



Christian
Reformed
Church

Reports of Ministries and Educational Institutions **2021**



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1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49508-1407 U.S.A.

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Dear Christian Reformed Church member,

We never imagined in spring 2020 that we would still be dealing with repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring and summer of 2021. The pandemic has caused the cancellation of two consecutive synods—certainly a unique time in the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Nevertheless, God is faithful—evident as churches leaned into new ministry and worship formats that will help shape the future of outreach and connecting with members. “Family reunions” are taking place among members who were forced to distance in the past fifteen months. And doors are being swung open, welcoming neighbors and guests once again. God is faithful to his community, his church, and to each of us.

Throughout this challenging year, we have continued to be the church—expressing the good news of God’s kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide. I am so encouraged by the ways congregations across North America have adapted to their local challenges and found new ways to be the church to their neighbors and the global community. The Christian Reformed Church has not lost sight of what God has called us to do and be. Thank you.

The following pages include reports from the ministries and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America—your ministries that serve the church. These reports were written with the intention of informing delegates to Synod 2021 about the work that has taken place in the past year. While Synod 2021 could not meet, we believe that these reports still have significant value—additional evidence of how God is blessing the ministry of the CRC! I hope that you will take some time to read the enclosed reports and appreciate all of the good work we are doing together as a denomination.

May God continue to bless you and your local congregation, and may you give evidence of his faithfulness as you serve him and live out *Our Mission*:

As people called by God,

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.

We love and care for one another as God’s people.

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.

We pursue God’s justice and peace in every area of life.

Colin P. Watson, Sr.

Executive Director of the CRCNA

Calvin University

I. Introduction

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

Calvin graduates are ready to step into the public square and renew all things for the glory of Christ. We believe that every student has something to offer the world; every student has something that God is calling him or her to do. Calvin's job is to partner with each student to discover what that is and to help them develop the skills they will need to gain that success. In order to achieve this objective, we have charted out a strategic plan with four goals: embody, grow, collaborate, and build.

A. Embody a faithful and engaged Reformed Christianity – Confident that conviction and curiosity are mutually enriching, Calvin University will continue to be shaped by Reformed Christian confessions as faculty, students, and staff engage with Christians across the nation and around the globe to live out their faith in fresh ways.

B. Grow student enrollment by diversifying academic offerings – To extend the reach of Calvin's mission, Calvin University will attract new students by offering a range of programs and services, degrees, and credentials.

C. Collaborate to enhance learning – To engage the complex challenges of the modern world, Calvin University will encourage collaboration that bridges academic disciplines and fosters external partnerships.

D. Build spaces that inspire learning and promote community – By investing in its learning environments, Calvin University will support a thriving educational community that promotes the well-being of people and creation.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

At Calvin University, we long for God's shalom—universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight. This is why we are here, and it is what we are all about: educating for shalom. To that end, Calvin University is grateful to partner with the CRCNA in living out the denomination's five ministry priorities.

A. *Faith formation*

- In keeping with Calvin University's vision to embody a Reformed Christian witness, the board of trustees and faculty senate have unanimously affirmed new expectations to deepen and strengthen Reformed Christian faith for faculty, senior administrators, and board members. This work is supported by the de Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development. With an \$11 million dollar gift received in June 2020 to develop the institute, the academic division is poised to move forward to serve Christian faculty and leaders in institutions around the world as well as to expand and deepen opportunities for Calvin faculty to integrate Reformed Christian faith with their teaching and scholarship.

In August, Matthew Lundberg, professor of religion, was appointed to serve as the first director of the institute.

- Campus Ministries’ pastoral care appointments have continued remotely.
- The 2020 campus-wide Bible study offered a six-week study of Philippians.
- Upperclass students serve as discipleship assistants to oversee Christian formation in the residence halls, supervising the student Barnabas leaders who serve on each floor.
- Campus Ministries hosted, with the worship apprentices and members of Urban Doxology, two seminars at the Calvin Symposium on Worship called “Worship 101: Worship and Culture” and “Worship 101: Worship Band Basics.”
- Calvin’s student Worship Apprentices attended the virtual Multicultural Worship Leaders Network Conference in October, learning about multicultural worship and racial reconciliation.

B. Servant leadership

- The unique Calvin LifeWork program continues to prepare students for servant leadership in work and life after earning their university degree.
- Calvin reenvisioned Streetfest, our annual service-learning program during student orientation, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of sending students into the community, we invited partners to our campus so that students could meet with them and learn about their work, with the goal of having students become inspired to get involved after the pandemic is over.

C. Global mission

- Calvin University is an intentionally global community, from current students, to faculty and staff, to alumni.
- Calvin’s global pursuits are exemplified through centers and institutes, research, and special projects.
- Calvin staff and faculty have walked alongside all students, and particularly international students, to make necessary adjustments for travel and coursework, and to ensure their learning opportunities during the pandemic are robust and rewarding.
- Calvin responded to the visa challenges of approximately 70 first-year international students by tailoring a set of online courses just for them. One of the key aims of the International Cohort is that when cohort members eventually join us on campus, they will not only be prepared academically but will also already feel that they are part of the broader Calvin community.
- The Global Campus has partnered with the World Languages Department and the Enrollment Division to develop new initiatives around language education, including contracting with a growing list of high schools for Spanish-immersion dual enrollment and developing online course offerings for partner universities that have had to eliminate upper-level language programming.

D. Mercy and justice

- The Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) 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. During the pandemic, Handlon student leaders have stepped up to lead in new ways to further their education and build community when professors are not allowed on campus.
- Calvin professor Mark Mulder is part of a trio of researchers helping the Alliance of Baptists denomination understand what it means to be anti-racist, and how to move their congregations toward that desired future.
- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching announced its list of colleges and universities receiving the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2020. Calvin University is one of 359 campuses across the country to receive this important designation. To receive the classification, each institution voluntarily submits an application that provides compelling evidence of community engagement through meaningful collaboration with local, regional, national, and global communities.
- The Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges: 2021 Edition recognized Calvin University as one of 416 colleges and universities committed to the environment and sustainability. The Princeton Review chose the colleges based on its survey of administrators at 695 colleges in 2019-20 concerning their institutions' sustainability-related policies, practices, and programs.
- Plaster Creek Stewards (PCS) is dedicated to returning health and beauty to one of the most contaminated urban waterways in West Michigan. PCS continues to involve students, staff, faculty, community members, and partners in education, research, and many different on-the-ground restoration efforts. In 2020, PCS received two separate Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants. One of these extends PCS's curb-cut rain garden initiative in the Alger Heights, Garfield Park, and Oakdale neighborhoods. The other grant is funding the planting of 390 trees in the watershed. Both projects began in summer 2020 and are scheduled to be completed in fall 2021.
- Calvin has been a leader in creating inclusive educational communities. Heading into fall 2020, the institution was one of only five universities in the state of Michigan and one of 300 in the U.S. to offer an inclusive higher education program. Now, thanks to a \$1.2 million Transition and Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Calvin is on a path to be the first university in Michigan to offer a Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary program.
- Calvin continued its tradition of partnering with World Vision to recruit runners for the Grand Rapids half-marathon to raise money for clean water.
- Campus Ministries continued to encourage student giving to the Community Care Fund during the pandemic, raising over \$2,750.

- The Center for Counseling and Wellness (CCW) is supporting two student leadership groups this year as part of its work cultivating emotional resilience on campus. The first, Calvin Unmasked, consists of student moderators for an anonymous peer listener app that started in September. Calvin students report that use of the app is supporting their sense of connection and community during the challenges of this pandemic season. The second group, the CCW Student Advisory Board, has existed since 2017 and is now preparing to bring mental health peer education to our campus community. Peer educators will use their training as NASPA-certified peer educators to strengthen wellness, connection, and self-care habits among their peers during the spring semester. Students in both groups bring a passion for mental health awareness and a desire to support their peers in thriving during college.

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

- Campus Ministries hosted external guests for chapel/LOFT musical and spiritual leadership, including Myra Maimoh, Quese Allen, Luke Enders, Nii Adoteye Anum, Tanner Smith, Lemarr Jackson, and a Ugandan Children’s Choir. These guests contributed to the rich ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes our campus worship.
- Campus Ministries partnered with the World Language departments to host worship in world languages on Tuesdays in chapel, contributing to the linguistic diversity of our chapel services and expanding our appreciation for the diversity of peoples and languages spoken in worship.
- Campus Ministries developed and coordinated 40 online chapels with worship apprentices, staff, guests, and alumni during the spring COVID-19 pandemic.
- Campus Ministries livestreamed daily chapel services during the fall semester, continuing our diverse chapel program.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruption in churches around the world, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship is guiding churches through this novel season.

III. Academic initiatives

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

A. Accolades

U.S. News & World Report has again ranked Calvin University as number 3 overall among Midwest regional universities in its 2021 *Best Colleges Guidebook*. In addition, Calvin received *U.S. News*’s number-5 ranking among Midwest regional universities on its “Best Undergraduate Teaching” list and the magazine’s number-13 ranking on its “Best Value Schools” list.

In 2020, Calvin received a grant that will continue to improve the support it can offer students. The U.S. Department of Education’s Student Support Services Program (SSS) is granting Calvin \$935,000 (\$187,000 per year for five years) for the institution to provide academic and other support services to low-income students, first-generation students, and students with

disabilities. The goal of the grant is to increase students' retention and graduation rates by fostering an institutional climate supportive of their success.

B. Expanded academic offerings

New schools were founded: School of Business (funded by a donor gift, with construction set to begin in March 2021), School of Education.

New interdisciplinary departments were formed: World Languages (Spanish, French, German, Dutch, and Asian languages), Historical Studies (History, Classics, Art History), Visual and Performing Arts (Music, Theater, Dance, Studio Art, Graphic Design).

New programs were developed: master of education (online), master of media and strategic communication, master in geographic information science

New majors and a minor were developed: financial planning major, B.S. psychology major (in addition to the B.A. already in place), graphic design minor.

Calvin began additional online programming after appointing Kevin den Dulk to lead the effort as associate provost. The Higher Learning Commission has authorized Calvin to offer online programs.

C. Core curriculum

Responding to challenges in Calvin's current core curriculum, the university has created a new, smaller core curriculum. It is a single core for all undergraduate students and builds on the university's educational framework; includes a three-hour seminar for all students in their first year at Calvin, focusing on community and Calvin's commitment to a Reformed Christian liberal arts approach to education; has assessment built into the program from the outset; and recommends a proactive approach to core program governance such that changes, when needed, can be made adeptly.

D. Academic calendar

The new academic calendar will feature an alignment of three 16-week semesters (fall, spring, summer), six 8-week sessions, and twelve 4-week sessions. This arrangement increases flexibility in course offerings and in meeting the needs of new student populations.

The fall and spring semesters will be similar to what Calvin currently offers for undergraduate students, using a traditional tuition model.

The summer semester, beginning in May, will include summer study abroad programs, 8-week courses for online learners, and traditional face-to-face summer offerings for undergraduate and graduate students.

These calendar changes, among other things, will make it possible for students to begin summer internships and employment a month earlier than in the past (if they do not take a May 4-week session) and to continue their studies during the summer with a reduced tuition model.

E. Pandemic adjustments

Some efforts of the academic division of the university were shifted by COVID-19 restrictions. What follows is a brief summary of the academic division's efforts since March 2020.

Calvin sought and received permission from the Higher Learning Commission to shift all operations, as needed, to online teaching and learning through December 2020.

Faculty summer plans were altered significantly so as to offer opportunities for learning more about online instruction. In June and July, two experts in online instructional design led faculty in a video and discussion series focused on key challenges. In partnership with CIT, the academic division also formed an instructional design team to help faculty prepare content and work through technical questions.

All teaching and learning spaces were evaluated with respect to square footage (to allow for six feet of physical distancing) and necessary technology (to enable remote learners to join class sessions and to enable a smoother transition to 100-percent online learning if needed).

About 150 students in fall 2020, via remote access, joined their peers who were learning face-to-face. These were students who identified as particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 or who cared for people who are particularly vulnerable. These students joined their peers in synchronous learning, in which faculty simultaneously taught students in the classroom and online. This practice will continue in spring 2021.

The Center for Student Success continued to implement needed “co-ordinated care” measures, providing online tutoring and one-to-one peer support, monitoring online course activity to identify disengaged students, modifying the early-alert program for faculty to identify struggling students, deploying virtual drop-in sessions for students with an academic counselor, and screening students who wish to learn remotely.

Student-faculty research collaborations were modified to engage as many students as possible through various technologies and strategies.

F. New learning spaces

The remodeling of a simulation lab for nursing students was completed in time for September 2020. The nursing faculty and staff created simulation modules and videos to use in the finished lab and also to use in online learning. These additional spaces are enabling students to have enhanced learning experiences in their career preparation.

A significant remodel of the first floor of the Spoelhof University Center began in February 2020 to create a Design Hub, a new collaborative learning space designated for students in art, business, and engineering programs. It was completed in fall 2020.

G. Spotlighting faculty and students

Adejoke Ayoola, professor of nursing, was inducted into the 2020 Class of Fellows of the American Academy of Nursing.

Richard Mouw, a widely respected theologian and philosopher, joined the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin University as a senior research fellow.

Student Laura Dykstra has been named a Goldwater Scholar. She is one of only 396 college students across the United States to receive this honor in 2020-2021. The scholarship, a partnership between the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation and the Department of Defense National Defense Education Programs, comes with a \$7,500 scholarship to support students in their research journeys.

Students Kai Arbogast, Zach Clark, and Kris Miedema placed in the top 10 percent of a worldwide programming competition: IEEEExtreme’s global challenge. The trio of electrical engineering majors at Calvin University

tackled 24 hours' worth of programming problems and finished near the top of a 3,700-team field.

Calvin senior Jason Entingh plans to head to Eastern Europe for six months as an English teaching assistant through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

A team of five engineering majors, seniors Zac Ericson, Brett Ermer, Marcus Gelder, John Macy, and Peter Oh, reworked a senior project halted by the COVID-19 pandemic and instead used their time and skills to help a local company print PPE.

For a graphic design class project, Gabrielle Eisma, a junior at Calvin University, took poems written by local artists and curated an unconventional and quite hidden gallery space. The poetry now rests in sixteen different places throughout West Michigan, from parks to parking lots, near gardens and playgrounds, and in churches and community centers.

IV. Finances

The pace of change at Calvin, as at many other institutions in the country, has been quite rapid over the past few months. It is easy to focus on the numerous adjustments that have been made as we have learned to work during the current COVID-19 era, but the truth is that we have several great team members and leaders who are not merely standing still or recovering losses but are instead taking steps to improve the university, financially and otherwise.

Calvin had its record-best year for fundraising, and endowment surpassed \$200 million, thanks to strong giving and good investment returns.

The fast pace for designing our new business school continued throughout the summer with our partners from GMB Architecture and Engineering and GDK Construction Company. It truly required a team effort to design the project so quickly, with numerous meetings that included faculty, the facilities team, and donors. Todd Hubers and Russell Bray contributed mightily to the organization of the entire process. We are pleased to have been able to open bids quickly and to start construction in March.

The local leadership for Creative Dining Services has kept up with constantly changing health department and State of Michigan mandates throughout the summer and fall. They have adjusted as needed to providing a reduced dining capacity, alternate serving models, and a delivery service while catering to a wide array of student preferences.

The dining services team has reduced their 2020–2021 spending targets to match lower revenues in catering, dining, and all facets of service in the Prince Conference Center.

The campus store has been open since late June, following all necessary social-distancing protocols. They instituted a delivery service for textbooks ordered online, dropping textbooks off in dorm rooms before students were even on campus. While they did this in response to the coronavirus pandemic, it was also a good opportunity to pilot a different service model as they seek to compete with Amazon and other online providers.

The university met the challenges of the global pandemic crisis, including financial and operational challenges associated with COVID-19, and reduced costs to maintain a balanced budget.

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 ministry with the following mandate:

Faith Formation Ministries joins and continues God’s mission of transforming lives and communities worldwide by encouraging and equipping local CRC congregations and their leaders in their calling to practice intentional, lifelong, intergenerational, holistic, missional discipleship and faith formation with an emphasis upon children, teens, and young adults.

(Acts of Synod 2015, pp. 467, 589)

Throughout the past year, Faith Formation Ministries has sought to carry out this mandate within the complexities (both challenges and opportunities) that surfaced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In pursuing our calling, we seek to collaborate wherever possible. That has been true to an even greater degree this past year. We also enter into our conversations with a listening ear, trying to discern what the unique cadences of the church or ministry leader’s context are. That listening posture has been even more important in a year when many leaders have been stretched beyond their training, experience, and capacity. In the midst of this season, Faith Formation Ministries team members have also engaged in our own ongoing learning related to facilitating virtual gatherings, creating and curating digital resources for faith formation, and assisting churches in equipping people for home-based faith formation practices.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

In previous years, the Faith Formation Ministries team has leaned into the lifelong and intergenerational descriptions in our mandate. This year we have begun exploring more of the holistic and missional aspects of our calling. This emphasis has led our team to recognize the need to diversify our resources, grow in our cultural intelligence, and collaborate more intentionally with other ministries.

Throughout the six years of our ministry, we have operated with a conviction that Christian discipleship and faith formation are more than a simple transfer of knowledge about God from one generation to the next. Following Jesus Christ involves an ongoing transformation of our character through the Spirit and in community with other disciples so that our desires, perspectives, and interactions with others conform more and more to the love of God made known in and through Jesus. This transformation is both personal and communal, and it leads us to participate more fully and more faithfully in God’s mission of making all things new.

This robust vision of discipleship beckons us to see faith formative aspects in each and every context and moment of our lives. Not only is faith formation lifelong; it is also holistic, shaping our home life, our vocations, our recreation, our economics, and our politics. Not only is faith formation intergenerational in that our faith together grows best through relationships across generations, but faith formation is also missional, forming us both for

and through the opportunities we have to work toward the well-being of our neighbors.

With these things in mind, our team is engaging in a wide range of conversations. We consult with church leaders about topics such as curriculum choices, encouraging and equipping parents for faith-attentive conversations with their children, inviting emerging adults more fully into the life of the church, and discipling people who are new to the faith or who are in the third third of their life. We are also participating in collaborative conversations around church planting, lay leadership formation, and best practices in responding to COVID-19.

We also continue curating and creating resources, including basic introductions to faith practices (spiritual disciplines), how to engage children and youth during the pandemic, and *Dwell at Home* activities for Advent and Holy Week.

