities to ensure that we meet our diversity and professional learning goals. To that end, we promote professional development and learning, and we continue to develop competencies across the organization.

World Renew is also committed to gender mainstreaming, with the goal of gender equality across our structure and in our staffing processes. As part of its gender plan, World Renew regularly tracks goals for the number of men and women in leadership positions, staff perception about their team's commitment to gender equality, and the participation of men and women in decision-making. In terms of World Renew's leadership positions (those with a job level of 14 or higher), 56.52 percent are held by women.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. This practice gives staff an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and critically review their growth areas. World Renew is thankful for all of its human resources, who are essential to providing program excellence in communities in need around the globe.

*D. Resource Development report*

Last year World Renew was blessed to receive nearly \$35 million (USD) from all sources in the United States and Canada. These funds were then leveraged into greater ministry dollars through grants, partnerships, and collaborations. Through various grants and matches from our funding networks, World Renew leverages every dollar given into \$1.60 in ministry impact.

World Renew's connections to international organizations such as Canadian Foodgrains Bank, ACT Alliance, Integral Alliance, and Growing Hope Globally (formerly Foods Resource Bank) provided technical and financial resources that expanded our reach to more people and communities. For



example, in 2019, as a member of CFGB, World Renew committed over \$9 million in resources toward food- and disaster-related programming. Currently World Renew-Canada director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo serves on the governing and executive boards of both ACT Alliance and the U.K.-based Integral Alliance, further strengthening World Renew's global partnerships and funding resources.

World Renew's fundraising efforts in 2019 resulted in just over \$2 million from grants and more than \$6 million from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for emergency disaster response and food security programs internationally.

World Renew directed approximately \$11.2 million (USD) of its 2019 financial resources toward core international development programs, and \$14.4 million (USD) went to disaster response. Over \$300,000 (USD) was used for community development in North America, and just over \$1.4 million (USD) was directed to constituent education.

World Renew has made great strides in building up its Comprehensive Impact Campaign (CIC). The CIC is intended to grow World Renew's fundraising capacities, strengthen its relationships with CRC congregations, and acquire new churches and donors beyond the denomination. The overall goal is to raise \$200 million to reach 6 million participants in five years to increase ministry impact and to change even more lives. In order to prepare for the launch of this CIC, World Renew is expanding and improving its marketing reach to acquire new donors. One example of this effort is World Renew's website redesign in order to attract new donors and improve user experience.

World Renew continued to receive accolades from nonprofit monitoring organizations for its financial and management practices in the U.S. and Canada, including a high rating (4) from Charity Intelligence Canada and a spot in *Canada's Top 100 Charities in 2019* in the International Aid category. World Renew was also featured in the Canadian national publication *MacLean's*. Each year the publication assesses Canadian charities based on data provided by Charity Intelligence. They look at how each charity spends the money they receive, and how transparent they are in providing this information. This past year World Renew came out with a score of 92.5 percent, placing it in the top 10 "International charities" and in the top 100 charities overall.

In the U.S., World Renew was approved by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance and achieved a Gold Star of Transparency from Guide Star. We continue to maintain excellent standing with Christian monitoring organizations, CCCC in Canada and ECFA in the U.S., and we thank God for these recognitions of World Renew's values: faith, people flourishing, effectiveness, and stewardship.

World Renew used about 15 percent of its resources for administration and fundraising purposes in 2019, meaning that 85 percent of the money entrusted to World Renew by churches and donors directly helped people who experience poverty, injustice, and disaster with community development programs and emergency assistance, providing long-term hope.

## V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Charles Adams, president of World Renew-U.S.; Andrew Geisterfer, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and 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 Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

### Calvin Theological Seminary

#### I. Introduction – Mission Statement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2020 with gratitude to God for his provision through the past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

Calvin Theological Seminary has been involved in the training and teaching of students for ministry for 144 years since 1876 and was the first agency or institution developed by the Christian Reformed Church.

*Mission Statement:* As a learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.

#### II. Reflecting on Our Calling (CRCNA ministry priorities)

Over the past number of years, Calvin Theological Seminary faculty, with input and final approval from the seminary's Board of Trustees, produced a "Vision Frame" document that includes our Mission Statement (*What are we doing?*) and continues as follows:

##### Values—*Why are we doing it?*

*Reformed theology*—All our teaching and formation grow from a shared understanding of God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessions.

*The church*—We are formed by and serve the church, God's agent of hope for the world.

*Cultural context*—We give our students tools to sow the gospel in a multicultural world. We challenge one another to have hearts that engage the broader world God so loves.

*The whole person*—We cultivate meaningful relationships with our students to foster personal and spiritual growth throughout our learning community.

##### Strategy—*How are we doing it?*

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,

- we are known for academic excellence and scholarship.
- we provide innovative learning environments.
- we pursue synergy with our graduates and other ministry leaders.
- we nurture a community of hospitality.
- we enrich the student experience through vital partnership.

##### Measures—*When are we successful?*

When graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary

- preach and teach the Bible (message).
- grow in their pastoral identity (person).
- discern and engage ministry contexts (*context*).
- cultivate and lead communities of disciples (*goal*).
- equip the church to renew communities for the glory of God (*purpose*).

A scan of this material shows significant convergence with the ministry priorities of the Christian Reformed Church in North America:

**Faith Formation**—Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to train disciples who become the trainers of disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Servant Leadership**—Calvin Theological Seminary is seeking to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God. From Dig (formerly Facing Your Future), a program for high school students, to its resident and online education programs followed by continuing education programs and resources, Calvin Theological Seminary is training leaders.

**Global Mission**—The world is at our doorstep. Every year over 25 different nations (this past year nearly 35 percent of our degree-seeking students came from outside the U.S. and Canada) are represented in the student body of Calvin Theological Seminary. The training for global mission takes place not just in classrooms but also over lunch in the Student Center.

**Mercy and Justice**—Calvin Theological Seminary trains students through cross-cultural internships and exposure to environments that help form the hearts of Christian disciples. For example, experience with prison ministry through Calvin Theological Seminary has led students to witness the need for ministry to prisoners and to understand the structures of society that need to be addressed.

**Gospel Proclamation and Worship**—Along with the priority of Servant Leadership this is probably our leading edge within the CRC ministry priorities. Our core degree is the Master of Divinity, which helps to form preachers and teachers of the gospel. This past year we were able to secure long-term funding for our Center for Excellence in Preaching and gained authorization to launch a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree in the summer of 2020 that continues this formation process for practitioners in ministry.

### **III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020 (Ministry Plan)***

Making and maintaining connections with churches is a foundational component of education for Calvin Theological Seminary. Whether this involves church-based internships or assignments related to the local church environment, the local church is the key partner for nurturing, developing, and training students.

In fall 2017, Calvin Theological Seminary set up a new way for M.A. and M.Div. students to fulfill a significant part of their contextual learning requirements. From early on in their program, students are placed in a church or ministry organization where they serve for two years, concurrent with their course work, through internship hours coordinated with churches during the ministry year. The office of Vocational Formation, led by Geoff Vandermolen and administrative coordinator Chris Wright, continues to develop partnerships to help bridge the classroom and the church.

The following organizations and churches are part of this concurrent, contextual learning approach: Ada CRC, Ada, Mich.; Blythefield CRC, Rockford, Mich.; Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Mich.; Calvary Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Campus Ministry at GVSU,

Allendale, Mich.; Central Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Christ Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Mich.; The Community Church, Ada, Mich.; Creston CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Encounter, Kentwood, Mich.; Evergreen Ministries, Hudsonville, Mich.; Faith Community CRC, Wyoming, Mich.; First CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Fuller Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Hanbit CRC, Rolling Hills, Mich.; Heritage CRC, Byron Center, Mich.; inSpirit Church, Byron Center, Mich.; InterVarsity, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Korean Bible Church, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Lee Street CRC, Wyoming, Mich.; Living Water CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Madison North, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Madison Square Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Mayfair Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; River Rock Church, Rockford, Mich.; Second CRC, Byron Center, Mich.; Tabernacle Community Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Because internship hours may now occur during concurrent internships throughout the academic year, we have opened a new way of connecting students to churches for summer service. We appreciate the number of churches that have served as “additional” places of formation, including these cross-cultural and international sites: David’s House, Wyoming, Mich.; Iglesia de Dios, Las Vegas, Nev.; Mel Trotter Ministries, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Mosaic Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Shenandoah National Park (A Christian Ministry in the National Parks), Va.; Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada (A Christian Ministry in the National Parks), Alta.; and Women’s and Ethnic Ministry, CRCNA, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Calvin Theological Seminary also offers continuing education opportunities throughout the year that are open to pastors and lay leaders alike. Many of these opportunities are presented through the Center for Excellence in Preaching led by director Rev. Scott Hoezee.

In January 2020 Calvin Theological Seminary hired Rev. Shawn Brix as its first Canadian Church Relations Liaison (CCRL). The CCRL is a “pastor-ambassador” who builds and strengthens bridges between Calvin Theological Seminary and Canadian churches and ministries. This newly created position is a part of Calvin Theological Seminary’s strong commitment to serving churches in Canada and seeking to imagine and build new partnerships and initiatives. This connecting, listening, and serving role will help Calvin Theological Seminary be more present and available to serve leaders and churches in Canada. Since his ordination in 1995, Rev. Brix has served congregations in Acton and Burlington, Ontario, and he most recently served at Living Hope CRC in Peterborough, Ontario.

#### **IV. Additional program and ministry highlights**

In October 2019 the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees approved two key initiatives:

1. The expansion of our Ph.D. program into New Testament studies as a result of gaining key funding for The Deppe Family Doctoral Chair in New Testament as well as scholarships for Ph.D. students. The Ph.D. program began in 1992 and has served in the formation of leaders for the global church.
2. The distinctives or values of our soon to be launched Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree that will focus on applied, contextual learning for a diverse community of practitioners to develop advanced ministry

leadership skills and spiritual formation. The webpage for this program can be found at [calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry](http://calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry).

We appreciate the support of the church and alumni for their encouragement to expand our offerings for academic and ministry leadership for local churches and the global church.

We continue to be blessed by strong support for our hybrid education Master of Divinity Degree program. In fall 2019, 16 new students joined the program, allowing them to remain where they are while receiving a Calvin Theological Seminary education. The launch of the distance education M.Div. degree has created significant interest in Calvin Theological Seminary, and we can now add this to our distance delivery format that includes our M.A. and M.T.S. degree programs. Over 25 percent of our degree-seeking students receive their education through a hybrid (distance and online) or completely online format.

We are excited to announce that our M.A. in ministry leadership degree can be completed entirely online. This streamlined degree is designed for emerging Christian leaders who want to focus their training in a key area of ministry. Students can choose from a variety of delivery formats, including online access so that students can enjoy the life-changing benefits of a Calvin Theological Seminary education while never needing to leave their home community, work, and ministry. This new delivery system will also be helpful in developing certification programs that will expand the scope of theological training to church workers and church leaders. To learn more about this, visit [calvinseminary.edu/ma](http://calvinseminary.edu/ma).

In fall 2019 the Latino/a ministry program, under the direction of Calvin Theological Seminary professor Mariano Avila, launched two new cohorts in its certificate program. One certificate is in Latino ministry, and the other is in family care. There is even a pathway to an M.A. in family care for students who complete both certificates along with Clinical Pastoral Education through a partnership with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. We have twenty-four students currently enrolled in these certificate programs.

The seminary is grateful for 241 degree-seeking students enrolled in the fall semester of 2019-2020, including 113 new students, of which 27 are M.Div. students (18 residential and nine in the distance education program). At the same time we urge the churches to encourage and support women and men who seek additional training for ministry to consider Calvin Theological Seminary.

As we continue to develop ministries and programs to serve the church, Calvin Theological Seminary notes that it is working with the CRC Candidacy Committee to survey key stakeholders to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). It is anticipated that a report on the background, growth, and proposed adjustments to the EPMC program will be provided to Synod 2020 through the Candidacy Committee report.

The following data for the Center for Excellence in Preaching demonstrates the reach of its ministry and illustrates that it is one of the premier Reformed preaching websites:



Average different pastors visiting per month: 12,000 to 14,000

Pageviews in 2019: 500,000

Sessions/visits: 220,000 (about 20,000 per month)

Calvin Theological Seminary, through the Center for Excellence in Preaching directed by Scott Hoezee, received a sustainability grant (2018-2021) from Lilly Endowment Inc. for \$250,000 that will be matched by the Center's budget. This follows a four-year \$500,000 grant program from Lilly that funded an average of twelve Peer Learning Groups of pastors each year. The groups discussed the challenges of preaching in the twenty-first century and explored best practices to meet those challenges. The learning harvested from these groups has many implications for seminary pedagogy. The new grant program will build on that learning and seek to incorporate it into the life of the seminary and in faculty engagement with alumni.

Calvin Theological Seminary also received a sustainability match grant (2017-2019) from the Lilly Endowment for \$125,000 in order to build on several of the goals from our 2013-2016 grant of \$250,000 under the Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers initiative.

The sustainability proposal builds on three of the four components in the original grant:

- research that more fully documents our reality of student debt and its contributing factors
- the importance of financial literacy to better equip future ministers
- greater financial assistance for our students

The two themes of the sustainability grant narrative are (1) stewarding the ecosystem health of Calvin Theological Seminary and (2) a “wellness plan”: more students, more funding, less debt.

We were also pleased to encourage the work of the CRCNA as they were invited to submit a grant proposal under the National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. We had several meetings with their grant developers, offering input from our work, and we were pleased to write a letter of support for their grant submission to Lilly Endowment Inc. titled “The CRCNA Financial Shalom Project.” We were even more pleased that they were awarded the requested grant. We look forward to possibilities of collaboration in pursuing financial shalom in our respective places of ministry.

On September 8, 2015, Calvin College (now University) and Calvin Theological Seminary were blessed to open prison doors by beginning classes at Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, as part of the Calvin Prison Initiative. Twenty new students from within the prison system came together to begin a five-year bachelor's degree program accredited through Calvin University. A total of 94 students are now enrolled in the program. This program began in response to a request from the State of Michigan and is a coordinated effort of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. It is our hope that this “seminary behind bars program” will be used by God to transform not only the students in the classroom but also the prison system as these students are deployed within it. In addition, we testify that professors and students at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary are changed and affected by their involvement in the lives of students

at Handlon. Lord willing, the first graduates of the B.A. program will receive their diplomas on May 11, 2020.

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Eleven of our 19 formation group leaders are pastors, and the other eight are seminary faculty / administration members. They include Mike Abma, Amanda Benckhuysen, Sarah Chun, Darrell Delaney, Chris DeMan, Aaron Einfeld, Lynn Barger Elliott, Doug Fauble, Marc Holland, Chris Klein, David Poolman, Denise Posie, David Rylaarsdam, Jeff Sajdak, Chris Schoon, Heather Strooboscher, Albert Strydhorst, Corey Van Huizen, and Cory Willson.

We are also grateful to pastors and others for recommending great students for the Dig program (formerly Facing Your Future). We celebrate the continuation of this opportunity to train young people and expose them to ministry. During the summer of 2019, 16 high school students experienced theological education at the seminary, followed by a week of ministry in the Chicago area. Churches and individuals can learn more about this vital ministry at [dig.calvinseminary.edu/](http://dig.calvinseminary.edu/). A remodel of this program will occur in the summer of 2020 with the use of the metro Detroit/Windsor area being “home-base” for this ministry and calling exploration.

## **V. Administration**

The seminary administration includes Julius Medenblik, president; Margaret Mwenda, chief operating officer; Gary Burge, dean of the faculty; Joan Beelen, associate dean of academic services and registrar; Geoff Vandermolen, director of vocational formation; Robert Knor, director of development; Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Sarah Chun, dean of international students and scholar services.

## **VI. Faculty**

The seminary 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, participate in 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.

## **VII. Board of Trustees**

The board met in plenary session in October 2019 and via conference call in February 2020. It anticipates a plenary session in May 2020.

The board officers are Curt Walters, chair; Keith Oosthoek, vice-chair; and Heather Garretson, secretary.

Trustees Frank Zee (Region 2), Allen Kleine Deters (Region 4), and Susan Strikwerda (Region 10 at-large) have completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment. The board recommends that synod reappoint each of these board members to a second three-year term.

Completing a second term on the board is Curt Walters (Region 11). We are very grateful for his service and wise counsel to the seminary and to the church.



#### *A. Regional nominees*

The following nominees have been submitted to the classes in Region 11 for a vote. The results of those elections will be presented to Synod 2020 for ratification.

#### *Region 11*

*Rev. R. Scott Greenway* is a pastor at Caledonia (Mich.) CRC. He has served there since 1995, and he previously served as the pastor of Irving Park CRC in Midland Park, New Jersey, from 1991 to 1995. Rev. Greenway has also served on the CRCNA Board of Trustees and on the board of Back to God Ministries International. In addition, he has twice served as president of synod, and he was part of the search committee for the current Calvin University president.

*Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemans* has been an ordained minister since 2014 and is currently a member of Oakdale Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She served in the Office of Social Justice as collaborative program developer from 2013 to 2017 and as racial justice team leader from 2017 to 2018. Rev. Jammal-Hollemans also served as coordinator of the Calvin Theological Seminary Dig program (formerly known as Facing Your Future) in 2019.

#### *B. At-large nominees*

Synod 2019 approved the request by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to add two at-large positions to help the board improve balance with regard to diversity and skill sets. The two at-large nominees to be recommended to synod for election to a first term on the board will be presented by way of the Calvin Theological Seminary Supplemental Report to synod.

### **VIII. Students 2019-2020**

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from Fall 2019 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

#### *A. Denominational affiliation*

Christian Reformed: 101 (42%)

Non-Christian Reformed students: 141 (58%)

Presbyterian: 56

RCA: 17

Other Reformed: 17

Baptist: 6

Other / None listed: 45

Total denominations represented: more than 27

#### *B. Geographical information*

U.S. students: 130 (54%)

Canadian students: 27 (11%)

International students, other than Canadian: 85 (35%)

Korean: 53 (22%)

Chinese: 16 (7%)

Other: 16 (7%)

Total countries represented: 26

C. *Student body*

Male students: 181 (75%)

Female students: 61 (25%)

D. *Programs and students enrolled*

M.Div.: 120

Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 16

M.A. (English): 26

M.A. (Spanish): 6

M.T.S.: 19

Th.M.: 42

Ph.D.: 29

Hybrid/Distance Learning: 65 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)

Certificate/diploma: 5

Unclassified: 9

E. *Nondegree students*

We have 94 students who are part of the joint Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary program known as the Calvin Prison Initiative. We also have a total of 24 students registered in our two Spanish-language certificate programs.

**IX. Recommendations**

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Curt Walters, chair, and Julius 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.

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

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees  
Heather Garretson, secretary

## Worship Ministries

### I. Introduction

Worship Ministries is grateful to be celebrating its fifth year as a “servant of servants.” Our desire is that every worshipping community in the Christian Reformed Church in North America experiences Spirit-filled gospel proclamation and worship that is directed to God, is biblically based and theologically Reformed, and is characterized by creativity, discernment, spiritual vitality, the faith formation of all worshipers, and a call to serve others.

At the writing of this report our 2.3 FTE staff includes Joyce Borger (director), Laura Meyering (administrative specialist), and Diane Dykgraaf (program coordinator). Our regional-advisory committee is made up of Gary Bomhof (Region 1), Elly Boersma (Region 2), Joyce Jackson (Region 3), Darlene Silversmith (Region 6), April Jackson (African-American representative), Christian Sebastia (Latino Consejo representative), and Benjamin Hoekman (Calvin Theological Seminary student representative). We are currently hoping to fill several vacancies.

### II. Reflecting on Our Calling

#### A. Faith formation

We continue to work closely with Faith Formation Ministries and are collaborating on a project aimed at laying out a Reformed approach to the place of children in the worshipping community. Through this project we hope to help set a foundation for further resourcing in this area.

This past year we offered two webinars on the topic of mentoring (recordings are available on The Network at [network.crcna.org](http://network.crcna.org)). *Reformed Worship* (RW) continues to provide resources for children, such as “Five Tips for Using Puppets in Children’s Worship” (Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence, RW 134); resources for teens, “On Engaging Quieter Young People in Worship Ministry” (John D. Witvliet, RW 131); and an entire theme issue related to older adults and worship, including resources for “Planning Funerals with Seniors” (Robert Koornneef, RW 132), and other intergenerational resources.

#### B. Servant leadership

The gathering of the congregation happens most frequently around worship, so worship serves as the locus for much of a congregation’s expression of celebration, lament, and everything in between. This reality is why Worship Ministries is helping to create and identify worship resources for a toolkit that Pastor Church Resources and Resonate Global Mission are developing for Legacy churches.

#### C. Global mission

All Christians are called to be missional wherever God has placed them, and that is why the *Reformed Worship* journal continues to address the connection between worship and the rest of our life—for example, by including an article by the new director of Faith Formation, Chris Schoon: “Pitfalls and Guardrails: Considering Worship and Mission” (RW 132, Mar. 2019).

*Reformed Worship*, with its global audience and subscription base, has been a great platform for learning from people around the world, such as Dr. Isabella Wong, music editor at the Chinese Literature Council, who shared

resources from the Asian Church in *RW* 134. It is also a place where we can learn from each other about multicultural worship: “Call It Worship: A Conversation about Cultural Diversity and Worship” (Angie Hong, Adam Perez; *RW* 133).

Desiring to be a support for worship leaders of churches of all types across our denomination, we have also welcomed the opportunity to be part of the church-planting cross-functional team led by Resonate staff and to have added a church planter to our regional-advisory team.

#### *D. Mercy and justice*

In worship we are reminded of how God wants us to relate to other humans and creation itself. This year saw the conclusion of our collaborative work with the Climate Witness Project, including the opportunity for staff to write on the connection between Easter and Creation Care for the *Do Justice* blog. *Reformed Worship* published an address by Rebecca Warren written for the conference “For Such a Time as This! Worship Meets Justice and the Arts in a Turbulent Time”; the event was a collaborative effort of several CRC ministries and took place at First CRC in Toronto in 2017. *RW*’s theme issue last June on aging adults was also a result of a prior collaboration between CRC ministries—a conference led by Worship Ministries and Disability Concerns the previous year. In addition, aiming to address current issues such as the alarming suicide rate among Indigenous youth, we featured “Praying with Indigenous People: A Prayer for the Suicide Crisis” by Shannon Perez, Canadian Ministries’ justice and reconciliation mobilizer, and Danielle Steenwyk-Rowaan, who served in communications for the CRC’s justice-related ministries in Canada.

#### *E. Global proclamation and worship*

##### *1. Reformed Worship*

One of the key ways we resource and support the worship of our churches is through the publication of *Reformed Worship*. The CRCNA has printed quarterly issues of this journal since 1986, and features have been available digitally since 2016. Not only has it continued as a relied-upon resource for the CRC, but *RW* also continues to support the worshipping community around the world. In fact, for the first time ever, the number of web visitors from the United Kingdom is larger than those from Canada, with significant other traffic coming from the Philippines, Australia, Nigeria, India, Singapore, South Africa, and Ghana. This past year the *RW* site received a total of 508,006 web visitors and 908,032 pageviews. *RW*’s monthly e-newsletter is sent to 6,736 people and has 5,460 Facebook followers, including a new subgroup for choir directors. Currently *RW* has 1,870 subscribers, of which 307 are CRC churches in the U.S. and 204 are CRC churches in Canada.

##### *2. Peer learning groups*

Each year Worship Ministries offers individuals the opportunity to participate in peer learning groups that meet to read one of three books we have chosen. This past year we also formed two online groups, for a total of 10 groups and 58 participants.

### 3. Webinars

In 2019, Worship Ministries offered eight webinars, viewed live by 96 individuals. Topics included communion, mentoring, choosing music, planning for Advent, and general worship theology. These webinars make up just a part of our current library of 22 worship-related webinars available 24/7 on the CRCNA Network ([network.crcna.org](http://network.crcna.org)). We also started a YouTube channel this past year (search “worship ministries crcna” on [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com)). Between the two libraries on these sites, the 22 webinars had 1,371 viewers.

### 4. Endorsed coaches

We continue to work on developing the endorsed coaches program for Worship Ministries and have made a few changes in order to make it more accessible to our churches. Fourteen individuals have applied and are now endorsed by Worship Ministries; their gifts and worship-related experience will be a blessing to the CRCNA. For more information on this program and the endorsed coaches, check out [crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches](http://crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches).

### 5. Denominational support

Worship Ministries continues to support the denomination in additional ways, such as coordinating the worship at synod and serving as the convener of the Bible Translations Committee.

## III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

### A. *The local church*

Worship Ministries works to network with, learn from, and support specific needs of the local church.

This past year we helped a church desiring to celebrate weekly communion by arranging for an online conversation between their worship committee and an endorsed worship coach as well as a Saturday workshop for their congregation led by Rev. Len Vander Zee and worship leader Philip Majorins.

We also helped to plan two events that were requested by local worship leaders, who also participated in the event planning and leading. “Telling God’s Story: A Day of Learning and Inspiration for Worshipers, Leaders, Musicians, and Preachers” took place in Hamilton, Ontario, with 83 attendees and was cosponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. “The Church Sound Bootcamp,” held at South Christian High School in Byron Center, Michigan, was well received by 157 attendees.

We continue to work with Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, to enable a cohort of CRC worship leaders to participate in Samford’s Certificate of Worship Leadership program. This one-year, four-course, fully online certificate is available at a reduced rate only through Worship Ministries, with additional funding available if necessary. Eleven CRC worship leaders received their Samford certificates in 2019, and twelve others are in the 2020 cohort.

In response to a request by Sonlight CRC, Regina, Saskatchewan, for the written sermons related to a five-week series on baptism published in *Reformed Worship*, we chose to test the idea of prerecording sermons that are prepared for a specific context without using any professional equipment or setting. These were produced in relationship with the church keeping

in mind not only their general context but also the specifics of the service itself. A good use of technology while still being incarnational, this experiment turned out to be a success, and we look forward to seeing how this model might be used within the CRC.

While planning to hold our fall regional-advisory committee meeting at a church in Classis Red Mesa, the idea came up that we should spend a majority of our time listening and learning from the churches there. So our meeting group expanded to include an endorsed coach, the director of Faith Formation Ministries, a regional catalyzer, a member of the COD, and the director of ministries and administration. In our three days together we were able to spend time with members from nine churches—physically visiting six of those congregations. We learned a lot and are eager to continue developing relationships with Red Mesa churches and individuals.

Staff also worked to create a welcome packet for new worship leaders, attended the Canadian National Gathering, Inspire 2019, and preached on World Wide Communion Sunday at Fourteenth St. CRC in Holland, Michigan.

Through email, phone calls, and personal visits we have connected with 278 individuals from 211 various CRC congregations (not including RW). Our monthly Worship Ministries' e-newsletter is sent to 2,223 people, and our Facebook page has 466 members.

#### *B. Other partners*

Worship Ministries is blessed to continue to partner with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW), which, in addition to supporting a number of projects financially, supplies us with insightful conversational partners and provides us opportunities to continue to grow and wrestle with larger questions that affect the CRC. In the past year staff have had the opportunities to participate in cultural intelligence training with an eye toward its application in worship and to be part of a consultation on multicultural worship. CICW also supports *Reformed Worship* through the one-day-a-week loan of Kai Ton Chau to serve as its associate editor.

Having deepened our connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada by collaborating on a conference in Ontario, we are looking forward to additional opportunities with that denomination as well.

Worship Ministries  
Joyce Borger, director

# STANDING COMMITTEES





### I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the concept of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee began meeting in late 2004 and was provided with a full-time staff person in late 2007. The committee mandate is available in a document titled *Journey Toward Ordination*, accessible on the Candidacy Committee website ([crcna.org/candidacy](http://crcna.org/candidacy)).

### II. Committee membership

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 following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Ashley Bonnes (2020/1), Rev. Changguk “Joseph” Byun (2020/2), Pastor James Jones (2021/2), Rev. Susan LaClear (2021/2), Rev. Henry Jonker (2021/1), Judy Cook (2022/1), Rev. Felix Fernandez (2022/1), Rev. Mark Hilbelink (2022/2), Rev. Andrew Vander Leek (2022/2), Rev. David Koll (staff), Rev. Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), and Colin Watson, Sr. (ex officio, as acting executive director).

Rev. Ashley Bonnes is completing her first term on the committee and is willing to serve a second term. Rev. Changguk “Joseph” Byun is completing his second term and is not eligible for reappointment. Therefore the Candidacy Committee presents to synod the following slate of nominees for appointment to fill the vacancy:

*Rev. Moon B. Kim*, serving as pastor of Korean Grace CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a 1995 graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. He has actively ministered to Korean students at both Calvin University and Calvin Seminary. Rev. Kim has been a delegate to synod and has been involved in the Korean Council, a denomination-wide fellowship group for Korean pastors. He has frequently served as an assistant in the Korean Institute in Ministry program for new Korean pastor orientation.

*Rev. KangWon Kim* is pastor of Happy Valley CRC in Pleasanton, California. Rev. Kim, with the Happy Valley congregation, affiliated with the CRC in 2011. For the past three years he has served as coordinator of the Korean ministry in Classis Central California. Rev. Kim has also been a frequent assistant in the Korean Institute in Ministry program for new Korean pastor orientation.

### III. Response to synod re protocol for “anonymous candidates”

Synod 2019 was asked to approve four individuals as candidates without publicly revealing their names. The missional reasons behind this request were judged to be adequate, and synod approved the request. Synod also asked the Candidacy Committee to provide a protocol for use in any similar future requests. The Candidacy Committee therefore offers the following Protocol for Processing Anonymous Candidates:

### **Proposed Protocol for Candidates Wishing to Remain Anonymous**

1. Potential candidates may identify themselves as persons who wish to have their identities as candidates protected from publication (in all forms of media).
2. Such requests are based on current or anticipated involvement in a ministry in which being identified as an ordained minister could endanger oneself, their family members, and /or people with whom they work.
3. Any person receiving permission to remain anonymous will complete all the requirements and processes for ministry candidates.
4. To honor the request for anonymity, such persons will be referred to in print and electronic media only by their initials and without photographic images. Their identities and information will be shared only with the appropriate synodical advisory committee.
5. The director of Candidacy will maintain records regarding such persons' eligibility for call, and will communicate with churches and classes as appropriate in order to complete the process toward ordination.
6. Once the anonymous candidate is scheduled for ordination, the Office of Synodical Services will be informed and will make use of a process already in place for ordained persons whose identities are protected.

### **IV. Update on the uses of Church Order Article 8**

Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 1 declares that a church may consider calling a minister ordained outside of the CRCNA and RCA "only if it has put forth a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America." The Candidacy Committee has on numerous occasions in the past 10-15 years reported to synod the challenges in defining and discerning the meaning of "a sustained and realistic effort."

Discerning what constitutes "a sustained and realistic effort" has been a challenge as information systems and search processes have developed greatly and provide churches with many immediate options. In addition, the individual needs and cultures of our congregations are becoming more and more diverse. Thus, standing as arbitrator on whether a congregation should be allowed to move ahead with use of Church Order Article 8 has become increasingly challenging. The Candidacy Committee has nonetheless found it helpful to work with the local congregational leadership and the regional classis leadership to make this judgment in a contextual way.

The most recent report to synod on this matter (see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 262-64) mentioned the use of a program called the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC), involving a specific form of the learning plans required of pastors who affiliate with the CRC via Church Order Article 8. For those local churches and classes that agree that "a sustained and realistic effort" has been made, yet in the opinion of the Candidacy Committee the search has been rather brief, the use of the MEPMC has been agreed to by all parties as a condition of proceeding with Church Order Article 8.

We reported to Synod 2019 that there were currently six pastors, representing congregations in five different classes, engaged in an MEPMC arrangement. We also reported that the Candidacy Committee would keep synod informed regarding this trend. We continue to receive requests from churches, often with classis endorsement, to make use of Article 8 in a situation in which it seems debatable that the search effort conducted has been “sustained and realistic.”

The Candidacy Committee is compelled to live under the authority of synod as it does its work, and it seeks to faithfully represent the mind of the church and to serve the interests of the church as expressed by synod. As our committee discussed this matter, we have agreed that continuing use of the MEPMC in select circumstances is a wise approach.

Therefore we recommend that synod formally endorse the strategy of requiring the MEPMC for Article 8 cases when it seems debatable that a “sustained and realistic” search effort has been put forth or that the situation is in need of contextualization.

## **V. Report regarding the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy review**

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) is designed for potential candidates who earn their M.Div. degree at an institution other than Calvin Theological Seminary. The elements of the program are integrated into the M.Div. at the seminary and afford participants the opportunity to receive required orientation into the CRC as they prepare for candidacy. The Appendix to this Candidacy Committee report describes the history of recent discussions regarding this matter and offers proposals for updates to this program.

## **VI. Review of the committee’s work**

The work of the Candidacy Committee involves many dimensions as the routes to ordination are managed, supported, and considered. In our annual report to synod we have a practice of also sharing initiatives and challenges beyond matters that are presented for synodical action. This year we call the attention of synod to the following:

### *A. Cherished partnerships with classes*

Our work is intimately tied to the work of classes, and we depend on many committed volunteers in order for the work to be accomplished. These include persons who work on classis leadership committees, classis interim committees, and persons serving as classis stated clerks and synodical deputies. We are grateful for the devoted effort of many, and for the respectful attitudes demonstrated as we together seek to apply and shape the Church Order in serving our ordination processes.

### *B. Development of training for new pastors*

As a Candidacy Committee, we have opportunity to observe and celebrate the growing diversity of our denomination as shown by the increasing diversity of persons becoming ordained. We now have vibrant annual orientation events for new pastors in Korean, Spanish, and English, and we continue to consult with regional and ethnic minority leaders in order to fashion a hospitable and sufficiently thorough process so that new leaders can participate in our regional and denominational life.

*C. Two significant resources now updated and available*

Synod 2019 approved updated versions of two resources that explain and guide the work of the Candidacy office. The Commissioned Pastor Handbook presents all the actions of synod related to the office of commissioned pastor. The Journey Toward Ordination document has been used since the inception of the Candidacy Committee as a synodically approved guide for our various ordination processes. Both are now available in print-ready PDF format on the Synod Resources webpage ([crcna.org/SynodResources](http://crcna.org/SynodResources)).

**VII. Recommendations**

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to 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 slate of nominees presented and reappoint Ashley Bonnes to a second three-year term.
- C. That synod note the protocol for approving anonymous candidates, as presented in section III of this report, and receive it as fulfilling the request by Synod 2019 for such a protocol.
- D. That synod endorse the strategy of requiring the MEPMC in Article 8 cases when it seems debatable that a “sustained and realistic” search effort has been put forth or that the situation is in need of contextualization.
- E. That synod approve the formation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, as described in section III, A of the Appendix to the Candidacy Committee report.
- F. That synod endorse the increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans as described in section III, B of the Appendix to the Candidacy Committee report.
- G. That synod direct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, to implement the proposals contained within the Appendix and provide Synod 2021 with a progress report.
- H. That synod take note of the various tasks and challenges identified by the Candidacy Committee in this report.

Candidacy Committee  
David R. Koll, director

**Appendix**

**Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy Review Task Force Report**

**I. Introduction**

Over the past decade there have been many changes in the educational process of the broader academic community. Included in these are the processes of theological education. At one time all seminary students participated in a three- or four-year full-time residential program. Most seminaries

now offer a distance education opportunity for the M.Div. degree, and the timing of the program varies. Seminaries continue to adjust their educational approach in terms of degrees and curriculum offered, and in methods of instruction.

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) once consisted of a one-year program requiring residency at Calvin Theological Seminary following the completion of an M.Div. degree earned elsewhere. In 2006 it became a one-semester program with a required residential component. More recently the EPMC has transitioned to a predominantly online program for coursework, with two required visits for orientation and for reflection, and with a required two-year mentoring relationship that includes making connections at the classis level.

Synod 2005 mandated a major revision of this program (at that time known as the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy), and since that time only minor revisions to the program have been made. It is the conviction of both the denominational Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) that we regularly need to review the program and make adjustments accordingly. Thus in the past two years a task force composed of persons from the Candidacy Committee and the CTS community has conducted a review of the EPMC, as reported to Synods 2018 and 2019 (*Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 204; and *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 668-74).

The work involved gathering input from a variety of partners beyond the Candidacy Committee and CTS. Three surveys were conducted in 2019 to gather input. These included EPMC participants since 2012, classis leaders who work with the ordination processes, and delegates to Synod 2019.

A variety of key insights emerged from these surveys and through related conversations:

- Currently the EPMC requires candidates who earn an M.Div. at a seminary other than CTS to earn nine credits at CTS. Ninety-seven percent of classical leaders agreed that EPMC candidates should be required to earn credits at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- In an EPMC survey to Synod 2019 delegates, we asked the following open-ended question: *What has been your knowledge and experience of the EPMC?* A significant number of respondents wrote comments such as “very little,” “none,” “second-hand,” and “very little to none.”
- In our survey of current and past EPMC students, we discovered that a majority of them chose to pursue CRC ordination *after* deciding to attend seminary, with 27 percent deciding *while attending* seminary, and 41 percent deciding *after finishing* seminary.
- Our survey of classical leaders and synodical delegates indicated a strong desire for the EPMC to help the CRC maintain a Reformed identity. EPMC students affirmed the desire to be grounded in a Reformed perspective while also hoping the program can have greater flexibility.
- Of the ten values identified (see section II of this report), all are judged to be “somewhat important” to “extremely important.” Three of the values rose to the top: (1) a Reformed hermeneutic for handling Scripture; (2) an in-depth knowledge of and commitment to the Reformed creeds and confessions; and (3) a well-formed character, heart, and leadership for ministry.

- Our committee’s analysis of the existing joint (CRCNA and CTS) administration and oversight of EPMC found there is a need to better identify where the authority and responsibility rest for the program.

By the time Synod 2020 convenes, the EPMC Review Task Force will have been meeting for almost two years. This report has been reviewed by a variety of persons, including mentors, representatives of classes, Calvin Theological Seminary, Resonate Global Mission, various ethnic subgroups, and persons who have completed the EPMC program. The report reflects as much as possible the best ideas offered from these diverse sources. You will find below a brief description of the current EPMC program and a variety of statements describing adjustments to the program. It is our intention as a Candidacy Committee, in partnership with CTS, to continue to review the effectiveness of the EPMC on a regular basis and either to report or, depending on the significance of the degree of change, to propose changes to synod. We recommend that Synod 2020 endorse the direction of and approve the current proposals outlined in this report.

## **II. Description of current program**

The current EPMC program has three components: (1) required academic course work as administered through Calvin Theological Seminary, (2) participation in the “24-month candidacy mentorship” as administered through the Candidacy office, and (3) review of vocational formation as administered through the seminary’s vocational formation office. The Addendum to this report lists the current requirements of each of these three categories.

At the risk of becoming too simplistic in describing the guiding values and desired outcomes of the program, ten basic statements can be useful. Students will show or give evidence of

- competency in knowledge of “Reformed standards” (creeds and confessions)
- competency in CRC polity
- knowledge of CRC history, culture, and ministry
- knowledge of the flow, themes, and content of Scripture
- an understanding of a Reformed hermeneutic
- a proficiency in studying the Bible with use of digital tools that access the biblical languages
- a sufficient degree of skill in preaching
- a sufficient degree of skill in pastoral care and leadership, expressed through a well-formed character
- the development of a peer support network within the CRCNA
- an ability to access a rich tradition of general, theological, and ecclesiastical thought

Each of these ten statements is embedded in the current M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary, and each finds expression in the current EPMC.

## **III. Proposed changes to the EPMC program**

The proposals that follow are presented in order to provide greater clarity in administration, greater flexibility in the experience of the program, and



continuing faithfulness to our high values of preparing persons for ordained ministry.

*A. Formation of an Admissions and Standards Team*

We propose the creation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, to be appointed and overseen by the denominational Candidacy Committee. The volunteer team will make admissions decisions and ensure that program participants are supported throughout the program up to the point of candidacy.

1. Team membership, process, and implementation

Details regarding the proposed Admissions and Standards Team include the following:

- The team would consist of seven or eight people appointed by the Candidacy Committee.
- Team members would be selected on the basis of their knowledge of the ordination process, their wisdom, and their ability to recognize the diverse needs of congregations in the CRCNA.
- Calvin Theological Seminary would contribute input to the team through material submitted by the admissions office and academic office. The seminary would also have opportunity to appoint one to two ex officio members to the team.
- The team would review profile material on each candidate applicant and then conduct an interview. In coordination with the interview a learning plan would be negotiated with each applicant, guided by the program requirements described in section III, B below.
- The team would communicate with the regional classis team appropriate for each applicant, serving as a catalyst for active relationship at the local and regional levels.
- The team would also interview each applicant as they near completion of their learning plan. This interview would substitute for the current EPMC faculty interview. The team would then recommend the applicant for interview in the Candidacy Committee process (the Candidacy Committee interview process is where the EPMC process and the CTS M.Div. candidacy process merge).
- For the initial implementation of the team, the Candidacy Committee hopes to secure volunteers who would be served adequately by existing administrative support staff. In the future, additional administrative staff support may need to be requested.

2. CTS contributions

The following current contributions of CTS will not change:

- The admissions office of CTS will gather the application materials required for admission to the EPMC.
- The academic office of CTS will review the transcripts of each applicant and offer input to the EPMC Admissions Team.
- The faculty of CTS will give input to the candidacy process for those completing their degree at the seminary.



### 3. Anticipated results

It is our hope that this process will produce the following results:

- EPMC applicants will more clearly understand that they are applying for a denominational candidacy process rather than a Calvin Theological Seminary program.
- The administrative load of the CTS admissions office and academic dean office will be reduced, limited to their specialized competency.
- The process toward candidacy will have greater continuity.
- Those who give input on candidacy will have greater familiarity with the candidates. The faculty of CTS will no longer be asked to complete candidacy interviews for EPMC students, many of whom they have never met.

#### *B. Greater flexibility in program requirements*

We propose that a more flexible learning plan strategy be adopted, with the inclusion of the following elements:

1. The EPMC Admissions and Standards Team will review each candidate's profile and history and create an individual learning plan appropriate to each student.
2. Ordinarily EPMC candidates will be required to take a minimum of nine credits of study at CTS, and the choice of course selection will be broadened.
3. The guiding values and desired outcomes mentioned in section II of this report will be demonstrated as follows:
  - a. To demonstrate knowledge of Reformed creeds and confessions, students will be required to either take the three-credit Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions course at CTS (residence or online format) or pass an advanced placement test (current cost: \$125).
  - b. To demonstrate understanding of CRC polity, students will be required to take the current 1.5-credit polity course at CTS (residence or on-line format).
  - c. To demonstrate a knowledge of CRC history, culture, and ministry, students will be required to either take the pertinent 1.5-credit course at CTS (residence or online format) or pass an advanced placement test (current cost: \$125). Nonresident students will also be required to participate in two group trips to Grand Rapids, Michigan—as required in the current program.
  - d. To demonstrate a knowledge of the flow, themes, and content of Scripture, students will be required to either complete a three-credit Bible-survey course at an institution judged to be Reformed in nature or pass a Bible-knowledge exam.
  - e. To demonstrate understanding of a Reformed hermeneutic, students will be required to either take a course at an institution judged to be Reformed in nature (including, but not limited to a one-credit online course offered at CTS in January) or pass an advanced placement test.

- f. To demonstrate proficiency in studying the Bible with use of the original languages, students will be required to match the current CTS requirement of 14-15 credits of coursework (six credits in Old Testament Hebrew; six credits in New Testament Greek; plus one additional exegetical course). An optional one-credit digital tools course will be offered. The Candidacy Committee will match the requirements of CTS, including any potential changes to this requirement in the future.
  - g. To demonstrate a sufficient degree of skill in preaching, students will successfully complete either five credits of preaching at an accredited seminary (including, but not limited to CTS) and will submit testimony from three mentors of effective preaching.
  - h. To demonstrate a sufficient degree of skill in pastoral care and leadership and to demonstrate a sufficiently well-formed character, students will complete a minimum of 600 hours of contextual ministry experience, engage in a psychological evaluation protocol (completing any requirements arising from this evaluation), and produce testimony from three mentors regarding effectiveness in pastoral care and leadership.
  - i. To demonstrate the development of a peer support network within the CRCNA, students will submit a recommendation from a CRC classis (or classes) indicating connection for at least two years, and students will also submit letters of testimony from three mentors or peers within the CRCNA.
  - j. To demonstrate an ability to access a rich tradition of general, theological, and ecclesiastical thought, students will demonstrate some undergraduate study in the liberal arts, such as philosophy, history, natural science, and literature. In addition, they must complete an M.Div. or M.Div. equivalent at a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
4. Continuation of elements in the current EPMC and Candidacy program
    - a. The 24-month candidacy mentoring will remain the same, including reports to the Candidacy Committee by an appointed mentor and from sponsoring classes.
    - b. The process for the final stretch of candidacy will remain the same. This process includes gathering documents and material from both CTS M.Div. graduates and from EPMC participants for use by the Candidacy Committee in their work of making recommendations for candidacy to synod.
    - c. The interview process for students seeking candidacy, as administered by the Candidacy Committee, will remain the same. It will be augmented, however, by an enhanced relationship with the EPMC students as potential connections are made through the work of the new EPMC Admissions and Standards Team.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

- A. That Synod 2020 approve the formation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, as described in section III, A of this report.
- B. That synod endorse the increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans as described in section III, B of this report.
- C. That synod direct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, to implement the proposals contained within this report and provide Synod 2021 with a progress report.

#### **Addendum**

##### **Overview of the Current EPMC Program**

#### **ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS**

- Required Courses
  - Hermeneutics (1 credit)
  - Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions (3 credits)
  - Christian Reformed Church Polity (1.5 credits)
  - Christian Reformed Church History (1.5 credits)
  - Digital Tools Course at Calvin Theological Seminary (1 credit)
  - Preaching the Word (2 credits) (may be optional if 5 or more credits of preaching are taken at home seminary)
- Bible Survey advanced placement exam; or complete 3-credit Bible Survey course
- Completion of personal Learning Plan, if required (ref. undergraduate liberal arts studies)
- Biblical Language Competency
  - Two courses in Old Testament Hebrew (6 credits)
  - Two courses in New Testament Greek (6 credits)
  - One exegetical elective (3 credits)

#### **24-MONTH MENTORING REQUIREMENTS**

- “Trip #1” (for nonresident students)
- Seven mentor reports (one initial report plus six others)
- Three classis reports (one initial report plus two others)
- “Trip #2” (for nonresident students)

#### **VOCATIONAL FORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Preaching
  - Apply for license to exhort in the CRC through Vocational Formation office
  - In consultation with mentor, present a report that four evaluated sermons have been presented in at least three distinct settings, due March 1 of candidacy year (report part of mentor recommendation for candidacy – see below)

- Psychological Assessment reviewed with mentor; completion of any recommendations
- Vocational Formation experiences
  - Congregational internship: 600 hours of supervised ministry experience and any additional requirements
  - Vocational Formation Reflection Paper, due March 1 of candidacy year
- Faculty Panel Interview

**I. Introduction**

As the name of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) indicates, there are two distinct and important aspects to our work: *ecumenical* relationships with other Christian denominations and *interfaith* interactions between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions.

To guide the work of the EIRC relative to the ecumenical directive in bilateral (denomination-to-denomination) relationships, we have used synodically approved categories. First is the category of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*—those with whom the CRC has a particular affinity or history. For denominations with which the CRC is in a stage of exploration for a closer relationship, or maintaining the status quo of certain valued relationships that are not intended to progress to the level of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*, we have used the category *churches in dialogue*. The third category is that of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*, where a relationship is important to the CRC as part of the global Christian family. Anticipated changes to the Church Order at Synod 2020 resulting from the actions of Synod 2019 will lead to modified categories in the future. In addition to bilateral relationships, we pursue our ecumenical work with organizations that allow for numbers of denominations to come together in unity.

Our interfaith efforts are led by a subcommittee of the EIRC and, as a result of decisions by the Reformed Church in America's General Synod 2019 and the CRCNA's Synod 2019, we have begun to work together to spur on this work, particularly as it relates locally between and among Reformed congregations and those whose house of worship may be a synagogue, mosque, or temple.

**II. Membership and meetings**

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2020, are Andrew Beunk (2020/2); Lyle Bierma (2022/1); InSoon Hoagland (2020/1); James Joosse (2021/1); William Koopmans (2021/1); Lenore Maine (2022/2); Ruth Palma (2020/1); Kathy Smith (2021/2); John Tenyenhuis (2021/2); Michael Wagenman (2022/1). The executive director and the Canadian ministries director serve as ex officio members of the EIRC.

The EIRC met in October 2019 and February 2020. A conference call meeting is scheduled to be held in April 2020.

**III. Nominations for membership**

Andrew Beunk is concluding two terms of service on the EIRC. The EIRC recommends that synod express its gratitude to him for his faithful service.

InSoon Hoagland and Ruth Palma are completing their first terms on the EIRC, and, given their contributions and willingness to continue, the EIRC recommends that synod reappoint each to a second three-year term.

In keeping with the synodical guidelines and requirements for diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and ordination among the membership of the committee, the EIRC presents a slate of two nominees for the Western Canada position.

The EIRC recommends that synod elect one member to a first term from the following slate of nominees:

Rev. Richard deLange is pastor of Trinity CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. He has been a delegate to synod seven times and has served his classis in multiple ways. In addition, he has served on a mission trip in conjunction with the Nehemiah Center in Managua, Nicaragua, has co-chaired the local ministerial of pastors from a range of denominations, and has organized interdenominational worship services. He has also traveled to meet with and has hosted leaders of the CRC in Cuba as part of Classis Alberta North's relationships with this ecumenical partner.

Yvonne Shenk, a member of Bethlehem CRC in Thunder Bay, Ontario, is the executive director of The Gathering Place, a social services organization. Her denominational and classis experience has involved the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee, the classical mission committee, and service as chair of the search team for the Canadian ministries director. Ms. Shenk has served her church twice as elder and in executive committee positions on the church council. Her work in Thunder Bay puts her in the midst of local challenges dealing with racism, violence, suicide, and addictions.

#### IV. Bilateral relationships

The CRC maintains a relationship of *ecclesiastical fellowship* with 23 denominations and partners with 13 *churches in dialogue*. In addition, we have four partners in the category of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. Of these three categories combined, we have 22 partners on the African continent; five partners in Central and South America (including the Caribbean); two partners in Europe; six partners in Asia and the Pacific Rim; and five partners in North America. A complete list is available on the "Relationships" page of the EIRC website ([crcna.org/EIRC](http://crcna.org/EIRC)).

##### A. Bilateral reports

##### 1. Activities with bilateral partners

Our *ecclesiastical fellowship* arrangement with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) as well as the accord we struck together in Pella in 2014 leads us to many collaborative efforts. The most recent of these is the Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal, which has developed into the *Vibrant Churches* effort led by Rev. Larry Doornbos. In addition, the general synod of the RCA and the synod of the CRC both adopted a plan in 2018 to combine our interfaith efforts. That work has just begun.

One of the RCA's regional synods encompasses all of the RCA's Canadian congregations. Our Canadian ministries director, our current EIRC chair, the leader of the RCA Regional Synod-Canada, and the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC)—a denomination with whom we enjoy a *church in dialogue* relationship—meet together regularly. A pressing issue for the PCC and the RCA is human sexuality and decisions that their denominations will make in 2020.

In anticipation of Synod 2020's adoption of Church Order changes to fully operationalize the new categories of *churches in communion* and *churches in cooperation*, the EIRC has interacted with the CRC agencies that have partnerships around the world. In terms of the 35 non-North American denominations with whom we have a current ecumenical relationship (in any of the three current forms), our agencies have ongoing

partnerships with 15 of these communions. Our work to make the transition to the new categories will begin in earnest after Synod 2020.

## 2. Formal exchanges

The following delegated ecumenical representations to bilateral partners occurred during this past year:

- a. To the general assembly of the Reformed Church in Japan, Lawrence Spalink (Resonate Global Mission)
- b. To the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, Steven Timmermans (as executive director)
- c. To the general assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, InSoon Hoagland (EIRC member)
- d. To the national gathering of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK), William Koopmans (EIRC chair)

The exchange with the NGK deserves special mention. The NGK is in conversations toward a merger with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland Vrijgemaakt (GKv). While we have not had ecumenical relationships with the latter, William Koopmans was invited to speak to the meeting of the GKv while in the Netherlands to address the NGK. This additional invitation was a first for the GKv and the CRCNA, and this opportunity to explain the CRCNA's posture for ecumenical relations may have served to help bring these two groups closer together, thereby potentially providing a new dimension to our ecumenical relations in the Netherlands.

## B. *Changes in bilateral partnerships*

### 1. The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

In April 2019 the EIRC received a communication from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, dated February 8, 2016, giving notice of their having moved us from their category of *ecclesiastical fellowship* to that of *correspondence*. Having responded in writing as a result of the EIRC's October 2019 meeting, the EIRC made the decision to remove the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia from our category of *ecclesiastical fellowship* and to so inform Synod 2020.