III. How we have engaged our mandate this year

In the first six months of the 2020-21 ministry year, we have specifically engaged this vision by doing the following:

- Facilitating more than thirty workshops, retreats, and roundtables for councils, pastors, and other ministry leaders.
- Launching the Faith Practices Project as a five-year initiative for introducing congregations to various spiritual disciplines and encouraging their engagement with *Our Journey 2025*'s milestone on spiritual disciplines and prayer.
- Offering insights, providing resources, and facilitating conversations through more than forty posts on The Network (network.crcna.org).
- Facilitating a cohort in southern Ontario to encourage mentoring with youth and emerging adults; preparing to launch three new cohorts (another on mentoring, one on children's ministry and family faith formation, and one on the third third of life in early 2021).
- Developing and launching *Dwell Flex* to support churches in adapting to new virtual, multiage, and at-home approaches to Sunday school, particularly during COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings.
- Shepherding a classis-based network of Youth Ministry Champions who support and encourage youth ministry in the congregations of their respective classes. We also started to work collaboratively with the RCA on this network and hosted a creative, dispersed retreat for youth champions for both denominations.
- Joining the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's newest research project on family-based faith formation.
- Facilitating five virtual gatherings of leaders from various CRCNA-related children's ministries (GEMS, Cadets, Kids Corner, and Faith Formation Ministries).
- Participating in collaborative teams around church planting and COVID-19 response.
- Preparing to lead Generation Spark, an emerging adult-mentoring initiative, with the Reformed Church in America (RCA).
- Contributing to broader ecumenical networks focused on faith formation, including relationships with the RCA, Fuller Youth Institute,

Therefore Go Ministries, Intergenerate, the Children's Spirituality Summit, Vibrant Faith, and the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators.

Our first priority in our work is to listen well to the people with whom we interact. So far this year, much of what has emerged through this listening has been related to the pandemic. We've heard comments and questions like these:

- "How do we lead a children's ministry online?"
- "What are the best practices for including children and youth in online worship?"
- "How can we encourage people to engage in faith formation at home?"
- "I've got nothing left. My church expects me to suddenly be the expert for all things online just because I'm the youngest member on staff."
- "This season has been the hardest in ministry. I'm not sure I'll be in ministry once COVID-19 is done."

We are also hearing the following:

- "Emerging adults, particularly those who have participated in campus ministries during university, often find that the leadership skills and experiences they have to offer are overlooked when they become part of a church post-college/university."
- "Faith formation resources need to be digitally accessible."
- "Pastors and ministry leaders are scrambling just to get Sunday services online and haven't had much time to think about other approaches to faith formation beyond the Sunday worship gathering."

IV. Connecting with churches: Concluding *Our Journey 2020* and preparing for *Our Journey 2025* (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.

During *Our Journey 2020*, we focused on the following:

- Encouraging a faith storytelling culture within churches. We wove a storytelling component into most of our workshops and many of our resources. We also developed a toolkit of resources related to faith storytelling.
- Creating intergenerational, lifelong opportunities for discipleship. We curated and created resources, like our *Ten Ways* handouts and our *Third of Life* toolkit, that provide tangible suggestions for how to engage faith formation throughout the whole lifespan.
- Contextualizing discipleship for the particularities of each congregation. We facilitated cohorts, workshops, and retreats for ministry teams, provided coaching to ministry leaders, and developed free, adaptable resources that congregations can access to meet the specific faith formation needs in their contexts.
- Giving attention to the faith formation of children, youth, and young adults. We brought on several team members with background experience, education, and other training focused on children and youth

ministry to serve as catalyzers and resource developers. We expanded the *Dwell* curriculum offerings and created resources to equip parents and families. We also developed partnerships with the Fuller Youth Institute, Therefore Go Ministries, and the RCA to strengthen our capacity to engage with youth and emerging adults.

As we begin *Our Journey 2025*, Faith Formation Ministries is giving attention to the following aspects of the ministry plan:

- **Cultivate practices of prayer and spiritual discipline:** Along with launching the Faith Practices Project in preparation for this milestone, Faith Formation Ministries team members will serve as guides, encouraging engagement by denominational ministries and congregations with this first milestone.
- **Listen to the voices of every generation:** Two Faith Formation Ministries team members will serve as guides for this milestone. This milestone leans into our strength and our mandate of intergenerational ministry and being attentive to the faith formation needs and opportunities for people of all ages.
- **Grow in diversity and unity:** We are excited about the opportunity this milestone provides to amplify diverse voices through the resources we develop, to become more attentive to the ways disciples have been and are formed in a wide range of diverse communities and contexts, and to broaden our own cultural competencies and antiracism practices.
- **Share the gospel and live it missionally:** Our mandate calls us to lean into missional practices of discipleship and faith formation. We look forward to participating collaboratively with other ministries to grow disciples who will make disciples, who can then make more disciples.

V. Looking ahead: three trends to note

Through our engagement with churches, our ongoing learning and dialogue with other ministries and denominations, and our discernment as denominational leaders responsible for encouraging faith formation in the CRCNA, we note three trends that we anticipate will affect faith-formative practices and resources in the coming years:

1. **Belonging:** The social isolation experienced by many people during the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and amplified the need to belong in community with others. While Western theology has often emphasized the personal assurance of our salvation and our relationship with God, people are more attuned to their need to experience a sense of belonging to the community of God's people. This raises our understanding of the importance of small groups, microchurches, and other communal spaces for engagement in the life of the church that can help people both to know others and to be known by others. Developing faith formation resources that emphasize belonging is a growing priority.
2. **Accessibility:** Our North American culture is increasingly mobile and technologically engaged. In recent years this has affected how frequently people attend events in person and their willingness to commit to traditional discipleship classes or Bible studies. We need to ask questions about how these patterns will shape the ways in which churches can disciple

their congregations, and to be attentive to the ways in which a growing digital footprint can change the audience and community that a church is reaching.

3. **Integration:** Many people are asking how the Christian faith relates to issues of justice, economics, politics, sexuality, science, and more. While this trend is not new, our team is hearing an increasing call for resources that pursue faith formation in dialogue with these areas of life. There seems to be a growing desire for a more integrated approach to faith formation among youth and emerging adults and also among older adults who have been in the church for years.

VI. Final remarks

Throughout the unusual circumstances of ministry in the past year, Faith Formation Ministries has continued to grow as a team and in its practice of engaging with ministry leaders. In the early months of the pandemic, we served as a trusted resource for guiding ministry leaders through the sudden needs surrounding online church worship and programming. As the need for longer-term safety measures, including physical distancing, became evident, we gave attention to deeper issues surrounding mental health, fatigue, care for ministry leaders, and equipping ministry leaders for a different type of ministry season. More recently we have focused on helping ministry leaders navigate faith-formative conversations and adaptive opportunities involved with the collective trauma that many have experienced through the pandemic, through increased attention on systemic racism, and through partisan political conversations and events unfolding in the United States.

In the midst of these fluctuations and challenges, Faith Formation Ministries' team members have also spent time on professional development in order to better serve congregations and ministry leaders. Everyone on the team has participated in antiracism or cultural intelligence learning opportunities. Many of our catalyzers have focused on learning new skills and making use of resources for facilitating virtual retreats, workshops, and other gatherings. A few of us have explored spiritual direction, restorative justice, and other areas that are tangibly connected to our faith formation. We recognize that there is still much to learn with regard to faith formation in North America, particularly in light of events that unfolded in 2020. But we are confident that our team will be well positioned to continue serving the congregations of the CRC as well as the missional focus of the denomination throughout this coming year.

Faith Formation Ministries
Christopher J. Schoon, director

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

I. Introduction

Our 149 chaplains embody the gospel of Jesus Christ and minister at the front lines by providing pastoral care to thousands of people each day. For the past 100 years, our chaplains have provided meaningful, creative, and essential ministry throughout our communities, hospitals, prisons, long-term care facilities, and workplaces. Chaplains also serve in the military, hospice care, veterans affairs, pastoral counseling, and more. These communities need chaplains for their ability to handle crises, conduct difficult yet meaningful conversations, and care for people from many different backgrounds. The year 2020 highlighted how important chaplaincy ministry is. Our chaplains are employed and embedded in organizations, creating unique ministry opportunities. Our chaplains have been creatively adapting to ever-changing policies and safety precautions. They have provided spiritual care within anxious institutions that are struggling with budgets, layoffs, and staff burn-out. When community clergy were restricted from visiting hospitals, prisons, and nursing homes, our chaplains were continuing to provide pastoral care to people in crisis and in pain who were often isolated and alone, and to sick, dying, lonely, and grieving patients who were separated from their church and family members. Our chaplains' education, special training, and gifts have prepared them to share the gospel during this critical time.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (CCM) endorses, trains, supports, and advocates for chaplains who extend the CRCNA's ministry into their institutions and organizations. CCM has had to adjust over the past year to provide meaningful ministry in the midst of COVID-19 restrictions, seek out new ministry opportunities, and meet the diverse needs of our chaplaincy community. Our ministry is entering 2021 with joy and excitement to implement the CRCNA's commitment to the ongoing ministry of our chaplains. Our ministry has restructured and added staff (from two 1.0 FTE staff to three staff working a combined 2.2 FTE) to better support our chaplains. Rev. Timothy Rietkerk, who began working as the director of this ministry in January 2021, has nearly thirty years of chaplain ministry experience serving within military, Veteran Affairs hospital, and hospice settings. Rev. Sarah Roelofs, who served as director for three and half years, will transition to working part-time as a ministry consultant. Carol Vander Ark Champion was recently hired and serves as a part-time executive administrative assistant. After working understaffed (at 1.6 FTE) for most of the year, we look forward to seeing how God continues to work through our chaplains who provide ministry in moments that matter.

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, pp. 685-87).

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:

1. Overseeing the denominational endorsement process for chaplains
2. Providing pastoral support and advocacy for endorsed chaplains
3. Facilitating shared supervision with chaplains' calling churches
4. Informing and educating the CRCNA on chaplaincy and related ministries
5. Administering training grants
6. Recruiting chaplains
7. Conducting training
8. Promoting the development of chaplaincy
9. Participating in national endorsement-related organizations

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. *Servant leadership*

CCM equips chaplains to serve as servant leaders. This past year, we were not able to make our usual 50 in-person visits and 6-8 campus visits, but we did connect with 68 students (43 U.S.; 25 Cdn.) and 177 ministers and lay leaders (140 U.S.; 37 Cdn.) through email, phone calls, surveys, and video calls. The number of students and prospective chaplains with whom we have connected has tripled over the past five years, including five times as many women and twice as many people of color now seeking to learn more about chaplain ministry. Through these connections, CCM guides these diverse individuals from a variety of backgrounds, ministry experiences, and vocational goals as they apply for endorsement, complete specialized training, and connect with others working in their field of interest.

Chaplains are specially trained as servant leaders for their ministry. CCM shares the stories and resources of our chaplains, through whom the church makes a direct impact in those chaplains' communities and institutions. To work in clinical settings, chaplains complete a minimum of 800 hours of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or equivalent training. This is in addition to formal master's level theological and biblical training. CCM supports these new and future chaplains through a donor-driven development fund. In 2020, CCM granted a total of \$10,261 (\$6,200 US and \$4,061 CDN) to seven individuals (5 U.S. and 2 Cdn.) for specialized training. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of training grant requests was down from the average 12 grants totaling \$22,000, and we expect the number of requests to significantly increase in the coming year.

Chaplains display leadership in a variety of settings. Endorsed chaplains continue to lead in their organizations and communities and have taken on a variety of new tasks to meet the needs of their organizations and the people they serve. Chaplains provide pastoral care to staff and people who are homeless, disabled, and elderly and people who have lost hope. Chaplains provide guidance, advocate for people's spiritual needs within many institutions, and serve on ethics committees within their organizations. Thirty-nine CRC chaplains are board certified through several professional chaplain organizations, demonstrating their advanced skills and enabling them to step into leadership and specialized roles in their workplaces. Three chaplains are clinical educators (2 U.S.; 1 Cdn.), training dozens of new chaplains annually. Ten 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, managing and advocating for peoples' spiritual needs and rights while serving their local community.

On any given day, a hospital chaplain reads Psalm 23 while holding an iPad to include family members as they say goodbye to a parent; a prison chaplain prays with an inmate who makes a profession of faith; a nursing-home chaplain visits with a dementia patient who feels lonely and confused because family members are no longer allowed to visit; a military chaplain provides counseling to a soldier having suicidal thoughts. CRCNA chaplains touch the lives of thousands of individuals each day, meeting them in a variety of crises. Chaplains 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 listen deeply, identify spiritual needs, and connect them with spiritual resources and faith communities. In this way, chaplains embody Christ's grace in the world.

B. Gospel proclamation

Every day, chaplains proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ as they minister to a diverse group of people in crisis, bringing the peace, healing, and grace of Christ to many who are outside the church. Chaplaincy ministry is a specialized ministry that has unique challenges, requires specific skills, can be isolating, and provides rich opportunities to minister. Chaplains are trained to provide care to people in difficult situations. The year 2020 has stretched our chaplains as they have been exposed to repetitive trauma and fatigue during this pandemic, and they have risen to these challenges and have continued to provide meaningful pastoral ministry.

This year CCM has adapted how we provide support to our chaplains. The pandemic limited our ability to provide in-person visits, but it created an opportunity to develop and deepen our ministry through our 2,989 (2,189 U.S.; 800 Cdn.) interactions with our chaplains. Normally we minister face-to-face with our chaplains by making six to eight regional visits each year and by hosting an in-person chaplain conference. Throughout this past year CCM has focused on supporting our chaplains through individual interactions (by phone, video call, and email), weekly prayer video meetings, weekly devotions, encouragement letters and gifts, our annual conference, and social media. At the beginning of 2020 we had been meeting once a month with 20-30 chaplains to discuss a topic (pluralism, trauma care, women in leadership, etc.) relevant to chaplaincy. On March 18, those meetings changed focus to gathering weekly for prayer and support, to ask questions, and to share resources. The meetings now are coupled with a weekly devotional time together, which has become an important source of support and care for our chaplains. Of our 149 chaplains, 82 (64 U.S. and 18 CAN) have joined us at least once this year, and an average of 10-15 chaplains attend per week.

Our annual conference is foundational to our ministry. In September, we hosted our first virtual conference: "Come to Me: Sufficient Grace, Perfect Power, and Humanity." The 113 attendees (80 U.S. and 23 CAN) spent three days together to learn, worship, reflect, and be refreshed. While the overall training format changed, our time together was incredibly meaningful, integrating worship times, fellowship, plenary sessions, small group breakouts, and space to practice spiritual disciplines. While many chaplains expressed

that they missed seeing each other in person, they identified that they were able to engage in deep conversations with a wider variety of chaplains due to being placed in multiple small group breakout sessions. We had a number of chaplains in attendance who had been unable to attend in the past due to the amount of time they would be away from work. Throughout the conference, our chaplains shared about the joys and challenges in their lives and ministry in the midst of the pandemic, racial tensions, and political divides.

Through our increased social media engagement, we were able to effectively connect chaplains to one another and share resources. This was evident through the 30 percent increase in members in our closed Facebook group and 300 percent increase in participation, engagement, and sharing posts. CCM provided regular updates through a bimonthly newsletter, sent out encouraging postcards and letters, worked closely with CRC News to highlight many chaplains' stories. Through these ministry activities, CCM supports chaplains as they proclaim the gospel in culturally appropriate ways to those God has entrusted to their care.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025 (the Ministry Plan)*

CCM aids churches and communities that cultivate practices, grow in diversity, listen to the voices, and share the gospel through the work of our chaplains. CCM facilitates the relationship between the chaplain and his/her calling church, enabling chaplains to get much needed support in their ministry and connecting churches with important spiritual resources. Our 149 chaplains represent 97 individual CRC churches. Through this covenantal relationship, the church can effectively extend their mission into unique areas of their surrounding community.

Through the milestone of cultivating spiritual disciples of prayer, worship, and fellowship, our ministry transforms the lives of our chaplains and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit. This milestone is developed in our weekly prayer meetings, weekly devotionals, and worship and prayer opportunities throughout our programming. Our chaplains foster cultivating spiritual disciplines in the church through active engagement with their local churches and providing spiritual care resources on social media and in CRC publications.

CCM is focused on growing diversity and unity by seeking justice, reconciliation, and welcome by supporting our chaplains who provide this essential ministry to persons of diverse ethnic, cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds. CCM seeks to increase diversity within our chaplain community by providing on average \$22,000 in training grants to ensure everyone is able to get the necessary chaplain training and connect all newly endorsed chaplains (regardless of their age or ministerial experience) with a chaplain mentor. Our chaplain community is becoming a more diverse ministry with a 47 percent (from 9 to 17) increase of chaplains of color and a 21 percent (from 31 to 39) increase of female chaplains in the last five years. CCM seeks to identify gifted leaders from diverse backgrounds and ministry experiences to serve in leadership roles on our advisory council, at our annual chaplain's training, and by sharing their story through social media and CRC publications. CCM collaborates with professional chaplaincy organizations in the U.S. and Canada to advocate for religious liberty and expression of religion, and to train our chaplains to meet the spiritual needs of diverse populations.

Listening to the voices of every generation and sharing the gospel are at the heart of chaplain ministry. CCM supports chaplains who connect the church to the local and global ministry contexts through the pastoral care they provide. They are a rich resource for the church. CRC chaplains provide pastoral care to over 2 million people per year, mostly to people who are not associated with the CRC and a growing number of people who are not affiliated with any religion. Our ministry is working on building relational networks and resources within our community to provide meaningful and appropriate pastoral care. Chaplains are equipped by our churches to serve as frontline workers and minister to those who are isolated, feel abandoned, are in crisis and pain, and have experienced overwhelming loss and grief. Their education, specialized vocational training, and unique gifts have prepared them to respond to the call to “be there in moments that matter” in their local communities and institutions.

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: 149 chaplains (in the United States: 120; in Canada: 22).
2. Twelve chaplains were newly endorsed in 2020: David Bouma, Michelle DePooter-Francis, Lisa DeYoung, Marcia Fairrow, John Kyu Hahn, Mark Janowski, Daniel M. Kim, James Kim, Anthony Matias, Sharon Segaar-King, Thomas VanWyk, and Hernan Zapata-Thomack.
3. The CRCNA supports 22 military chaplains: 16 active duty in the United States; 2 active duty in Canada; 4 in the US National Guard and Reserves; and an additional 6 military chaplain candidates.
4. In the past year, the following 7 military chaplains have served, or are currently serving, overseas: Israel Alvarado, Jon Averill, Richard Hill, Raidel Leon Martinez, Cornelius Muasa, Cory Van Sloten, Lloyd Wicker.
5. Three chaplains retired in 2020: Douglas Einfeld, Barbara Schultze, Alfred Vanden Boogaard.

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
Timothy L. Rietkerk, director

Pastor Church Resources

I. Introduction

Pastor Church Resources (PCR) 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. Our efforts aim toward the well-being of pastors and churches and provide the context for individual programs, personal interactions, resources, and consultations that PCR staff offer. Recently, along with emphasizing vocational assessment, we have focused attention on the systemic health of classes and the resourcing of classis functionaries. Our desire to resource pastors, churches, and classes is an attempt to reflect the Spirit of God's work to resource the church with all the gifts necessary for flourishing.