### 2. The Reformed Church in Argentina

The EIRC has learned that the Reformed Church in Argentina has split in two, just ten years after the joining of two communions: the original Reformed Church in Argentina and the River Plate group. The EIRC remains mindful of the CRCNA's *ecclesiastical fellowship* with the Reformed Church in Argentina; no communication has been received from the split-off group, now called the Evangelical Church of River Plate.

## V. **Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations and dialogues**

We belong to a number of ecumenical organizations, including the Canadian Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Global Christian Forum, the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Reformed Fellowship. We also participate in important dialogues among those of various Christian faiths. The organizations and



dialogues with which we have made specific connection this past year are highlighted in the following:

*A. World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)*

The WCRC is divided into nine regions, six of which are represented by regional councils. One such group is the Caribbean and North America Area Council (CANAAC). As the director of ministries and administration, Colin Watson has served on the Steering Committee of CANAAC. Rev. Najla Kassab, president of the WCRC, visited Grand Rapids, Michigan, in January and met with some of the EIRC's members. She stressed the importance of active regional groups; in addition, we benefited from learning more about the history and current challenges of the binational (Syria and Lebanon) denomination she serves.

*B. Canadian Council of Churches*

Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda as well as other EIRC members (see section V, D below) routinely participate in gatherings and initiatives of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), an organization ably led by CRC member Peter Noteboom.

*C. Other multilateral organizations and dialogue*

We benefit from partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and we participate in the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue (noting an anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification held in Edmonton, Alberta, last fall with EIRC member Jim Joosse and former EIRC member Karen Norris providing representation). Finally, in response to informal questions and actions, the partnership we had with Sojourners has transferred from the EIRC to the CRCNA's U.S. Office of Social Justice.

*D. Appointed representatives and observers*

The EIRC appoints representatives and observers to many of the aforementioned multilateral ecumenical organizations and to other ecumenical efforts; often Christian Reformed Church members are asked by these organizations to serve as well.

1. Colin Watson, Sr., has served as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and on the Steering Committee for the WCRC's Caribbean and North American Area Council. He has also represented the CRC, alternating with the executive director, to meetings of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. and the Global Christian Forum.
2. Darren Roorda and Michael Wagenman serve on the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, and Kathy Vandergrift serves as vice-chair of the board. Peter Schuurman has represented the CRC on the Commission of Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches and is being replaced by CRC member Jessica Joustra. Working groups from the Commission of Faith and Witness are served by Jim Payton (National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee), Jim Rusthoven (Faith and Life Sciences Group), Greg Sinclair (Christian Interfaith Reference Group), and Janiece Van Oostrom (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity).



Dayna Vreeken and Michael Wagenman are part of working groups relative to the Commission on Justice and Peace.

3. Tim Wood serves on the board of KAIROS; a number of CRC members serve on KAIROS's partnership circles.
4. Darren Roorda represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
5. Matthew Lundberg serves as the representative on a commission of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.
6. Since the United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue has not yet moved to its next round of dialogue, our CRC members are in a holding pattern.

## **VI. Interfaith activities**

The Interfaith subcommittee of the EIRC continues its work. Membership includes Bernard Ayoola, Jacob Bol, Priscilla Brink, Jim Payton, Raidel Martinez, Greg Sinclair, Mark Wallace, Cory Willson, and the executive director.

The Ecumenical Charter that guides the EIRC states that our "responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally)." For interfaith efforts, the EIRC and its Interfaith subcommittee emphasize regional and local engagement. To that end, they seek to highlight regional groups that are open to CRC members and to publicize local efforts.

Jim Payton, chair of the Interfaith subcommittee, has also been serving as the ecumenical representative on the RCA's Commission for Christian Unity. Greg Sinclair leads Resonate Global Mission (RGM)'s Diaspora project. Raidel Martinez is a military chaplain, and Mark Wallace leads RGM's campus ministry efforts; including these leaders on the subcommittee provides ample evidence of the interfaith opportunities in military settings and on university campuses.

Most encouraging was the first meeting of the RCA Interreligious group and the CRC's Interfaith subcommittee on February 4, 2020. Members of the RCA Interreligious group are drawn from many different ministries and regions of their denomination. While the first meeting provided sufficient time for developing cross-denominational relationships, areas of common endeavor were also identified. For example, two efforts with roots in Resonate Global Mission, Peer to Peer Interfaith Network and Journeys into Friendship, currently involve both CRC and RCA leaders; these efforts seek to invite clergy and others into experiences with those of other faiths, to engage in scriptural reasoning, and to bring their learnings back to their congregations and communities. In addition, possible new joint activities were discussed, such as developing joint web resources, building a network of champions to guide local congregations into interfaith engagement, and/or developing regional contextual learning experiences that include the interfaith dimension.

## VII. Synodical assignments

### A. U.S. Roman Catholic Reformed Dialogue

Synod 2018 instructed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to make the report of the most recent round of the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, *The One Body of Christ: Ministry in Service to the Church and the World*, accessible to the churches, along with study materials; and synod asked the EIRC to consider the recommendations in the report for their applicability to the CRCNA and to report its conclusions to Synod 2019. Unfortunately, the final release of the report (introduced in summary form at Synod 2018) has not yet occurred, necessitating postponement of work on these assignments.

### B. Categories of affiliation

As mentioned in the Introduction of this report regarding changes to our categories of affiliation as proposed to Synod 2020, the EIRC has been discussing the implications of these changes on our work. We anticipate closer work with our agencies (Back to God Ministries International, Resonate Global Mission, and World Renew) and look forward to Memorandums of Understanding that will guide the breadth and focus of our work together with partner denominations around the world.

### C. Reconciliation

As a follow-up to previous synodical actions (“addressing unresolved conflict in our history and the need for reconciliation”—*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 473), the EIRC has initiated contact with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America and will seek to promote a spirit of Christian unity between our denominations.

## VIII. Closing comments

In all of the work of the EIRC, a preeminent goal is to equip members and congregations as they seek to interact in ecumenical circles and interfaith ways in their home communities. While at times the EIRC is required to develop relationships well beyond the congregational level as Memorandums of Understanding between denominations are inked, participation in groups such as the World Communion of Reformed Churches are scheduled, or guidelines for interfaith encounters are developed, these efforts too should be understood as needed engagements that pave the way for local awareness and engagement in a world that desperately needs to see the unity of the church and experience the love of Christ.

## IX. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to William T. Koopmans, chair, and Colin P. Watson, Sr. (ex officio), when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Andrew Beunk for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod by way of the ballot elect one new member from the slate of nominees presented to serve on the EIRC for a first term of three years, effective July 1, 2020.

D. That synod reappoint both InSoon Hoagland and Ruth Palma to a second three-year term.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

William T. Koopmans, chair

Colin P. Watson, Sr., acting executive director (ex officio)

**I. Introduction**

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and to promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. Current committee members, listed according to their concluding year and present term of service, are John Bolt, chair (2020/1); James A. De Jong, secretary (2021/1); Herman De Vries (2022/1); and Tony Maan (2022/1).

John Bolt is completing his first term of service on the committee, and the committee heartily recommends his reappointment to a second term. As committee chair, he has provided thoughtful leadership above and beyond the call of duty for members on a synodical standing committee.

The committee met on October 30 (with three representatives from the COD), November 8 (briefly with interim curator Will Katerberg and library dean David Malone), November 15, November 22, December 12 (at length with the three representatives from the COD), January 24, and February 6 and 13 with Will Katerberg.

**II. Archives staff**

At a time of significant transition and adjustment, the Heritage Hall staff continues to provide fine continuity of service to the various constituencies of the denominational archives, which include those of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. Will Katerberg of the university's history department began his work as interim curator of the archives in February 2019 with Historical Committee endorsement. He has brought both a steady-hand and creative innovation to the center's programming. The dedicated work of longer-term staff is particularly appreciated. This includes the invaluable guidance of Hendrina Van Spronsen, long-time office manager; Laurie Haan, assistant archivist; and Janet Sheeres, editor of *Origins*. Last fall Emily Koelzer was hired as the archives' new, part-time collection and metadata assistant for, among other things, creating and maintaining digital finding aids and descriptive resources for the collections.

The archives currently also benefit from the work of three student assistants. Caleb Ackerman is writing for Heritage Hall's blog, *Origins Online*. Aaron Van Dyke is working on a digital catalog of Heritage Hall's photo collection. Another student is working on entering the finding aid for the Calvin University collection into Archon, Heritage Hall's digital finding aid, accessible through the Heritage Hall website and via Google.

The committee also notes with special appreciation the often-unsung work of our Heritage Hall volunteers: Phil Erffmeyer, Clarice Newhof, and Jeannette Smith. In addition, Casey Jen has been working with the curator, the Hekman Library dean, library staff, and staff from the CRCNA offices to bring the ministers database up to date, reconcile differences between the denominational and Heritage Hall versions of the database, and to develop a plan going forward to maintain the database. Since last year's report, the archives have lost the services of two deeply appreciated volunteers: Ed Gerritsen and Helen Meulink. Our committee recommends that synod express its appreciation to both of them. The work of our volunteers over

the years has greatly enhanced the orderliness and completeness of our collections.

Robert Bolt, who served as the committee's field agent and assistant archivist for several decades, retired in 2019. He recruited and nurtured contact with regional classical representatives, sent reminders to submit minutes and records to the archives, and constructed the lists of ministerial and congregational anniversaries that appeared annually in our reports to synod. He usually drafted a large portion of the detail that went into our reports to synod and customarily met with our committee to review it. In this vital role of networking with our denomination's classes and councils, he followed in the footsteps of E.R. Post, who pioneered that role on behalf of the Historical Committee and synod, and of Post's successors Henry Ippel and Nick Huizenga. We recommend that synod recognize with deep appreciation the vital role that Robert Bolt has played in building up our denominational archives.

The staff's report of Heritage Hall activities during the past year has been assembled and written by Will Katerberg.

### **III. Regional classical representatives and noteworthy anniversaries**

Last year we provided synod with a list of classical representatives serving the Historical Committee and the archives. Adjusted since then, it now includes the following names. Robert Bolt worked with these representatives on behalf of synod and the churches, and since his resignation the staff and our committee have done so as well, to some degree. It is important that the churches have an accessible, current record here of these contacts. The committee is working with the Heritage Hall leadership toward designating a staff person to continue maintaining these contacts.

Alberta North – Stated clerk Gary Duthler  
Alberta South/Saskatchewan – Stated clerk David Swinney  
Arizona – Rodney Hugen  
Atlantic Northeast – Richard Vanden Berg  
B.C. North-West – Anne Kwantes  
B.C. South-East – Stated clerk Leonard Batterink  
California South – Stated clerk Cornelius Pool  
Central California – Stated clerk Larry Fryling  
Central Plains – Stated clerk Jonathan Spronk  
Chatham – John Koole  
Chicago South – Stated clerk Jeremy Oosterhouse  
Columbia – Stated clerk Roger Kramer  
Eastern Canada – Jean Lauziere  
Georgetown – Stated clerk Glenda Tebben  
Grand Rapids East – Stated clerk Alfred Mulder  
Grand Rapids North – Stated clerk Kory Plockmeyer  
Grand Rapids South – Stated clerk George Vink  
Grandville – Stated clerk Daniel Mouw  
Greater Los Angeles – Stated clerk Aaron Solomon-Mills  
Hackensack – Stated clerk Sheila Holmes  
Hamilton – Stated clerk Dick Kranendonk  
Hanmi – Charles Kim  
Heartland – Stated clerk Robert Drenten

Holland – Stated clerk Calvin Hoogstra  
 Hudson – Stated clerk Jeremy Mulder  
 Huron – Stated clerk John Medendorp  
 Iakota – Garry Zonnefeld  
 Illiana – Jeffrey White  
 Kalamazoo – Stated clerk Dan Sarkipado  
 Ko-Am – Charles Kim  
 Lake Erie – Stated clerk Benjamin Van Arragon  
 Lake Superior – Stated clerk Henry Gunnink  
 Minnkota – Stated clerk LeRoy Christoffels  
 Muskegon – Stated clerk Drew Sweetman  
 Niagara – Stated clerk Wendy de Jong  
 North Cascades – Stated clerk Steve Van Noort  
 Northcentral Iowa – Stated clerk Steven Schulz  
 Northern Illinois – Gerald Frens  
 Northern Michigan – Stated clerk Roger Hoeksema  
 Pacific Northwest – Matthew Borst  
 Quinte – Stated clerk Joan Crawford  
 Red Mesa – Stated clerk John Greydanus  
 Rocky Mountain – Stated clerk Mark Hilbelink  
 Southeast US – Stated clerk Vivian Cassis  
 Thornapple Valley – Stated clerk Roger Bultman  
 Toronto – Hendrik Bruinsma  
 Wisconsin – Stated clerk Rodolfo Galindo  
 Yellowstone – Stated clerk Del VanDenBerg  
 Zeeland – Stated clerk Ronald Meyer

At its January meeting, members of the Historical Committee agreed to divide this list among themselves and to make direct contact with these representatives, as explained below in section V.

The committee recognizes the following ordained ministers who will celebrate anniversaries of their ordination in the year 2021. The list includes ministers with current denominational ministerial status, listed at five-year intervals and beginning after fifty years of ordination.

#### **70 Years (1951-2021)**

Hofman, Leonard John  
 Lee, Myung Jae  
 Malestein, John Theodore

#### **65 Years (1956-2021)**

Cooper, Sidney  
 Doornbos, Milton Roger  
 Jones, Norman E.  
 Kok, James Robert  
 Quartel, Jacob Arie  
 Van Essen, Clarence  
 Van Ryn, John George

#### **60 Years (1961-2021)**

Beukema, Alvin  
 De Vries, John Fredric  
 Evenhouse, James Melvyn  
 Hellinga, John D.  
 Holwerda, David Earl  
 Koedoot, Gerrit  
 Mennega, Harry  
 Van Essen, Lester Wayne  
 Woudstra, Sierd J.

#### **55 Years (1966-2021)**

Bultman, Stanley J.  
 Doyle, David Michael  
 Duifhuis, Richard

Hogeterp, Peter C.  
 Klompeen, Donald John  
 Louwerse, Anthony Louis  
 Meyer, Galen Harris  
 Meyer, John S.  
 Noorman, Ronald Jon  
 Schoonveld, Arthur John  
 Van Donselaar, Marvin Lee  
 Vander Kwaak, Nicholas  
 Vander Meyden, Calvin Dale  
 Visser, Duane A.  
 Westenbroek, Robert Lee  
 Wigboldy, Homer John

**50 Years (1971-2021)**

Alferink, Jerry Lynn  
 Baker, Ronald Dennis  
 Bulthuis, William Keith  
 Cho, Chung Choo  
 Compaan, Arlo Don  
 de Jong, Harold  
 De Jong, Peter  
 De Moor, Henry, Jr.  
 De Vries, Hendrik  
 De Vries, John, Jr.

De Young, Ronald Duane  
 De Young, Ronald William  
 Dykman, Thomas Earl  
 Holtrop, Philip Cornelius  
 Joldersma, John  
 Kim, Paul Soomyung  
 Kok, Philip Jay  
 Kuiper, Aldon Lee  
 Mast, Stanley Paul  
 Meyer, Larry Dean  
 Osterhouse, James David  
 Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr.  
 Roeda, Jack  
 Roossien, Louis, Jr.  
 Samplonius, Homer Gerben  
 Scholten, James Henry  
 Slings, Larry Dean  
 Smits, Lee Roger  
 Steen, Robert Duvalopis  
 Timmer, Robert J.  
 Van der Borgh, R. John  
 Ver Heul, Stanley Eugene  
 Vredeveld, Ronald Clare  
 Vugteveen, Howard John  
 Zoerhof, Laryn Gene

The committee also recognizes the following congregations who will celebrate milestone anniversaries of their founding.

**25th Anniversary (1996-2021)**

Boulder, Colorado – Boulder Korean  
 Grand Haven, Michigan –  
     Covenant Life  
 Pella, Iowa – Grace Fellowship  
 Santa Ana, California – Hmong

**50th Anniversary (1971-2021)**

Ames, Iowa – Trinity  
 Big Rapids, Michigan – Fellowship  
 Binghamton, New York – Valley  
 Crownpoint, New Mexico—  
     Crownpoint  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan – Sunshine  
 Lynden, Washington – Mountain  
     View  
 Mason City, Iowa – Rolling Acres  
 Wheeling, Illinois – Yebon Korean

**75th Anniversary (1946-2021)**

Bozeman, Montana – Bozeman  
 Cadillac, Michigan – Cadillac

Grand Rapids, Michigan – Calvin  
 Holland, Michigan – Bethany  
 Phoenix, Arizona – Phoenix  
 Ripon, California – Immanuel

**100th Anniversary (1921-2021)**

Falmouth, Michigan – Aetna  
 Martin, Michigan – East Martin  
 Orange City, Iowa – Calvary  
 Waupun, Wisconsin – First

**125th Anniversary (1896-2021)**

Sully, Iowa – Sully  
 Grant, Michigan – Grant  
 Whitinsville, Massachusetts –  
     Pleasant Street  
 Willard, Ohio – Willard  
 Woden, Iowa – Woden  
 Wyckoff, New Jersey –  
     Faith Community

**150th Anniversary (1871-2021)**

Orange City, Iowa – First



#### IV. Archival activity during 2019

This portion of our report on activities at Heritage Hall during the past year has been assembled with staff input as submitted by Will Katerberg, with committee edits and additions.

##### A. Collections

A variety of materials has been accessioned to CRCNA, Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary and manuscript collections in the past year, including the following:

- letters by William Fridsma to his family during World War II
- material related to poet John Heath-Stubbs, a Christian poet from England, donated by John Van Domelen, a Calvin graduate and English professor
- material from CRC Home Missions (e.g., relating to Jews, Native Americans, church planting)
- other material from the CRC: budgets, reports, and documents; synodical documents, reports
- material from Calvin University, from the provost's office and the president's office
- material from Calvin professors Roger Griffioen, Chris Overvoorde, Joel Carpenter— some new collections, some additions to existing collections
- material from Armand Merizon, artist, adding to an existing collection
- Calvin Institute for Christian Worship brochures and programs
- two framed maps from Andreas Cellarius's *Harmonia Macrocosmica*
- a collection of 1,500 postcards of Dutch American enclaves in the mid-western United States. The postcards were acquired from Conrad and Dee Bult and include images of churches, schools, businesses, street scenes, and more from West Michigan and other parts of the Midwest where Dutch immigrants settled between the late 1800s and the 1960s.
- glass "magic lantern" slides and a two-reel film related to Christian Reformed missions to the Navajo and Zuni peoples of the southwestern United States. The material dates to the early to mid-twentieth century. It supplements collections of material long held that have come from the denomination and retired missionaries.
- records related to the Student Activities Office of Calvin University, including materials related to conferences on faith and music

##### B. Research

As usual, the most commonly requested material has been related to the Immigrant Letters Collection, the Genealogy Collection, and the history of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. More specifically, patrons requested material in the following areas:

- **Topics:** congregational histories; Japan missionary materials; genealogies; photographs collection; Dutch immigrants/education; Christian school collection; Dutch beyond Holland, Michigan, and Pella, Iowa; Symposium on Christianity and Leisure; Council of Reformed Charities; Home Missions (southwestern U.S.); CRCNA classis minutes; Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee minutes; Canadian CRC architecture; origin and history of First Netherlands Reformed congregation; Calvin

Radio shows; Korean periodicals; CRC *Acts of Synod*; Historical Committee minutes, reports to synod, related documents

- **Individuals:** H. Evan Runner; Geerhardus Vos; Johanna Timmer; Diet Eman

### C. Digitization

An intern from the University of Michigan graduate program in library science last summer began work on a database for the photographs collection. A student worker, Aaron Van Dyke, is continuing this project now that it is set up. A digital humanities class has been doing a small project on a collection of postcards of Dutch American enclaves. Work continues toward making the finding aids for Heritage Hall's collections available online.

### D. Banner indexing

Work continues through the help of volunteers on the indexing of *The Banner*. They had been working on the 1920s and early 1930s but have since moved into the 1900s and 1910s, including work on the magazine's predecessor, *The Banner of Truth*.

### E. Promotion and outreach

Staff members have made presentations to Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary classes. The Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies held its biennial meetings last June on the Calvin campus. In conjunction with this conference, the archives staff hosted a small exhibit and tour of Heritage Hall. In October, staff also hosted a delegation from the Province of Zeeland in the Netherlands. Publications in 2019 included Volume 37, issue 1 of *Origins* last spring, focusing on the Great Plains, and Volume 37, issue 2 of *Origins* last fall, focusing on Dutch Reformed entrepreneurs involved in furniture manufacturing, particularly in western Michigan.

A major new development at Heritage Hall is *Origins Online*, a blog started in October 2019 that features news and history related to the work of the archives. It will include stories about new collections and current work and events at Heritage Hall. It will also feature stories about the history of Dutch North America, the seminary and university, the Christian Reformed Church, and more. A page on the blog provides a convenient link to older issues. It eventually also will allow people to subscribe (or renew subscriptions) to the print version of *Origins*. A Heritage Hall Facebook page also has been started to promote the *Origins Online* blog and other news and stories related to the histories of the CRCNA, Calvin University, and Calvin Theological Seminary; Dutch American immigration and ethnic history; local and state history; and Reformed intellectual and cultural history.

The Heritage Hall staff has been active and creative despite the facts that for intermittent periods it lost staff and student assistance, that its volunteer ranks have decreased, and that it is operating with only a part-time interim archivist. For part of the 2019 year, due to financial constraints and to accommodate part-time staff schedules, the archives and Heritage Hall reduced the number of hours it was open. Shortages in staff also caused some regular operations to be delayed or curtailed. Several years ago two of the funding entities (the denominational office and the seminary) supported the need for additional staffing. This was also endorsed by our committee. Nonetheless, the university (then college) did not support the proposal, and the

archives were compelled to carry on under less than adequate circumstances. The hiring of Emily Koelzer as part-time collection and metadata assistant has begun to address these concerns. As of February 2020, Heritage Hall is searching to hire a full-time curator/archivist.

The committee is grateful that these matters are being attended to. At the same time, it recommends that the three funding entities revisit the matter of restoring and enhancing the funding required to carry on the important work of Heritage Hall as mandated by synod, including an emphasis on the historical legacy this organization was created to protect and make widely available.

The committee applauds the dedication, resolve, and sacrifice exhibited by the staff and volunteers. Their dedication and devotion are a gift to us all.

## **V. Committee initiatives**

While the bulk of its time and attention in the past year has been invested in organizational matters, the committee has also devoted attention to programmatic initiatives in response to the synodical directive to “promote publication of denominationally related historical studies.” Brief notations on some initiatives follow.

Shortly after his appointment as interim curator, Will Katerberg was asked by the committee to communicate on its behalf with their classical representatives, asking them to solicit and/or supply information to him and the committee on any historical projects and research of denominational interest. This initiative developed from the conviction that deepening knowledge of and appreciation for all facets of our rich spiritual and communal legacy is as much a local and regional responsibility as a denominational one.

After receiving a rather meager initial response, the committee members undertook the task of following up by directly contacting their classical representatives. We asked a series of specific questions not only to gather wider information on our shared heritage but also to give the committee and its resolve greater visibility and to inspire the regional representatives to participate in promoting this legacy. We also, importantly, asked how we could more effectively resource the representatives in their role. We have specifically asked that paid staff be appointed to fill the vacancy left by Robert Bolt’s retirement, thus restoring the work in place since the time of E.R. Post. The interim curator noted that when the new curator/archivist is in place, Heritage Hall will need to review its current and future needs and develop a plan to define the roles of staff in order to meet them effectively.

As noted in the previous section, one example of archival activity in the past year has been research into the work of Geerhardus Vos. Vos was an early professor of Calvin Theological Seminary and later of Princeton Theological Seminary. Specifically, this research involved examining and transcribing two detailed, substantially identical sets of student notes in long-hand on Vos’s lectures on natural theology. These lectures were given while he taught at our seminary. A proposal to fund the translation and annotated publication of this material was presented to the board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society last fall. The two members of our committee who also serve on that board carefully vetted the transcribed lectures and recommended that the proposal be accepted. It was, and the translation work is under way. Vos’s work on natural theology is amazingly well-informed

philosophically, lucid, and timely. It harmonizes with Article 2 of the Belgic Confession. Its appearance in English will contribute significantly to lively current discussions on the subject and should find a wider market also in light of the recent appearance of his systematic theology in English translation. This one example reinforces the importance of a competent, motivated Historical Committee membership and staff with the capacity to carry out synod's mandate. What else lies hidden in our archives to be discovered and promoted in sharing our legacy more widely?

A growing concern of the committee has been the use of earnings on the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund. This endowment has accumulated over the years almost entirely from gifts by appreciative readers of the archives' *Origins* magazine. This Heritage Hall publication falls under the committee's responsibility in light of promoting "publication of denominationally related historical studies" and exercising "oversight" of the archives. This year, as has been the case from time to time, significant expenditures from this fund have been submitted to the Historical Committee for advice and approval. The Historical Committee has also sometimes initiated publication projects, with the curator's assent, funded from this endowment's earnings. Yet stipulations on the expenditure of funds from this endowment have not explicitly been developed and put in place. Expenditures have been made through collaboration and good faith between the curator and the Historical Committee, both respecting the synodically vested interest in these projects through the Historical Committee. At a time of managerial change regarding Heritage Hall, the committee believes that the time has come for a policy requiring that significant expenditures from this endowment be approved by the Historical Committee. The committee is also recommending that such expenditures not exceed the expenditure rate from endowments governed by the COD through the denominational financial office.

As the committee solicits suggestions on ideas and projects for "promoting denominationally related historical studies," it has assigned one of its members to look into the possibility of publishing in print or some other accessible form a fine collection of essays from the *Reformed Journal* on significant denominational leaders of the past and their contributions to our shared legacy.

The committee solicits and will heartily welcome suggestions, preferably in writing, on other such ideas from synodical delegates—either their own or ones they might solicit in their areas.

## **VI. Clarifying the committee mandate**

In late 2019 and early 2020, the Historical Committee spent considerable time responding to the directive given by Synod 2019 to the COD and the Historical Committee:

That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761)

The need to clarify the Historical Committee's mandate arose because Synod 2019 approved the recommendation from the boards of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary to change the organizational structure of Heritage Hall management. The proposal approved by synod was

incomplete in that it did not address the fact that the archives of the CRCNA are owned by the denomination and that ever since synod took initiative to gather and preserve these archives, the denominational Historical Committee has been synod's agent in providing oversight of the archives.

To address this matter, synod instructed the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review and clarify "the continued relationship" between the committee and the stakeholders.

At its October meeting, the COD appointed its members Paul De Vries, Victor Chen, and Michael Koetje to work with our committee in drafting a clarifying statement. The committee first met with these representatives on October 30. The COD delegates requested that the Historical Committee draft a clarifying statement that would reflect our discussion. The Historical Committee subsequently met several times to consider various drafts of such a statement and sent a unanimously agreed-upon draft to the COD representatives on December 3. The committee and the COD representatives adopted the draft unanimously at a meeting together on December 12. That document, titled Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the COD and Historical Committee to the COD – A Draft, is appended to this report.

At the December 12 joint meeting it was also agreed to submit our mutual draft clarifying the Historical Committee mandate to the three funding stakeholders and to the Van Raalte Institute stakeholders for comment and/or advice. The Van Raalte Institute (VRI) is the archival repository at Hope College. The three VRI staff members with whom two of our committee members met on January 2 are all Christian Reformed leaders—one has served on our committee in the past; one is an elder in one of our congregations, the long-time director of the VRI, and a former trustee of Calvin Theological Seminary; and the other is a retired Calvin College professor and one of last year's nominees for appointment to our committee. All are very familiar with archival work and are deeply engaged in archival research and historical publication. They have been vitally interested in the welfare and oversight of Heritage Hall. All found the jointly supported clarifying document very helpful and offered no improvements to it. As of the deadline for submitting this report for the *Agenda for Synod 2020*, our joint committee has not yet received or considered in a form it has been able to consider together a response from the three funding stakeholders invited to submit suggestions. At its February 13 meeting, the Historical Committee affirmed its readiness to continue working together as a joint COD-Historical Committee toward final formulation.

## **VII. Proposal to expand the committee**

As the Historical Committee grappled with its identity, acceptance, importance, and responsibilities in light of developments during the past two years, it was compelled to do a self-assessment.

Synod has only three standing committees.

As a synodical standing committee, the Candidacy Committee includes nine regular members, ex officio members Jul Medenblik and Colin Watson, Sr., plus a full-time staff member, David Koll.

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations standing committee has ten regular members and ex officio members Colin Watson, Sr., and Darren Roorda.

Both of the foregoing committees have funding and in some cases office space and support staff to carry out their important work on behalf of synod. The work of nurturing and evaluating prospective ordained leadership for the CRCNA and of maintaining healthy interdenominational relationships within the wider body of Christ are obviously both of vital importance to our communal life.

For 86 years our synods have judged that maintaining and enhancing the best of our treasured spiritual, theological, communal, institutional, liturgical, and organizational legacy is vitally important as well. Thus, at this time of organizational adjustment and clarification, the Historical Committee respectfully recommends that synod approve expanding and structuring it in a way that is in greater conformity with its other two standing committees and that would enhance its visibility and effectiveness in carrying out the mandate synod has assigned it.

We call attention to the fact that the Historical Committee has only four regular members in comparison with the membership of the other standing committees. The first appointment of a member from outside the wider Grand Rapids area was made only last year. The Historical Committee has no discreet budget or staff other than that on which it gratefully relies at Heritage Hall by precedent and synodical assumption. We envision that very minimal expenses for the denominational office would be involved in this expansion, likely no more than travel and lodging expenses once a year for several members. The returns in the form of wider representation and expertise and greater historical creativity in fulfilling its mandate would far outweigh the costs.

Important to emphasize in this connection is that the archives and Heritage Hall are in a very real sense the outcome of the work of the Historical Committee and its precursors over the years. This has been recognized by people who know the history of this development. In the course of the growth of Heritage Hall, the Historical Committee has enjoyed a dynamic, mutually supportive, and respectful relationship with the first full-time archivists, Herb Brinks and his successor, Richard Harms. That relationship was productive in both cases without being consigned to a written understanding. Everyone accepted the Historical Committee's collaborative authority and leadership in this joint endeavor.

Meanwhile, several developments have compelled the recent review of the relationship of archival stakeholders in Heritage Hall. The first development was the denomination's reorganization of executive leadership, eventually resulting in the designation of an executive director. As that position evolved, a brief statement of that person's involvement with the archives was introduced in 2004, saying that the executive director would "be responsible for denominational archives and historical documents and administer the right of access to such documents" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 93). This statement was repeated verbatim in the executive director's 2017 revised position description (*Agenda for Synod 2017*, p. 96). Noteworthy, however, is the absence from the record of any correlation of this assignment with the much longer standing mandate of the Historical Committee. In retrospect it is regrettable that synod was asked to approve the executive director's responsibility for the archives without addressing how that duty interfaced with the Historical Committee's mandate.



The second development came about as a result of the greater organizational integration of Heritage Hall with the Hekman Library operation. This occurred under the leadership of a new dean of the Library, appointed in 2016, with keen archivist interests and background. His active managerial role in the affairs of Heritage Hall was coupled with diminished involvement of the Historical Committee in archival programming and leadership.

The third development was the retirement of Richard Harms as archivist in 2017 and the hiring of his replacement later that year, but without benefit of the requested overlapping of tenure that would have assured a deeper understanding of the Historical Committee's relationship to the archives. Despite this, the Historical Committee developed a fine working relationship with the new archivist in the one year she held that position. Her technical abilities as well as her skills as a research historian were much appreciated.

A fourth factor has been a heightened interest of leaders of the funding entities in the structure and operations of Heritage Hall, an interest codified in the formation of the Archives Advisory Council recognized by last year's synod.

Because the new library governance document, also approved last year, provided inadequate clarity on the relationship of these recent developments to the Historical Committee and its mandate, Synod 2019 directed the COD to work with the Historical Committee in clarifying its mandate.

The committee believes that coupled with its clarified mandate is the need to expand the membership of the Historical Committee. By including the executive director (ED) on the committee, the collaboration that could have been built into this position description in 2004 and 2017 would be achieved. The expanded membership with the presence of the ED would bring the structure of the Historical Committee into closer conformity with the other two standing committees of synod. It would also honor an expressed desire that this happen. Further, it would give the committee the benefit of wider representation, including the richness of ethnic minority spirituality, wider geographic representation, and the benefit of outside archival expertise. The committee also judges that the denominational archivist, who in practice but without designated appointment functioned on the committee ex officio, should now be formally added to the committee ex officio and without vote. The involvement of that person historically has served both the committee and the church well and should now be formally stipulated, just as comparable staff positions are with the other standing committees.

Accordingly, the committee recommends expanded membership of the Historical Committee as set forth in our recommendations.

## VIII. Conclusion

Our committee expresses its gratitude to synod for entrusting us with the mandate assigned us. Our extensive attention to organizational structure last year and again this year has deepened our appreciation for the precious resources we oversee with others and our resolve to enhance their meaningful use. We invite and welcome advice and creative suggestions on how Heritage Hall and its archives can be an even greater blessing for our denomination and for others. *Soli Deo Gloria!*



## IX. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to John Bolt, chair, and to James A. De Jong, secretary, when matters pertaining to the mandate and work of the committee are addressed.
- B. That synod appoint John Bolt to a second three-year term on the Historical Committee.
- C. That synod recognize with deep appreciation the work of dedicated Heritage Hall volunteers Ed Gerritsen and Helen Meulink.
- D. That synod recognize with deep appreciation the significant contributions of Robert Bolt to the denominational archives in his position as the Historical Committee's field agent and as the assistant archivist of Heritage Hall.
- E. That synod expand the membership of its Historical Committee by adding two regular members to the committee as well as the executive director (ex officio, without voting privilege) and the Heritage Hall archivist (ex officio, without voting privilege).

### *Grounds:*

- 1. This would bring the committee into closer conformity with synod's other two standing committees.
  - 2. This would allow the broadening of committee expertise to include, for example, such matters as outside archival experience and wider geographic and ethnic minority representation.
  - 3. This comports with the CRCNA executive director's job description and is similar to roles the executive director has with other standing committees of synod.
  - 4. This would reinforce the committee's visibility and stature in carrying out its synodical mandate.
  - 5. The formally recognized presence of the archivist on the committee would provide synodical sanction to actual past practice.
- F. That synod acknowledge the Historical Committee's contribution to the joint statement clarifying its synodical mandate (see the Appendix to this report).

### *Grounds:*

- 1. The statement was unanimously approved by the Historical Committee and the COD representatives assigned to draft such a proposal.
- 2. The statement honors the synodical mandate assigning oversight of the joint archives at Heritage Hall to synod's standing Historical Committee.
- 3. The statement clarifies the Historical Committee's leading but shared oversight of the archives.

Historical Committee  
John Bolt, chair  
James A. De Jong, secretary  
Herman De Vries  
Tony Maan

## Appendix

### Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the COD and Historical Committee to the COD – A Draft (December 16, 2019)

#### *Introduction*

In approving the “Change to Library Governance” document requested by the boards of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, Synod 2019 also adopted the following:

That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761)

In response, the COD appointed a subcommittee of Victor Chen, Paul De Vries, and Michael Koetje to meet with the Historical Committee. The document that follows is the product of our meetings, and we present it together as a draft for your consideration and feedback. We first present some essential background, discuss the 2019 synodical decision, and then take up the task assigned to us jointly by synod as given above.

#### *Essential background*

##### 1. The CRCNA Synod of 1934 appointed

a permanent committee with the mandate to gather and preserve books and documents of historical value pertaining to the history of our Church and the Church from which we originated and to religion in general, and to provide a room and facilities in the College or Seminary building where they can be properly preserved and displayed

(*Acts of Synod 1934*, pp. 81-82)

The stated clerk of synod together with the professor of church history were designated as “the permanent *Historical Committee* for this purpose.” The grounds given:

- a. The Stated Clerk has been and is the official keeper of all official documents.
- b. Since these documents are of special significance for the history of our Church, the Professor of Church history is the logical man to serve on this Committee.

(p. 82)

##### 2. Since 1934 the Historical Committee has served the CRCNA synod as its agent of oversight for the archives and other documents of the church and has provided annual reports to synod. An example: The 1991 report to synod states that “the primary task [of the HC is] as synod’s supervisory agent over the work of the archives” (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 159-60). The activities of the committee over the years have sometimes included the following:

- reviewing and approving the Heritage Hall annual budget and goals with the curator
- submitting both to the three stakeholders for endorsement and approval
- approving major expenditures
- participating at times in formulating Heritage Hall policies and position descriptions

- having input into the curator’s appointment, periodic reviews, and reappointments
- planning and initiating new CRCNA historical studies
- engaging in fund-raising as necessary to finance projects
- receiving reports on the Origins endowment
- serving as the editorial committee of *Origins*

3. The current mandate of the CRCNA Historical Committee has two distinct components, reflected in the quotation from the *Acts of Synod 1969* below:

- a. Supervising the gathering, preserving, and use of the archives of the CRCNA and its agencies.
- b. An educational and research responsibility that involves use of the archives for the benefit of the church.

The Historical Committee shall gather, preserve and supervise the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church knowledge of and appreciation for the church’s history.  
(*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 74)

#### *The Decision of Synod 2019*

The key points of the Synod 2019 decision as it relates to Heritage Hall (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 629-31, sections H and I of the governance document; 761):

- a. “The operations of and personnel in Heritage Hall are under the administration of the Dean of the Library. The Curator of the Archives reports to the Dean of the Library and the other staff in Heritage Hall report to the Curator of the Archives.”
- b. “The Dean of the Library reports to Calvin College’s provost and to Calvin Theological Seminary’s president (or designee), given that both institutions are funders of the library.”

#### *Observation on a and b*

The full import of “reports to” needs to be spelled out. We observe that there are four entities with responsibility for oversight of Heritage Hall—the synod of the CRCNA through its Historical Committee and the three “funders” or “stakeholders.” Only two are included in the opening paragraph of Section I.

- c. The formation of an Archives Advisory Council to “inform” the work of the Curator.

#### *Observation*

The Historical Committee also recommended that synod approve the establishment of such an advisory council (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 677). One major difference between the Historical Committee’s proposal and that of the two schools is that the former included a clear reporting structure to the four entities that have oversight over Heritage Hall:

The advisory council will report to the Historical Committee, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the administrations of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Historical Committee remains responsible for reporting to synod on Heritage Hall and the archives.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 677)

The proposal approved by Synod 2019 fails to make provision for synod's ownership and direct oversight of its own archives through its Historical Committee and thus might leave the impression that synod is relinquishing ownership and oversight of its own archives.

The responsibility of the Historical Committee includes a fiduciary obligation to the denomination and donors to oversee the endowment of Heritage Hall and to ensure that the endowment is used for the educational and publication purposes for which the funds were donated.

#### *A way forward*

Since the Historical Committee's responsibilities for Heritage Hall exceed those stipulated in the 2019 decision of synod, and since synod affirmed "the work of the CRCNA Historical Committee" (ground 1, d, *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761), and since the mandate given to our joint committee speaks of the "continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders" (ground 2, p. 761), our proposal for moving ahead is to clarify that oversight for Heritage Hall is properly shared by four entities:

- a. The Historical Committee of the CRCNA as synod's standing committee on archival oversight and use.
- b. The Executive Director of the CRCNA, who on behalf of synod oversees agency compliance with archival policy and denominational funding of 40 percent of Heritage Hall's operating budget.
- c. The administration of Calvin University, which provides 40 percent of the funding for Heritage Hall's operating budget, provides space for the archives, and oversees management of personnel.
- d. Calvin Theological Seminary, which provides 20 percent of the funding for Heritage Hall and shares the oversight of the Hekman Library with Calvin University.

#### *A proposed new mandate for the Historical Committee of the CRCNA*

Our proposal for clarifying the mandate of the Historical Committee seeks to take into account the synodically mandated role of the Historical Committee, the expressed desires of the three stakeholders for greater direct involvement in the affairs of Heritage Hall, the new administrative role of the Dean of the Hekman Library and the Archives Advisory Council, the concerns that the current Historical Committee has about the governance change, along with those of previous members of the Historical Committee and people who are "friends of the archives," who have supported the work of Heritage Hall by contributing generously to its endowment (see ground 1, c, *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761). The proposed mandate is intended as a *clarification* of the Historical Committee's mandate and as an acknowledgment of *shared* oversight in a spirit of cooperation.

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church created its Historical Committee in 1934 with the vision that the records, papers, and other artifacts of the CRC's congregations, agencies, schools, and other institutions be scrupulously gathered, carefully preserved, and treasured as a witness to the faithfulness of our Lord to his church in the past, as a guide to the present, and as a testimony for all future generations. For 85 years, synods have entrusted supervision of its archives through the Historical Committee to leaders with recognized expertise in and devotion to the Reformed heritage

upon which the CRCNA is built. A reliable historical grasp and appreciation of the Reformed faith, particularly in its Dutch Reformed manifestation, has usually been a *sine qua non* for synodical appointment to this standing committee. These qualifications served the committee and synod well in guiding the appointed staff in gathering, archiving, protecting, regulating, and making available for research all the materials now archived in Heritage Hall. They have also positioned the Historical Committee strategically for fulfilling its mandate to cultivate knowledge of and appreciation for the denomination’s rich spiritual and corporate legacy.

With all this in mind, following is our draft proposal for a revised Historical Committee mandate:

Current Mandate from 1969	Proposed Mandate (2020)
“The Historical Committee shall gather, preserve and supervise the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church knowledge of and appreciation for the church’s history.” ( <i>Acts of Synod 1969</i> , p. 74)	The Historical Committee, on behalf of synod, provides leading but shared <sup>1</sup> oversight <sup>2</sup> of the gathering, preservation, and use of the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies. <sup>3</sup> It also cultivates within the Christian Reformed Church and the wider church and academic worlds <sup>4</sup> knowledge of and appreciation for the CRCNA’s history, heritage, and legacy. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The phrase “leading but shared” attempts to capture (1) the important role of the Historical Committee to ensure that synod’s vision for Heritage Hall is maintained, and (2) the final authority of the CRCNA synod over the archives through its Historical Committee. Two other issues in discussion during the past few years are clarified: (1) An explicit role for the stakeholders in important issues involving Heritage Hall such as budgets, major expenditures, key appointments, and policies. This has always been understood and practiced in the past but never written down. (2) The Historical Committee’s oversight has never meant and does not mean that it serves as a kind of “super-management team,” directly involved in every detail of Heritage Hall.

<sup>2</sup> The expression “provides . . . oversight” replaces the active verbs “gather, preserve and supervise” in the current mandate. These active verbs are misleading because the actual work is not done by the Historical Committee but by Heritage Hall staff. “Provides . . . oversight” (on behalf of synod) clarifies the nature of the Historical Committee’s relation to Heritage Hall: the word used in the current mandate—i.e., “supervise”—brings the Historical Committee too close to the notion of “management,” which it has never done, and paves the way for a major conflict with the proposal approved by synod in 2019. The word “supervision” should be limited to the internal administrative/management tasks of personnel, policy, and programs that is in place. Nonetheless, the Historical Committee should be involved in the decision-making process with respect to Heritage Hall, since it reports annually to the synod of the CRCNA.

<sup>3</sup> Includes Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University, which are owned and operated by the CRCNA and are subject to denominational policies and regulations through the oversight of the CRCNA synod.

<sup>4</sup> This expands the horizons of Heritage Hall’s educational mission beyond the CRC and more accurately reflects what is happening in the world of scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> “Heritage” and “legacy” have been added (1) to suggest that the CRC’s history is more than merely a matter of antiquarian interest but a vital part of its current mission, and (2) to include the wider impact of the Christian Reformed Church in North America on its surroundings locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

### *Implementation of the revised mandate*

If this draft proposal is accepted, then one additional revision is needed to meet the requirement of final synodical oversight through its Historical Committee as well as the desires of the three funders for greater participation in governance.

Section I of the governance document approved by synod provides for a strong and direct role for the three funders but not for the Historical Committee apart from its two representatives on the Archives Advisory Council.

#### Section I

The Council will advise on matters approved by the funders of Heritage Hall as set forth in the funders' Statement of Responsibilities. Normally such responsibilities include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, its strategic alignment with the respective funders' visions, new programs and outreach, budgets, fundraising, and other items named in the Statement of Responsibilities. In addition to their representatives on the Archives Advisory Council, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (including but not limited to the CRC's Historical Committee) shall from time to time, address major strategic vision, structure, and evaluative matters appropriate to their role as organizational stakeholders and consistent with their governance documents.

*(Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 629-30)*

Without changing the structure by which the two educational institutions handle their respective roles—namely, through the joint library committee and the Dean of the Hekman Library who reports to the provost of Calvin University, we propose clarifying the approval process by *adding* the Historical Committee to the process as follows:

All matters concerning Heritage Hall are handled by the Archives Advisory Council, are reviewed by the joint Library Committee of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, the Historical Committee of the CRCNA, and the three stakeholders. Major decisions involving budget, personnel, and programs require the approval of the Historical Committee and the three stakeholders.

In this way of shared oversight of Heritage Hall, all four participants and synod's own interests are honored.

#### *Comment*

We do not presume to suggest how the three funders structure their own approvals of major decisions regarding Heritage Hall; hence the word "reviewed" in the preceding statement. When major decisions are at stake (appointment of curator, programs, budgets), recommendations should be reviewed by the four oversight partners and approval sought from all four. This is in fact how the governance of Heritage Hall took place prior to the introduction of the new governance document. The goal is that all four "overseers" agree, but, preparing for the eventuality that disagreements *may* occur, we propose the following "rules" for working out disagreements:

- i. Final approval on major matters requires agreement among the Historical Committee and two of the stakeholders.
- ii. Should there be a disagreement between the Historical Committee and all three stakeholders, the matter is subject to appeal to the CRCNA's Council of Delegates and, if need be, to the CRCNA synod for adjudication.

*A final point*

As the agent of the CRCNA synod, the Historical Committee has a fiduciary responsibility to the donors to see that the Heritage Hall (*Origins*) endowment is used for the educational and publication purposes for which the funds have been donated. These funds should not be merged into the general operating budget of the Hekman Library.

*Conclusion*

Our proposal attempts to satisfy the obligations placed upon the CRCNA Historical Committee by its synodical mandate and the expressed desires of the three stakeholders/funders for greater direct oversight over Heritage Hall. This proposal meets our concerns about our responsibilities; we trust that it also satisfies the desires of the three stakeholders/funders.

*Addendum*

The revision of Section I in the Library Governance Document (“Relationship with Heritage Hall”) is, as we said, not up to us. In a spirit of cooperation, we offer the following ideas:

Section I of Library Governance Policy Approved by Synod 2019	Ideas for revision
The Council will advise on matters approved by the funders of Heritage Hall as set forth in the funders’ Statement of Responsibilities. <sup>6</sup>	The Council handles all matters relating to Heritage Hall. It will advise the Curator and process requests from the Curator, the Historical Committee of the CRCNA, the three stakeholders, individually or in consort, and the joint library committee of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary.
Normally such responsibilities include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, its strategic alignment with the respective funders’ visions, new programs and outreach, budgets, fundraising, and other items named in the Statement of Responsibilities.	Responsibilities of the council include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, new programs and outreach, budgets, and fundraising.
In addition to their representatives on the Archives Advisory Council, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (including but not limited to the CRC’s Historical Committee) shall from time to time, address major strategic vision, structure, and evaluative matters appropriate to their role as organizational stakeholders and consistent with their governance documents.	Does this add anything? It is less than fully clear.

*On behalf of the COD Subcommittee*  
Victor Chen  
Paul De Vries  
Michael Koetje

*On behalf of the CRCNA Historical Committee*  
John Bolt  
James De Jong  
Herman De Vries

<sup>6</sup> Since this document is not public, is this helpful?



# DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



### Dordt University

Greetings to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. We are grateful to God for the partnership of our mutually beneficial ministries.

This year, when students arrived on Dordt University's campus, they were greeted by two newly completed building projects. These projects offered larger, updated spaces for two departments: theatre arts and nursing. Dordt has taken its nursing program fully in-house after a long partnership with a local hospital-based college of nursing. With this change has come the Carl and Gloria Zylstra Nursing Education Center, which offers a skills lab, two simulation labs with manikins, observation rooms, offices, and storage. An additional classroom and theatre-style viewing room have also been added.

Not only has Dordt experienced growth with physical spaces, but graduate programs are also expanding. In the past two years our master of education program has increased enrollment by 70 percent and offers eight specialized tracks. In fall 2020 we will also begin offering a master of social work degree and a master of public administration degree. All three of these programs are offered 100 percent online and are integrally taught from a Christian worldview. These classes are designed to be engaging and relevant for working professionals.

Dordt is excited that for the fourth year in a row we have been named the number-one university in the nation for student engagement, according *The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education* 2020 rankings. This category examines whether students are engaged in critical thinking and learning, how the classes challenge students, how the students perceive professors' active mentoring, and to what extent the teaching applies student learning to the real world. In addition, Dordt has tied for third place in the Midwest Colleges list by *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings.

Dordt's Pro-Tech program is now in its third year, offering hands-on, two-year associate degrees in manufacturing technology as well as farm operations and management. Pro-Tech plays to our region's strengths as a manufacturing and agriculture hub and emphasizes the nobility of all forms of work from a kingdom worldview. We have been blessed with numerous community partnerships that have benefited the program through internships, equipment donations, and strategic partnerships.

Dordt's mission to equip students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life continues to be the foundation of everything we do. We are grateful for the second highest enrollment in our history this past year, with 1,548 students, and we love to hear stories of how alumni continue to experience spiritual growth following their time at Dordt. According to a recent alumni survey, 96 percent of Dordt alumni report attending church weekly. When students are on campus, we strive to help them experience what living in Christian community can be like, so that when they leave Dordt as alumni they continue to pursue those relationships.

We ask that you continue to pray for us as we seek to be faithful to the task of training up kingdom citizens. Dordt remains committed to Christian

education, and we pray that all of our educational work is continually permeated with the spirit and teaching of Christianity.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dordt University

Erik Hoekstra, president

## Institute for Christian Studies

The 2019-20 academic year marks the Institute for Christian Studies' (ICS) second year of operating in its new home at 59 St. George Street, in the Knox College building at the heart of the University of Toronto campus. On November 30, 2019, we welcomed over 175 friends and supporters to our second annual Open House and Advent Concert, *Creator of the Stars of Night*, in the Knox College chapel. The ICS community continues to experience the setting at Knox College as a great blessing to its collective educational work. One added benefit of moving to this location is that, for the first time, ICS students can live in a Knox residence hall and purchase a University of Toronto meal plan. This year, two first-year students took advantage of this economical accommodation opportunity, a blessing in a city that is experiencing an affordable-housing crisis.

As we continue to seek effective and innovative ways to serve God faithfully in the arena of Christian graduate education, we have experienced God's blessing on our work and in the lives of our students. The ongoing, generous commitment of our CRC churches and support community has encouraged us in this educational mission, enabling us to form cultural leaders in a learning environment that expects and encourages the integration of faith and learning and nurtures the ability to join God's work of blessing and healing in all areas of contemporary life.

Following are some highlights of the ongoing work of ICS in 2019-20:

Our M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs are central to our commitment to Christian scholarship at the highest levels. At the same time ICS also provides significant educational opportunities to lifelong learners through our master of worldview studies and continuing education programs. In fall 2018, ICS also launched a unique "Educational Leadership" stream in the M.A. program (the MA-EL), designed in partnership with the Christian Teacher Academy in Hamilton, Ontario, to meet the professional development needs of curricular innovators and principals of K-12 Christian schools. In fall 2019 a small cohort of four students joined two students from the 2018 pioneer cohort. We hope to grow this program incrementally and organically, and to that end this year we also advertised to fill the position of professor in the philosophy of education and the practice of pedagogy. Should we be blessed with a successful search, the MA-EL program will have a faculty director dedicated to its establishment and continued growth.

At our Annual Convocation in May 2019, we celebrated the graduation of three junior members (students): 1 Ph.D., 1 M.A., and 1 M.W.S. In 2020 we anticipate celebrating the graduation of four junior members: 2 Ph.D. and 2 M.A. One of those Ph.D. graduates, Joshua Harris, successfully defended his Ph.D. on September 16, 2019, at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam (our partners in a conjoint Ph.D. program) with a dissertation titled *Neither Solitary nor Diverse: Transcendental Multitude in Thomas Aquinas*. Joshua joined the faculty of the King's University as a full-time assistant professor of philosophy in fall 2018.