Staffing notes—In 2020 we were blessed to welcome four new staff members to the PCR team: Rev. Elaine May, women's leadership developer; Kristin Hoekstra, Healthy Church administrative specialist; Nate Rauh-Bieri, Financial Shalom program manager; and Rev. Zach Olson, ministry vocational consultant. Rev. Samantha DeJong McCarron left her position as ministry vocational consultant to do similar work at Calvin Theological Seminary. After serving PCR for eleven years, Rev. Cecil Van Nijenhuis retired in June 2020. Cecil's steady and wise pastoral leadership has been a rich blessing to the CRC.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

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 ministry leaders. That ministry sometimes takes the form of responding to an emerging season of growth, transition, or challenge. Sometimes it takes the form of resourcing leaders or systems (such as a classis or council) to be more resilient before such seasons of growth, transition, or challenge arise.

Whether that ministry is responsive or proactive, the premise is the same: when people (such as pastors and ministry leaders) or systems (such as a classis or council) know their calling and are sufficiently encouraged and equipped to pursue it, we will see more creative and faithful ministry. In other words, equipped and encouraged leaders and systems will be better able to pursue the kind of wide and deep ministry the CRCNA so strongly values: forming deep faith, developing servant leaders, witnessing widely to Christ's kingdom, and loving mercy and doing justice while proclaiming the saving message of Jesus Christ and worshipping him in all we do.

In PCR, we believe that when leaders and systems are clear on calling and sufficiently equipped and encouraged, the sometimes disruptive dynamics of growth, transition, and challenge need not derail faithful ministry. In fact, PCR seeks to help such leaders and systems recognize and cooperate with the ways God often uses such disruptions as ministry and discipleship opportunities—for example, recognizing that the way pastors engage in continuing education can help them form faith more deeply; that the way a council conducts a retreat can develop a new generation of servant leaders; that the way you handle a conflict can witness to God's kingdom; that the

people you include in critical decision-making can express your commitment to mercy and justice; and that the joyful lives of faithful leaders can point others to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

Pastor Church Resources is committed to serving CRC congregations through the lens of *Our Journey 2025*, the newly adopted ministry plan. We have initiated a time of strategic planning to reflect on both how the variety of ministry we do is already living into these priorities and how we can continue to grow in alignment. We are starting with articulating more clearly how each aspect of our work (as listed below) aligns with supporting each of the four milestones of *Our Journey 2025*, and we are seeking ways to refine and/or increase how each ministry reflects those milestones. Further, we are assessing what new opportunities we might pursue or existing ministry programming we might bring to a close to best serve the CRC churches with respect to *Our Journey 2025*.

While future reports will reflect our growing alignment, we would like to highlight one new project we are currently developing. Seeing that listening well is an embedded value throughout all four milestones of *Our Journey 2025*, PCR is working on a way to highlight some of the various tools we often use that support better congregational listening (to one another, to God, to our neighbors, etc.). Our aim is that each year, we will highlight one specific tool and invite (and equip) every CRC congregation to engage with that tool in an accessible way sometime during the month of February. We are planning to launch this effort in 2021 for congregational participation in February 2022.

A. Ongoing ministry initiatives

1. Serving pastors

- a. Consultation and intervention—In 2020, PCR continued its consultation work with pastors and churches, often in the context of tension and challenge. Our consulting staff engaged in 16 intensive engagements with churches (10+ interactions), 13 medium engagements (3-9 interactions), and 8 small engagements (1-2 interactions). These numbers do not reflect the many brief or one-time phone or email conversations regarding Church Order, staff arrangements, church renewal instruments, and so on. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the nature of our work in that all engagements after mid-March took place via virtual meeting platforms. That adjustment brought challenges and opportunities. The work had to be done in a way that felt less personal, but we could be at work in more places than ever because travel was no longer necessary. The experience of the pandemic and the restrictions it brought also formed a new element of every church's story, challenging leadership in myriad ways, exposing underlying dysfunction, and yet also revealing health in many places. It led many people in church leadership to new levels of weariness. That experience was exacerbated in U.S. contexts by political and social tensions within the country, tensions that came to expression in many congregations. We wonder what the long-term impact on churches and pastors will be.

b. Continuing education grants of up to \$750 per opportunity are awarded to pastors and staff to engage in learning opportunities that enhance their work in the local congregation. Over the past year, PCR awarded 20 grants on topics such as preaching, restorative practices, Clinical Pastoral Education, Specialized Transitional Ministry training, and spiritual formation/direction. In fall 2020 a new Continuing Education Advisory Team formed. The team assists in grant decisions and provides input for PCR's ministry supporting the ongoing formation of pastors for ministry.

c. Promoting flourishing in ministry—PCR provides grants for pastor peer groups and biennial conferences for pastors and pastors' wives. During this difficult year, the support and encouragement pastors received in peer groups was needed more than ever. Over 100 pastors joined a PCR peer group in 2020—almost 10 percent of CRC pastors.

We hosted a virtual pastors' wives' conference in October with the same number of attendees as in past in-person conferences. (Male spouses have not shown interest in such events.) We are planning for our second pastors' conference in November. It is our desire to be able to meet in person in Albuquerque, New Mexico. May it be so!

d. Financial Shalom—In 2020, Financial Shalom distributed grants to 22 pastors to support them with critical financial needs and student loan relief. The program also covered 33 pastors' professional financial counseling sessions. Beyond its regular grants to pastors, Financial Shalom oversaw the distribution of the COVID-19 Church Engagement Fund, which provided over \$813,000 in grants from denominational agencies to sustain 155 congregations financially affected by the pandemic; of this, around \$550,000 was Financial Shalom funding (from a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant). Most of this COVID-19 relief funding went to sustaining pastors' salaries and benevolence for church members. In 2020, Financial Shalom made its work—to alleviate some of the key financial challenges facing CRCNA pastors—more accessible through updated and translated brochures, educational webinars, and the development of a new program for bivocational pastors.

e. Bivocational ministry resources—In tandem with Financial Shalom, PCR took up the goal to normalize and support healthy bivocational ministry. PCR staff have worked with other ministries and the Study of Bivocationality Task Force to learn about bivocational ministry in the CRC. In addition to the Bivocational Growth Fellowship—a yearlong program for pastors seeking a sustainable bivocational arrangement, funded by Financial Shalom—PCR has begun developing resources to assist pastors and churches who are pursuing bivocational arrangements.

f. Vocational discernment—PCR equips pastors to clarify their most effective and unique ministry strengths. A primary tool for this work is the Birkman Assessment through which pastors discover how God has wired them to flourish in ministry. Since this program began, nearly one quarter of active CRC pastors have taken the assessment, increasing their self-awareness and strengthening their ability to communicate

with leadership, identify blindspots, and discern ministry fit. PCR's goal is to provide the Birkman Assessment and assessment debriefing to every pastor in the CRC.

2. Serving churches

- a. Pastor transitions and search—PCR helps churches navigate the logistics of pastor searches. During 2020, personal connections with search-team leaders increased from those of previous years. We recently completed a major revision of our primary resource for these transitions, *More Than a Search Committee*. The revision includes the same practical advice that search committees have appreciated, and it provides more encouragement and support for churches wishing to take advantage of the unique discernment opportunities afforded by pastoral transitions. PastorSearch, a database of searchable minister profiles, remains a vital resource, providing direct access for up to 100 search teams at any given time. A list of supply pastors available to serve congregations during periods of vacancy is also maintained.

Shortly after a minister leaves a church, PCR contacts the church in order to make the council aware of the ways their classis and denomination can help them navigate the changes ahead. We also survey participants who have recently served as search-committee chairpersons to help us understand how the search process is working for local churches and where it may need improving. We soon expect to release a new virtual training so that search committees are aware of the impact of unconscious bias in a search process. We are also putting the finishing touches on revisions to both the Letter of Call template and the Church Profile template.

- b. Tools and toolkits for churches—PCR provides training tools for churches including *More Than a Search Committee*, *Evaluation Essentials*, and *Effective Leadership in the Church*. Congregations can access all of these resources by downloading them at the PCR website (crcna.org/pcr) or by ordering printed copies through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org). We also offer collections of tools that we call toolkits.

The *Crossroads Discernment Toolkit* is a collection of over twenty group activities that can help any church proceed through a Spirit-led, group-engaged, mission-oriented discernment of where they have been, where they are, and where God is leading them. As the centerpiece of our Crossroads Discernment Process, it is especially helpful to guide churches through the spiritual discernment of considering, and the logistical details of pursuing, a significant institutional change including a major ministry reset, a church restart, or a church closure. Crossroads is a joint PCR/Resonate resource.

The *Challenging Conversations Toolkit* is a resource for small groups to engage with the synodical report on human sexuality and to listen deeply to one another as the church considers what to do next. The toolkit is based on some of the best practices recommended by PCR for helping to turn conflicts into opportunities for discipleship and witness.

- c. Healthy Church discernment process—The ministry of Healthy Church helps congregations understand their health challenges and discern best ways to grow healthier. This year, Healthy Church began a “re-set” of its own, recognizing that it needs to make itself known to our churches more effectively and to provide better support to the coaches and churches involved in renewal. While attempting to address these needs, PCR will retain the core of Healthy Church—the healthy church indicators, a robust survey format, a strong coaching component, and an orientation around discernment. A grant from Vibrant Congregations is providing financial support for this work.
- d. Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs)—PCR endorses and supports a number of seasoned pastors who are trained to help congregations experiencing challenges during transitions between pastors, challenges related to conflict, or challenges related to the impact of the lengthy tenure of an outgoing pastor. When the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread in North America in early 2020, there was a brief reduction in the number of churches asking for help with such transitional ministry. However, the need for transitional ministry has again reached former levels and may even grow beyond them because of tensions and conflicts related to COVID-19—and, in the United States, because of relationship challenges related to political and social differences. At this time, there are twenty STMs endorsed by PCR.
- e. The Women’s Leadership Ministry assists congregations in developing a theology and practice for identifying, cultivating, and releasing women to use their gifts in the church. This ministry was integrated into PCR in July 2020. We developed the *Ten Ways for Men and Women Thriving Together in Ministry* tool.

This year the CRCNA is recognizing the 25th anniversary of ordaining women in the ecclesiastical office of minister of the Word, commissioned pastor, and elder. The 2020 *Yearbook* survey indicates that 72 percent of CRCNA congregations that completed the survey are open to having a woman serve as a deacon, 52 percent have opened the office of elder to women, and 51 percent have opened the office of minister of the Word or commissioned pastor to women. The survey also found that percentages vary between Canada and the United States. In Canada, 87 percent of congregations have opened the office of deacon to women; 77 percent, the office of elder; and 73 percent, the offices of pastors. In the U.S., 68 percent are open to women serving as deacons; 44 percent, as elders; and 41 percent, as pastors. The ongoing task of the Women’s Leadership Ministry is to work with all of our churches to increase the leadership capacity and contributions of women at all levels—local, regional, and denominational—for the health and mission of the church.

3. Serving classes

- a. Classis Renewal—The work of classis renewal continues to encompass two broad categories: direct engagement and supportive infrastructure. PCR has worked indirectly with multiple classis leadership teams in the past year to help them better understand their organizational

structure and how their activities best fit with the purpose of classis. We also continue our support for a variety of functionaries, such as being involved in coleading a conference for stated clerks and maintaining continued engagement with church visitors. In 2021 we have started developing more robust support for church visitors and for classis counselors for churches seeking to call a pastor.

- b. Regional pastors and mentoring—PCR extends its work through regional pastors at the classis level, providing support, encouragement, and counsel to 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. Among other supports, PCR facilitated a spiritual direction cohort for regional pastors in 2020 and will be hosting a similar cohort for 2021. The key mentoring resource, *Toward Effective Pastoral Mentoring*, will be updated and revised in 2021.

B. Special ministry initiative projects

1. Thriving Together Program

Thriving Together is in its third year of a five-year program. It is funded through a nearly one-million dollar grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The overall purpose of this program is to create a stronger, more vital culture of mentoring in connection with three undersupported, almost “invisible” pastoral-transition moments: early in a second call, in late 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 2020 we hosted multiple gatherings for pastors in transition and have approved the funding for multiple peer-mentoring groups. (These are different from the peer groups mentioned earlier.)

2. Council/elder/deacon training

Our work to develop focused support for church councils continues. We are creating orientation resources for persons entering church office as well as resources that provide ongoing training and support for elders and deacons once they are in office. In partnership with the Thriving Congregations project (funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant), we are developing a specific curriculum that can be used by church councils in a variety of settings and timeframes.

IV. Conclusion

2020 was a year of tremendous disruption in almost every area of all of our lives. Indeed, every aspect of Pastor Church Resources’ ministry experienced some turbulence and disappointment along the way. Yet, as pastors, councils, and classes felt the strain of 2020, PCR also felt strong confirmation that synod’s mandate for our ministry remains as important as ever. Though we may hope we never have another year quite like 2020, pastors and churches know that “in this world [we] will have trouble” (John 16:33). Changes will come. Plans will be derailed. Leaders will be stretched. Yet it is precisely because of these challenges that synod created PCR. So we remain

focused on equipping and encouraging pastors, churches, and classes with tools, resources, and networks of support so that we might face such seasons of challenge in the confidence that we are not alone. In fact, the Lord we serve assures us, "Take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Pastor Church Resources
Lis Van Harten

Raise Up Global Ministries

I. Introduction

Raise Up Global Ministries equips global church leaders by (1) developing biblically based interactive materials and (2) training facilitators to lead change in their communities. Raise Up is a partnership of three programs of the CRC: Global Coffee Break, Timothy Leadership Training, and Educational Care.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

In the past ministry year, God used a pandemic to push the programs of Raise Up out of the box. Each program experienced loss, change, and new opportunities. The mission remained steady, but methods changed. In the spirit of interactive learning, as you read through the following reports, consider where you see the five ministry priorities of Our Calling at work. Where do you see faith being formed, servant leaders being equipped, global mission taking place, mercy and justice being practiced, and the gospel being proclaimed?

A. Global Coffee Break

Global Coffee Break (GCB) serves churches and small group leaders around the world with vision, training, and resources for relational, small group Bible discovery so that people develop faith in Christ and together grow in him. Put succinctly, GCB helps churches invite neighbors to discover God's story together. Training, coaching, and networking prepare church leaders in North America and around the world. GCB produces and distributes the *Discover Your Bible* study series to support this work.

The COVID-19 pandemic closed the door to in-person events and opened a door to online learning. In spite of the pandemic in 2020, GCB increased its number of conferences, coaching, and training events. Korean Coffee Break leaders took the lead in moving to Zoom training and conferences. In August, more than 100 leaders attended an online Korean Coffee Break conference. In November, 100 people joined an online weekend retreat. Participants came from the four corners of the United States—Alaska, Florida, California, and Maine—as well as from Canada, Mexico, and Korea! In addition, GCB program manager Juan Sierra led Zoom training for leaders from the CRC of Liberia and continued using technology in relationships with global partners.

COVID-19 made an impact on group life. Some groups stopped meeting, and our print book sales suffered. But many other groups took advantage of our new option to order digital studies and continued to meet by Zoom, in parking lots, or parks. Coffee Break groups continued to see people meet Jesus. A leader in Washington shared that a newcomer, who had never opened a Bible, joined their Zoom Coffee Break group. They scrambled to get her a Bible and a *Discover Mark* study guide. Her questions opened their eyes and give them joy. They are watching the Holy Spirit open her heart to God's story. Another group in Illinois found a Bible for a newcomer. That church's pastor says, "Coffee Break has been and continues to be their most effective evangelistic strategy."

God has opened doors, and GCB will follow these new opportunities. More online training opportunities will develop as we eagerly await and plan for in-person training and conferences. A diverse team helped revise *Discover Genesis* for fall 2020 and spring 2021. This study reflects the commitment to resource group discovery. A brand new study, *Discover Revelation 1-3*, will be ready for sale in July 2021. More translations of the well-loved studies will be made available in Korean and Spanish, as well as Hindi, Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Nepalese.

B. Timothy Leadership Training

Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) serves the underresourced global church through the development and stewardship of biblically rooted and contextually relevant training resources, equipping leaders for faithful and flourishing ministry. In other words, TLT provides accessible training resources for church leaders who need it most. TLT delivers training and resources through partnerships with mission agencies and churches.

When the pandemic hit, TLT encouraged leaders to suspend in-person TLT activities. Training events in thirty-plus countries around the world came to a screeching halt. God led. In February, TLT had launched two Trainer's Care Networks. The networks resourced and connected leaders for shared learning and support on WhatsApp. Early in the pandemic, TLT revised a manual written for the 2014 Ebola crisis. This was rapidly translated into over twenty languages and distributed to hundreds of TLT facilitators and partners. Families and small groups continued with TLT, using *Loving Your Neighbor in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. One young girl created an action plan to draw water for handwashing each morning. A pastor in Bangladesh said that the manual helped his church members have a shared awareness of the facts about COVID-19 and encouraged members to continue to reach out to neighbors in safe ways. He told his congregation that taking those steps would help nonbelievers have a positive view of Christians and enthusiasm for learning about Christ.

More innovations took place. TLT partnered with a mobile technology ministry called Relay Trust to modify the COVID-19 manual into a WhatsApp video format. The creative distribution of the study by phone allows people with low internet bandwidth or limited access to print materials to engage with the interactive study. This successful experiment led to the development of a new study, also distributed on WhatsApp videos, called "God's Unfailing Love." This three-part study is a follow-up to the COVID-19 manual, and it pastorally encourages leaders who are serving in a context of hardship and suffering.

TLT also continued to develop new resources and partnerships. A draft of a new TLT manual, *Fear Not: A Christian Attitude to Spirit Powers* was completed and will be piloted. This study and other training resources are being developed with rich and diverse input from global TLT participants. In addition, TLT forged new partnerships to expand TLT in India and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Program manager Albert Strydhorst also led a Zoom group of Burmese church leaders in Indianapolis through the TLT manual *Caring for God's People*. By the grace of God, TLT will continue to develop more ministry partnerships characterized by mutual respect and

shared learning. TLT will continue to innovate in making interactive training and materials more accessible to people around the world.

C. Educational Care

Educational Care (EC) equips school communities with a new perspective based on a God-centered, biblically informed program of learning that results in holistically educated people becoming salt and light in the world. In short, EC inspires and provides useful tools to help educators take care of God's children. EC facilitators train and coach school leaders using interactive learning manuals for change in schools, families, and communities.

The work of equipping teachers in schools was also limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools, teachers, parents, and children around the world were greatly affected by stay-at-home orders. Even so, EC facilitators continued to stay in contact with schools and displaced teachers. Mark Wiersma helped schools in Nigeria develop safe COVID-19 protocols. A handful of training events took place in person and on Zoom. During this time, EC facilitators formed an interim leadership team. Great work took place as the team shared best practices and identified ways to contextualize EC for different settings: Christian schools; government schools; rural; urban—Bible friendly or not—and more. A subteam worked on revising EC manuals, developing facilitator training resources, and updating a facilitators' guide.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

Raise Up Global Ministries is directed by core values aligned with the milestones of *Our Journey 2025*. Each program engages the milestones in various ways, as our sample stories illustrate.

Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline: DYB studies and TLT and EC manuals are based on the Bible. Group participants read the text, talk about it together, and decide what they will do as a result of what they have learned. Learning is put into practice and results in life and ministry change. Prayer is essential to the process. For example, the idea of an evangelistic Bible study was imagined through the prayers of a CRC church plant more than fifty years ago. Today leaders continue to lead from a posture of prayer. A Coffee Break group in Cedar Springs, Michigan, always ends with prayer. The prayer is conversational. They talk to God about what they have learned and what they need.

Listening to the voices of every generation: All three Raise Up programs use facilitated group learning practices. Group learning involves active listening and empowers all voices to participate. Diana Boot, a Resonate Christian education specialist, witnessed the impact of intergenerational learning at an EC training in Uganda. The group was attended by young teachers and a wise, deeply respected, community elder. He joined in to color butterflies while they all discussed the multiple ways in which students learned. His humility, presence, and participation modeled openness to learning and willingness to change.

Sharing the gospel and living it missionally/planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts: Raise Up equips and strengthens the global church with accessible resources that can be adapted and contextualized. The same pastor from Bangladesh also shares this story: "As I was

praying, a thought came to my mind. The [COVID-19] manual is suitable for believers who have a Bible—they can look up the verses. But we can use the manual for evangelism too, if we add the verses into the manual.” They added extra pages to the manual with Bible passages and distributed the manuals with food packages to about twenty families who are out of work because of the lockdown. They believe the food and Word will give their neighbors strength!

In churches, communities, and schools, we journey together in raising up leaders. Our next steps will remain, as ever, centered around the Word, prayer, groups, and listening.

Raise Up Global Ministries
Sam Huizenga, director

ReFrame Ministries (formerly Back to God Ministries International)**I. Introduction—Mission and mandate**

ReFrame Ministries serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Our ministry today looks much different than when it launched as a single English radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, in 1939. Today our vision is that the lives and worldviews of all people around the globe will be transformed by God's gospel message.

Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we create contextual media resources that proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church throughout the world in ten major languages. This work takes place through four core strategic focal points:

- Church rooted: We believe that the Holy Spirit works through the church, so we partner with churches to build and strengthen the body of Christ.
- Major languages: We strive to reach the widest possible audience, so we create content in the world's most-spoken languages.
- Context driven: We work with local partners who faithfully contextualize the gospel message and use the most effective media for connecting with diverse audiences.
- Relationship focused: Following the example of Christ, we seek to build long-term, discipling relationships with individual members of our mass audiences.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

The focus of ReFrame Ministries is primarily global mission. All of our work is guided by the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Naturally, 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

ReFrame carries out ministry in ten major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Using media, ReFrame 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 ReFrame.

1. ReFrame employs about 150 Indigenous staff members working around the world. ReFrame has a ministry presence in 55 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution. ReFrame reaches people in nearly every country through internet and mobile application resources.

2. ReFrame's international ministry teams have developed 28 ministry websites in 10 languages supported by 67 social media sites. ReFrame produces 50 radio/audio programs and 36 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 devotions has decreased as we are able to reach more people in more places digitally through email, Facebook, and smartphone apps. We send more than 250,000 devotional emails daily—and this number increases every day.

B. Faith formation on the global mission field

ReFrame provides faith formation resources in the English language, primarily for North American audiences. To learn more about these resources, see section III of this report or visit ReFrameMinistries.org/English.

Culturally relevant discipleship resources are also available in the nine other languages in which ReFrame works. Produced and distributed in print, online, on social media channels, and through smartphone apps, devotions and faith formation resources are bringing God's Word to people around the world.

1. Audio programs apply God's Word directly to people's lives through Bible teaching programs, offering Reformed and biblical perspectives on current cultural issues within the context of the nations where we do ministry.

For example, as COVID-19 came to the forefront of people's minds in 2020, each of our ministries adapted their programs' core messages to discuss what God's Word says about pandemics, death, and hope in Christ.

2. ReFrame offers print resources, including devotional guides in nearly every language ministry. In total, ReFrame mails or hands out about 2.1 million devotional guides and other gospel-centered materials every year. Much of this content is also available online. In all 10 language ministries, ReFrame regularly hears from people who are grateful to have a meaningful reflection on God's Word.

For example, one reader of our *Today* devotions shared, "On days of excess stress, I can read and reread your devotions and get a refreshing breath of God's grace. Thank you so much."

3. As video-based programs become increasingly popular and accessible, ReFrame now has 36 different video programs across its ministries. These programs range from daily, two-minute devotional reflections to hour-long church services that took the place of in-person visits while people were restricted from gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of these video programs offers the hope of God's truth in an easily accessible format. Most of the programs are available on social media sites as well as YouTube.

After watching a video from our Spanish ministry team, Maria wrote, "You are a blessing. One of the good things about confinement is the exchange of messages and reflections that we hear daily. We see God using pastors for his holy ministry. God bless you!"

C. Servant leadership on the global mission field

1. ReFrame Ministries 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 10 language ministries.

2. 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. Hernandez Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Sergei Sosedkin (Russian); 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 their positions in the past two years. We praise God for providing these leaders just in time for a global pandemic, as media ministry suddenly became even more important than we had known before.

- a. Rev. Arliyanus Larosa was officially commissioned in January 2020. As COVID-19 hit Indonesia, he started 12 new video programs that people could access on social media.
 - b. Robin Basselin and Justin Sterenberg's appointment as codirectors came in fall 2019. Together, they led the English ministry team to create several new publications and resources for North Americans that have experienced a lot of trauma in just the past few years. This includes resources for celebrating holidays at home, audio programs that address racial injustice, and videos featuring ways that Christian kids helped people respond to COVID-19.
 - c. Rev. Huascar de la Cruz officially became the Spanish media ministry leader at the end of October 2019. His appointment was providential. Just a few months later, a state-owned television station reached out and asked him to produce a special Sunday program that would allow people to worship from home in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This marked one of the only times this station has allowed religious content in its programming.
2. Pastor Jerry An facilitates symposia for Chinese-speaking church leaders in both Asia and North America to promote the use of media for gospel outreach.
 3. The goal of all ReFrame-related training events is to equip leaders for sharing the gospel in the context to which God has called them.
 - a. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie expanded Timothy Leadership Training events in several West African nations.
 - b. In India and nearby countries, ReFrame's Hindi ministry leader facilitated leadership training events for pastors, church leaders, media producers, and vacation Bible school 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 ReFrame 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

ReFrame 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 makes a special effort to distribute food and sanitary equipment, since many of their listeners are in the lowest castes of Indian society.
2. Our English ministry's *Family Fire* staff have been producing materials for people who are experiencing pain and brokenness in their lives.
3. With the goal of teaching and encouraging Christ-followers to live out their faith, ReFrame also produces the *Think Christian* online blog and the *Groundwork* audio program, regularly offering discussions on issues related to biblical justice.

For example, in September 2020, *Groundwork* host and Calvin Theological Seminary professor Rev. Scott Hoezee shared the following on a *Groundwork* episode titled, “Answer God’s Call for Justice”: “COVID-19 has reminded us that society just isn’t fair. . . . Poorer people don’t have health maintenance organizations that they are part of, so when they get sick with COVID-19, they are much more likely to die of it. . . . Followers of Jesus should lament this; and although we might have different ideas on how to reform health care and the like, . . . we should say: Something has to be done.”

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

The core mission of ReFrame is gospel proclamation through a variety of media, sharing the gospel with people wherever they are in the world. ReFrame 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—including communities as far as Angola in southern Africa.
2. As our world moves toward using less and less paper, ReFrame 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: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

ReFrame offers a variety of programs and resources to help congregations and individuals work toward the milestones named in our denominational ministry plan, *Our Journey 2025*.

A. *Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline*

Our English ministry team has grown a network of more than 7,500 prayer partners in North America and throughout the world who pray for people responding to our media outreach programs. This number has been growing exponentially over the past few years, as has the number of prayer requests coming in to the ministry.

Our *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, are available in print, at TodayDevotional.com, by email subscription, on podcast websites, and through mobile applications. We print and distribute about 210,000 *Today* booklets six times each year, and more than 260,000 people have signed up to access the *Today* emails. In addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.

Groundwork is a 30-minute audio program and podcast that builds biblical foundations for life. *Groundwork* guides 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.

Think Christian is a collaborative online magazine that invites readers to practice seeing God in all things—particularly popular music, movies, television, and other forms of pop culture. 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.

Family Fire is an online community (through Facebook and the website FamilyFire.com) that provides resources to spiritually strengthen families through articles, devotions, email and social media interaction, and live retreat events.

B. *Listening to voices of every generation*

Kids Corner is a children's program especially geared toward children ages 6-12. This program has transitioned from a single audio program to a growing collection of online resources for children's spiritual growth that can be delivered across North America. *Kids Corner* launched a new website in 2020, making all 20 seasons of our 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. A video series called *Kids in Action* gives kids the opportunities to tell their own stories within the *Kids Corner* audience about how they are living out God's Word.

People of all ages respond to the messages in our *Today* devotions. A class of high school students responded to the December 2020 devotions, written by retired CRC pastor Rev. Arthur Schoonveld, with a photography project. The students read the devotions, looked for daily reminders of the topics in the messages, and snapped photos related to those topics. The students also wrote reflections about their discoveries.

C. *Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships*

ReFrame's 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 our connections with the various ministries in the CRCNA, ReFrame works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations

worldwide: the Reformed Church in America, the Reformed Church in Japan, the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico, the Indonesian Christian Church, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile. In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe, in Africa, and in India and surrounding countries—and with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

ReFrame Ministries has also partnered with the CRC's Korean Council since 2008 to publish a bilingual Korean-English version of the *Today* devotions.

D. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts

1. *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.

Church Juice offers virtual and in-person opportunities for church communicators to come together, learn, and encourage one another. 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.

2. ReFrame's English ministry produces ebooks as downloadable PDF files. Several are also available in print for group discussion or personal growth. Topics from the newest resources include "pop Psalms" (*Think Christian*), bullying (*Kids Corner*), "Blue Christmas" (*Today*), and "How Do I Pray?" (ReFrame's prayer ministry).
3. ReFrame's Japanese ministry team offers videos to churches that are part of the Reformed Church in Japan. These videos help to introduce the church to prospective visitors and seekers and offer a glimpse of what a Sunday is like in a typical church. In this way ReFrame helps to grow the global church in Japan using media resources.
4. ReFrame's Hindi ministry team supports the work of church planters in northern India. The team hosts radio-program listener gatherings and offers resources to communities of believers. These gatherings often take place at house churches that are growing into church plants.

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Kurt Selles, director of ReFrame Ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when ReFrame matters are discussed.

B. That synod encourage congregations to use ReFrame's materials to support their own local ministries and outreach.

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

ReFrame Ministries
Kurt Selles, director

Resonate Global Mission

I. Introduction

Gospel mission is essential. In a year that has been especially difficult—as churches have grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, political division, protests, and so much more—we are more confident than ever that gospel mission must remain a priority for the Christian Reformed Church.

We are grateful to you, the members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, for your continued support for ministry through the COVID-19 crisis. This year many ministries and missionaries needed extra support to transition to a new way of doing ministry remotely, and you were there to help. Thanks to you, missionaries, church planters, and other ministry leaders are able to respond and adapt.

Synod has mandated Resonate to lead the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world. Our key strategies of forming leaders, sending congregations, and connecting networks have proven to be resilient and effective in the face of this year's challenges. We are thankful to God and to you, our brothers and sisters who join us on mission, for what we've accomplished together: keeping mission workers safe, and keeping mission work going.

Resonate partners with you, your church, and Christians in more than forty countries who minister to people of different faiths and cultures. Thanks to your support, the good news of Jesus is going out like an expanding, amplifying sound around the world!

Here at home, we help our churches discover God's plan for their community and join in. Each congregation and each one of us has a role to play in God's mission, and Resonate wants to help you respond to God's call.

We do not yet know all that will happen in all the mission fields where your missionaries, church planters, campus ministers, and other mission workers are serving. But, together with you, we are committed to continuing our work as Resonate: to deepen your passion for mission, strengthen your capacity to follow God on mission, and amplify the impact you and your church have in your neighborhood and around the world.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Of the five ministry priorities in *Our Calling*, Resonate's main focus is *global mission*. In this regard, Resonate's growing impact on the Christian Reformed Church is most apparent in three strategic areas: forming leaders, sending congregations, and connecting networks.

These broad categories are essential to encompass the mission work of this denomination, work that spans the globe and carries forward more than a century of passion for God's mission. Here is how these three strategies help mobilize Christian Reformed churches to participate in God's mission and proclaim the gospel worldwide.

A. *Forming leaders*

Missional leaders live out, influence, invite, and equip others to join God's mission. Your partnership with Resonate is working to see an increasing number of Christians formed to engage and lead others on God's mission. Mission work using this strategy includes the following:

1. Campus ministry: Resonate engages universities and colleges in ministry on more than forty 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 opportunities in which leaders work alongside others in their communities—whether in North America or overseas.
3. Global mission education: Our staff members walk 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: A New Direction

Maura was an isolated teenager who didn't take faith seriously. But then she joined an IMPACT club facilitated by the Nehemiah Center, a Resonate Global Mission partner in Nicaragua, and her life took a new direction.

A Resonate initiative, IMPACT clubs equip and empower young people to be servant leaders in their communities. At each meeting, they play games, learn about faith, grow as a leader, and find creative solutions to challenges facing their communities. Any young person in elementary, middle, or high school can get involved.

At each IMPACT club meeting, leaders teach lessons from a biblical perspective. As weeks passed, Maura learned more about God and what it looks like to live like Christ. IMPACT leaders taught Maura how much God loves her; they encouraged her to think about the dreams God has given her for herself, her family, and her community; they inspired her to be a better person.

And one day, Maura realized she didn't want to live without God.

"I decided to accept Jesus as my Savior because I realized that, without God, I am nothing or no one," said Maura. "But in him I am sure. There is no one in the world who loves me more than him. He created me, gave me life, and sustains me . . . with him it is easier to face problems."

Maura is one of the twenty young people in Nicaragua who accepted Christ through an IMPACT club that you help to support through Resonate. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/maura.

B. Sending congregations

Jesus sends all of his followers into the world as his witnesses. Your partnership with Resonate is working to see an increasing number of diverse, locally rooted, and globally connected congregations and ministries sent to faithfully proclaim and live out the good news of Jesus. Mission work using this strategy includes the following:

1. Church planting: Starting new churches is a vital part of Resonate's ministry and is a priority for the CRCNA in the *Our Journey 2025* ministry plan. 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: Supporting Church Plants during the COVID-19 pandemic

When the coronavirus pandemic forced many churches throughout the world to take worship gatherings online, many church plants like Bridge Church—a new CRC plant in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta—didn't have the equipment. The unexpected shift to go online was not in the budget.

Trusting that they would be able to pay for equipment someday, somehow, Pastor Ryan Pedde and his team purchased a camera, audio gear, and a license for an online video platform.

Just a few days later, the church plant received an email from Resonate's church-planting team with a list of CRCNA resources available to help support church plants during the coronavirus pandemic—among that list was a "COVID-19 Support Grant" offering up to \$1,200 for equipment that would help keep church plants connected during the pandemic.

"Talk about a God thing!" said Pedde. "[Financial giving in our church plant] is uncertain, and to have this cost taken by Resonate is a big deal."

Cornerstone Church, a CRC plant in New York City, also applied for and received the COVID-19 Support Grant from Resonate.

"We moved everything online—prayer, Bible study, discipleship, community groups," said Pastor Brian Na. "We needed to buy a lot of tech equipment to accommodate that."

Cornerstone Church launched in January 2020, and many people who have been plugged into the church plant are new Christians or people who are interested in learning more about Christ. Na said that staying connected online is essential for their growth and understanding.

Na also said that the church plant's online ministry opens up new possibilities to connect with people in their community—especially during a time when many people are anxious, stressed, or lonely as they stay home and physically distance themselves from family, friends, and neighbors.

"This will help our church plant to spread the word in our communities that we are here and everyone can still be connected," said Na.

Bridge Church can already testify that technology has helped them reach more people. "We usually have 150 in attendance [on a Sunday

morning],” said Pedde. “Through live streaming, we had 1,800 people tune in last Sunday!”

Thank you for partnering with Resonate to support church plants during this challenging time! Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/tech-grants.

C. *Connecting networks*

As more people join God on mission, we want to see people working together for spiritual and social transformation in their neighborhoods and around the world. Your partnership with Resonate works to foster an increasing number of networks of leaders connected in relationships of mutual learning, trust, and influence. Mission work using this strategy includes the following:

1. Coaching leaders of holistic mission networks to help local churches come together and accomplish more than they could if working 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 people who have vital resources to offer, such as experience, coaching, and encouragement.

Example and Story: It Takes a Network to Feed a Neighborhood

Mission Montréal, a Resonate Global Mission partner, is meeting needs in the city during the coronavirus pandemic by packing and delivering food baskets—and it’s taking a network to make it possible. A collaborative effort of Resonate, Diaconal Ministries Canada, First CRC Montréal, Classis Eastern Canada, and Christian Direction, Mission Montréal is a network that brings together ministries, churches, nonprofits, and other organizations within the city.

When the coronavirus hit, universities in Montréal shut down and university students found themselves facing a lot of challenges—especially international students. Christians in the community were anxious to help with food security. Concordia Food Coalition at Concordia University was trying to help students but couldn’t do it alone. They contacted Mission Montréal.

“We started making food baskets for students,” said Jacynthe Vaillancourt, who leads campus ministry for Mission Montréal.

It would have been a daunting project for just one church or ministry—and that is why Resonate’s work developing holistic mission networks is so important. Because Mission Montréal is a network of people and organizations working together, they are able to meet more needs in the community and to reach more people.

Working with nonprofits, churches, and campus ministries, Mission Montréal has been able to provide about 300 food baskets each week packed with fruits, vegetables, grains, tomato sauce, pasta, and eggs.

Thank you for supporting Resonate partners like Mission Montréal! As individuals, nonprofits, churches, and other ministries work together, we're able to do more for God's kingdom—in this case, by providing food for students, families, and individuals who were in need. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/montreal.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

Resonate is an extension of your local church, and we exist to serve you and walk with you as you join God's mission in your own neighborhood and around the world.

Our Christian Reformed congregations are our most important ministry partners. Alongside the updated *Our Journey 2025* ministry plan for the denomination, Resonate has resolved to prioritize four main ministry areas that fit in and help champion mission work among our churches.

One of the most significant areas Resonate can help CRC congregations in mission is in the area of diaspora ministry and ministry with ethnic minorities. Our churches and society are struggling now with critical issues of diversity and justice. However, CRC churches have opportunities to share the life-giving gospel of Christ with people in their communities who may look, speak, and act differently. God's vision for his church is a unified body of people "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev. 7:9). Churches young and old throughout North America are working to be the hands and feet of Christ and to spread the gospel, and Resonate is committed to walking alongside on this journey of mission.