At the time of writing this report (February 2020), total course enrollments for the current academic year are 117. In terms of full-time equivalency (FTE), this number translates to 20 full-time students. After adding full-time students who are in post-coursework stages of their programs, the final FTE

number this year is 34, similar to that of last year. This number does not yet include enrollment figures for the May intensive seminar to be offered jointly with The King's University (see below), as well as the summer 2020 Art in Orvieto seminar scheduled to take place July 16 through August 6, 2020. So far, 80 individuals have taken at least one course at ICS this year.

On May 23-31, 2019, ICS took a historic step in partnering with The King's University to offer a joint intensive seminar in Toronto, the first course approved for credit by both institutions. Titled "To the Unknown God: Paul and Some Philosophers," the course was co-taught by Ronald Kuipers of ICS and Jeffrey Dudiak of The King's University. In total, 11 students took the course: 5 King's students, 2 King's graduates (one of whom joined ICS's M.A. program in the fall), 1 Trinity Western graduate student, and 3 ICS students. The course was also attached to ICS's third Annual Undergraduate Workshop on the theme of political theology, titled "God and Politics: Religion and Public Life in the 21st Century." Ten undergraduates from across North America and beyond gathered May 23-25 to share their research with the ICS academic community at this event.

In this academic year (May 28-June 5, 2020), ICS and King's are again offering a joint intensive seminar led by Dr. Kuipers and Dr. Dudiak, this time focusing on the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt. The course is also again attached to our (fourth) Annual Undergraduate Workshop, on the Arendt-inspired theme "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment: Creating a World Fit for Human Habitation."

Beyond this particular teaching collaboration, our partnership dialogue with King's continues to bear more fruit. In addition to the annual joint seminar in Toronto, this year four ICS students are taking King's professor Neal De Roo's philosophy seminar, "Foundations and Implications of Phenomenology," via video conference. Finally, ICS associate professor of worldview studies and academic dean Gideon Straus was invited to be the keynote speaker at King's Interdisciplinary Studies Conference, "For Love or Money? Vocational Wayfinding," held in Edmonton, Alberta, from January 22-23, 2020.

In addition to their teaching and graduate supervision duties, our senior members (faculty) continue to make significant contributions to academic research by giving popular and academic presentations, and by publishing articles in popular and academic journals. This year ICS's five faculty members made 11 presentations at academic conferences and 40 presentations at popular events, and they published two articles in academic journals. ICS's junior members have been productive as well, with 15 presentations at academic conferences, six publications in academic journals, 12 popular presentations, and nine popular publications.

ICS's Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics (CPRSE) continues to collaborate with other academic and community organizations to pursue quality research and to curate public dialogue about leading questions of life and society. This year's highlights of CPRSE activity include the following:

- Interfaith Dialogue—CPRSE partnered with the Canadian Interfaith Conversation (CIC), Canada's largest interfaith dialogue and cooperation network, to plan and convene the biennial *Our Whole Society* confer-

ence. From April 28-30, 2019, CPRSE participated in the CIC's fourth OWS conference, taking place at the University of Toronto on the theme "Identity and Common Ground in an Age of Transition." CPRSE director Ron Kuipers also serves on the steering committee for the fifth OWS conference, *Free to Believe, Responsible to Act*, slated for May 3-4, 2021, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

- Collaboration with Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)—On October 3, 2019, CPRSE partnered with CPJ to host a town hall gathering in Toronto ahead of the 2019 Canadian Federal Election on the theme of "Shaping a Just Canada."
- *Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship* seminar series—CPRSE hosted two public *Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship* seminars this year. The first, held on December 3, 2019, was led by ICS students in the new Educational Leadership stream of our M.A. program, as a culminating presentation for their MA-EL course "Deeper Learning." The second seminar, held January 23, 2020, featured Matthew Kaemingk, associate dean and assistant professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, speaking about "Hospitality, Scripture, and Interreligious Dialogue."
- Fourth Annual Undergraduate Workshop (May 23-25)—As mentioned above, this year's ICS Undergraduate Workshop is titled "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment: Creating a World Fit for Human Habitation." This event provides an annual opportunity for undergraduate students to showcase their academic work in a collaborative and constructive environment, receiving feedback from ICS junior and senior members, and it leads those students registered into the intensive portion of the joint King's University/ICS seminar on the philosophy of Hannah Arendt.
- *Critical Faith* podcast—Featuring the voices of ICS faculty, students, and special guests, this podcast provides greater public access to the intellectual conversations taking place at ICS. This year the podcast focuses on the ICS/King's course theme "Evil, Resistance, and Judgment," as well as key issues and figures in the Reformational philosophical tradition. At the time of writing this report, we have posted 13 episodes, with an average of 110 downloads per episode, and a total reach of 2,300 (an increase of 28 percent over the previous year). Our most popular episode was an interview with pastor Thyra Van Keeken of First CRC of Toronto.

This academic year has been both dynamic and fruitful. We ask you to pray that God continues to bless our work and that it may effectively serve the purposes God has for ICS in today's world. The strong support we receive from the Christian Reformed Church in North America is a great encouragement to us as we pursue the academic mission to which God has called ICS. We wish to thank the church especially for the commitment this support demonstrates to our faculty, students, and the wider Christian community we seek to serve.

May God grant you wisdom and discernment in your work during Synod 2020.

Institute for Christian Studies  
Ronald A. Kuipers, president



## The King's University

It has been another year of increasing student enrollment. In fall 2019 we set a record high again, with 850 students enrolled. We are incredibly thankful for continued growth in our student population, and we continue striving to reach our goal of enrolling over 1,000 students. As student enrollment is directly linked to the vibrancy and viability of our institution, we covet your prayers and continued support in encouraging prospective students in your community to pursue their Christian university education at King's.

In 2019-20, The King's University is proud to be celebrating 40 years. Established in 1979, King's was founded in the belief that Christian universities matter—to students, to communities, to our world. This year, King's observes 40 years of developing minds and equipping learners to bring change, and we celebrate a proud tradition of rigorous academic scholarship and research at the highest levels. Most importantly, we celebrate the generations of alumni and graduates who form King's emerging legacy as a university, unrelenting in its pursuit of student success, faithful scholarship, and commitment to equipping learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ.

In conjunction with our 40th anniversary, we launched Alumni Achievement Awards at King's. King's has countless alumni around the world accomplishing amazing things each and every day. These alumni are a wonderful testament to the return on your investment into the university over the past 40 years, and we were honored to celebrate three alumni at our 40th Anniversary Banquet this past fall. Christa Aubrey (B.Sc., 2008) was named our Accomplished Young Alumni for her work in the field of medicine. In addition to becoming a medical doctor and currently serving as a clinical fellow in gynecological oncology at the age of 32, Christa is a mother to two children and an active researcher, and she has attained a master of science degree in public health. Jesse Edgington (B.Sc., 2000) was the deserving recipient of the first Servant Leader Award, recognizing his work with the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference, his passion for creation care, climate justice, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and his engagement with his church and neighborhood. Jesse is also currently pursuing a Micah Certificate at the King's Micah Centre. Robert Greidanus (1989) was our inaugural Distinguished Alumni Award recipient. Robert is a family physician and surgeon in Peace River, Alberta, where he serves the local rural community and surrounding First Nations communities. Robert has not only committed his life to serving the underserved and underprivileged in Canada, he has made this commitment globally. Robert and his family spent seven years in Africa, where he served as a medical missionary. Robert has demonstrated remarkable service to others and is committed to building a more humane, just, and sustainable world. We are thankful for all King's alumni who are living out our mission in their communities. If you would like to nominate someone for the 2020 Alumni Achievement Awards, complete the nomination form at [kingsu.ca/alumni/alumni-achievement-awards](https://kingsu.ca/alumni/alumni-achievement-awards).

Recent shifts in the provincial government and a continually depressed economy in Alberta have resulted in some significant alterations in the post-secondary government funding model. We are thankful to have been spared funding cuts mid-fiscal year in the past fall, but we are currently

preparing for a decrease in our provincial operating grant this spring. This presents a significant challenge for King's and other independent institutions in the province, since we are already working with significantly less government funding to begin with. The government's desire is to have all post-secondary institutions receive between 28-35 percent of their total revenue from tuition. This has been part of the impetus behind their cuts to funding. Last year King's derived 47 percent of its revenue from tuition and fees. There is significant concern that funding cuts will put further strain on students who desire a Christian university experience. Please pray for wisdom for our elected officials, that their decisions will be made in a way that preserve the diversity of choice within the post-secondary sector in Alberta. Financial support from our community is as important today as it was 40 years ago, when the institution was in its infancy. Please continue to support King's and our students to ensure that Reformed Christian university education continues to be available and accessible for generations to come.

King's continues to be committed to being a faith-filled, Christian university with staff and faculty who live out their deeply rooted Christianity in their work at the university. Our Statement of Faith, rooted in Scripture, informs our mission "to provide university education that inspires and equips learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as followers of Jesus Christ, the Servant-King." This core biblical stance drives how King's, as a Christian university, engages with our students, our community, and with the society around us. Thank you to the Christian Reformed Church for your faithful partnership in prayer and generous financial support.

The King's University  
Melanie Humphreys, president

## Kuyper College

It's been another good year at Kuyper College. The stories of our students and alumni show that we are fulfilling our goal of education as we enable them to flourish through the good work of our faculty and staff, the generosity of our donors, and God's faithful provision.

Our newly revised philosophy of education states that we do not want our students' primary desire to be for good grades, achievement, or mere accumulation of knowledge. That's not enough. At Kuyper, our end goal of education for our students is that they "live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world."

In fall 2019 we dedicated our students toward this goal—which fits our mission—"to equip students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ's church and his world."

On a trip to central Minnesota this past year, Kuyper's president had lunch with a group of church and civic leaders, many of whom are Kuyper College alumni. In opening devotions, one leader shared his story of being called into ministry. His calling started when he was a young teen and said "Yes" to Jesus Christ at a church event, and it solidified when he said "No" to receiving a full scholarship to a prestigious college. He explained that his decision wasn't easy and seemed foolish to many people, but he knew that God was leading him on a different path—toward full-time Christian ministry—and that path led him to study at Kuyper College. He went on to share that in retrospect he has no regrets, for he has witnessed God's faithfulness and leading in ways beyond what he could have asked or imagined. He closed by saying that he loves what he is doing for Jesus!

This is a refrain that is echoed by Kuyper alumni who are living faithfully for Jesus Christ in more than fifty countries in God's good world. Many of them are connected to a variety of CRCNA churches and organizations, serving as ordained pastors, missionaries, youth workers, theological educators, entrepreneurs, leaders of nonprofit organizations, social workers, teachers, writers, community developers, and much more. And they love what they are doing for Jesus!

Again this past year the Kuyper College community has drawn together to prepare students to be the next generation of Christian leaders—leaders who will live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world, just as our alumni are doing. The world needs such Christian leaders. With an increased awareness of the changing needs and expectations in higher education and the workplace, we are committed to providing our undergraduate and graduate students with quality, affordable programs and well-fitted student services within an innovative and applied learning environment.

Focusing on our undergraduate students . . .

- Our first-year Kuyper Seminar and our Vocation and Calling Formation program enable our undergraduate students to discern their calling and evaluate their spiritual development through intentional touch points with faculty, staff, and mentors during their college experience.
- Our fully implemented KuyperWorks program connects work and academics in meaningful ways to provide more than 65 undergraduate

students with professional, workplace-ready skills and more affordable education.

- Our Loan Repayment Assistance Program provides a safety net to help students repay their college loans after graduation, for we recognize that the majority of our alumni serve in career positions that have limited wages and salaries.
- Our enhanced professional counseling services enable our students to receive free counseling sessions from caring and capable Christian mental health providers who understand the challenges college-age students are facing today.
- Our internships and capstone courses provide all of our undergraduate students with opportunities to tangibly connect their classroom learning with real-world learning so that they can be fully equipped in their various vocations.
- Our robust foundation of Bible and theology courses remain the mainstay of our undergraduate curriculum and a key reason why students come to Kuyper. They love God's Word, and they desire to engage in purposeful study and practical application.

Focusing on our graduate students and others . . .

- Our Master of Ministry program successfully launched this past year, and it involves several students from the CRCNA. This is a hybrid, praxis-based program of eight-week courses, aimed at equipping women and men who are already serving in some ministry capacity. Courses include topics such as contemporary theological issues, financial management in ministry, technology and transformation, teaching and preaching the Old Testament, and discipleship and spiritual formation. These courses are also available as professional development opportunities for people who already hold a master's degree.
- Our aim is to equip more and more professional and lay leaders within the church. That is why this winter we piloted a new program called KuyperEquips, providing courses to leaders and members of partner churches in order to equip them to lead others. In this pilot program, we partnered with six area Christian Reformed churches as well as a Reformed Church in America congregation and two parachurch organizations. Participants attended several of our Bible and theology courses at the undergraduate and master levels. These courses provided not only avenues of personal enrichment for the participants but also opportunities to enhance our on-campus community as other students engaged with these participants from area churches and organizations.

By God's grace, we have achieved these initiatives through the dedication and skill of our faculty and staff and the support of women and men within the CRCNA who generously pray, work, and give to help us further our mission. We are thankful for our partnership with the CRCNA, and we look forward to finding more tangible ways to serve Christ's church and his world together as we live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world.

Kuyper College  
Patricia R. Harris, president

## Redeemer University

Greetings from Redeemer University! It's official! After a successful organization review and a name-change application process with external expert review panels under the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, Minister for Colleges and Universities Ross Romano granted ministerial consent on January 20, 2020, for Redeemer to be known as Redeemer University.

This is an exciting and historic change for Redeemer. We believe that changing the institution's name to Redeemer University will clear up confusion that regularly arises from the term "university college." Aligning the name with the university education that Redeemer provides clarifies the degree-granting status that we have had for over two decades.

More exciting changes are coming in the long-awaited filling of the provost and vice president, academic position. We are pleased to welcome David Zietsma as Redeemer's new provost and vice president, academic, beginning April 1. Formerly the vice president, external relations and enrollment, Dr. Zietsma brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from the pivotal role he has been serving for five years in addition to his time as dean of humanities (2010-15) and as a tenure-track member of the history department when he first joined in 2007.

Along with many changes in 2019, Redeemer is pleased to see the newly created gap-year program, Act Five, flourishing with its first cohort. As the young people in this group live and learn together, they have been busy with the many programs and activities that Act Five offers. Students spent a week on the Six Nations reserve, learning from community members in partnership with Ohsweken Baptist Church. They also traveled to Zambia with Edudeo, serving in local villages and communities. You can follow along with their experiences through Instagram at @act\_five.

In fall 2019, Redeemer partnered with the CRCNA's Faith Formation Ministries at Redeemer's fall conference featuring Tish Warren Harrison and Jen Pollock Michelle. More recently, in January 2020, Resonate Global Mission's Greg Sinclair hosted a discussion panel at The World and Our Calling lecture series with Matthew Kaemingk on "Learning to Love our Muslim Neighbours." We appreciate opportunities like these to partner together to feature influential Christian public thinkers, serving to encourage Redeemer faculty, students, and community members to encounter new ways to think about their faith, their culture, and God's world.

As the Re Campaign came to a close at the end of 2019, Redeemer can see the blessings of God's provision. Through generous donors, the Re Campaign raised \$19.3 million to fund the Strategic 2020 Plan, which launched a variety of exciting additions and improvements across campus. These include the Centre for Experiential Learning and Careers that continues to prepare students for employment after graduation with a variety of co-op programs and internships across many fields of study. They also include our new Media and Communications Studies and Urban and Intercultural Ministry programs, which offer new opportunities for students to pursue their careers and callings.

Improvements made at Redeemer could not happen without a supportive community. During the first week of February, students, faculty, and staff

took the opportunity to celebrate generous donors through the Gratitude Project—a week-long reflection and series of events highlighting contributions that have been made so that students can better afford a university education. Redeemer is deeply grateful for the financial contributions and support in prayer from the Christian Reformed Church. More young people than ever are being educated through a Reformed Christian worldview, and your support is essential in continuing this mission. Thank you!

Your partnership has been vital as Redeemer looks forward in 2020 to a promising future with increased enrollment, a new strategic plan, and a renewed commitment to prepare students to follow Christ wherever they are called.

Redeemer University  
Robert J. Graham, president

## Trinity Christian College

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update to synod on behalf of Trinity Christian College. Throughout our history, we have valued our relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. We are grateful for the support from CRC congregations to advance our mission of providing a distinctive Christian higher education experience at Trinity. We cherish the students from CRC families who select Trinity as their college. We relish the opportunities to be in partnership with the CRC in a variety of ways—from hosting classis and denominational meetings, to serving as a resource for local congregations, to preparing students to be leaders in the church. Our partnership with the CRC is a valuable and, we believe, a mutually beneficial one!

Trinity marked 60 years of existence on October 1, 2019. On the first day of October 1959, in the former Navajo Hills Golf Course clubhouse, in what then was called the Fireside Chapel, Trinity officially opened with 35 students and four full-time faculty. The building had been hastily prepared for academic purposes as the golf course had only recently vacated it—even the bar remained intact on that first day of class (minus its contents, of course). As is fitting for a Christian institution, the first official act of the new college was an opening convocation with a sermon from the chair of the board of trustees, Arthur DeKruyter. Thereafter, it was time for class, and Derke Bergsma taught the first class at Trinity—Latin 101. Trinity was off and running, and we have been looking forward ever since.

One of our founders, Richard Prince, in a column for the *Illinois Observer*, succinctly summarized what those faithful founders were up to more than half a century ago:

We stand today before a golden opportunity to plan for tomorrow. This type of building for tomorrow always demands Courage, Faith & Vision. Remember, Trinity stands for the extension of God's kingdom. Nothing can be more important than that.

It was an auspicious start, and over the decades God has blessed it. From beginning as a two-year school to become a four-year school offering a variety of degrees. From being unaccredited to having full accreditation. From limited academic offerings in a few core disciplines to professional preparation in fields like business, education, and nursing. From being exclusively undergraduate to expanding into adult programs and then graduate programs too. From having a nearly homogenous population of Chicagoland Dutch Reformed families to embracing a diverse community made up of varied ethnicities, denominational ties, and geographies.

God has indeed blessed Trinity at her young age. And Trinity is *young*, as far as academic institutions go. (By way of contrast, America's oldest college, Harvard University, celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1696—a full 80 years before the founding of the United States.) So, at Trinity's Diamond Jubilee, we rightly have paused, looked back, given thanks, and celebrated for all that Trinity has accomplished and all whom Trinity has shaped and molded in a few short decades.

And what an impact Trinity continues to have! Consider these examples of external indicators of recognized excellence:



- Nursing program ranked number 2 in the state of Illinois (with 100% passage rates in four of the past five years on national licensure exams)
- Education program ranked in the top 20 nationally
- Top CPA passage rates among Illinois universities
- A nearly 100 percent medical school placement rate
- A partnership—along with six other institutions like the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois, and Loyola University—at North America’s largest and the world’s top-ranked technology start-up incubator, 1871
- A new core curriculum passed overwhelmingly by Trinity’s faculty, taking seriously both intellectual endeavors *and* vocational preparation—and attracting attention from national foundations and Ivy League universities alike

Additionally, Trinity continues to offer increasingly engaging opportunities for worship experiences on campus, with the continued popularity of student-led Outcry services at 10 p.m. (yes, *10 p.m.*) on Thursday evenings, and a twice-weekly voluntary chapel program that has witnessed almost a tenfold growth in attendance over the past five years. God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

Trinity stands at a unique intersection as a well-regarded Reformed college located in a global metropolis. This presents challenges, of course, but it also gives us opportunity to be salt and light, creators of culture, and agents of God’s grace in an urban and largely secular environment. We are seeing God bless Trinity in amazing ways, with increasing ethnic diversity (now nearly 40 percent of our students), increasing opportunities for educational access (with nearly 37 percent of our students as Pell-eligible), and with outstanding educational outcomes (significantly higher than national average graduation rates and a 98 percent job placement rate after graduation). God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

In fall 2019 Trinity welcomed a freshman class that was 5.5 percent larger than in 2018, and a transfer-student population that was nearly 13 percent larger than in 2018. As of the writing of this report (in February) Trinity appears to be on its way to a promising enrollment for fall 2020 as well (though with much work yet to be done and many prayers yet to be raised). Compared to this point in the previous year, Trinity has doubled its pool of inquiring students, has seen a 35 percent increase in its applicant and deposited student numbers, and has welcomed 50 percent more student visitors to campus. In our adult undergraduate and graduate programs, the enhanced interest in a Trinity education is even greater, with increases ranging from 30 to 300 percent. God indeed continues to bless Trinity.

Some months ago, an article in *Architectural Digest* suggested that architecture is trending once again toward the classical style. That is interesting, and this quote from Robert A.M. Stern, famed architect and former dean of the Yale School of Architecture, is worth noting: “We are always trying not to copy the past, but to interpret it and reinterpret it, as artists often do.”

We at Trinity are artists too, and we cannot simply copy the past. Rather, our task is to interpret and reinterpret where we have come from so that we are true to our missional history while being well connected to this time and place. Trinity needs to constantly pursue purposeful, intentional adaptations

that allow us to be particularly attuned to Trinity's mission in our time—just as Trinity has been throughout its history. This involves connecting the *who* and *why* we are with the *where* and *when* we are. Trinity in 2020 is not exactly what it was in 1960, in part because the world is different in many ways from what it was in that era. What will Trinity—and the world—look like in 2080, when few, if any, of us reading this report in 2020 will still walk this earth? What kinds of hopes do we have for our grandchildren—and our grandchildren's grandchildren?

It is no secret that higher education, as an industry, faces significant challenges. This is especially true for smaller, historically liberal arts colleges, especially in the midwestern United States. Nationwide there are three million fewer high school graduates today than there were in 2011. The story is even more challenging for Christian liberal arts colleges and universities—institutions that generally lack the size and financial strength of larger and better-known ones.

If we want places like Trinity—where an excellent education includes serious engagement with the Christian faith—for future generations, we must make them a priority in our prayers, in our encouragement of students, and in our philanthropy. As we look forward to another sixty years of faithfulness, we respectfully but boldly ask for your continued prayers, encouragement, students, and finances so that Trinity can continue—and continually improve—its faithful service to God's good world.

In this time—and speaking for all of the CRC-affiliated institutions—we need to make clear that your support is more vital than ever. At a time when institutions generally are seeing diminished loyalty and support, our colleges are needed more than ever before for the world in which we live. Without your support there can be no assurance that our institutions will weather the storms in which we find ourselves. Make no mistake: if we *lose* our institutions, we *will not* get them back. If we lose our institutions, what sort of a world will we be leaving for our grandchildren and their grandchildren?

This technically is an annual report to the denomination—but in reality it is a *generational* report to the church and to Christian people everywhere. Now is the time, like never before, to invest in us and to pray for us. And, in return, we endeavor to be faithful witnesses to the broader world and incubators for future leadership in our congregations and denomination.

We invite you to learn more about the things that are happening at Trinity! You can easily do so via our website ([trnty.edu](http://trnty.edu)) or on our various social media channels (links are available on our website). You are welcome also to send in your questions and discuss these matters personally ([president@trnty.edu](mailto:president@trnty.edu)).

Thank you again for your partnership with and support of Trinity Christian College. We are a better and more faithful place because of our cherished relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and we look forward to many future years of deep and rich partnerships with the church.

Trinity Christian College  
Kurt D. Dykstra, president

# OVERTURES, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PERSONAL APPEAL



## Overture 1: Formally Allow Campus Ministers to Serve as Delegates to Classis

### I. Background

As in most classes, churches in Classis Huron send three delegates to classis meetings in keeping with Church Order Article 40-a. Due to an amendment to Supplement, Article 40-a approved by Synod 2007, organized congregations are also able to delegate officebearers from the emerging churches under their care.

Classis Huron also recognizes campus ministries as “member churches” similar to emerging congregations and allows organized churches to delegate campus ministers who are ordained as ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors under the care and supervision of their council. We have found great benefit in this practice for both the classis as a whole as well as our campus ministers. Campus ministers benefit from greater visibility, accountability, encouragement, collegiality, and regular opportunities for reporting and sharing the fruit of their ministry in both formal and informal capacities through participation in the deliberative process of the classical assembly. Classis as a whole benefits from the insight and experience of campus ministers, who serve in unique and diverse ministry settings, are engaged at the forefront of the intersection of faith and academia, minister with young adults, stay informed on the latest research and cultural trends, and bridge the gap between the significant cultural institutions of church and academy. Campus ministers serve in a missional laboratory where they are uniquely positioned to learn for the sake of the wider church, and their input into ecclesiastical proceedings is vital as we together seek to navigate the globalized, post-Christendom world in which we now find ourselves.

Whereas church planters are able to be delegated by their calling churches through the credential forms provided by the denomination, this is not currently the case for campus ministers. Due to the benefits of expecting campus ministers to be involved in the proceedings of the classical assembly, Classis Huron presents the following overture.

### II. Overture

That synod amend the Supplement to Church Order Article 40-a to formally allow campus ministers to serve as delegates to classis as follows (deletions indicated by ~~strikethrough~~; additions indicated by *italics*):

If a classis so desires, it may ~~also invite emerging churches to~~  
~~delegate three officebearers to the meetings of classis~~ *invite councils*

to delegate up to three officebearers from emerging churches and campus ministries under their care.

Grounds:

1. Such delegation will benefit classes by the expected presence and contributions of campus ministers at classis meetings.
2. Such delegation will give greater recognition and encouragement to these officebearers in classis.
3. An amendment to the supplement would invite classes to implement this practice without obligating them to do so.

Classis Huron

John C. Medendorp, stated clerk

## **Overture 2: Revise Church Order Article 45 to Permit Classes to Delegate an At-large Alternate to Synod**

### **I. Overture**

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to revise Article 45 of the Church Order to permit classes to send an “at-large alternate” delegate to synod if the classis has documented that they cannot find a pastor, an elder, or a deacon to serve in the assigned delegate role for that year.

The proposed wording for Church Order Article 45 follows (with new text indicated by *italics*):

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all classes. Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon and one other officebearer to synod. *A classis that has documented that it cannot find a minister, elder, or deacon delegate to serve shall be permitted to delegate to synod an at-large alternate delegate. The at-large alternate delegate may be a minister, an elder, or a deacon.*

Grounds:

1. In 2017, nine classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod; in 2018, eight classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod; in 2019, eleven classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod (data gathered from Agendas for Synod).
2. Minority-majority classes, rural or geographically distant classes, and smaller classes have been most likely to have sent three or fewer delegates to synod and have been the most affected by the decision to mandate deacon delegates to synod.
3. The principles of Christian fellowship and unity call us to act in ways that promote justice and equality instead of ways that promote injustice or discrimination for those classes unable to provide deacon delegates every year.
4. Mandating that a classis can only substitute an at-large alternate delegate if they document not being able to find a deacon, elder, or minister delegate upholds the spirit of the 2015 change while honoring the reality many classes face.