Following are the four areas Resonate will walk alongside your church as they minister with different groups of people.

A. Develop young adults and lay leaders for mission

We will open space for diverse groups of young adults and lay leaders, equipping, mentoring and discipling them so that together we may share the good news and live out the gospel in all areas of life.

Example and Story: Equipping Students to Share Their Faith

"I've learned a lot this year about being a Christian on a university campus where most of my friends don't believe in God," said Tian, a student at the University of Alberta. With your support, Tian stepped up as a strong Christian leader on her campus.

Tian grew up surrounded by a community of strong, supportive believers. For that, she is thankful—but when she got to university, her faith was challenged. Most of her classmates and friends were not religious.

"I suddenly became shy about expressing my faith or even talking about religion at all, even if people asked. I just didn't know what to say, and I didn't want people to judge me for it," said Tian.

But then Tian met Rick Mast, your partner campus minister at the University of Alberta.

Twice a week, Rick set up a table in the residence hall where Tian lived and chatted with students who passed by. Sometimes they would talk for hours.

Noticing Tian's passion for faith and her gift for connecting with people, Rick encouraged Tian to step into campus ministry leadership.

You helped make that possible through a Resonate Emerging Leader grant. Mentored by Rick throughout the year, the leadership experience empowered Tian to use her gifts to help shape the campus ministry and minister with students.

“Tian has been a gift from God,” said Rick. “She is devout [and] is continually interested in deepening her faith.”

Tian said she learned a lot about living out her faith and sharing it with others.

“University was the first time I’ve ever been around people where it’s not ‘normal’ or accepted to believe in God—or any god, for that matter! Especially among people my age, religion or spirituality just isn’t something people want to talk about or discuss, to the point that it’s a little taboo,” said Tian. “But I really think that’s a sad thing, so it’s important for me to have the words and space to talk about faith for anyone who’ll listen, as well as hear what they have to say.”

Thank you for supporting campus ministry and raising up student leaders like Tian! Your support provides a space where students can ask tough questions, grow in faith, and step into leadership. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/tian.

B. Plant churches that participate in broader church-planting movements

We will catalyze the planting of diverse churches locally and globally that seek spiritual and social transformation in their communities.

Example and Story

Carrie Rodgers didn’t think she had the skills to plant Alive in Grandville, a Resonate church plant in Michigan, and Allix Hutchison wasn’t sure how to step up and serve—but God equipped both of them to be leaders that the new church plant needs.

When Carrie began working at Alive Ministries in 2012, church planting wasn’t on her radar. As her role in leading the student ministry program shifted over time, the church staff encouraged her to consider planting a new church.

Carrie was surprised by their recommendation, but she was also prepared to take the first steps of the church planting journey. She had some people in mind to ask to join her. One of them was Allix, whom Carrie got to know through Alive and through a book club.

After graduating college and moving to Hudsonville in 2017 to begin her teaching career, Allix had a difficult time finding the right church where she could grow in her faith and serve at her fullest potential—something she had struggled with for years.

Carrie invited Allix to join her for coffee. As they sat in their favorite coffee shop and sipped their drinks, Carrie told Allix she was going to plant a church, and she asked Allix to join the planting team.

“It takes everybody, and everybody has something to offer,” said Carrie. “You don’t have to be the person that writes the big checks . . . you can be the person that says, ‘I have time and some skills to give, and my heart is in this.’”

Now, not only does Allix provide great administrative support for the church, but she’s also a great example of a young leader. Other young

adults at Alive in Grandville are now following her example and offering to serve.

Please pray for the work that God is doing through Resonate's church plants, and pray that more people like Allix will be empowered by the Spirit to become leaders in their churches. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/alive.

C. Equip and encourage congregations in gospel witness

We will challenge, encourage, and equip communities of disciples locally and globally to discern the Holy Spirit's work in their neighborhoods and boldly follow the Spirit into relationships that concretely demonstrate the love of Christ and grow the church.

Example and Story: Iowa Church Follows God to Laos

Nearly 40 years ago, Faith CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, welcomed a refugee family from Laos. After more than a decade, the newcomers—Khay Baccam and his family—became Christians, and Baccam became a church planter among communities of people from Laos in the United States. But as years passed, Baccam also felt the Holy Spirit tugging on his heart for his home country.

Thankfully, Faith CRC belongs to a denomination of churches who are passionate about mission. Ministry opportunities like their partnership in Laos are the reason the CRC formed and supports Resonate Global Mission—to equip churches in Canada and the United States for mission in both their own neighborhoods and around the world. Faith CRC connected with Resonate (then Christian Reformed World Missions) for guidance.

"The church is to be engaged in the mission of God. Resonate equips the church," said Joyce Suh, Resonate's Regional Mission Leader for South and Southeast Asia. Missionaries like Suh, who have served in Southeast Asia, have knowledge and experience in mission. Resonate missionaries have been able to help Faith CRC's Laos Committee take strategic, practical steps forward from the very beginning.

When Faith CRC first started their ministry in Laos, they traveled with a Resonate missionary to the country and met with church leaders. Faith CRC, Resonate, and church leaders of Laos discerned that the church needed leadership training and launched a ministry partnership.

But Faith CRC's partnership with the church in Laos didn't stop there. God has opened up many opportunities for ministry. Together, Faith CRC and their Lao partners have distributed wheelchairs. They've trained soccer coaches to share their faith with children and teenagers. They dismantled grain bins that once stood in Iowa's fields and rebuilt them in Laos's fields. Through all of these efforts, Laotian believers have been able to connect with more people and share with them the hope found in Christ.

Gord Blom, a member of Faith CRC, said his church has not only seen growth in the church in Laos but has witnessed growth in members of their own congregation who are committed to this partnership.

"[Suh] was a great help in focusing our thoughts on the future," said Blom. "The weekend [Suh] was there, three names popped up that I think are really good candidates for the next generation." Suh said that

Resonate is also committed to working with Faith CRC in their partnership in Laos. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/laos.

D. Minister with diaspora communities

We will mobilize believers inside and outside communities of immigrants, migrants, refugees, and international students in a way that welcomes and embraces them, communicates God's love, and calls them to faith in Christ.

Example and Story: Immigrant Congregations around the World

Iglesia Cristiana El Sembrador

Pastor Harold Caicedo and Iglesia Cristiana El Sembrador in California have a mission to build unity in the body of Christ. Their diverse church is made up of people from fourteen countries across Latin America, working together to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their community.

In addition to spreading the Word of God, this congregation meets the needs of their community in other ways. They serve through helping people navigate the immigration process, assisting people with economic problems, and being a faithful presence in a community healing from drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and violence.

A Ministry among Muslims

More than 11,000 Muslims from all over the world have made their homes in West Michigan, including Bosnians, Arabs, Somalis, and many others who are in need of Jesus Christ. A Resonate partner ministry that you support reaches out to African Muslims—they believe God has brought them here for a purpose.

Many of these people are refugees, people who are running from suffering, persecution, or hardship. Your Resonate partner ministry leader has a vision to bring Muslims into fellowship with Christ—to show them the way to faith in the one true God. Already, more than 60 new believers have left Islam and come to faith in Jesus Christ through this church plant!

Berliner Stadtmission

Resonate missionaries David Kromminga and Mary Buteyn are planting a new church directed toward recent immigrants to Berlin. God has already provided them with team members, a mentor, and potential congregants—and, of course, plenty of challenges.

More than a million refugees have crossed Germany's borders in the past year, with tens of thousands settling in Berlin. They are often fleeing repressive societies and war-torn countries. "As people from different nations come together, by his Spirit and sometimes in the strangest ways, God is drawing all sorts of people to himself, adding to Christ's church and building his kingdom," said David. Read more at resonateglobalmission.org/diaspora.

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.

Notes:

1. 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.
2. Resonate Global Mission and ReFrame Ministries have worked to prepare and submit a comprehensive evaluation of the Global Mission ministry priority that is part of Our Calling. See the evaluation report in the Council of Delegates report for an overview of ministry results since 2017 and key growth areas identified by both agencies.

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, responding to proposed Medical Assistance in Dying legislation in 2020.

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 Day of Justice (August), and provide devotional resources in connection with our Lenten challenge and offering Sunday. This past 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). Through our *Do Justice* columnists initiative, CRC and RCA writers from across North America have regularly shared the ways they are wrestling with the call to do justice in their own local contexts. Our thirteen regular columnists (including six persons 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 past year have included international students, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and not growing weary in doing justice.
3. Working closely with the Canadian Ministries justice mobilizer, Cindy Stover, to develop and animate learning opportunities on justice and reconciliation. During the pandemic, these opportunities have pivoted to virtual learning sessions, including online advocacy webinars and recorded video presentations, as well as longer-term engagement projects such as a weeklong Youth Ambassadors of Reconciliation online journey and an eight-month Hearts Exchanged reconciliation-focused community of practice.

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. Programmatically this became manifest in our responses to COVID-19, including reflections on Romans 13 in video and in written format.

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, Ontario, 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, the Canadian Council of Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, KAIROS, and Citizens for Public Justice. This year we encouraged and supported church members on a number of significant advocacy issues including the support and welcome of refugees through the Continuing Welcome campaign. 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. This has included requests for information on Israel/Palestine, religious freedom, medical assistance in dying, and more.
3. Working with CRCNA partners to bring justice-themed learning experiences to churches. We have worked with World Renew and refugee service providers to refresh our *World Refugee Day Toolkit*, with particular emphasis on supporting refugees during the pandemic. *Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy* is a practical citizen planning and action tool that is being relaunched with updated materials in Canada and newly launched in the United States in partnership with the Office of Social Justice. In addition, the Hearts Exchanged program launched in two pilot locations in the eastern and western regions of Canada with a focus on supporting congregants in their reconciliation journeys. Planning beyond these pilot cohorts will see Hearts Exchanged expand to all classes/regions in Canada in 2021.
4. In light of the fifth anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, we continue to connect with churches through our Education Together campaign. We build on churches' understanding of the importance of community involvement in education, and we advocate with them to support this essential right for Indigenous youth.
5. We worked closely with the Indigenous Settler Working Group of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada to produce *Stewarding Sacred Seeds*—a reflection on evangelical action for reconciliation since 1995 that includes

exciting new commitments to action and relationships between Indigenous Christians and evangelicals.

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 2025* (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 partnering on the second season of the *Do Justice* podcast and a new Instagram channel.

B. Assisting churches within their local contexts

We regularly connect with churches across the country to help them seek justice. We were able to convert many of our learning events and coaching sessions into virtual opportunities. In 2020 we adapted to offer three Faith in Action Advocacy webinars; two Justice 101 workshops; multiple video conferences on racial reconciliation, refugee justice, and Centre for Public Dialogue priorities; and an online Blanket Exercise workshop. We supported our Climate Witness Project partners in their binational screening of the film *The Story of Plastic* and subsequent regional Zoom discussions. We connected with the Northern Caucus of Classis B.C. North-West to support their discussions on tensions related to the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline running through Wet'suwet'en territories.

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 2021, DC had two employees totaling 0.8 FTE: a part-time director, Mark Stephenson, who works in West Michigan, and a 30-hour-per week volunteer and communications specialist, Becky Jones, who shares her time between Disability Concerns and Safe Church Ministries (20 hours / 10 hours) and works from Burlington, Ontario.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Although our work is reflected in all five of the CRC’s ministries priorities (Our Calling), we give primary focus to the Mercy and Justice area.

A. Faith formation

We work on 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. Even though Friendship is a separate ministry from the CRC, DC's director, Mark Stephenson, served on the Friendship Ministries board and executive committee from 2014 through 2020. DC promotes the sales of Friendship Ministries materials and encourages the formation of Friendship groups. In 2018, Disability Concerns began working closely with Faith Formation Ministry in assisting churches in their ministry with adults in their "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*. We pray 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 church and regional 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 2021, 399 church disability advocates and 31 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 2020 over 147 church and regional advocates as well as many others from across North America participated in online training events that DC sponsored. 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.

DC volunteers and staff help to equip church leaders by doing webinars and other training events online 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 Disability Concerns newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, and the DC Network blog both received second-place awards from the Associated Church Press.

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 which 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, 311 CRC congregations (30%) worship in barrier-free facilities, and another 634 (62%) have partially accessible facilities; so a total of 92 percent of CRC church buildings are fully or partially accessible. In addition, 578 churches (56%) have barrier-free sound, and 480 (47%) have barrier-free books/materials in print. Further, 554 churches (54%) offer transportation for people who cannot drive themselves, and 38 percent of congregations have adopted a church policy on disability. As well, in *Breaking Barriers*, on our Network pages and social media, 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 annually review and update our Memorandum of Understanding, and we have met with the new Church with Community Coordinator in the United States, Jodi Koeman. Working together to equip deacons, communities, and churches can be enriched and strengthened by engaging with people who have disabilities and so that churches can provide for the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being of persons and families with disabilities.

Our director serves as 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. This connection allows us better to understand the needs within churches and ensure that DC is offering resources to support them. For example, noting the dramatic increase in anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic, Disability Concerns highlighted our resource for small groups, *Let's Talk! Breaking the Silence around Mental Illness in Our Communities of Faith*, developed over 10 years ago, and this resulted in nearly double the unique pageviews this resource received in 2020 as compared to 2019.

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.

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

Many RCA and CRC regional advocates, church advocates, and members of CRC RCA DC Advisory Team wrote brief devotions for a Lenten series

that the RCA organizes each year. These devotions give visibility to RCA and CRC advocates and to the work of DC.

Synod has asked CRC congregations to celebrate Disability Week each year (this year: Oct. 10- through 17), to raise awareness about the gifts and needs of congregation and community members who have disabilities. DC provides worship leaders with a variety of online resources including litanies, prayers, and sermons. 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 2025* (the Ministry Plan)

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

See section II, A above for more information about how DC cultivates practices of prayer and spiritual discipline.

B. Listening to voices of every generation

DC provides a variety of resources for congregations to engage children and young people with disabilities in all of congregational life.

C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships

In the Reformed understanding of vocation, God calls all of his people to serve in God's 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. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts

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 much better equipped to connect with members of their community, 15 to 20 percent of whom live with disabilities.

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)

This past year has been an extremely challenging one for our Indigenous Ministry as it relates to the work happening at our Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres in Edmonton, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Winnipeg, Manitoba. All the staff were turned into “frontline workers” because of the COVID-19 pandemic. And as was the case in other kinds of work, the pandemic acted as a catalyzer for both the challenges and blessings of the work. Their work highlighted the fact that communities need the heart and hands of Jesus in their midst. Before reading the rest of this report, you will be well served to watch the short video at youtube.com/watch?v=kjDti3TE1g&feature=youtu.be about the work at the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg. It shows the impact of the work and the collective value of the congregations of the CRCNA through ministry shares. This is your ministry!

In the past few years, the work of our Indigenous Ministry entities in Canada have been walking an increasingly intentional journey of reconciliation due to the sharpened focus across the country in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3). Through ministries of compassionate community, awareness raising, and advocacy, ministry with Indigenous persons in Canada and the connection to local churches continue to grow increasingly faithful and strong. These efforts have included collaboration with both the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee (CIMC) (crcna.org/indigenous/canadian). A thoughtful review and evaluation process throughout 2018-2019 contributed to this maturation among our Indigenous ministry efforts. CIMC follows 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.

The Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton—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 as an ecumenical partnership. Ministry participants value the dignity and respect the experience as they attend and participate in the programs and community activities.

The ministry of Indigenous Christian Fellowship (ICF) continues in Regina, which has the highest proportion of Indigenous peoples within its province (Saskatchewan) and the highest number of residential school survivors. The city is also home 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.

These past years have seen an increasing amount of violence in the ministry’s neighborhood. Deaths in Regina have occurred within a city block of ICF’s front doors. ICF seems like a bubble of peace and sanctuary within what too often can feel like the 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 the 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 Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee consists of key volunteers, the directors of the Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres, and other ecumenical partners (RCA and PCC) who continue to urge churches to grow in structuring their ministry toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. CIMC also works on educating churches about colonialism and its negative influences on Indigenous people and how both the church and Indigenous peoples need reconciliation with one another.

Resources, studies, and other tools are increasingly available. The key hope would be for all churches to access the plethora of tools and resources available as reconciliation becomes a stronger theme in our churches—not just reconciliation with God through Christ but also with people in Canada. Given the history of the church in Canada, the process of reconciliation with our Indigenous peoples is an important part of the way the Canadian CRC has made real the 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 people 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 Indigenous 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) 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.)

Office of Race Relations

I. Introduction

Two events in 2020 had a dramatic effect on the work of Race Relations. The global pandemic required us to pivot from our usual practice of face-to-face workshops and consultations to virtual events. The death of George Floyd at the knee of a police officer and several other prominent deaths heightened awareness of racism in North America, in our denomination, and around the world. We are grateful for the increased awareness about racism, and we have received many requests from churches for resources for study and action, which we have made available through the years on our website at crcna.org/race. However, a sad truth is that this increased awareness has been among white people, because people of color must live with awareness of race and racism all the time, and the graphic images of seeing black persons die at the hands of white people has caused great pain and anger among all peoples of color.

We continue to serve CRC congregations, classes, agencies, institutions, the Council of Delegates, and synod in embracing and living out our identity as God's diverse and unified family. We seek opportunities to engage church and denominational leadership and to field inquiries for collaborative learning programs and organizing actions that

- imagine true biblical reconciliation as a diverse and unified people of God.
- mobilize congregants and staff members to help lead them into greater awareness of racialized injustice.
- engage them to stand against racism in their personal lives.
- work to dismantle racism in all its forms.

II. Mandate

CRC Race Relations will initiate and provide effective and collaborative training, programs, and organizing actions in ways that mobilize Christian Reformed agencies and educational institutions, as well as classes and congregations, to recognize, expose, and dismantle racism in all its forms and to experience true biblical reconciliation as a diverse and unified people of God.

III. Connecting with churches and aligning with Our Calling

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.

A. Faith formation

We have several workshops: Racism: Looking Back, Moving Forward (U.S.), The Act of Re-membering (Canada), and Churches between Borders, Cultural Intelligence, and the Ideology of Whiteness. In partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the CRC Office of Social Justice, we have also conducted the Blanket Exercise throughout the year. First developed in Canada and contextualized for use in the United States, the Blanket Exercise

is an interactive telling of the shared history of Indigenous peoples. This perspective is rarely heard and speaks to the profound urgency of reconciliation.

B. Servant leadership

In the past year we helped to support servant leadership in the following ways:

- consulting with classes Arizona, California South, Columbia, Greater Los Angeles, Grand Rapids North, Red Mesa, and Southeast U.S. on leadership development, minority candidate assessments, strategic planning, and antiracism
- coaching Consejo Latino on multiethnic leadership development
- entering into a consultation process on antiracism with the Council of Delegates
- entering into consultations with Pastor Church Resources to help staff assess their awareness of systemic racism, develop cross-cultural competence, and generate an equal connection with pastors and church leaders from all the ethnicities in the CRCNA
- mentoring an intern from Calvin University, Pisudtiporn (Paula) Tang-sirisatian, during the summer
- maintaining close contact with Race Relations facilitators during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in New Mexico as they serve on reservations where illness and deaths due to COVID-19 have been severe
- collaborating with the CRC staff group Hungry for Racial Justice and with CRC Human Resources to ensure greater equity in our personnel policies

C. Global mission

In support of global mission, we sponsored eight students from several countries with our Race Relations scholarships toward their education at CRC-endorsed institutions. More information is available at bit.ly/rrscholarships.

D. Mercy and justice

In 2020 we accomplished the following in mercy and justice efforts:

- cowrote the denominational “Statement about the Deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor” in early June, which included many suggested antiracism resources for churches
- consulted with 25 churches and seven classes on resources for education and dismantling racism
- adapted Race Relations workshops to be available online
- led racial reconciliation workshops, training sessions, and book and movie discussions with congregational groups at Covenant Life CRC (Grand Haven, Mich.); Southwest Chicago Christian Schools; and Faith CRC in New Brighton, Minn. Workshops included Cultural Intelligence and Racism: Looking Back-Moving Forward.
- maintained active social media presence online with articles and other educational materials
- in the fall, initiated a series of online conversations on race and racism called Race Relations Roundtables. The first two—Addressing Native

American Issues as a Non-Native and Post-election Outlook for Antiracism Efforts—were attended by 49 people each; and the third—Talk Is Cheap, Antiracism Is Work, co-sponsored with the Office of Social Justice—had 175 participants.

- posted online a new, asynchronous workshop, the Ideology of Whiteness
- began hosting “Living Room Conversations” in October to provide CRC staff with a place for dialogue
- published the Race Relations quarterly newsletter with articles that challenge the present situation in North America and the church, including reading recommendations and events. In 2020 we began offering most articles in English and Spanish. Subscribers to our newsletter increased by 47 percent from May 2020 to January 2021.

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

- cosponsored the 2020 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration, attended by more than 900 people, in January 2020 in Grand Rapids, Mich.
- with Antioch Podcast, Calvin University, ReFrame Ministries, and World Renew, sponsored the Stand against Racism virtual event in April, attended by 112 people
- provided bulletin inserts and covers for All Nations Heritage celebrations, held the first Sunday in October

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.

The ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. Race Relations is committed to its statement of vision and its mandate to make the CRCNA a truly diverse and unified family of God. We continue to attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry 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 (crcna.org/race), Facebook page (facebook.com/crcracrelations), and social platforms Twitter (@[crcnaORR](https://twitter.com/crcnaORR)) and Instagram (instagram.com/racerelations).

Office of Race Relations
Mark Stephenson, interim director

Safe Church Ministry

I. Introduction

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness prevention and response, to help build communities where each person, made in the image of God, is respected and honored, 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 calling to do justice and to love mercy as a core part of our identity. Each congregation and person is affected by abuse, some to a staggering degree, and what happens to one part of the body of Christ inflicts harm to us all. Preventing and responding to abuse is at the heart of our call to follow Jesus in all we do. Safe Church is focused on meeting each congregation and classis where they are to take practical steps forward not only to develop policies to prevent abuse and respond justly to abuse but also to help them create cultures and systems that can identify abuse of all kinds in order to live out our calling as the church of Christ, who brings the fullness of the kingdom in our midst.

B. *Leadership development*

Safe Church invests in volunteer and paid leaders at all levels of ministry across the United States and Canada, working with denominational and classical leadership to increase our collective understanding of abuse of power in our systems, and more particularly with the safe church coordinators of classes that in turn equip and empower their safe church teams to empower congregations, pastors, and ministry leaders. We work with our coordinators to build networks of support and encouragement through equipping and coaching and by connecting people with effective resources.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025 (Ministry Plan)*

Safe Church Ministry is not just about having a policy. It is a way of being the church. It is our goal to work together to systematically prevent abuse and equip congregations and classes to create cultures—as the church—that use power to reflect the shalom of our triune God. A key measurement of this goal is to keep track of and report on the status of safe church teams in congregations and classes throughout the CRCNA, as directed by Synod 2018. The data below are based on the responses of 718 congregations to the annual *Yearbook* survey in 2020 (850 responded in 2019; 760 responded in 2018).

- 614 churches (85.5%) have a written safe church or abuse prevention policy (84% reported in 2019; 86% in 2018).
- 213 churches (29.7%) require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position (24% in 2019; 16% in 2018).
- 111 churches (15.5%) use a prevention program, such as Circle of Grace, with children and youth (12% in 2019; 7% in 2018).

- 420 churches (58.5%) have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct (47% in 2019; 36% in 2018).
- 292 churches (40.7%) have a safe church team or committee (35% in 2019; 28% in 2018).

Synod 2018 also requested annual reporting on the number of classes that have safe church teams. According to data received from the *Year-book* questionnaire and input from our coordinators, we can report the following:

- Twenty classes have a functioning safe church team that is equipping congregations in their classis.
 - Nine of 11 Canadian classes have teams
 - Only 8 of 38 United States classes have teams; by region there are
 - 0 of 4 in USA East.
 - 4 of 12 in Great Lakes.
 - 2 of 10 in USA Central.
 - 2 of 12 in USA West.
- Fifteen of the 29 classes that do not have a safe church team do have a safe church coordinator who is trying to create a safe church team; however, many have faced challenges or may not have the support from classes or congregations to create a thriving team.
- Fourteen classes do not appear to have either a coordinator or a safe church team.

Following are lists of the classes that have or do not have a safe church team:

- Classes that have a safe church team:

Alberta North	Huron
B.C. North-West	Iakota
B.C. South-East	Illiana
Chatham	Kalamazoo
Chicago South	Muskegon
Eastern Canada	Niagara
Georgetown	Northern Michigan
Grand Rapids North	Pacific Northwest
Hamilton	Rocky Mountain
Heartland	Toronto

- Classes that do not have a safe church team but do have a coordinator trying to start a team:

Arizona	Holland
California South	Hudson
Central Plains	Minnkota
Columbia	Northern Illinois
Grand Rapids South	Quinte
Grandville	Yellowstone
Greater Los Angeles	Zeeland
Hackensack	

– Classes that do not have a safe church team or coordinator:

Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Lake Superior
Atlantic Northeast	Northcentral Iowa
Central California	Northern Cascades
Grand Rapids East	Red Mesa
Hanmi	Southeast U.S.
Ko-Am	Thornapple Valley
Lake Erie	Wisconsin

Synod 2019 adopted directives at all levels in the denomination in response to a committee report on the abuse of power. Staff member Eric Kas represented Safe Church Ministry on this committee, which has completed its work in developing a proposed Code of Conduct and a pilot version of an Abuse of Power Training module, mandated as training for all 2021 candidates for minister of the Word. In addition, progress has been made in several committees assigned with addressing other adopted directives from the Addressing Abuse of Power Task Force report to Synod 2019. The committees will report to synod through the Council of Delegates.

In 2020, Safe Church consulted in 38 separate situations involving abuse. In addition, we sponsored various safe-church related initiatives through our mini-grant program. Safe Church continues to add and update resources for churches on its website and on the Network, including our 2020 webinar series titled “Connect, Collaborate, and Coordinate to End Abuse”; the webinars featured conversations with accomplished authors and experts, including Diane Langberg, Chuck DeGroat, Jay Stringer, Ruth Everhart, and Boz Tchividjian along with several safe church leaders and survivors of abuse. 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 three employees: a full-time director, Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen, who began her work at the end of January 2021 and did not participate in writing this report; a full-time (increased from part-time) ministry consultant, Eric Kas; and a volunteer and communications specialist, Becky Jones, who works ten hours per week for Safe Church and twenty hours per week for Disability Concerns. Safe Church has additional administrative support from staff shared with other justice ministries as well. Staff time has increased to meet demands of the adopted directives related to abuse of power and of renewed efforts in catalyzing restorative practices throughout the CRC. We are thankful for every effort made in leading the church to prevent abuse in all of our congregations.

Safe Church Ministry
Eric Kas, ministry consultant

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 those 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, 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 continued this year in its work of assisting OSJ 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). Mark Stephenson began serving as interim director of OSJ and of Race Relations in February 2020 and continues to serve as director of Disability Concerns.

II. Reflecting on our Calling

A. Our main focus in terms of the CRCNA’s ministry priorities is *mercy and justice*; 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—pressing for political action on the laws, policies, and systems that contribute to injustice, hunger, and poverty—is one of the spectrum of 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, blog posts on *DoJustice* (dojustice.crcna.org), action alerts, and congregational workshops and learning opportunities that focus on the role of policy-making in eliminating hunger’s root causes.
- In response to the variety of vulnerabilities made abundantly evident by the COVID-19 pandemic, we released an action alert called “Hear

Us Out” in partnership with World Renew, Disability Concerns, and Safe Church Ministry. This provided an opportunity to raise up the needs of a variety of groups during the early stages of the pandemic.

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 125 churches are Climate Witness Partner churches.
- CRC members in both the U.S. and Canada contacted their representatives over 228 times to urge strong action on climate change, as a matter of creational stewardship and love for our neighbors.
- Almost 400 people registered for movie screenings across North America as part of the Climate Witness Project’s *The Story of Plastic* series. Participants were invited to watch a free screening of the film *The Story of Plastic* and then sign up for one of six discussion groups facilitated by regional organizers. Organizers are located across North America and, as a result, discussions were hosted in Mountain, Central, and Eastern time zones.
- During Lent, the Climate Witness Project hosted a conversation with author Gayle Boss about her book *Wild Hope*. People tuned in to the conversation and then participated in a challenge to read the book and reduce single-use plastics in their homes.

3. Immigration and refugees

- In 2020 more than 80 congregations across the U.S. were represented in partnering with OSJ to educate and equip their communities to engage in immigration and refugee justice. Twelve Christian schools and universities across the United States invited us to facilitate immigration workshops for their students.
- In January 2020 we partnered with Calvin University’s January Series to encourage advocacy for immigrant justice when author Karen Gonzalez spoke (livestream.com/calvin-university/tjsaudio/videos/201263291) on her book, *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*. We added her book to our website (justice.crcna.org/immigration-resources) as a recommended read, and CRC members in Pella, Iowa, did a book study on it in fall 2020.
- CRC members responded enthusiastically to action alerts in support of refugees and immigrants, with more than 10,099 online advocacy actions taken by people in both the U.S. and Canada. CRC advocates in California, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan shared their faith voice for refugee and asylum-seeker justice with their members of Congress through virtual legislative meetings in July and September.
- In the U.S. we partnered with World Renew to equip six immigration mobilizers who supported churches in their regions (California, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan) to love and advocate with their immigrant neighbors. Through their leadership, CRC members

across the country participated in congressional meetings, book studies, lectures and panel discussions, virtual workshops, and relationship building with immigrant neighbors. A highlight was a series of discussions led by mobilizer Jason Lief at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, about a biblical perspective on immigration and advocacy.

- Based on the OSJ’s “Immigration Is Our Story” audio series, which shared the immigration stories of CRC and RCA members through recorded interviews, OSJ and Faith Formation Ministries partnered to create the Immigration Is Our Story workshop. This workshop is intended to create a space for congregants to hear one another’s immigration stories and learn about immigration in the U.S. both yesterday and today.
- More than 2,600 subscribers from CRC and RCA congregations across the U.S. received our monthly Immigration newsletter in 2020, 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.
- In fall 2020 we relaunched our Immigrants Are a Blessing, Not a Burden (BNB) campaign to equip the CRC to learn and speak the truth about immigrants as imagebearers of God. We updated our BNB webpage and Facebook page, created new opportunities for engagement with the campaign, and worked with partner organizations to update and sell BNB swag.
- With the COVID-19 pandemic moving much of our lives online in 2020, we got creative with virtual immigration mobilizing. We launched a *Do Justice* series on international students’ navigation of the U.S. immigration system, cohosted a webinar on immigration and gender-based violence, and facilitated a virtual Church Between Borders workshop series for CRC members across multiple time zones.
- In Canada we participated in a Citizens for Public Justice Conference in Ottawa (before the pandemic) to share the *Journey with Me* refugee-welcome workshop with participants from dozens of area churches. Once we began pivoting our resources online due to the pandemic, we offered a six-session video series for World Refugee Day, viewed over 500 times online. We also organized a Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy webinar, helping CRC church members write advocacy letters supporting refugee claimants.

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 by 322 churches.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about ending abortion and supporting people vulnerable to abortion via social media.

5. Religious persecution

- We made available materials for International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, which focused on the plight of Chinese Christians.
- We shared regular posts and discussion about persecuted Christians and other religious minorities via social media.
- We encouraged church members to remain hopeful “when the arc, bending toward justice, feels too long” through a blog series called “Growing Weary of Doing Good.” Part of this series addressed peace in the Middle East.

6. Restorative justice

- We shared regular posts and discussion about mass incarceration, criminal justice reform, and restorative practices via social media.
- OSJ partnered with Prison Fellowship in collecting faith leader signatures for a letter to the Michigan Legislature urging them to consider guiding biblical principles as they work to reform the criminal justice system in the state.

B. *OSJ contributes to the other CRC ministry priorities*

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, 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. In addition, 36 percent of our *Do Justice* podcast listeners are under age 27.

We partnered with the CRC Office of Race Relations, World Renew, Faith Formation Ministries, and Calvin Theological Seminary to offer and sponsor a reduced cost of attendance for Ecumenical Advocacy Days. The partnership recruited over fifteen young adults from six CRC churches to prepare and attend the conference. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic this event became a virtual conference, but participants still developed further understanding on what faithful ecumenical advocacy entails.

Our regular e-newsletter, *OSJ News*, has a subscription list of over 7,000 people and continues to grow. In it, we offer ways to integrate justice and advocacy into the faith commitments of Christians—from worship and prayer to advocacy and education.

This year we launched the *Do Justice* podcast! This podcast is intended as a conversation starter for people wishing to pursue justice in and through the Christian church. Together we are finding new ideas and perspectives, sharing better ways to engage in justice work, remembering our motivation, and growing in our faith.

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 thirteen regular columnists, six are people of color. Overall, 37.3 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. In addition, free energy audits and assessments were made available to churches.

3. Global mission

In partnership with World Renew, the Office of Social Justice offered a Bible study titled *Bangladesh: The Canary in the Coal Mine*. This study is designed to help congregations understand the global perspective on climate change and the connections between the climate crisis and international aid work.

This year Resonate Global Mission joined us as a partnering contributor to our Advent devotional series, in addition to our ongoing partnership with World Renew.

We offered a six-video series for World Refugee Day, viewed over 500 times online. Two of these videos focused on the global impact of COVID-19 on refugees.

4. Gospel proclamation and worship

Our Advent devotional series continues to be our most widely read and shared publication this year, with over 4,000 subscribers.

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 3,300 people and are viewed on the web by scores more.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025 (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 nearly twenty Church between Borders workshops to 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. Due to the limitations of the pandemic, many of these

workshops were moved to a virtual setting and were thus made accessible to many congregations across the country at once.

- Our Climate Witness Project, conducted in partnership with World Renew, worked with more than 300 congregational members in more than 40 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 was adapted to a webinar format and engaged members of over ten CRC churches and campus ministries during the pandemic. Due to the success of this adaptation, the workshop is being updated and relaunched in both Canada and the U.S. in 2021.
- We also provide focused training and leadership development through the Blanket Exercise, Biblical 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 in spite of challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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
Mark Stephenson, interim 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). And 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 58 years World Renew has fulfilled this 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 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 where it is most needed.

B. *Mission and ministry*

In 2020, God accomplished more through World Renew than we could possibly have imagined. As the COVID-19 pandemic changed our families, homes, and work lives, God gave us the means to quickly change the way we work. As we adapted to the changes demanded by the pandemic, we witnessed how during the most difficult times our hope in God does not disappoint us (Rom. 5:5). Through God’s grace, in most areas where we work, World Renew was able to continue to provide support and counseling to vulnerable communities and help them to recognize and utilize their natural God-given resources to move forward with hope. We give glory to God for providing enlightenment so that communities can see that through him, all things are possible.

With your prayers, involvement, and support World Renew was able to partner globally with 76 Christian churches and outreach partners, for a total of 1,414,026 participants in 35 countries who changed their stories to include newfound strength and hope. We give glory to God for these transformations.

Through community development programs in 1,254 communities, World Renew reached 274,495 participants in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, community health, and peace and justice. These people were able to build on health, agriculture, livelihood, and leadership skills that will serve to improve their lives for the long term. Additionally, 1,139,531 survivors of violence, drought, flooding, storm, and COVID-19 benefited from World Renew’s disaster response programs in 2020.

When COVID-19 lockdowns began in March 2020, World Renew was uniquely positioned, because of our on-ground partners and strong relationships with community leaders, to assist families who were already living in extreme poverty. The pandemic brought more hunger and hopelessness as jobs dried up, income stopped, and food became scarce. But our God is loving and merciful, and his love was reflected in the generosity of our supporters, whose gifts made it possible for World Renew to quickly pivot to provide the most vulnerable families with food and water, virus-prevention

education, masks, soap, sanitizer, and much more. World Renew is grateful to God for putting us in a position where we could share the love and hope of Jesus Christ with his people.

In an immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic, donor gifts to World Renew amounting to \$454,045 (USD), through the *Moment of Hope* campaign, touched 1.2 million lives. World Renew was able to equip communities, partners, and staff with personal protection equipment (PPE) and emergency food throughout Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, as well as to assist the Navajo Nation in the U.S. and Christian Reformed churches across North America.

World Renew has never received 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 2020, despite economically challenging times, World Renew received more than \$27 million (USD) in gifts from generous-hearted individuals and churches. This work was supported by 1,447 volunteers from more than 37 church denominations who donated their time and gifts to people in need, totaling 116,962 hours of time, or the equivalent of 58 full-time employees. In Bangladesh, Malawi, Madagascar, and Zambia, 19 International Relief Managers volunteered their time to serve in places of greatest need, and eight continued remote-location work during the pandemic.

World Renew strives for systemic, generational change in five key impact areas: food security, economic opportunity, disaster response, community health, and peace and justice. We partner with local churches and organizations around the world to bring holistic programs that transform communities for the long term.

Compelled by God's deep passion for justice and mercy, World Renew works alongside partners and communities, building programs that focus on every area of need and that allow participants to tap into God-given resources and talents to find renewed hope for the future. This holistic approach to World Renew's mandate, mission, and ministry contributes in various ways to each of the five core principles of the Christian Reformed Church's calling: 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, this work not only touches all five of the CRC's ministry priorities but also makes a focused contribution 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 2020, though at times having quickly to adapt programming to meet COVID-19 safety protocols, 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 many 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. And this year was truly a year when the world as a whole needed to hold on to God's certain hope.