5. Allowing for an at-large alternate delegate accommodates the classes who find it difficult to nominate even four regular delegates or who have churches with “leadership teams” with shared deacon/elder responsibilities.

## II. Background and elaboration of grounds

In 2015 synod adopted the changes to Article 45 of the Church Order first proposed by the 2013 Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force. The changes adopted in 2015 to this article changed the typical synodical delegation from two ministers and two elders to one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer. After four years of the new system of delegation, we are now in a position to reflect on how this change has affected the classes:

Year	Number of Churches with Fewer than Four Delegates
2013	1
2014	2
2015	1
2016*	3
2017	9
2018	8
2019	11

\* The delegation change went into effect in 2016.

The chart suggests a significant change from one or two classes being less than fully delegated through 2015, to an average of nine classes being less than fully delegated from 2017-2019.

In effect, over the past three years, an average of nine classes each year have had one fewer delegate present to contribute to the dialogue and decisions of synod. Perhaps we might call this a “disenfranchisement” of sorts, in which these classes with fewer than four delegates have had their voices minimized because they could not find a fourth delegate—usually a deacon—who was available to attend synod.

While some might suggest that this might only be a problem for classes who are not sufficiently motivated to recruit, equip, and provide for a fourth delegate, the data show that, in fact, the classes most likely to send three or fewer delegates have been either minority-majority<sup>1</sup> classes; classes smaller than the median size<sup>2</sup>; or classes that are spread out over a significant geographical distance or are rural classes.<sup>3</sup> This means that the effect of the 2015 decision to change the delegation to synod has had a larger impact on our fellow churches and classes that are minority-majority, smaller, or rural. We might suggest that this has resulted in a discriminatory effect on those types of classes, since they are more likely to be underrepresented.

<sup>1</sup> We define “minority-majority” as a classis in which an ethnic minority constitutes a majority of the members of classis.

<sup>2</sup> We define smaller than median classes as those in the lower 24 classes in terms of number of total members.

<sup>3</sup> We define geographically distant or rural classes as those where two or more churches are more than three hours by car from the majority of the classis, or those comprised largely of rural or small-town communities.



Consider the list of classes who have sent fewer than four delegates over the past four years<sup>4</sup>:

Classis	Year	Minority-Majority?	Rural/Geographically Distant?	Smaller Than The Median?
Arizona	2017		Yes	Yes
Arizona	2018		Yes	Yes
Arizona	2019		Yes	Yes
Central Plains	2017		Yes	Yes
Chicago South	2019			Yes
Columbia	2017		Yes	Yes
Columbia	2018		Yes	Yes
Columbia	2019		Yes	Yes
Georgetown	2017			
Grand Rapids South	2018			
Hanmi	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hanmi	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hanmi	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hudson	2018			Yes
Hudson	2019			Yes
lakota	2016		Yes	
Illiana	2018			
Kalamazoo	2019			Yes
Ko-Am	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ko-Am	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lake Superior	2019		Yes	
Niagara	2019			Yes
Northcentral Iowa	2018			Yes
Northern Illinois	2019			
Northern MI	2017		Yes	Yes
Northern MI	2018		Yes	Yes
Northern MI	2019		Yes	Yes
Quinte	2017			
Thornapple Valley	2019			Yes
Yellowstone	2019		Yes	Yes
Zeeland	2017			Yes

Out of 31 instances over the past four years in which classes sent fewer than four delegates, 26 of those occurrences involved a minority-majority classis; a rural or geographically distant classis; or a smaller than median classis. Even more, the six classes that have had less than a full representation multiple times are in the lowest 11 classes in terms of number of total members.

We want to affirm the good work of the Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force (2013) and the followup work of the Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon (2015). It is good for us to strive to nominate a deacon delegate every year, and this ought to remain our aim—for deacons are equal partners with elders and pastors in the leadership of the church. But as we see above, the result of changing the synodical delegation has resulted in an accidental discrimination effect that has limited and reduced the representation at synod rather than having broadened it. Our overture to permit classes to delegate an at-large alternate is intended to undo this discrimination effect and allow for classes who find it challenging to send delegates from all three offices to synod. We believe this is an equal and just

<sup>4</sup> Data gathered from *Agendas for Synod 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019*, and the 2019 *Yearbook*.

approach to the difficulties experienced by minority-majority, small, and rural/distant classes.

In addition, Classis Chicago South believes delegating an at-large alternate instead of four separate alternates is preferable to the current system for the following reasons:

1. Church Order Article 27 recognizes the delegated authority of the major bodies (classis and synod) and the original authority of the churches. Allowing for an at-large alternate allows for churches and classes to delegate the persons whom they believe are best called and suited to represent them at synod.
2. Allowing for an at-large alternate accommodates the growing movement that blurs the lines between elders and deacons. At least two churches in Classis Chicago South elect a “leadership team” in which deacons and elders share responsibilities and titles. As the overturing classis, Chicago South also occasionally makes exceptions for our small churches to send alternate delegations in which deacons or elders are seated in place of each other so that these churches may fully contribute to the ministry of our classis.
3. Allowing for an at-large alternate accommodates the needs of classes who find it difficult to nominate even four main delegates, much less four separate alternates as well.

Thus, Classis Chicago South overtures synod to permit classes to send an at-large alternate delegate to synod if the classis has documented that it cannot find a pastor, an elder, or a deacon to serve in the assigned delegate role. We believe this is right and just because it promotes the unity and equality of all members, all churches, and all classes; and because it best accommodates the unique needs of each classis.

Classis Chicago South  
Jeremy Oosterhouse, stated clerk

### **Overture 3: Revise Church Order Article 45 to Reduce Number of Delegates to Synod to Three per Classis**

#### **I. Background**

We are grateful for the excellent work of the Synod Review Task Force (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 445-73). This overture is not intended to re-do the work of the task force but, rather, to add another consideration to how synod is conducted.

Of concern to Classis Muskegon is the high absentee rate and the overall costs of synod.

Church Order Article 45 currently states, “Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod.”

Consider the following disturbing trend in unfilled roles (both primary and alternate delegates) and incomplete delegations (data gathered from *Agendas for Synod*):

Year	Number of unfilled roles (primary delegates)	Number of incomplete delegations (primary and alternate delegates)
2015	53	1
2016	58	4
2017	80	9
2018	79	8
2019	85	12

The costs for synod were presented by the Synod Review Task Force (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 471). While not all costs are variable, a reduction of one delegate per classis could result in up to a 20-percent cost savings (fixed costs remaining the same; variable costs reduced by 25 percent).

Prior to the change in Article 45 to include deacons, there was equal representation of the officers (two ministers and two elders per classis). Article 45, in its current form, creates an imbalance among the offices.

Classis Muskegon currently delegates one minister, one elder, and one deacon to each classis meeting.

**II. Overture**

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to revise Church Order Article 45 to read as follows (changes indicated by ~~striketrough~~ and *italics*):

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, ~~and one deacon,~~ *and one other officebearer* to synod. *One alternate would fill any of the three delegates.*

*Grounds:*

1. At the present time classes have difficulty presenting four delegates and four alternates (see above).
2. The costs for synod would be less expensive and thus more stewardly for the denomination (cost savings of up to 20 percent).
3. Synod advisory committees could be smaller and still include all delegates.
4. Fewer individuals would need to miss work and take on additional expenses to be delegates, thus reducing the financial impact to classes that provide stipends to delegates.
5. Having three delegates would restore a more equal representation of the offices that existed when only ministers and elders were delegates.

Classis Muskegon  
Drew K. Sweetman, stated clerk

**Overture 4: Amend Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, and 17 with Respect to Supervision and Transition of Ministers**

**I. Background re Church Order, Articles 12-14 and section III, A-E**

Whereas all members of the church are to engage in ministry as parts of the living body of Christ, the church has recognized and assigned unique

roles and functions to certain members. The Belgic Confession lists three marks of the true church: the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline. In the Christian Reformed Church, while the task of discipline falls to the church elders (general discipline of members) and the church council (special discipline of office-bearers), the tasks of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments are assigned in a primary way to the role of ministers of the Word.

Responsibility for these essential tasks in the faith and life of the church is why entry into the ministry of the Word and the acceptance of specific ministry positions require both an internal sense of “call” to mission as well as an external “call” from a local church for a specific ministry position. Both dimensions of this “call”—the call to ordained ministry and the call to a specific position—underscore the importance of both the “called” minister and the “calling” church desiring and cultivating a healthy relationship of trust, support, and supervision.

In the Christian Reformed Church today there is a growing number of persons, already ordained or seeking ordination, who are serving or seeking to serve in ministry positions other than pastoral ministry in a congregation. For the purposes of this overture, on occasion we also use the term *specialized ministry* in referring to this wide variety of ministry positions.

The Church Order requires that there be clear description of such positions and official approval that each ministry position is in fact “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” (cf. Church Order Art. 12-c). However, the Church Order and Supplements have been less precise in providing guidance for establishing and maintaining a solid relationship of trust, support, and supervision between the calling church and ministers called to specialized work.

One unique aspect of specialized ministry is the requirement of joint supervision: “A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved” (Art. 13-b). Frequently, however, an organization that employs a specialized minister may have no obligation to consult with the calling church prior to modifying or even terminating the position. Consequently, even though the Supplement to Church Order Article 13-b requires communication between the partners in supervision, frequently the position of a specialized minister may be changed or concluded without any communication to the calling church.

Church Order Article 14 also clearly stipulates that a minister must seek the permission of the calling church before leaving their approved position. Again, however, the reality exists that ministers can have their position in an organization terminated or radically changed solely at the discretion of the organization without prior consultation with either the minister or the calling church. In any case, whether the change in status is effected unilaterally or upon prior consultation, it still renders the minister without a call to a specific position, thus prompting the need for redefining the relationship between the specialized minister and the calling church.

The urgency of these considerations is highlighted by the following:

- The large and growing number of specialized ministries and therefore of joint supervisory relationships (currently, more than sixty specialized ministries exist in Classis Grand Rapids East alone).
- The seemingly abrupt nature of many of these transitions as well as the inconsistent nature of communication with the calling/supervising churches.
- The periodic transition from a ministry position or even relocation from the area without consulting or even informing the calling church.

While recognizing that these situations will not be rectified completely by changes to the Church Order and its Supplements, we believe that certain revisions and other provisions will provide a better framework for more effective support and supervision of specialized ministries.

In keeping with the history and concerns as outlined above, we propose the following direction as further specified in section III, A-E below.

- Provide and require utilization of a Covenant of Supervision to assist the specialized minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization in defining, understanding, and supporting the joint supervision of specialized ministers (cf. Art. 12-b and -c, and Supplement, Arts. 12-c and 13-b).
- Revise and standardize the vocabulary in Articles 12, 13, and 14 by replacing the word *work* with the word *position* as a common referent for the ministry being carried out by agreement with the calling church and the appointing agency.
- Strengthen practices in support of the requirement that ministers of the Word transitioning out of an approved ministry position also need to obtain release by their calling church from their call to that position (cf. Art. 14-a).

## **II. Background to Church Order Article 17 and section III, F-G**

The focus in the preceding section has been on the supervision and transition of ministers of the Word under the provisions of Church Order Articles 12, 13, and 14. However, when a minister is released from one call without having received and accepted a call to another position, Church Order Article 17 also applies. Specifically, while Article 17 only names “active ministerial service in a congregation,” in practice its application is *intended* for specialized ministers as well. For this reason, and because of unique history and perceptions surrounding Article 17, we are proposing revisions to Article 17-a as well.

Ever since the adoption of the revised Church Order in 1965, there have been ongoing efforts to clarify and improve Article 17 (Article 11 in pre-1965 Church Order). Some changes have been minor tweaks: 1973, allowing transfer of a minister’s credentials, not just membership, to a new church; 2010, clarifying that when a pastor leaves a congregation for personal reasons, the council is not required to provide extended compensation and benefits. Other changes, however, suggest that Article 17 as currently formulated has not been serving diverse ministry situations satisfactorily.

- In 1983 synod clarified that the separation for “weighty reasons” may be initiated by a pastor or a council or jointly, and synod recognized

that the standard two-year eligibility for call after an Article 17 separation may be inadequate given the challenge of a minister receiving a call after an Article 17 separation.

- In 1987, Article 16, which allowed a temporary leave of absence (with the expectation of return) was expanded to include a terminal release (without expectation of return) when the request for release from one's ministry position was initiated by the minister. Commensurate with this change, releases from a ministry position under Article 17 were limited to requests initiated by the council.
- By 1998 these changes were revoked, with Article 16 again limited to a temporary leave of absence and Article 17 reinstated as the official route for a terminal separation, regardless of who initiated it. Also in 1998 the Supplement to Article 17 was modified to include the provision that a classis may require that the minister undergo evaluation before being eligible for call and/or that the congregation undergo evaluation before it may extend a call.
- In 2003 the Supplement was amended once more to allow for releasing a minister from ordination if, after a time of evaluation, classis decides it cannot declare the pastor eligible for a call.

Taking note of an increase in Article 17 separations, Synod 2012 instructed the denominational Board of Trustees and some of its ministry offices to consider what could be done to address this concern (*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 755, 798-99). In response to a follow-up charge from the Board of Trustees, Pastor-Church Relations began work on a "Better Together" initiative and reported on developments over the next few years. One important result has been the implementation of vocational ministry assessment for pastors, begun in 2016 (see *Agenda for Synod 2013*, pp. 34, 67-75; *Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 31, 63-65, 166). Indeed, the numbers of separations under Article 17 in recent years are startling: in the 1980s, there were 24; in the 1990s, there were 25; in the 2000s, the number jumped to 146; and in the nine years from 2010-2018, there are already 141.

Until 2004, synodical deputy reports in the *Acts of Synod* specified when a classis put conditions in place before a call could be issued, but that is no longer the case. However, it is instructive to observe that in the years 2001 through 2004, only 46 percent of the Article 17 separations reported noted conditions imposed by classis. Conversely, 54 percent of the separations gave no indication of problem situations.

It would be a faulty conclusion, therefore, to assume that all or even the majority of these releases were due to problem situations. Ministers serving in congregations may request release from their position for a wide variety of "no-fault" reasons, such as advanced education or training, the closing of a congregation, parental leave, the relocation of a spouse, or other family changes. In addition, multiple classes have a growing number of "specialized ministers" whose positions are with other than their calling church (cf. Art. 13-b). We already cited the example of Classis Grand Rapids East having approximately sixty ministers in active specialized ministry positions plus a steady stream of others in transition. In addition to the no-fault reasons cited above, specialized ministry situations involve other factors: staff positions are seriously altered or concluded, term calls come to an end,

transfers and resignations occur. Although there are exceptions, the majority of these releases involve no concern regarding the minister's eligibility for accepting a call to a new ministry position.

Notwithstanding this increase in specialized ministries, Article 17-a remains the only Church Order provision for allowing or approving the release of a minister from their position. In 2012 synod received an overture to amend Article 17 by adding a section 17-e for application specifically for persons desiring to pursue further education, but this was rejected on the basis of not wanting to single out one special reason for release when Article 17 already allows release for a wide variety of reasons (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 749). Consequently, all releases continue to be reported under this single Church Order article, whether the actual release was negative or positive, complicated or uncomplicated.

Given this history, it seems compelling to modify Article 17-a in a way that gives some recognition of differing reasons for which ministers may be released from their call to ministry positions, and in a way that counters the unfortunate assumption of some that all releases under Article 17-a are due to problem situations.

Another consideration is the current policy of requiring the presence of synodical deputies for *all* releases by way of Article 17-a. When specific releases raise no questions regarding the minister's eligibility for a call to another ministry position, approval for such releases can be granted by the classis itself. It is being proposed, therefore, that the concurrence of synodical deputies be required *only* when the classis may wish to require that a released minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call (Supplement, Article 17-a).

### III. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures Synod 2020 to amend Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, and 17 by making the following changes (indicated by strikethrough and italics):

#### A. Revise Church Order Articles 12-b and -c as follows:

b. A minister of the Word who (1) ~~enters into the work~~ *accepts the position* of missions, chaplaincy, or specialized transitional ministry; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in ~~other work~~ *another position* which relates directly to the calling of a minister, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that said ~~work~~ *position* is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.

#### B. Revise Church Order Article 13-b as follows:

b. A minister of the Word whose ~~work~~ *position* is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in



cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

*Ground:* The word *position* is consistent with language used in the Supplements to Articles 12-c and 13-b.

C. Add a new Article 13-d as proposed by the following:

*d. When the position of a minister of the Word is with other than the calling church, the position shall be regulated by a Covenant of Supervision as approved by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization, with concurrence of the classis. Any changes to the status of the Covenant of Supervision, as soon as they are known, shall be submitted to all parties for review and concurrence.*

—Cf. *Covenant of Supervision Form in Synodical Resources*

*Ground:* Establishing and utilizing a standard framework for joint supervision will facilitate clear expectations of all parties involved while maintaining appropriate flexibility within the variety of ministry situations.

D. Revise Supplement, Article 12-c, section a, 2 as follows:

2) ~~The evidence that the minister will be directly accountable to the calling church, including an outline of requirements for reporting to the calling church, and supervision by the calling church, in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.~~  
*A Covenant of Supervision shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization.*

—Cf. *Covenant of Supervision Form in Synodical Resources*

*Ground:* Requiring a review of specific responsibilities and commitments of supervision prior to determining whether a minister's position "is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word" (Art. 12-c) will help to ensure that all relevant considerations have been addressed by the parties involved.

E. Revise Church Order Article 14-a and add a new Article 14-b as follows:

a. A minister of the Word shall not leave the congregation with which the minister is connected for another church *or other position* without the consent of the council.

b. *A minister of the Word whose position is with other than the calling church shall seek appropriate approval of the calling church and classis as soon as major changes in the status of the position are known.*

—Cf. *Supplement, Article 13-b and Article 17-a and -b*

*Ground:* Adding the stipulation that those serving in specialized ministry shall seek approval of the calling church and classis when

their position has been altered or concluded will ensure appropriate supervision, even if or when they are temporarily without an approved position.

*Note:* If the above changes to Articles 14-a and -b are adopted, the current Articles 14-b, -c, -d, and -e, along with the respective Supplements to Articles 14-b, -c, and -e, would be relettered accordingly.

F. Revise Article 17-a and add a new Article 17-b as follows:

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may ~~for weighty reasons~~ be released from active ministerial service in a congregation *or other position* through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis *or its interim committee* ~~with the concurring advice of synodical deputies~~, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

b. *If the classis interim committee judges that the situation leading to the request for a release from active ministerial service may be of such weight that the minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call, such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.*

*Grounds:*

1. The language in the proposed Articles 17-a and -b clarifies that releases apply to ministers serving in congregations and in other ministry positions.
2. It is important to differentiate between releases that require no additional action (proposed Art. 17-a) and releases that require additional action (proposed Art. 17-b).
3. This differentiation will relieve synodical deputies from the need to ratify releases that are routine and in keeping with synodical regulations.

*Note:* If the above changes to Articles 17-a and -b are adopted, the current Articles 17-b, -c, and -d, along with the Supplement to Article 17-a, would be relettered accordingly.

G. Instruct the Candidacy Committee to recommend commensurate changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

*Note:* Classis Grand Rapids East requests that the Synodical Services Office include synodical action regarding this overture in its summary of Synod 2020 actions reported to the classes for their special attention.

Classis Grand Rapids East  
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

## Appendix

### Covenant of Supervision (COS) for Ministers of the Word and Commissioned Pastors Serving in Specialized Ministry Positions

This Covenant of Supervision (COS) provides a working framework for the calling and supervision of CRC ministers of the Word (hereafter, *MW*) and commissioned pastors (hereafter, *CP*) who serve in ministry positions with appointing agencies, institutions, or organizations other than their calling church (hereafter, *Organization*), and in keeping with CRC Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, 23, and relevant Supplements. These ministry positions, also referred to below as *specialized ministries*, include but are not limited to those of denominational leaders, missionaries, chaplains, campus pastors, church planters, theological professors, Bible teachers, and ministry leaders with Christian nonprofit organizations.

The expectations and responsibilities listed below are designed to facilitate effective supervision of specialized ministers/ministries, as stipulated in Church Order Article 13-b:

A minister of the Word whose [position] is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

#### A. Expectations of the MW/CP: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Submit your position description to the council of your calling church (hereafter, *Calling Church*), accompanied by (a) your Organization's mission statement, (b) your letter of appointment, and (c) a summary description for information to the congregation.
2. Inform your Organization of the contact person(s) for your Calling Church.
3. Request your Calling Church to extend you a letter of call for the ministry position and submit a letter of acceptance to your Calling Church, provisional *as applicable* upon approval of the position description and sustaining an examination for ordination.
4. Meet with your Calling Church at least once annually, in the manner stipulated in section B, 3 below to review, discuss, and pray regarding
  - a. your personal and spiritual life, including family joys and concerns.
  - b. your professional life, including a summary of your annual work review as provided by your Organization.
5. Participate in the congregational life and ministry of your Calling Church in keeping with gifting and availability, and as mutually agreed (cf. section B, 4).
6. Inform your Calling Church, *as soon as known*, of an impending change or conclusion to your ministry position or appointment, and/or of your desire or intention to resign your ministry position for educational, professional, personal/family, or other reasons.
7. Inform your Organization in the event of transferring your church membership and ecclesiastical credential to a different Calling Church.

8. Meet other expectations of your Calling Church and Organization, if any, as stipulated: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Examples include a code of ethics as required of CRC Chaplains, joint supervision for ordained CRCNA staff (signature required), a code of conduct or other expectations and concerns as stipulated by the respective Organization.*

**B. Responsibilities of the Calling Church:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Extend a letter of call to the MW/CP and, *as applicable*,
  - a. recommend classis approval of the specialized ministry position.
  - b. request that classis examine the MW/CP candidate for ordination.
2. Prior to proceeding with the installation of a previously ordained MW or CP, have in hand the classis-approved ecclesiastical credential or other required approval.
3. Arrange to meet with the MW/CP at least once annually for reporting, discussion, and prayer, regarding the MW/CP's (cf. section A, 4 above)
  - a. personal and spiritual life, including family joys and concerns.
  - b. professional life, including a summary of their annual work review as provided by the Organization.

These meetings shall take place with the council, the elders, or their appointed representatives, as stipulated below, in fulfillment of the above purposes.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. Invite and encourage the MW/CP to participate in your congregational life and ministry in keeping with their gifting and availability, and as mutually agreed (cf. section A, 5).
  5. Meet other responsibilities toward the MW/CP or Organization, if any, as stipulated: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. If the Calling Church notes significant concerns regarding the MW/CP's doctrine and life or duties, the Calling Church will summarize those concerns to the Organization and may request a joint meeting with the MW/CP to address those concerns (cf. section C, 4 below).
7. Inquire directly of the MW/CP and the Organization regarding reasons for conclusion of the ministry position or termination of the appointment by the Organization, or for the resignation by the MW/CP from the ministry appointment (cf. section C, 5 below).
8. In the event of the conclusion of the position, or termination of or resignation by the MW/CP, the Calling Church shall obtain the concurrence of the classis or its interim committee prior to declaring the MW/CP eligible for call to a new ministry position.

**C. Responsibilities of the Appointing Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Provide the MW/CP with appropriate compensation and support.
2. Provide the MW/CP with required training, reporting protocol, and professional support, as stipulated: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Provide the MW/CP a summary of their annual work review for sharing with the Calling Church, with the content of the summary determined by the Appointing Organization.
4. If the Appointing Organization notes significant concerns regarding the MW/CP's doctrine and life or duties, the Appointing Organization will summarize those concerns to the Calling Church and may request a joint meeting with the MW/CP to address those concerns (cf. section B, 6 above).  
*Note: This protocol is not intended to interfere with the Appointing Organization's right (and potential need) to take immediate employment action when necessary for compliance with applicable laws, protection of other staff, or other compelling reasons.*
5. Inform the Calling Church in writing when the position of a MW/CP is being altered or eliminated (cf. section B, 7 above).
6. Meet other responsibilities toward the MW/CP or Calling Church, if any, as stipulated: \_\_\_\_\_

Required Signatures:

MW/CP _____	Date _____
Calling Church _____	Date _____
Organization _____	Date _____

This completed *Covenant of Supervision* has been approved by the following authorized designee of classis (printed name):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Classis position

**Overture 5: Appoint a Study Committee to Review Church Order  
Articles 12-17**

**I. Background**

In response to an overture to Classis Columbia by one of its churches following a recent negative experience with Church Order Article 17, classis formed a committee "to review matters dealing with outcomes of the use of C.O. Art. 17 and . . . to formulate an overture to synod . . . to address these concerns."

The committee soon noted that since the adoption of the revised Church Order in 1965, there have been continuing efforts to clarify Article 17. In spite of these efforts the number of separations under Article 17 have risen dramatically. Whereas in the 1980s such separations totaled 24 for the

decade; by the 2000s they had risen to 146. The decade of 2010s has seen nearly the same number, with 141 Article 17 separations. In total, the past 20 years have seen nearly 270 churches and 270 pastors separated from one another via Article 17. (For further statics, see Overture 4 from Classis Grand Rapids East to Synod 2020.)

It would be faulty to conclude that all, or even most, of these separations are directly the result of conflict between pastor and congregation. However, if even half of these separations stem from conflict, the aftermath is still far too many wounded individuals and congregational communities for us in good conscience to ignore.

As the committee looked into Article 17, it quickly became clear that any effort to address Article 17 would also require a deeper look into the articles leading up to it—namely, Articles 12 through 16. These articles address the duties, supervision, leave of absence, and support for a minister of the Word. All of these articles, the committee found, have a direct impact on the use, or misuse, of Article 17.

The committee also became aware of certain cultural and ecclesiastical shifts that affect not only the use of Article 17 but also the manner in which the ministry of the Word is viewed. A few examples:

- More and more ministers have come to see themselves as “free agents,” who move about at will when their present position is uncomfortable or when another position looks more desirable.
- Councils and congregations are quicker to adopt a “hire and fire” model when addressing conflict or dissatisfaction with their pastor.
- Church leadership is often undertrained in Church Order which, in times of conflict or dissatisfaction with the pastor, can result in (1) failure to use the tools Church Order provides, such as church visitors and/or the wisdom of classis and other classical functionaries, and (2) deferring instead to Pastor Church Resources for a quick solution.
- The speed with which the surrounding culture moves has birthed in our churches a desire to deal with things very quickly instead of bearing with one another and looking prayerfully for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

All of these shifts, and more, result in a change of perception with respect to

- the call issued by a congregation and accepted by a minister (Art. 12).
- the supervision and accountability of the minister (Art. 13).
- the acceptance or pursuit of a resignation of a minister (Art. 14).
- matters of compensation of the minister (Art. 15).
- the use and abuse of leaves of absence (Art. 16).

There are other cultural and ecclesiastical shifts causing pastors to seek release from their positions—for example, more pastors seeking advanced education, the closing of a church, an increase in the number of specialized ministry positions, the relocation of a spouse. Many of these situations end up being dealt with via Article 17 or a locally “adjusted” version of a related article.

Synod has responded to these shifts by giving advice via commentary in the Church Order or in appendices to the *Manual for Christian Reformed Church Government*. These may not be given enough consideration or may

even be difficult to find. Who knew that Appendix B in the 2008 *Manual for Christian Reformed Church Government* became Appendix A in the 2017 version or even that there was such an appendix? Handbooks for such people as synodical deputies appear to contain material that has not previously been clearly presented to congregations or ministers, often creating the impression that information has been withheld from local church councils.

In 2013 synod's response to the increasing Article 17 separations was to ask the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (now known as the Council of Delegates) to consider what could be done. This resulted, in part, with Pastor Church Resources implementing the vocational assessment program now in place. While this program will be helpful, it fails to consider adequately many of the matters noted above as cultural and ecclesiastical shifts.

In February 2012, the *Banner* published an article titled "The Scarlet Number," indicating that in spite of all the efforts put forth, Article 17 continues to carry with it a stigma, especially on the pastor. This was also confirmed by research conducted by the Classis Columbia committee by sending a communication to each stated clerk of the CRCNA. The responses this received indicated a broad-based desire in the denomination to see Article 17 revisited. Clarification was sought specifically regarding the proper use of Articles 14 and 16 in cases that should technically be settled according to Article 17 but frequently are not, due to the negative perception attached to Article 17. The overture of Classis Grand Rapids East (Overture 4) to Synod 2020 also addresses Article 17 in particular as regards those serving in "specialized ministry" assignments. The second to last paragraph of that overture's background is worthy of note.

It is the belief of Classis Columbia that we are in need of clearer guidelines, guidance, and resources to aid pastors, councils, and congregations both in situations of pastoral transition and in order to improve the way in which we deal with pastor/council (congregational) conflict. The goals of such guidelines, guidance, and resources must be (1) that matters of conflict are resolved in a way which leave fewer damaged people in their wake, (2) that there might be more amicable transitions for pastors and congregations, (3) that by following scriptural mandates more vigorously, we may improve the spiritual health and well-being of both our congregations and our clergy, and (4) that the honor of the God whom we serve is upheld.

## II. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2020 to appoint a study committee to conduct a comprehensive review, and possible revision, of Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 with a view to providing clearer guidelines to pastors and churches in times of conflict as well as assistance for positive pastoral transitions.

### *Grounds:*

1. Two-year committee action mandated by Classis Columbia to review matters dealing with outcomes from the use of Church Order Article 17 revealed the essential interconnected relationship between Article 17 and Articles 12-16 such that all Church Order Articles 12-17 must be evaluated to form helpful congregational guidelines.



2. There is a strong understanding of “the call” of a pastor by a congregation in Articles 12-17, which recent cultural and ecclesiastical shifts have watered down.
3. There is precedent for the request to review and improve Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17, (e.g., Synod 1996 instructed the Pastoral Ministries Board “to prepare guidelines for congregations which are considering separations from their ministers under Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17”; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 578). Classis Columbia’s request is consistent with that decision in asking for a revision and update 24 years later.
4. A review of the data of *Acts of Synod*, the *Manual for Synodical Deputies*, and memos to stated clerks from 1972 to the present indicates that the best synodical advice for congregations unhelpfully lies in synodical supplements and board/committee memos (see Appendix A of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, for example).
5. Research conducted by a Classis Columbia committee in communications sent to each stated clerk of CRCNA classes indicates a broad-based desire to see Article 17 revisited and to clarify the proper use of Article 14 and 16 in cases that should technically be settled according to Article 17.
6. Given that so many pastors and churches within our fellowship are experiencing pain, frustration, disappointment, and discord, and given that the occurrence of these situations seems to be rising, it seems self-evident that we are not fulfilling the mandates our Lord has laid down in Scripture to honor our leaders and to live in uniting love (see Heb. 13, esp. v. 17; Rom. 12, esp. vv. 9-10; Titus 3:1-11).
7. Church Order does not currently provide clear, helpful, biblical guidance in matters of disagreement between a pastor and a council or congregation.
8. Church Order currently does not provide for the amicable separation of pastor and congregation, other than Article 17, in such cases as
  - a pastor in a specialized ministry whose position or term of service ends.
  - a pastor who seeks to pursue further education with no intent of returning to the congregation she/he is leaving.
  - a pastor who becomes ill and can no longer serve his/her congregation.

Classis Columbia

Roger D. Kramer, stated clerk

## **Overture 6: Revise Church Order Article 16 to Provide for a Terminal Leave of Absence and Avoid Unnecessary Stigma of Article 17 Separation**

### **I. Background**

Within Church Order Article 17-a, action can be initiated unilaterally by a pastor or by a council, or action can be initiated “jointly.” If initiated unilaterally, the Article 17 action generally indicates an unresolved and

even unresolvable conflict, raising a red flag with regard to both pastor and congregation. By default, an Article 17 red flag is also raised when action is initiated jointly, even if the separation is mutual and free of conflict. Article 17 is the only means by which pastor and congregation can separate and credentials be retained. This creates a stigma for both pastor and congregation.

## II. Overture

Classis Holland therefore overtures Synod 2020 to create a specific provision in Church Order Article 16 whereby a pastor and council can enter into a mutually agreed-upon *terminal leave of absence*.

### *Grounds:*

- a. Multiple pastors and congregations are seeking a separation that does not demand identifying “weighty reasons” for a separation, which often increases the pain of the separation and carries baggage for both pastor and congregation.
- b. A terminal leave of absence allows severance to be applied during the leave, which makes available a period of time when a pastor can seek alternative employment while also having daily needs met.
- c. A terminal leave of absence recognizes, without assigning blame, that in a rapidly changing ministry context not every pastor nor every congregation will be a good fit. In addition, with a growing number of pastoral positions within one congregation, fit and capacity for very specific functions and job descriptions are necessary and do not always match well.
- d. A terminal leave of absence continues to provide classical supervision and a duration for ministerial credentials to be retained.

## II. Explanation

1. Adding a specific provision in Article 16 for a mutually agreed-upon terminal leave of absence would allow for a specified length of time for pastor and council—in conjunction with the classis and Pastor Church Resources—to work together in discerning the next call.
2. In differentiation from the current Article 16, at the conclusion of the terminal leave of absence a pastor would not return to ministerial service in that congregation.
3. If at the conclusion of the terminal leave of absence the pastor does not have a call to a classically approved ministerial service, a separation between pastor and congregation would take place.
4. A minimum of a 13-week severance is attendant to a terminal leave of absence but may be applied during the time of leave. Other provisions governing Article 17, its Supplements, and explanations in the *Acts of Synod 1998* and *2010* would guide the separation, as applicable.
5. The terminal leave of absence would not exceed six months.
6. A pastor’s ministerial credentials would be retained for up to two years following a terminal leave of absence.

7. A leave of absence would commence with approval of the classical interim committee (CIC) and concurrence of the church visitors. The terminal nature of the leave of absence would require classical approval. If greater conflict is evident, requiring counseling and further supervision, the CIC and church visitors could recommend Article 17.
8. Over the course of the past few decades, the use of Article 17 to separate church and pastor has been enacted with greater and greater frequency. Paul Vander Klay, in his article on the CRCNA network, titled "The Article 17 Flag" (Nov. 28, 2011; updated Feb. 27, 2014) notes the following figures:

1980 to 1989: 24 Art. 17-a; 7 Art. 17-d  
 1990 to 1999: 25 Art. 17-a; 13 Art. 17-d  
 2000 to 2009: 146 Art. 17-a; 26 Art. 17-d

Classis Holland  
 Calvin Hoogstra, stated clerk

## **Overture 7: Adopt an Additional Supplement to Church Order Articles 82-84**

### **I. Observations**

The Reformed churches in continental Europe determined that mutual support and accountability were an important part of being Christ's church, so in the mid-16th century the idea of church officebearers signing a "Form of Subscription" began to take root. The Synod of Dordrecht 1574 determined that its officebearers must "attest" to the Reformed confessions, but it took the great Synod of Dort of 1618-19 to formally require all officebearers in the Dutch Reformed Churches to subscribe to a "Form of Subscription." In signing this form, officebearers were vowing before God and his people, in part, to hold one another accountable for their faith and doctrine, both lived out and taught. The Christian Reformed Church, at its inception as a denomination, also included the requirement that its officebearers sign a Form of Subscription. We took those promises seriously, including the pledge that "we are prepared moreover to submit to the judgment of the council, classis, or synod, realizing that the consequences of refusal to do so is suspension from office." Synod 2012 adopted an updated Form of Subscription, referred to as the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church, by which all officebearers serving the church likewise vow: "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."

Church Order Article 82 states, "All officebearers, in addition to being subject to general discipline, are subject to special discipline, which consists of suspension and deposition from office." Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct." But what does this look like, when officebearers in one congregation or even in one classis might be lax in or refuse to hold its officebearers accountable to the confessional

decisions of synods? There appears to be sufficient ambiguity in the Church Order to cause a paralysis of action in officebearers being able to hold one another accountable to the vow each made when signing the Covenant for Officebearers upon their ordination. What role does another council or classis have in helping to encourage or move forward special discipline when made aware of a failure in another council or classis to uphold our covenant together? Greater clarity is necessary.

We do have some guidance from past actions of synods. A brief study of the history of synodical decisions shows us that classes and synods have intervened in the decisions of local congregations, even when those decisions did not originate in the council itself. Synods in the past have decided that it is permissible for a broader assembly to step in and impose special discipline on a narrower assembly, even if no one in a narrower assembly of the offending party has requested such intervention. Many of these decisions were highlighted by the Judicial Code Committee back in 1993, based on an appeal it received and then passed on to synod, about the ability of other assemblies to enforce the Form of Subscription's covenanted responsibilities (see *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 523ff.).

1. Classis Muskegon deposed the minister and entire consistory of one of its churches in 1919 (with synod's later approval of the synodical deputies' work) when the consistory refused to depose its minister (see *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 526).
2. Synod 1926 upheld Classis Grand Rapids West in its actions deposing a minister and the majority of his consistory. Synod stated that "Article 36 of the Church Order [currently Article 27-b] gives the classis jurisdiction over the consistory" (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 142).
3. Synod 1980 considered an appeal from elders of a church in Classis Huron who had been deposed by the classis. They found that the broader assembly of the classis was not guilty of abusing their God-given authority over the narrower assembly of the consistory by lording it over them based on the following grounds:
  - a. Classis did not exceed its authority when it engaged itself with the situation at Goderich CRC. Christ gave authority to the church as a whole and thereby entrusted authority to the occasions of its exercise in classis and synod as gatherings of the churches to maintain the unity of the congregations in both doctrine and discipline.
  - b. The gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem set a pattern of authoritative decisions, which pattern is followed in principle in the deliberations and decisions of the major assemblies.
  - c. To contend that Classis Huron had no proper jurisdiction over the Goderich Consistory proceeds on a mistaken conception of the relation of the minor assembly to the major assembly. The same authority, constituting the same standards and the same goals, is applied by the several assemblies. Classis Huron adhered to the correct use of the authority delegated to them by Christ.
  - d. In the application of Article 17 (re the release of a minister) to the Goderich situation, it is in order that a classis act when a consistory fails to do so (Art. 27). Classis Huron's action was within the range of the delegated authority."

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 28-30)

4. Synod 1982 concurred with Synod 1980's ability to have authority over a consistory (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 55, 628-29).
5. Synod 1991 upheld the action of Classis Lake Erie in suspending the entire council of a church, and instructed the classis to immediately complete the discipline proceedings and deposition of an elder and a deacon (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 771).
6. Synod 1993 heard an appeal from a church in Classis Hudson when the classis suspended and deposed its minister. Synod did not sustain the appeal. Some of the grounds included the following:
  - a. The Church Order does not specify that the local council is the only body that may initiate and impose special discipline.
  - b. Synodical precedents establish the authority of a classis to suspend and depose a minister without request or appeal from a member of the council or congregation of the church involved under circumstances such as those present in this matter.

(*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 529)

7. Synod 2004 instructed Classis Toronto to urge one of its churches to act in accordance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 632). Synod 2005 appointed an in loco committee, and Classis Toronto passed their recommendation, stating that the biblical/ethical guidelines of Synod 1973 and Synod 2002 are considered settled and binding, and that the actions of First CRC of Toronto constituted a breaking of the denominational covenant (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 459). Synod 2006 approved the work of the In Loco Committee after the church agreed to conform to the denomination's position (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 653).

More recently, Synod 2019 showed us the need for greater clarity in this manner, as it was confronted with a situation in which a minister was teaching Kinism and was not being disciplined for that false teaching by his council. Such teaching was doing great damage not only to that local congregation but also to our entire denomination. The classis had slowly begun a process of investigation, after this pastor had been publicly advocating this position for years, though it was contrary to what he had vowed to uphold when he signed the Covenant for Officebearers. But the question was raised, asking, What if a majority of this classis' delegates were also sympathetic to Kinism? What options would be available to another classis in the CRCNA to hold that officebearer accountable to the Covenant for Officebearers if his own council and classis refused to do so? This pastor's teaching was damaging the witness and reputation of our entire denomination. Synod 2019, beginning to acknowledge that, adopted the following guidance for the churches:

That synod, given the recent history of Kinist teaching in a particular church of the CRCNA, admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity and mutually to pursue special discipline of an officebearer [emphasis added] who is found to hold views contrary to our standard.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818)

Synod 2019 was presented with many recommendations for how we as a denomination might go about protecting our members and churches from abuse of power. In the process of wrestling with this, we were reminded

how we are stronger together than apart, particularly when dealing with the matter of abuse. We need mutual accountability, and we need fellow brothers and sisters in other classes to hold one another accountable to the vows made in the Covenant for Officebearers when it comes to matters of abuse.

Synod 2019 saw a greater need, both with Kinism and the abuse of power, to broaden the contact that we have with one another, both on a congregational and a classical level. The need is great and pressing in this current age. We see the importance of clarifying this in our Church Order, detailing what it means to continue to covenant together as fellow officebearers in our respective classes when there is a failure to abide by the vows we have made in signing the Covenant for Officebearers.

There is clear scriptural instruction, Church Order mandate, and historical precedent that we should hold one another accountable to these mutual vows to Christ and his church, so that the honor of Jesus would be upheld and that the witness of his church, as represented in the Christian Reformed Church, would not be tarnished. The Church Order foundation, in Article 1, is that we are in “complete subjection to the Word of God.” The Church Order has always been intended as a means to that end and must never be allowed to be used as an excuse for permitting such gross recent affronts as Kinism or abuse of power to continue on technicalities. Let us hold ourselves to high standards and ensure that our Church Order not only allows but also encourages and enables us to live up to our covenant responsibilities.

## II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2020 to adopt the following addition to Church Order Supplement, Articles 82-84:

To carry out our mutual, covenanted responsibility, any narrower assembly may make a formal appeal to a broader assembly regarding the action or inaction of another assembly when an officebearer is deemed to be in violation of the Covenant for Officebearers. Such an appeal may proceed only after the perceived violation has been communicated to the council and classis of the officebearer. Synod shall be the final body of appeal in all matters.

### *Grounds:*

1. There is consistent historical precedent in the CRCNA for broader assemblies to hold narrower assemblies accountable to the Form of Subscription/Covenant for Officebearers as an expression of our vows to covenant together as a Reformed denomination.
2. There is a pressing need for clarity to define the ability of one classis to hold another classis accountable to the enforcement of the Covenant for Officebearers, which all officebearers in all classes have signed, for the sake of our common witness and testimony in this world.
3. Synod is the final body to appeal to and is the proper avenue to appeal to, in carrying out our covenanted responsibilities.
4. Synod is the appropriate authoritative body that determines whether it will instruct a classis to a certain point of action regarding the imposition of special discipline on an officebearer within that



classis, so synod has the ultimate authority to enforce that (Church Order Art. 27-b).

5. The appointment of synodical deputies (Art. 48) recognizes the vital importance and value of other classes, with synodical approval and authority, to speak into certain decisions of another classis, and has been deemed by synods past not to be an instance of one body “lording it over” another body (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 28).

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

## **Overture 8: Do Not Adopt the Proposal to Recognize the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women**

### **I. Background**

In an online *Banner* article dated February 25, 2020 (“Council of Delegates Aims for Balance in Recognizing Women’s Ordination”), it has been made known that the COD is proposing that synod recognize the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women. According to the article, this proposal would include the following:

- time at Synod 2021 to recognize the anniversary
- encouraging denominational offices to develop resources and suggestions
- inviting churches and classes to commemorate the occasion
- encouraging the sharing of stories of women who are ordained and those in training
- preparing litanies with Scripture and songs
- designating a Sunday to lament for hurt caused to each other concerning theological differences

Even though the COD calls this a *recognition* of the anniversary, the wide scope of this proposal demonstrates that it will indeed be a *celebration*. We also note that according to the article, there is no budget set for this project.

We view this proposal as unnecessary, given the denominationally recognized position that both positions on women in office honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. Our Church Order protects the consciences of delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God by allowing them to protest (Church Order Supplement, Art. 45, b, 1). It also states that “officebearers shall not be asked to participate against their convictions” (Supplement, Art. 3-a, 1, c).

Over the past few years, delegates who return from synod have noticed a pattern of making things more and more difficult to participate according to their convictions:

- At the synodical worship service communion is often served by women elders and ministers, leaving our delegates with no choice but to abstain from participating in a meal that should be binding us together.
- The joint CRC/RCA synod in 2018 celebrated the ordination of women by showing videos, which celebrated this milestone, and delegates sang a song that was re-written for the occasion.



- The Synod Review Task Force in 2019 proposed that synod require one delegate to be either a woman or ethnic minority, which was defeated.

As synod is faced with making a decision on this matter, we call on all delegates to uphold Ephesians 4:3: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

## II. Overture

For the sake of conscience and for the unity of the church, Classis Minnesota overtures Synod 2020 not to adopt the proposal to recognize the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women. Instead, we ask that synod redouble its efforts to respect the convictions of and seek feedback from both sides of the women-in-office issue before making such proposals.

*Grounds:*

1. Recognizing the anniversary of the ordination of women celebrates a view that is opposed by many in the denomination.
2. Officebearers should not be asked to participate in assemblies in ways that are opposed to their convictions (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3-a, 1, c).
3. As a denomination, we have affirmed our desire to maintain unity even while serious disagreements exist. The proposal to celebrate the anniversary of women in ordained office disrupts that unity by favoring one side of the discussion while ignoring the other.
4. Proposals like this should come by way of an overture from a church council or an individual. These matters should not be given directly to the Council of Delegates to act upon.
5. There is no funding source for these proposals.

Classis Minnesota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

## Overture 9: Appoint a Committee to Address Issues of Abuse of Power within the CRCNA

### I. Background

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has been diligent in developing and implementing ways to prevent, educate, and respond to abuse throughout and within the denomination since 1994.

Efforts to address abuse issues are evident in the Abuse Victims Task Force Report of 2010 and the Abuse Report of 2014. Overture 2 to Synod 2018 presented many specific ways to identify abuse, including abuse of power in the CRC. Synod 2018 affirmed that more needs to be done to address this subject.

This overture asks for a committee that can help us all protect, serve, and educate members and leaders of the CRCNA about abuse of power, abuse of authority, spiritual abuse, and power dynamics in the CRCNA as we seek to be a more Christlike church.

## II. Scripture support

- 2 Samuel 2:22-25 (Hophni and Phinehas at the tabernacle)
- 2 Samuel 11-12, (David, Bathsheba, and Prophet Nathan)
- Jeremiah 5:30-31; 6:13-15; 8:10b-12 (Peace, peace, when there is no peace)
- Ezekiel 34:1-16 (shepherds who serve themselves)
- Matthew 23 (Jesus confronts the Pharisees)
- John 19 (trial and abuse of Jesus Christ)
- Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-3 (stoning of Stephen, Saul's approval, Saul began to destroy the church)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:6 (no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him)
- 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 3:16 (all Scripture is God-breathed)
- Titus 1:6-8 (An elder must be . . . )

## III. Overture

I, Judy De Wit, overture synod to instruct the Council of Delegates to appoint a committee composed of clergy, social workers, mental healthcare professionals, and clinicians to address the following seven areas to help pave the way for better body life in the Christian Reformed Church:

A. Pastors and church leaders need definitions to help in their work of understanding abuse, including abuse of power. The committee will define the following terms and explain what they look like in the context of the CRC so that definitions may be added to the Church Order:

- abuse of power
- abuse of authority
- spiritual abuse
- power dynamics

*Ground:* Pastors and church leaders need clear definitions of what is meant by abuse of power, abuse of authority, spiritual abuse, and power dynamics so that they may be equipped in knowing how to address abuse of power allegations.

B. The appeal process (council, classis, synod) is not appellant friendly and is church leader protective when allegations are raised concerning abuse and abuse of power. The committee will develop and recommend a system for appeals that protects both the appellant and accused.

*Grounds:*

1. Classis leadership teams, synod advisory committees, and delegates
  - need to be taught how to identify, recognize, and respond to abuse and abuse of power.
  - may be biased in favor of pastors and church leaders or themselves fear abusive behaviors of pastors and church leaders.
  - are currently unable to interact adequately with appellants as they work through the appeal process. If we isolate appellants, we increase the likelihood of additional abuse and traumatization.

2. The current process makes it difficult for appellants to bring their concerns to appropriate church bodies for adjudication.

C. Abuse of power, abuse of authority, spiritual abuse, and power dynamics have occurred on all levels of leadership within the CRCNA. The committee will recommend how findings and stories of abuse should be reported, shared, and/or distributed among churches and the denomination. The committee will determine if a resource external to the CRCNA should assist.

*Grounds:*

1. Abuse and abuse of power are contrary to Scripture.
2. Opportunities to share abuse of power stories provide healing for victims that can lead to reconciliation.
3. Exposing abuse of power helps to end it.
4. This supports the church's work of bringing healing to those who have been abused by church leaders.

D. Executive closed sessions and nondisclosures protect abusive pastors and silence victims and their stories. The committee should provide proper and protective procedures for all parties.

*Grounds:*

1. The silencing of victims by using executive closed sessions and nondisclosures is harmful and abusive.
2. The church should be encouraging victims to tell their stories openly and freely, because exposing what has happened to them brings healing to victims and perpetrators to account.

E. Traits and behaviors of narcissism are as prevalent among Christian Reformed pastors and church leaders as in the general population. The committee should provide resources to clarify and illustrate narcissistic behaviors such as exploitation, manipulation, charm, entitlement, and other sociopathic behaviors that create circles of protection around abusive leaders. Such circles of protection allow leaders to ostracize those who desire accountability.

*Grounds:*

1. These forms of abuse are not easily identified among CRC church leaders or pew members.
2. These behaviors are not to be found among church leaders who claim they follow Jesus.
3. Resources will give insight about what to look for and how to respond when church leaders are addressing these kinds of behaviors.

F. When allegations of abuse of power, sexual abuse, physical abuse, spiritual abuse, or any other abuse come forward against a pastor or church leader, it is appropriate for more than one of the denominational personnel to respond—one to the accused, and another to the accuser.

*Ground:* The committee should establish guidelines for denominational employees because

- call-ins by the accused and the accuser may not receive the direction, guidance, and support needed if the same denominational person works with both parties.

- boundaries may be confused and blurred if the same denominational personnel responds and is involved in both sides of allegations of abuse.

G. Clergy and church leader accountability is needed to stop abuse and end abuse of power, abuse of authority, and spiritual abuse, and to understand power dynamics among church leaders. The committee shall provide the following:

1. A model for conducting investigations when pastors and church leaders are accused of abusing power.
2. Informal assessment tools that are needed to help elders identify boundary violations such as administrative boundaries, personal boundaries, ethical boundaries, sexual boundaries, and others.
3. Additional tools to help leaders understand power dynamics.
4. Resources to familiarize local church leaders with Church Order articles that speak to the discipline of church leaders, including violations of Church Order, ordination, Scripture, and Matthew 18 (e.g., accountability, confidentiality, conflict among believers).

*Grounds:*

- a. Resources about clergy accountability will give guidance for elders and church leaders when allegations come forward.
- b. Abusing power and abuse of spiritual authority within the context of the church can be limited and stopped when governing elders and others understand what power dynamics look like.
- c. It is the responsibility of governing elders and church leaders to be equipped to do their work.

Judy De Wit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

*Note:* This overture was adopted by the council of Hancock (Minn.) CRC in January 2020 and submitted to Classis Lake Superior at its meeting in March 2020 but was not adopted by the classis. The council of Hancock CRC decided not to forward the overture to synod. Therefore it is being forwarded to synod by the author.

## **Overture 10: Compile All Abuse Prevention Decisions by Synod**

### **I. Background**

Since the opening of the Safe Church Ministry Office of 1994, many documents that speak to the subject of abuse within the CRCNA have become a part of the CRCNA's polity. Included but not limited to these are what is found in Church Order, supplements to Church Order, appendix references, Abuse Victim's Task Force Report of 2010, Abuse Report of 2014, Overture 2 (*Agenda for Synod 2018*), and other relevant documents—all of which are important for leaders and members of the CRCNA in the education, awareness, prevention, and response regarding abuse.

## II. Overture

I, Judy De Wit, overture synod to instruct the executive director to commission a book—in print or online—that contains all adopted synod and CRCNA documents pertaining to abuse and the Office of Safe Church Ministry to be put into one reference source. Compiling all the resources in one place would provide a handy reference for those who feel abused and those who wish to defend themselves against charges.

*Ground:* A reference book will simplify the work of locating synodical Safe Church Ministry-adopted documents and other related documents which have increased in number throughout the past twenty-four years.

Judy De Wit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

*Note:* This overture was adopted by the council of Hancock (Minn.) CRC in January 2020 and submitted to Classis Lake Superior at its meeting in March 2020 but was not adopted by the classis. The council of Hancock CRC decided not to forward the overture to synod. Therefore it is being forwarded to synod by the author.