Your prayers, involvement, and financial gifts through World Renew have provided the opportunity for men, women, and children living in poverty to change their lives for the better. Through your support you have shared the hope of the Father. That hope knows no bounds, and the people whose lives you change can now share that hope and influence others in their communities to make positive, permanent changes to their lives as well. Thank you for your contribution to making these changes—and so much more—possible.

“Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isa. 40:31).

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

1. North America

a. Church and family education and classical support

In 2020, World Renew continued to build on existing relationships with churches and schools and created new connections with educators and church members. Yet this past year brought huge changes in the ways these connections were made. Rather than via traditional and expected face-to-face conversations, the connections were made virtually through the use of many platforms: Zoom, Facebook, phone, text, and email. Sometimes the messages were recorded; sometimes they were live. Through the onset and the ongoing duration of the pandemic, World Renew continually swiveled to enable God’s work of disaster response, development, and mercy and justice to continue. World Renew also continued to build on previously developed relationships with deacons across North America.

In Canada, World Renew and Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) completed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding early in 2020, committing to work more closely together. This providentially timed, structured connection allowed both organizations to be in positions of strength to support congregations in their transitions during the pandemic, and to share both staff and specific best practices so that constituents, churches, and the work both organizations have been called to do could flourish. This includes reviewing our *Helping without Harming* workshops, and strengthening our ties with deacons in each congregation. Four important and helpful webinars were planned and implemented:

- March 28: “How Your Church Can Help during COVID-19”
- April 11: “Mental and Emotional Health in the Church Community during the COVID-19 Crisis”
- May 9: “Learning from Inequality during a Pandemic”
- May 30: “How World Renew Is Still Effective during COVID-19—and How Can You Share that Impact?”

It was recognized that webinars serve as an ideal vehicle and opportunity to reach a great many people both inexpensively and effectively.

Another manifestation of this new relationship was COVID-19 grants. In partnership with DMC, World Renew awarded 18 grants to churches across Canada. Over \$70,000 CDN was awarded to local churches responding to urgent needs in their communities to people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the United States 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. The focus for the past year has been on building a network of leaders, educating churches on working with their communities, and consulting with churches that have shown interest in and readiness for changes to community ministry.

Monthly meetings with leaders across the United States and Canada helped in building a network of diaconal leaders. These leaders supported and learned from one another and other community development leaders with the hope of enlivening their community transformation efforts in their neighborhoods and communities. Consultation was provided to over 10 church leaders as they explored an asset-, or strengths-, based approach to community ministry. Online education was provided primarily through interactive webinars and discussions:

- April 23: “Walking alongside Your Church and Community Members”
- May 21: “Churches on the Front Line of Hunger”
- September 2: “Reimagining Church Budgets: Through a Kingdom Lens”
- December 10: “Stop Playing Santa: Community Ministry”
- December 17: “Food Justice, Creation Care, and the Great Outdoors”
- a series of six online discussions, titled “Welcome to the Neighbo(u)rhood,” conducted in January / February 2021, led churches and leaders in innovative approaches to working with their neighborhoods.

To support and encourage the work of churches working with their local communities during the pandemic, 30 churches across 12 states received small \$2,000-5,000 (USD) grants totaling \$98,500. It was inspirational to see churches multiply these small grants to leverage \$607,610 in total for projects that served over 27,000 individuals and 4,000 families/households. World Renew continues to develop these new church relationships, providing education, consultation, and networking so that they can continue to transform their communities.

Though face-to-face conversation was not possible due to the pandemic, the Church and Community Engagement team of World Renew quickly found other ways to connect with churches, deacons, pastors, and constituents:

- recorded presentations by field staff
- a complete prerecorded World Hunger worship service
- phone and Zoom calls with individuals and church groups

- ten “World Hunger Live” devotions
- four “Advent Live” devotions

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 also supported churches and schools in developing ways to use the gift catalog for the edification of both the givers and the receivers of the gifts.

In the absence of educational opportunities around tables, World Renew developed a set of podcasts. In six recorded sessions, the following practitioners who were interviewed were able to share of their expertise on a variety of subjects:

- Cheryl Nembhard/Drew Brown – racial justice and the arts
- Dr. Jason Lief – immigration
- Andrew Oppong – climate
- Natalie Wright – local community development/gender justice
- Ken Kim – international disaster response, world hunger
- Julian Muturia/Cindy Stover – gender justice

This method of education will continue in the future, considering that it can reach people inexpensively and effectively.

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. Again, in the absence of face-to-face conversations and presentations, World Renew chose in 2020 to present webinars and video conferencing in and with schools: elementary, middle, and high schools as well as universities and colleges. An example of such video conferencing was a four-week Zoom workshop on justice held with some 10 students at Redeemer University in fall 2020.

Students, particularly those in the senior grades of high school, 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 years ahead. In addition, the codirectors of World Renew use their knowledge and experience toward training up the next generation of Christian practitioners. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew-Canada, continues to teach a course on community development at Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ontario. She has also started teaching a new course on conflict transformation. And Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S., began facilitating a course for NGO Leadership at Wheaton College’s Humanitarian Disaster Institute.

c. Refugee Office, Canada

In Canada, World Renew’s Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program (RSRP) provided support to churches and sponsoring

groups from coast to coast. Between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020, 46 sponsoring groups submitted 80 new refugee sponsorship applications to Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for 205 refugees. Also, the RSRP team continues to work on 69 sponsorship applications for 184 refugees to submit in 2021 with 37 sponsoring groups. World Renew is grateful for the continued compassion of many churches across Canada as they continue to reach out to increasingly vulnerable refugee populations in the context of COVID-19 and the uncertainty it brings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed restrictions on global travel and reduced sponsorship processing at visa posts, and this situation has particularly affected the number of refugee arrivals. Between January 1 and December 31 of 2020, through World Renew, 53 refugees arrived in Canada and were welcomed by 15 sponsoring groups. Arrivals for sponsored refugees are well planned. For all arrivals, World Renew must confirm with IRCC that refugees are ready to travel, that their sponsors are ready to welcome the newcomers, and that a quarantine plan is in place. All newcomers to Canada must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Churches provide financial and nonfinancial support for the quarantine period as well as for the sponsorship year. Churches have demonstrated creativity and adaptability in providing settlement support to newcomers in a way that respects health directives such as social distancing and mask wearing. Despite the difficult times of this past year, we are thankful that refugees are once again arriving in Canada. We are also thankful for the churches that have remained steadfast in their care for refugees seeking safety, protection, and a fresh start.

2. International volunteer opportunities

Despite having to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 400 global volunteers participated in justice and compassion ministries with World Renew in 2020. Their service in and for communities of poverty and disaster was a catalyst for change in their own hearts and in the hearts of the communities in which they lived and worked. Their testimonies are a powerful witness to the formation of their own faith in the context of global ministry.

In 2020, World Renew's service opportunities placed people in relationships where they could build each other up, learning and sharing together. By relating to people who live in poverty as God's fellow image-bearers, people of faith truly serve others. While serving, they grow in Christ, who changes stories by his power and grace.

B. *Servant leadership*

World Renew's ministry is addressing the pain of a hurting world as the corporate expression of the office of deacon in the church. Servant leadership is considered a key outcome of World Renew's activities. As such, World Renew raises up and equips servant leaders locally and globally to develop and exercise their gifts to minister in their community, nation, and world.

1. Global Volunteer Program

2020 was a year of challenge and hope for participants in World Renew's Global Volunteer Program (GVP). Many partnership churches

worked to connect with each other in creative ways. In addition, as COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, some groups had to cancel their scheduled mission trips while also facing overwhelming challenges to stay connected with their community partners.

Congregations found ways to support their brothers and sisters as their lives were affected by COVID-19 and later in the year by the back-to-back hurricanes Eta and Iota, which swept across Central America. The generosity of our global partnership churches was inspiring, with congregations taking multiple special offerings and holding online fundraising events. Through their generosity, many communities and families experienced God's provision and hope through their North American brothers and sisters.

GVP's Global Partnership Program provides opportunities to participate in the transformative global work God is doing through World Renew. Our global volunteer program gives individuals and groups opportunities to explore God's plan for them. As a volunteer in overseas ministry with World Renew, participant's lives intersect with others—and God changes their stories and gives hope. In 2020, 396 individuals, interns, and groups volunteered with World Renew in person and through online virtual learning experiences.

For the past five years and in partnership with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Renew's GVP has organized a learning trip each spring to Ottawa, the capital city of Canada. The participants are young people who want to learn to speak to government officials about justice issues such as global food insecurity.

The trip has been popular, and registration for the 2020 event was full when COVID-19 hit. To adapt to the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, World Renew set up online learning sessions, hosted video meetings, and adjusted for different time zones. The participants explained to their Members of Parliament that, as Christian young adults, they care that people in developing countries have enough food to eat.

In late 2020, World Renew was able to share with these young adults that, as a direct response to their action, the Canadian government committed an additional \$400 million to global relief and development in response to COVID-19.

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 crucial management support to World Renew and local partner organizations in the context of international disaster work.

World Renew has 19 individuals on the IRM roster. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only eight IRMs went out on assignment in 2020, serving in Bangladesh and Zambia. IRMs contributed to World Renew's response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, helping to provide food assistance to over 60,000 refugees. In Zambia, IRMs worked with a local organization to implement two separate projects that provided food to 10,739 households / families (53,695

people) experiencing significant drought and crop failure. After travel restrictions were put in place due to COVID-19, all IRMs continued to support the work of World Renew by calling supporters, reviewing response proposals, making virtual presentations, and engaging in learning through the International Disaster Response's "Caffeinate and Consider" webinars.

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

In 2020, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers gave their time and talents to help clear debris, assess needs, and rebuild homes after disasters in North America. 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.

Despite sites closing in March due to COVID-19 lockdowns, DRS was able to shift focus to smaller jobs such as helping in Washington, North Carolina, to build laundry trailers for tornado victims. A small team also helped to repair a home that sustained damage due to Hurricane Florence in Aurora, North Carolina. DRS was able to deploy small teams to Nebraska to aid in rebuilding homes heavily damaged during the spring storms of 2019. Two early-response teams were also deployed to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Pensacola, Florida, to aid in cleanup after strong storms left much damage in the late summer of 2020.

Trying something new, DRS completed remote training with local volunteers from Rio Grande Valley, Texas, on how to complete needs-assessment surveys. They then gathered data for the local long-term recovery group so that they could complete a plan for recovery from Hurricane Hannah.

In addition to completing physical work, DRS allocated several grants. Grants went to aid in Hurricane Laura recovery in Texas and for tornado recovery in Georgia. Rehoboth (N.Mex.) Christian School received a grant to help their community fight COVID-19.

Although 2020 was a very unconventional year for DRS in comparison to the way that we usually serve, we give glory to God for all of the unique ways staff and volunteers were called to serve as Jesus' hands and feet.

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 works 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*

World Renew's work around the world falls primarily into the CRC's calling of mercy and justice, and 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 lives of local communities. While World Renew works in concert with CRC agencies in many countries, we also take an ecumenical approach to our partnerships, extending far beyond our traditional CRC relationships. Our work in Kenya showcases the diversity of our partnerships.

In Kenya, 2020 started off with World Renew focused on continuing community development work in the key areas of food security, community health, economic opportunity, peace and justice, and disaster response. This work was supported by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a 15-member organization working to end global hunger; by Growing Hope Globally, a Christian organization that helps to engage subsistence farmers in the world's poorest regions; and by various branches of Anglican Development Services (ADS), the Anglican Church in Kenya (ACK). World Renew has worked alongside ADS to address issues such as the impact of climate change and to improve livelihoods, health, and disaster-risk reduction in Kenya.

The following excerpts from a report by World Renew's field staff in Kenya outlines how World Renew, with partners in Kenya, had to change the way we work in order to navigate the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing the work of empowering families to become self-sustaining:

"Since COVID-19 appeared for all of us at the beginning of 2020, we had to adapt to new ways of thinking and working pretty much overnight. We decided to become proactive and creative in what we could do to move on. We had frequent virtual meetings with our ADS partners and with home office staff to try to figure out how best to move forward with ongoing programs and new ones we were envisioning. We are grateful to say that as difficult as these times were, we were able to move on as a team quite well and look forward to new opportunities as we continue to do scenario planning and mitigating risk of how much COVID-19 has affected communities, development work, and the overall livelihood and well-being of people in Kenya.

"With regard to our ADS partners, ADS Western was able to proceed with several Organizational Development activities, focused mainly on financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and program management. ADS Western, ADS Central Rift, and ADS Mount Kenya continue to implement the five-year Scaling Up Conservation Agriculture program in the face of challenges in the final year of implementation. This program has reached

more than 6,000 farmers with conservation agriculture and other livelihood impacts. Through our partnership with ADS Pwani we have been able to improve the livelihood of six marginalized communities, and we contributed toward improving the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating mothers at the coast.

“In Central Kenya (Meru), a four-year integrated program has brought substantial impact to around 1,200 program participants in seven communities in terms of food security, better nutrition, healthier environment through more trees and latrines, and better access to water and savings through many established village savings and loans groups. Lastly, we continue to explore and cultivate church-to-church partnerships that will bring learning and ultimately transformation to us all.”

By the end of 2020, COVID-19 cases in Kenya were on the rise. In response, World Renew’s team in Kenya has continued to partner with our International Disaster Response team and Growing Hope Globally to build on the current project and prevent human-to-human transmission of COVID-19 by communicating critical risks, countering misinformation, reducing infections among close contacts and health care workers, preventing transmission amplification events, and educating communities about physical distancing. The World Renew model has been adopted by other local partners as a standard for safe and effective community support during COVID-19.

In every place where World Renew works, we partner with Christian denominations and community organizations to reach out to communities in the greatest need. We are grateful to work with these partners to improve ministry capacity and to create opportunities for people to lift themselves out of poverty. During the pandemic, our partnerships have become crucial to reaching the most vulnerable people with accurate information, emergency supplies, and renewed hope.

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, and particularly for those who are burdened by extreme poverty, hunger, and the effects of disaster.

As an agency that firmly believes we are all imagebearers of God (Gen. 1:26), we made gender justice a fundamental piece of our work in 2020. In late 2019 we launched an organization-wide gender audit to enable us to better understand the needs, gaps, and strengths in our gender justice/equality programming. We have been hard at work streamlining our gender policy as well as developing a global gender strategy to guide our home and international offices. Our greatest learning through this process has been that sustainable development and elimination of poverty among the communities we serve will not be possible if we don’t deliberately work toward reducing gender inequalities and ensuring that women’s contributions and dignity are recognized and respected, just as God intends in Galatians 3:28.

One of our greatest collaborations this year has been our work on gender-based violence. A group of justice-seeking CRCNA agencies led by World Renew collaborated to expose the “hidden crisis” of gender-based violence

(GBV), the horror and pain inflicted on women and girls around the world for being female. The agencies joined together with the United Nations Women's initiative, "16 Days of Activism" (Nov. 25 - Dec. 10), to raise awareness of the causes and impacts of GBV and how Christians can make an impact on families' lives and bring hope for the future. The resources included the following:

- a Bible study from Bonnie Nicholas and Safe Church Ministry on the rape of Tamar, shared through *The Network*
- a *Do Justice* podcast episode, hosted by World Renew and OSJ, released on December 1
- an education and awareness video on gender-based violence, available on World Renew's website
- a "Twitter Takeover" from November 25 through December 10, with input coming from the Office of Social Justice, Diaconal Ministries Canada, World Renew, and others
- two webinars: one addressing domestic GBV on November 19; the other dealing with GBV in countries outside of North America on December 3
- a *Banner* article addressing GBV in an Asian country
- three binational, livestreamed devotional sessions in the CRCNA offices on November 24, December 1, and December 8
- Advent devotional content provided by OSJ, Resonate, and World Renew

1. International community development

In 2020 World Renew was able to touch the lives of more than 270,000 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 to improve their way of life in locations where the basic essentials of life, such as food, healthcare, and education, are scarce or out of reach.

As an essential part of our work, World Renew helps to clear pathways for economic opportunity for families through our Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program. One of the goals of this program is to strengthen the economic livelihoods and resilience of local communities by forming community savings and loans groups that help poor families get more access to goods, services, resources, and markets for economic activities, and that help people earn an adequate income to support themselves. In 2020, World Renew facilitated 1,085 VSLA groups with 21,696 participants in 17 countries. As the following account illustrates, the groups also allow participants to build bonds that give them a sense of belonging:

On a Tuesday in Loma de Cáfen, Nicaragua, 22 young women sit together chatting. They are participants in a VSLA with World Renew partner Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes (ACJ).

The women are sharing their hopes of bringing to reality some dreams that they once thought were unattainable. Damaris Vasquez Pérez is one of the group members. She is proud that together her group has saved \$23,758 córdobas (USD \$686) in just 12 months.

“In our community, no one saves even one córdoba [about 3 cents],” she said. “We try to make ends meet by growing crops and working in our small businesses while paying for health care and education. We often have to go to neighbors who are a little better off and ask to borrow money. It’s embarrassing to beg for a loan, and most of the time no one has money to spare anyway.”

With the promise of training and guidance from ACJ and World Renew, the women decided to start a VSLA group. Damaris admits that the first meetings were difficult, and it took the group four months before they were able to manage the accounting independently.

The women are proud of their perseverance and grateful for the natural support network that their VSLA provides. The meetings give them a chance to connect, opportunities to learn, and the ability to work toward making their hopes and dreams a reality.

Damaris shares, “We overcame all of those challenges, and we overcame the fact that our husbands had to give us the freedom to attend the meetings and give us a few coins to save at first. It was hard, but as time went on, our husbands realized that it was a good thing – in fact, we could help make ends meet at home. Now they all know that on Tuesdays we have our meetings, and no one has a problem attending.”

In March 2020, World Renew began to shift its focus in development programs to adapt to COVID-19 restrictions worldwide. In many of our ongoing community-based programs, we worked quickly to restructure and implement pandemic support for people most affected by lockdowns and travel bans. When aspects of programming became less pertinent or possible – with some VSLAs suspending lending, for example – we adapted and at times refocused existing meetings. In Nigeria, VSLAs suspended the issuance of loans between March and June, but groups continued to meet while observing safety protocols to learn about promoting peace, savings group mechanisms, and COVID-19 safe practices. When women were banned from the markets in Tongi, Bangladesh, to curb the spread of the virus, the advocacy of community leaders in the VSLA program led the local political leaders to overturn their decision and instead move the markets to more spacious locations that allowed for physical distancing.

World Renew’s economic opportunity programs such as Village Savings and Loan groups help to empower participants to make decisions for themselves and, through the coaching and training they receive from World Renew, to gain the financial know-how and confidence to better provide for their families. Most importantly, participants learn of their own value as children of God as they grow in their skills and faith.

2. Disaster response

a. International disaster response

By mid 2020, in the midst of COVID-19 lockdowns around the world, an estimated 80 million people were displaced worldwide by conflict, persecution, or disaster. Humanity is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. World Renew’s International Disaster Response team provided assistance to many communities worldwide that were affected by these disasters. Disaster frequently affects people who are already vulnerable and living in poverty. World Renew exists

not only to meet immediate needs but also to implement a long-term approach that helps prepare families for future disasters. Thanks to God's compassion and the generous support of churches, individuals, organizations, and institutions, World Renew has provided assistance to over 1,100,000 people in 27 countries through its international disaster response programs. The following stories give a glimpse of how World Renew brings the justice and mercy of Christ to families in crisis.