## Overture 11: Curtail Clergy Use of Pornography

### I. Scripture support

- Galatians 5:19—“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality. . . .”
- Ephesians 5:3—“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . these are improper for God’s holy people.”
- Colossians 3:5—“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires. . . .”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5—“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust, like the pagans. . . .”

### II. Overture

I, Judy De Wit, overture synod to recommend that every church-owned computer (i.e., any church-owned computer used by pastor(s), ministry staff, and/or support staff or any other church-owned computer) shall be searched regularly to ensure no porn usage by anyone has occurred.

*Grounds:*

1. Pornography used by pastors and church leaders is contrary to Scripture.
2. Accountability about the use of pornography stops it.

Judy De Wit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

*Note:* This overture was adopted by the council of Hancock (Minn.) CRC in January 2020 and submitted to Classis Lake Superior at its meeting in March 2020 but was not adopted by the classis. The council of Hancock CRC

decided not to forward the overture to synod. Therefore it is being forwarded to synod by the author.

## **Overture 12: Declare Denials of Penal Substitutionary Atonement as Heresy and Instruct Classes to Guard the Reformed Confessional Teaching of the Cross**

### **I. Introduction**

Synod 2019 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America took a bold and necessary step toward confessional fidelity when it declared its opposition to the teachings of Kinism, making a clear case from both Scripture and our Reformed confessional standards.

One particular duty was placed on the officebearers in our denomination as a whole with this motion, which was adopted:

That synod, given the recent history of Kinist teaching in a particular church of the CRCNA, admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity *and mutually to pursue special discipline of an officebearer* [emphasis added] who is found to hold views contrary to our standard.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818)

The cross of Jesus Christ is central and foundational to the Christian gospel. When the biblical and Reformed teaching of the cross is attacked, the very Christian faith is attacked. In the book of Jude, the church is instructed to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” Here, the faith refers not to the subjective act of believing, but the doctrinal content of the message of salvation found in the Scriptures and in biblical proclamation.

Various places in the New Testament warn us of the reality and danger of false teaching and false teachers. Entire letters emerge from the threat of false teaching (e.g., Galatians), while other books regularly intersperse warnings and instruction to renounce and avoid false teaching (e.g., Phil. 3; Titus 1; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; etc.).

Thus the church is to be on guard against threats to “the faith.” One common threat to our faith is the challenge to the historic teaching of the cross which states that Jesus bore the wrath of God against the sin of his people. The historic Christian belief that Jesus satisfied God’s wrath against our sin at the cross is commonly called *penal substitutionary atonement*. It is the historic view of the creeds and confessions, and of the historic Christian church. It is a central tenet of the work of Christ and essential to the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.

This threat is most often articulated by denying that Jesus went to the cross as a way to bear God’s wrath. Whatever specific form the denial takes, most begin with the foundational claim that the cross was not a way for God to judge sin in and through his Son.

This overture will not discuss every minute detail of the various expressions of teachings that deny penal substitutionary atonement (PSA), but it will address the core truth that we confess and is refuted by all denials of PSA: that Jesus bore God’s wrath against sin on the cross at Calvary.

This overture, similar to Synod 2019 and its consideration of Kinism, deals with the question of heresy. For the purposes of this overture, we will use the

1984 definition of *heresy* in a synodical report on apartheid: “By ‘heresy’ we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604).<sup>1</sup>

## II. Why should we address denials of PSA?

Some may wonder why such a clear biblical and confessional teaching needs to be dealt with by an overture at our annual synod. Our reasons are clear and simple:

1. We must be diligent in defending the historic Christian faith, especially when denials such as these are within our own walls.
2. All threats against the historic teaching of the cross must be dealt with by any church which claims allegiance to the Scriptures.
3. A minister in good standing within the CRCNA explicitly denies PSA in his preaching and yet was sustained in his classical examinations even though his views on the atonement were directly addressed.<sup>2</sup>
4. The continued presence of this teaching in our denomination places a responsibility upon all officebearers to deal with the matter in integrity and faithfulness to the Scriptures and Reformed confessions.

## III. A biblical overview of PSA – “In my place condemned he stood”

The Scriptures are very clear: Jesus Christ is the God-man who came to earth to bear the judgment of God upon human sin. He alone is the mediator between God and humanity and our only hope for salvation from our sin.<sup>3</sup>

Here are several examples of New Testament texts, which leave no doubt as to the substitutionary nature of Christ’s work on the cross. What we find is that Christ bears God’s just punishment for our sin in his life lived as a true human, and in his sacrificial death.

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:20-26)

God’s righteousness is upheld through the cross, for by it the price for sin was paid. God must remain both holy and just in the outpouring of his mercy, thus a satisfactory sacrifice must be given.

<sup>1</sup> While Synod 2019 instructed the Council of Delegates to appoint a task force to give clarity to the definition of the word *heresy*, synod also showed a willingness to recognize instances of clear heresy on a case-by-case basis, as was done with the overture on Kinism.

<sup>2</sup> Identity is not disclosed, but see the Appendix to this overture for two pertinent sermon excerpts.

<sup>3</sup> Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV), © 2001, Crossway.



but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (Rom. 5:8-9)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. . . . (Eph. 1:7)

It is the blood of Christ which allows us to be justified, which means to be forgiven of sin and declared righteous in God's sight.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. . . . (Col. 1:19-22)

This passage speaks not only of the blood of Christ but also how reconciliation is achieved through the "body of flesh" and "death" of Jesus. Through these means, we are presented "holy and blameless and above reproach" before the living God.

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:10-14)

Sin brings us under a curse, and the context for this passage is legal standing before God ("justified before God," v. 11). Thus, the curse is the punishment for sin, which is enacted by God himself; he is the One who curses his rebellious creatures, for sin cannot dwell with him.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

Where and when did Christ bear our sins? Ultimately on the cross, that sin might be put to death in us. Where do we find healing? In his wounds. This also makes a clear allusion to Isaiah 53, which is the clearest Old Testament prophecy dealing with PSA.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. . . . (1 Pet. 3:18)

What did Christ do for our sins? He suffered for them. What was our standing before God prior to Christ's vicarious work? We were unrighteous and sinful. What is the result of Christ's suffering? We are able to be brought to God, proving that our unrighteousness has been dealt with.

#### **IV. The position of our standards – "He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood"**

The CRCNA is a church constituted under the Three Forms of Unity, our confessional standards. It is these we have been tasked to uphold as officers in the church. To fail to do so is to fail at our calling and to break our ordination vows.

As we survey the teaching of our standards, we find that PSA is the clear and consistent position regarding Christ's life on earth and his death on the cross. Emphasis will be added in italics at key points and phrases.

A. *The Heidelberg Catechism*

First, we begin with the Heidelberg Catechism, which is one of the clearest expositions from all the Reformed confessional documents of our need for satisfaction from sin through a mediator. That Mediator is Jesus Christ alone, who bears God's wrath upon our sin in his human nature and suffers all the way to death as the just punishment for our sin. Here are several questions and answers that make this case.

Question 9: But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

Answer: No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law. They, however, provoked by the devil, in willful disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

Question 10: Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

Answer: Certainly not. God is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit. As a just judge, God will punish them both now and in eternity, having declared: "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."

Question 12: According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

Answer: God requires that his justice be satisfied. *Therefore, the claims of this justice must be paid in full*, either by ourselves or by another.

Question 16: Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

Answer: God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, *must pay for sin*; but a sinful human could never pay for others.

Question 17: Why must the mediator also be true God?

Answer: 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.

Question 18: Then who is this mediator—true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

Answer: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to us to *completely deliver us* and make us right with God.

Question 37: What do you understand by the word "suffered"?

A. That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, *Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race*. This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, *he might deliver us, body and soul, from eternal condemnation*, and gain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Question 38: Why did he suffer "under Pontius Pilate" as judge?

Answer: So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and so *free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us*.

Question 39: Is it significant that he was “crucified” instead of dying some other way?

Answer: Yes. By this I am convinced that he *shouldered the curse* which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.

### B. *The Belgic Confession*

The Belgic Confession is the oldest of our Reformed confessional standards. It should be noted that Guido De Brès, the author of this confession, wrote it at least partially to show how the Reformed churches affirmed the orthodox doctrines of the gospel.

#### Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God—who is perfectly merciful and also very just—sent the Son to assume the nature in which the disobedience had been committed, *in order to bear in it the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death. So God made known his justice toward his Son, who was charged with our sin, and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who are guilty and worthy of damnation, giving to us his Son to die, by a most perfect love, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have immortality and eternal life.*

#### Article 21: The Atonement

We believe that Jesus Christ is a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek—made such by an oath—and that he presented himself in our name before his Father, to *appease his Father’s wrath with full satisfaction by offering himself on the tree of the cross and pouring out his precious blood for the cleansing of our sins, as the prophets had predicted.* For it is written that “the punishment that made us whole” was placed on the Son of God and that “by his bruises we are healed.” He was “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter”; he was “numbered with the transgressors” and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though Pilate had declared that he was innocent. So he paid back what he had not stolen, and he suffered—“the righteous for the unrighteous,” in both his body and his soul—in such a way that when he sensed the horrible punishment required by our sins “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” *And he endured all this for the forgiveness of our sins.*

Therefore, we rightly say with Paul that we know nothing “except Jesus Christ, and him crucified”; we “regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus [our] Lord.” We find all comforts in his wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means to reconcile ourselves with God than this one and only sacrifice, once made, which renders believers perfect forever. This is also why the angel of God called him Jesus—that is, “Savior”—because he would save his people from their sins.

### C. *The Canons of Dort*

The Canons of Dort likewise affirm the clear and consistent position of our standards regarding the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sacrifice. Following are the first three articles of 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.*

#### D. *The teaching of contemporary testimonies: Our World Belongs to God*

Contemporary testimonies are “dynamic statements,” which can speak to essential matters within a particular situation and context. Our World Belongs to God, though situated within a particular context, nevertheless affirms Christ's work as a timeless truth of the gospel and source of unending comfort and power against evil.

*25: Standing in our place, Jesus suffered during his years on earth, especially in the tortures of the cross. He carried God's judgment on our sin—his sacrifice removed our guilt. God raised him from the dead: he walked out of the grave, conqueror of sin and death—Lord of Life! We are set right with God, given new life, and called to walk with him in freedom from sin's dominion.*

The above examples make very clear the position of our confessional standards and other documents:

Jesus Christ is the God-man who was sent to earth to bear in his body the just punishment of God for sin. He bore God's wrath and suffered for us, in order that through faith in his work we might be cleansed, justified, sanctified, and made to be forever with God.

Not only do we find this to be the position of the confessions; it is also the position of the CRCNA. Rather than a relic or icon of the past, this is the very power that we hold out to a world lost in sin and death, and the very power which God has commanded us to use for his glory in the salvation of the lost. Without clear affirmation and protection of this doctrine, we forfeit the power entrusted to us.

## V. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2020 to do the following:

A. Declare that it is a grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy, to in any way deny that Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide a substitutionary work of bearing God's wrath on our behalf because of the just punishment we deserve for our sin.

*Grounds:*

1. This is an error that is currently being allowed to exist within the denomination.
2. The Scriptures and confessional standards make clear the substitutionary nature of Jesus Christ's work.
3. To deny penal substitutionary atonement is to take away from the glory of our Savior.
4. To fail to take action against such heresy is to break the Covenant for Officebearers and to commit grievous sin against our Creator and Redeemer.

B. Declare that any officebearer who explicitly denies penal substitutionary atonement or promotes teachings contrary to the penal substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of special discipline in accordance with Church Order Article 83.

*Grounds:*

1. Church Order Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct."
2. A heresy is a serious deviation from sound doctrine, and is a teaching contrary to the Scriptures as interpreted by the Reformed confessions. Therefore, any officebearer who denies penal substitutionary atonement is seriously deviating from sound doctrine and should be subject to discipline.

C. Instruct all classes, councils, and officebearers in the CRCNA that it is our duty to uphold the clear teaching of the Scriptures and confessions on the nature of Christ's substitutionary work. Failure to do so may result in special discipline in any of the courts of the church, and will certainly result in an accounting for such negligence when one day we stand before our holy God.

*Grounds:*

1. As Christians, we are called to be people of the truth, with integrity and honor, and failure to defend the faith is to break the Covenant of Officebearers.
2. The church must make every effort to correct such a grievous error, that we might not continue to sin in the eyes of God.
3. Local councils are accountable to the classis, and the classes are 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" (Church Order, Art. 42-b).
4. Tolerating denials of foundational gospel truth puts the CRCNA in danger of transgressing its own boundaries for what a true church is, which includes the proper exercise of church discipline (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
5. Our witness to the world is severely damaged when we abuse the very gift that God has given as his instrument for kingdom advancement, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

D. Acknowledge, with lament, the distortion of the gospel and the covenant breaking that has gone on within our own denomination and has perpetuated confusion, condemnation, and the displeasure of our God and King.

*Grounds:*

1. As we remain diligent to uphold our theological heritage, we must name the errors that we have committed, that we might learn from them and never again repeat them.
2. Given the clarity of our Reformed confessional standards on the nature of Christ's substitutionary work, we must lament the extent of our negligence and ignorance that could have allowed for such sin to exist within our denomination.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

## Appendix

### Sermon Excerpts Referenced in Section I

(Excerpts transcribed from audio sermons posted on the website of the church where the minister is serving.)

#### Excerpt 1 (from 2016):

God sent His Son Jesus to die for my sins. Right? God sent His Son Jesus to die for my sins. So, that's kind of a starting point with faith and especially with life. So why, why would God bother to do that? Why would God bother to go to the cross for my sin? The way I see it and come to see it is that there's two possible answers to that question. Two kinds of answers.

The first possible answer for why God sent Jesus to die for my sins is that God needed to do that. So the story goes something like this. God created the universe and the earth and then humanity. It was all very good. It was all perfect in fact. And then pretty much right away the humans mucked it up. We fell. Sin was introduced into the good world which was a big problem because our new condition couldn't stand up beside God's infinite goodness and justice, so God was put out, and the only way that the situation could be fixed was with a proper payment. But the payment was impossible for us because we're human, and so then the payment had to be infinite because it was an infinite wonder.

So because, so God's idea was to make the payment himself by sending His Son to be sacrificed and as a human, make the payment as a human. So this way God could be satisfied and God could once again look upon humanity with favor. Is that a familiar kind of storyline to a number of, to most of you?

So this option, in this option, the problem that's trying to get solved is the kind of plotline is that God is the offended party, so God's anger needs to be placated or satisfied and then but humans are incapable of doing that and so the solution has to be God's as well. So really, so the problem and the solution are all kind of God's feelings, and humans we really almost have nothing to do with it other than that we're the ones who caused the problem in the first place and now we experience a sort of gratitude that God fixed it for us and we kind of have this sense of remorse that it took such a drastic measure to make it happen.

So that's one option why Jesus had to die.

The other option for why God would bother to send Jesus to die for my sin is love. So I'm saying it's the other option that's love. This other option is love because I do mean to suggest that the first option might not be love. I think the first option has been familiar to me as long as I can remember but it feels more like compulsion, retribution, the story of an insatiable God who has trouble managing his appetite for blood, and Jesus essentially absorbs God's wrath. In the most crass way that I've heard it put is that Jesus takes a cosmic bullet for us, as if God is like shooting bullets at us and Jesus steps in front of them and saves us.

The best argument I think you can make is just logic like simple logic. The formula works if you want to, and it kind of fits in like this kind of scheme of culture and sacrifice, but it, even if that's the case, even if the formula works it still isn't. I can't see the love in it. Like it seems like God is just kind of working out his own satisfaction. So what I want to talk about is love.

#### Excerpt 2 (from 2019):

I had taken issue with one of the ways that evangelicals commonly interpret the meaning of the cross and um, the way that people talk about atonement which is the storyline that you've probably encountered in some form, right, that God created the earth, and all humanity. It started out very good, perfect in fact but then Adam and Eve messed it up, and sin was introduced into the good world and that, the storyline goes that that created this really big problem for

God because he couldn't look upon us in our kind of sinful condition, um, we couldn't stand up beside God's infinite holiness and justice. So basically God was really angry, which made it so that there was this kind of giant chasm between God's holiness and our sinfulness. And because we are so sinful there's nothing that we can do to fix the problem so the only way to make things right would be for God to send his own Son, Jesus, and then he could take out his anger on Jesus instead of us, and that would make it so that now God is satisfied, and we're kind of back to square one, we're off the hook. Have you guys heard some version of that storyline with respect to the gospel?

And that view that I just told you about, the one about this giant chasm between us and God where God is like taking out his anger. The issue there, I don't think the issue there is that people...are taking the issue too seriously or making too big of a deal out of atonement, it's that they're actually not taking it seriously enough...and I wonder if that's kind of the main reason this other storyline about God appeasing his own wrath in the death of Jesus has gotten so much traction. I wonder if why that is because it's actually kind of an easier way to think about it...if we can pin it all on God, then we can avoid having to face up to the reality of our own place in this process our own participation and our own, kind of reality of the situation of our own anger and fragmentation, and our own wrath. That's what this James Allison guy says, or asks, "Who is actually the angry divinity in the story of atonement?...Who is the angry divinity?" He asks, and then he says, "We are. That is the purpose of atonement. We are the angry divinity, we are the ones inclined to dwell in wrath and think that we need vengeance in order to survive."

This I think is one of the most crucial moves that we need to make in order to really understand the significance of the life and death of Jesus is the question of who the atonement is actually happening to.

It's not God who needs to change. It's not God who needs to be reconciled, it's not God who needs to work out God's stuff. It's us. We are the ones who are disconnected from ourselves, we are disconnected from each other, we are disconnected from the earth, and we are disconnected from God.

And that's what the story of atonement addresses. It's not God resolving his anger and fragmentation, it's God confronting us in the midst of ours. And that, I think, is just really important to let that settle in that there is no vengeance in God. God is not interested in trying to even the score, or settle debts, or fulfill obligations, or exact retribution. God's justice is always only a matter of restoration and reconciliation.



## Communication 1: Classis Zeeland

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

As this passage in Amos highlights, for people, organizations, churches, and denominations to function together, there has to be a shared vision and understanding. We must be agreed on major issues. Each church cannot be doing its own thing with no accountability to the other. It is not that a denomination must be cookie-cutter, with each church and council working in absolute uniformity, but there must be unity on matters of substance.

From the first missionary journeys to the Gentiles, a critical core of teachings and practices emerged, which every believer must hold. Believing Gentiles did not need to be circumcised, but they were to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, strangled animals, and the drinking of blood (Acts 15:20). It is impossible to follow Christ and continue worshipping other gods. The sexual immorality so prevalent in the Gentile world was an unqualified sin, and to disregard it was to disregard God who gives his Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:7-8). It is this sexual immorality and impurity that are not even fit to be named among people of God (Eph. 5:3). On these core matters, there is no room for divergent opinions.

In the Reformed tradition, we have been well served by our three creeds and Three Forms of Unity. These have given us a shared understanding of God’s Word and world that has helped us work well together and accomplish much for the kingdom. These faithful summaries of God’s Word have long been the boundaries of how we live, work, and serve together.

We cannot ignore the growing noise and confusion of our day. People, families, churches, and denominations are struggling with the issues of sexuality. This is not an area where a local option is viable. The Bible has not changed on this matter. Scripture and our confessions clearly teach that marriage is between one man and one woman, and that all sexual activity, outside of that union, is sin. In saying this, we stand with the historic Christian church, declaring that any who lust for or engage in homosexual relations are living in sin and are called to repent and find forgiveness in the cross. We declare that those who refuse to repent, flee, and fight against such sin are outside this church body, and we cannot walk together.

We must also say that there can be no union among those who have signed our Covenant for Officebearers and those who would publicly deny this teaching, live contrary to it, or violate it in their official duties (for example, performing a same-sex wedding ceremony). Though there are many minor issues of Christian liberty, God’s Word is specific on sexuality and the

use of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. Disunity on these matters is unsustainable for the Christian church and effective gospel ministry.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

## **Communication 2: Classis B.C. North-West**

Classis B.C. North-West and Classis B.C. South-East have both received correspondence from Classis British Columbia – Reformed Church in America (BC [RCA]) requesting dialogue on the possibility of joining with our two classes and encouraging broader conversation on a “realignment” of churches/classes within the CRC and RCA denominations.

For more than a decade the Reformed Church in America (RCA) has been dealing with the matter of same-sex marriage and human sexuality at their general synod. Understandably these discussions have become quite polarizing within their denomination. Some years ago, a vision team was formed in order to make recommendations about what a possible future might look like for the RCA. At their 2020 General Synod they will be considering three options: (1) staying together, (2) reorganization, or (3) grace-filled separation (see [rca.org/rca-vision-2020-team](http://rca.org/rca-vision-2020-team)).

In 2018 Classis BC (RCA) formed a Five-Year Plan Ad Hoc Team, tasked to propose options for the classis to consider for its future, realizing that to remain in the RCA was becoming less and less likely, given the more “progressive/liberal” direction the denomination was moving toward. This concern of Classis BC (RCA) is shared by numerous classes and congregations within the RCA. General Synod 2020 will be a key moment in the history of the RCA. Though speculative, it is believed that the denomination will adopt an affirming position on same-sex marriage and pursue a “big tent” model that tries to allow for divergent views.

Concurrent to all this in the RCA is what is happening in our own denomination. Our Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality will submit its report to Synod 2021. Their mandate is to present a biblical view on marriage and human sexuality that maintains the traditional views. There is a strong concern held by a number of pastors and congregations that, even if our denomination adopts their report and maintains the traditional view, there will continue to be ongoing pressure to embrace/accept a “revisionist”/“affirming” position, resulting in ongoing “dialogue, debate, conversation, and listening.”

The congregations of Classis BC (RCA) are genuinely open to the possibility of leaving the RCA and affiliating with the CRC, but of course they would want to avoid being in a denomination in which the debate continues well after 2021.

In spring 2019 a conversation was initiated between several RCA and CRC pastors to imagine a way forward through this difficult issue that might result in an orderly realignment of churches and/or classes within our two denominations. Believing that we are at a kind of “impasse” between those who adopt a traditional reading and those who adopt a revisionist reading of Scripture, might there be a way forward that would bring an end to the

impasse and allow for each “side” to move forward in their mission without the need for ongoing, fractious debate?

If the RCA in 2020 adopts an affirming position and the CRC in 2021 maintains the current position, might our two denominations encourage/allow for a realignment of churches, or a “grace-filled separation”—to use the language of the RCA Vision 2020 report—so that painful schism and splintered denominations can be avoided? For the foreseeable future this would bring the debate in each of our denominations to a close. As a classis, we believe this to be a viable and wise option. Perhaps our two denominations, in a unique kind of way, can model a kind of separation that at the same time seeks to preserve unity; a unity that agrees to disagree in order to release one another to serve the kingdom in a way that each believes to be biblically faithful.

We understand this communication to be a next step in bringing this conversation to more churches to allow for broader discernment.

We think it will be helpful for synod to encourage the CRCNA senior staff from both Canada and the United States to conduct meaningful conversations and discernment with their counterparts in the denominational office of the RCA on discerning a path moving forward on re-alignment options in light of varying responses from local churches to human sexuality in both denominations. The goal of the conversations would be to make recommendations for action for local churches in each denomination.

Classis B.C. North-West  
Kathy N. Smith, stated clerk

**Communication 3: Classis Minnkota**

Classis Minnkota wishes to communicate to Synod 2020 its gratitude that the synodical Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality has advised our churches to study the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 437-44). We find the Great Lakes Catechism to be biblical, pastoral, gospel-driven, and coupled with grace and truth applications for singles, marrieds, families, the family of God, disciples of Christ, and those not yet disciples of Christ. We pray that all churches will read it, be shaped by it, and be blessed by it for the strengthening of Christ’s churches and the advancement of his gospel.

Classis Minnkota  
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

**Communication 4: Classis Minnkota**

The churches of Classis Minnkota affirm that men and women are created by God with equality in essence and dignity but with distinction in some roles. We praise God for the beautiful diversity he created when he made us male and female. These distinct roles are taught in Scripture, derived from God’s creative will, and are to be manifest in complementary roles in the

family and church. This belief is reflected in an accurate translation of the Belgic Confession, Article 30, which reads, “when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his Epistle to Timothy.” (See the original French wording, which refers to persons using the masculine gender.) This belief is therefore not rooted in chauvinism or patriarchy but in Scripture and in our historic confession of faith. It is our hope and prayer that this communication will provide a clear and respectful understanding of our convictions in this matter.

We believe that men and women are created equal as imagebearers of God and as heirs of salvation. We also believe that men and women complement each other in mutually enriching ways and that God has given each gender specific callings in the church and home. We seek to honor and glorify God by celebrating and using the gifts and abilities he has given to us within the roles he has established for us.

As a classis we affirm the following convictions:

1. That men and women equally bear the image of God and are called to serve him throughout their lives (Gen. 1:27-28).
2. That we are to follow Christ’s example when he honored and respected women during his earthly ministry (Luke 8:1-3; 10:38-42) and as he continues to equip them for service in his church today (1 Cor. 12:4-7).
3. That the roles for men and women in the church must be defined solely by the Word of God and not by human ideologies such as feminism, male chauvinism, patriarchy, or sexist oppression (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
4. That from the beginning of creation God assigned headship to males in the family and in the church (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12-13; 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).
5. That the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man” and then grounded this argument in the good created order (1 Tim. 2:12-13). The church, therefore, should not ordain women to its authoritative offices.
6. That the purpose of spiritual gifts is not self-fulfillment but service to God and others, to the end that God receives all the glory (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26).
7. That the CRCNA’s 1995 decision to open all offices to women is contrary to Scripture.

We also offer the following observations:

1. That even though Synod 1995 declared that both complementarian and egalitarian views are faithful interpretations of the Word of God, synodical practice since that time has become markedly egalitarian, making it difficult for complementarians to participate in good conscience.
2. That the complementarian position is held by many male and female members and by other officebearers, churches, and classes in the CRCNA.
3. That the CRCNA’s 1995 decision to open all offices to women has resulted in offense, division, strife, loss of members, and our expulsion from NAPARC in 1997.

4. That celebration of the egalitarian position and practice through video and song (as done at Synod 2018) causes offense and pricks the consciences of those who hold to the historic complementarian position regarding women in church office.

As members of the body of Christ in the CRCNA, Classis Minnkota does not present this communication in order to offend our brothers and sisters who hold to the egalitarian view; rather we wish to explain that our convictions are rooted in the Word of God. Though under protest, we continue to participate because we love the CRCNA and seek God's blessing upon our denomination.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk



1. D. Lowe and M. Szto, Queens CRC, Jamaica, New York