Locust plagues are one of the three worst agricultural natural disasters, alongside flooding and drought. Atiang Teddy and her husband Odege Martin had heard stories from their grandparents of a locust plague that devastated Uganda 70 years ago. In February 2020 those stories of the past became a present reality when desert locusts returned, threatening the destruction of the region's crops. In the weeks that followed, the insects spread from one district to another; they were spotted in at least 20 districts, leaving behind eggs that, when hatched, caused additional outbreaks and led to food insecurity.

World Renew Uganda worked with partners in the Teso and Karamoja regions where families like Atiang's live. The goal was to increase the communities' capacity to control and cope with the invasion. Community leaders were trained on the effects of desert locusts and the best methods of prevention, including vigilant surveillance, providing time to target and spray the locusts before they hatch eggs. Through community outreach programs, nearly 3,000 families gained a strong awareness about the issue, and even more surrounding villages were reached through radio programs that gave people a chance to call in and talk about how to handle the invasion.

Atiang is grateful for the support, which has had a great impact on the region so far. "Our crop harvest for the first season has been saved," she said. "We're grateful to PAG KIDO and World Renew for supporting us in the communities and giving us hope in controlling the desert locusts."

In early August, a massive explosion in Beirut's port shocked the world. The blast killed dozens, injured thousands, and left over 300,000 people homeless. The explosion was a crisis on top of many other crises experienced by the people of Lebanon. This is particularly true for the more than two million refugees who live in this country. The nation's devalued currency, rising food prices, and COVID-19 risks had made many vulnerable even before the August explosion. Throughout 2020, World Renew and its partner in Lebanon, MERATH, continued to distribute food to refugee families, and, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, delivered 11,000 hygiene kits to help families protect their health.

In response to the August explosion, World Renew and MERATH provided an additional 18,000 hygiene kits, as well as 7,800 hot meals and 2,200 food vouchers to survivors, including Hagop and Anaheed, an elderly brother and sister. Their apartment is located in the blast zone; and although it sustained heavy damage, they have no option but to stay. Deliveries of hot meals from local churches and gifts of food vouchers have been a vital lifeline for them.

"We don't have any other place than this apartment. We have no choice but to stay here. People are working hard to try to rehabilitate the building, but it will take a lot of time. Now winter is around the corner. . . . The church has given us vouchers that we use to buy food from the supermarket. Some people from the church are also cooking for us every day and bringing hot meals for us to eat. I don't know how long this situation is going to last and how much we can take, especially at our age. The little savings we had are stuck in the bank and not worth much anymore anyway. Still, we are thankful, because God protected us!"

For people whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, natural disaster, or climate change, COVID-19 made precarious living even more uncertain. As the virus spread globally, increased health risks became clear—and the impact goes far beyond immediate consequences. Thankfully, through World Renew's network of trusted local partners, we continued to assist families who were already in crisis, reaching more than 688,000 people with programs designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These included distributing emergency food supplies, providing families with electronic vouchers, and radio campaigns sharing vital health information. To further protect people's health, we also began to distribute soap, face masks, and hand sanitizer in communities around the globe. The following story illustrates our COVID-19 initiatives in Haiti.

As COVID-19 swept across the globe, governments demanded that people stay at home. In Haiti, however, people were forced to go about their lives as if the virus did not exist. From the capital, Port-au-Prince, to the countryside, the recommendations of health experts to social distance and follow handwashing practices went largely unheard.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Most Haitians must go to the public market every day to buy and sell products in order to make a meager income. Missing a day at the market would mean not having money for food.

To raise awareness in communities that lacked information about the pandemic, World Renew, partnering with Perspectives Reformées Haiti, provided 25 megaphones to 15 communities; produced five awareness videos for social media, developed awareness programs for 10 radio stations; distributed 5,000 flyers; and provided sanitizers and soap to 850 families.

In addition, 20 church and community leaders were trained to lead awareness campaigns. These leaders promoted the need for hygiene and sanitation, handwashing, and household and neighborhood cleaning. Today, as they make their way to the markets, more Haitians are aware of the dangers of the spread of COVID-19 and are now practicing ways to avoid infection.

COVID-19 presents new challenges, but World Renew has worked tirelessly with partner organizations to strengthen the ministry of hope we have in Christ. We enter 2021 with that hope in our hearts. Our commitment to walk alongside people in crisis remains strong. As the number of hungry people increases as a direct result of the pandemic, World Renew's work is even more important.

b. Disaster Response Services in North America

In 2020, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) continued to provide volunteer-based assistance in 34 communities affected by disaster in North America. DRS has decades of experience helping people in North America to recover after disasters, but continuing to provide help during the 2020 pandemic meant finding safer ways for volunteers to serve. Working with our partners and following health guidelines, DRS developed COVID-19 safety protocols to continue to minister safely to people in need. The following is an example that not only shows how DRS had to change the way they work, but also showcases how COVID-19 caused a disaster that affects the well-being of vulnerable men, women and children in North America:

In May 2020, the Navajo Nation reported more cases of COVID-19 per capita than any state in the United States. Covering an area roughly the size of West Virginia, the Navajo reservation is home to thousands of people who lack access to clean running water and other necessities.

For Navajo families, staying home and staying safe during the pandemic was often not possible. So World Renew DRS kicked off a national response to quickly deliver life-sustaining supplies to people living on the reservation. With the Reformed Church in America's Global Mission and Rehoboth Christian School, located on Navajo land in New Mexico, World Renew DRS provided water, food, and face masks to Native American families who needed it most.

"This crisis is different from any other disaster that World Renew DRS has responded to," said Bob Laarman, DRS director. "We have changed some of our response methods during the pandemic, but World Renew DRS remains committed to serving vulnerable people in North America through local people and organizations."

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." World Renew collaborated closely with the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Office of Social Justice (OSJ) 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. In 2020, 238 churches in both Canada and the U.S. were involved in justice activities with World Renew. In addition, World Renew partnered with 122 churches in the U.S. and Canada on the Climate Witness Project, which focuses on creation care.

a. United States

In the U.S., World Renew partnered with the CRC Office of Social Justice and the Office of Race Relations to support churches in doing justice, especially in the areas of understanding biblical justice, energy stewardship, creation care, and immigrant and refugee rights; deepening one another's understanding of systemic causes of poverty; and advocating on behalf of people who suffer injustice worldwide.

On the topic of creation care, the Climate Witness Project (CWP) supported churches across the U.S. and Canada to learn more about the impacts of plastic on the environment and to meet with policy makers

to encourage policies that would care for creation at both local and national levels. CWP participants gained an increased understanding of how climate change is affecting vulnerable communities and learned how World Renew is supporting those communities to adapt. CWP also hosted online voter/candidate forums during which candidates shared and voters asked questions about the candidates' plans to address climate change along with the role that their faith plays in caring for creation.

World Renew also partnered with the Office of Social Justice to support immigration organizers in five regions throughout the U.S. The organizers team up with churches to host the Church between Borders workshop, to listen and learn from people who immigrated to the U.S., and to stand with immigrants against injustice. The Church between Borders workshop takes participants through a virtual immigration experience. Participants deal with and try to work their way through the same challenges that vulnerable populations face when attempting to immigrate legally to the United States. Participants also journey through an immigration timeline and learn about the roots of racial injustice in our immigration system and discuss a biblical view of welcoming the stranger.

b. Justice mobilization Canada

World Renew in Canada works 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. In 2020 a memorandum of understanding was established between World Renew and the justice mobilizer to outline the plan to pursue justice through the intersection of World Renew's vision/mission and the shared areas of justice ministry within the CRCNA's Canadian ministry offices.

Justice mobilization had to adapt to the new COVID-19 reality for most of 2020. Some events were canceled or postponed, but thankfully there was a renewed interest in online learning, so many of our justice resources and events continued in a virtual format.

To celebrate World Refugee Day in June, the justice mobilizer partnered with the World Renew Refugee Sponsorship team to create a series of six videos that were viewed over 500 times, helping people know how to pray, advocate, volunteer/welcome, and donate to make a difference in the lives of refugees who were affected by the pandemic both in North America and internationally.

The Youth Ambassadors of Reconciliation Program (YARP) also adapted to an online learning format in August 2020. Partnering with World Renew's Global Volunteer Program, we developed creative ways for YARP to be a meaningful week-long peer-learning experience for seven youths, using a mix of video discussions and self-guided activities focused on privilege, decolonization, and reconciliation action. An added bonus in moving online allowed YARP to include twice the amount of participants at a much-reduced cost in comparison to our regular in-person program. While we maintain the value of in-person intercultural experiences and hope to return to that format after

the pandemic, we've seen the potential of using a mix of both virtual and in-person learning for the future.

The Canadian justice mobilizer also supported the "16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence" (GBV) campaign (Nov. 25-Dec. 10). Bringing together the Justice and Reconciliation team in Canada (including the Centre for Public Dialogue, Indigenous Ministries, and Safe Church) as well as the Office of Social Justice in the U.S., we developed a webinar to highlight GBV in North America, and we produced an advocacy action alert focused on GBV and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada.

The Canadian version of the Faith in Action: Practicing Biblical Advocacy workshop has now been downloaded over 100 times. In January the workshop was hosted in Edmonton at The River CRC; and then during the pandemic the justice mobilizer adapted the content to a webinar format that could be shared nationally. The webinar was hosted by three churches/campus ministries in the remainder of 2020. Feedback from hosting the live workshop in 2019, as well as new ideas from the virtual adaptation this year, demonstrated a need for updates, so the workshop will be revamped for in-person and online use and relaunched in Canada (along with a new U.S. version in partnership with the U.S. Office of Social Justice) in early 2021.

In addition, 2020 marked the first year of a long-term project, *Hearts Exchanged*; an intercultural and reconciliation formation learning journey for Christian Reformed congregants and churches in Canada. Beginning with a pilot of two learning cohorts in Eastern and Western Canada in fall 2020, *Hearts Exchanged* will expand over the next three years into every classis/region in Canada and will culminate with a commissioning event at the next Canadian National Gathering. The goal of the project is to develop a reconciliation identity in the CRC in Canada through acknowledging and working to undo spiritual harm and building healthy and refounded relationships with Indigenous communities. The justice mobilizer has been involved in all phases of the project, including planning/development of curriculum and facilitating cohorts. The participation of World Renew in supporting the vision, connections, and implementation of future cohorts of *Hearts Exchanged* has been and will continue to be a key part of the project.

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, peacebuilding, and trauma healing. The following account demonstrates World Renew's efforts in Niger to provide trauma healing and support to people who have suffered injustice.

Several years ago rioters attacked and burned down homes, businesses, and a church in a small village in the Sahara Desert. The families who lived there ran, with the few possessions they could carry, to villages nearby.

World Renew and a partner provided the survivors with both emergency assistance and long-term help. A few weeks after the attack, in partnership with the American Bible Society, World Renew offered trauma-healing training to church leaders. The pastor learned to facilitate a Bible study titled *Healing the Wounds of the Heart* with his parishioners. Then the church members gathered in a temporary space to work through the lessons together.

“We stopped – and we spent six weeks going over and over the lesson on forgiveness because we weren’t yet ready to forgive,” the pastor said. “When we finally reached the point where we were able to forgive the neighbors who attacked us, we realized that we are not only called to forgive them – but also to love them!”

When the church completed its trauma-healing training, they contacted World Renew to learn about community outreach through Christian development work. World Renew’s integrated approach to working in communities took the church from forgiving their enemies to loving their neighbors. In the process, they discovered that they could change the story of poverty in their community – and change their own story as well.

Once the victims of violence, the church is now loved and respected by their neighbors and village leaders. From their desire to forgive and find peace in Christ, this community of believers is showing their neighbors the power of God to change lives.

In Niger and many other countries around 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 essential for individuals and communities to heal, become whole, and move forward with hope.

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. The following story not only illustrates the teaching of God’s Word but also demonstrates the strengthening of faith even in the face of persecution.

Matthew, the accountant for World Renew’s Niger partner Showing Everyone Love (SEL), read from 2 Timothy 3 as part of the team’s devotions: “. . . In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” [3:12-13].”

“We are,” he reflected soberly, “living in these times.”

A church denomination, SEL is indeed living in a time of persecution. Jihadist threats have resulted in many of its churches and most of the schools in its communities being closed for months now. People are being threatened; some schools are even being burned. Staff members, pastors, and teachers all have personal stories of threat and danger. Many have fled their homes to move to the city in hopes that they will be safer there. Some pastors in exile have carefully set up “house churches” so that believers can continue to meet together outside of their traditional church buildings.

And yet, SEL’s president says, the church is stronger than ever. He has seen an inspiring increase in leadership and devotion. He places a lot of credit for this with a household advisor program started by World Renew and SEL.

A household advisor encourages and teaches best practices to community families in the areas of agriculture, income generation, health, family responsibilities, or prayer. “The church had been in a deep sleep,” says SEL’s president, “but thanks to the prayer household advisors, it is being woken up!”

Kanpoa (not his real name) is the prayer family advisor in his village. He visits families to find out how they are doing, to encourage them in daily Bible reading and prayer, and to invite them to put into practice what God is showing them. At a recent meeting of household advisors, Kanpoa was effusive about the program.

“I am really satisfied with the household advisors program,” he said. “Personally this has really helped me strengthen my Christian faith, because through this program I decided to read my Bible every day before sleeping, and also to read it with my family. Through this I have seen my whole family grow in their faith. I am also advising five other households in my village, and they have put into practice my advice. Each night they are praying together as a family and reading the Bible before going to bed. . . . I sincerely thank SEL [and World Renew] for this program.”

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 while also pointing participants to the saving grace of the God who loves them.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

A. World Renew Church and Community Engagement 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 several synodically designated Sunday offerings each year. In 2021 these denominationally approved offerings are slated to include the following:

- March 7: Canadian Foodgrains Bank (Canada)/Disaster Response Services (U.S.)

- April 11: Refugee Sunday (Canada)/Growing Hope GLOBALLY (U.S.)
- May 9: Mother's Day/Maternal and Child Health/Free a Family®
- June 27: Human Trafficking Awareness (Canada)
- November 7: World Hunger Sunday
- December 25: "World Renew"

2. Reaching and growing into constituency beyond the CRC

In 58 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 2020 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 Presbyterians (ECO).

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 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.

As 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 we provide a necessary response to victims of disaster, 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. 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 explains 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.
- In 2020, GEO arranged ways and means for churches to receive first-hand information and “visits” from field staff regularly and virtually.
- 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.

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 2021 with gratitude to God for his provision in 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 145 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. COVID-19 update

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected and is continuing to affect us all. In March 2020 we moved our course instruction online with hopes of being able to return to some level of in-person instruction at some point in the spring semester, but that was not possible. At the end of the semester, we held a virtual commemoration for our sixty-one graduates who came from Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, South Korea, and the United States.

The fall 2020 semester brought us to a "flex" delivery system of education in which we had asynchronous online courses as well as synchronous residential courses in which students had the option of being present via Zoom or in person. Then in November, near the time of the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, we again moved instruction entirely online. From using an outdoor tent in warm weather to turning our chapel into a classroom space later in the fall, we aimed to do what we could to adapt to the circumstances that kept changing throughout the semester.

The spring 2021 semester will start in "flex" mode again, but we will probably have most students begin online and then hopefully move into more face-to-face residential instruction as the vaccine for COVID-19 becomes more widely available.

We would like to commend everyone who worked to provide and support IT functions and program support during this time, with special thanks to Daryl Boersema, technology support manager, and Chris De Man, organizational systems and strategic initiatives manager. We also give thanks for the team leadership of Margaret Mwenda, chief operations officer, and Jeff Sajdak, dean of students, who lead our COVID-19 response team.

While we have seen a pause in prospective enrollment as students decide whether to attend school during a pandemic, we have also been blessed by a summer 2020 session during which we partnered with Calvin University and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to offer "COVID courses" online. In these courses over 300 individuals from across the globe took part

to focus on some aspect of responding to and ministering in the midst of this pandemic. We are experimenting with an online format for continuing such courses—located at calvinseminary.edu/academics/covid-19-courses.

We were also able to provide a complete online event, titled “Loving Your Neighbor Conference: Forming Citizens of God’s Kingdom in Prison and Upon Reentry.” The entire conference is available at vimeo.com/showcase/7340817.

We want to acknowledge and give thanks for the ongoing and faithful support from the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination and from individuals, churches, and classes. We are blessed by this community that continues to care for and encourage us—board members, faculty, staff, and students.

III. 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 that continues this formation process for practitioners in ministry.

IV. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey 2025 (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 programs, 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, MI
Blythefield Hills CRC, Rockford, MI
Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, MI
Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, MI

Calvin University, Grand Rapids, MI
 Campus Ministry at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI
 Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
 Central Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI
 Christ Church, Davis, CA
 Christ Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, MI
 Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, MI
 City Life Church, Grand Rapids, MI
 Community CRC, Wyoming, MI
 Creston CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
 Disciple Making Church, Bayside, NY
 Encounter, Kentwood, MI
 Faith Christian Fellowship, Walnut Creek, CA
 Fuller Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
 The Gathering at Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, MI
 Grace for the Nations Church, Grand Rapids, MI
 Granum CRC, Granum, AB
 Hebron CRC, Ajax, ON
 Heritage CRC, Byron Center, MI
 Joyful Church of Seattle, Lynwood, WA
 Monroe Community Church, Grand Rapids, MI
 Plymouth Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
 River Rock Church, Rockford, MI
 Rockford Reformed Church, Rockford, MI
 Second CRC, Byron Center, MI
 Stanwood Community Church, Navarre, OH

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:

A Christian Ministry in the National Parks (Yellowstone)
 Mel Trotter Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI
 New City Farm/Neighbors, Grand Rapids, MI
 New Hope Baptist Church, Toronto, ON
 Southwest Community Church, Wyoming, MI
 Sunshine Community Church, Grand Rapids, MI

We also continue to welcome the opportunity to connect our students with churches in need of summer ministry leadership—as a result of pastoral vacancy, sabbaticals, or new ministry initiatives. Please contact the Vocational Formation office for more information about this process at vocationalformation@calvinseminary.edu and/or visit calvinseminary.edu/church-resources.

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 (CEP), led by director Rev. Scott Hoezee. You will find a refreshed website for CEP as it continues to serve as one of the premier

Reformed preaching sites in North America (visit cep.calvinseminary.edu/ for information).

In January 2020, Calvin Theological Seminary called Rev. Shawn Brix as our 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 it reflects our desire 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 in Burlington, Ontario, and he most recently served at Living Hope CRC in Peterborough, Ontario.

V. Additional program and ministry highlights

This past fall, Calvin Theological Seminary proceeded into the following new key initiatives:

The seminary launched two fully online master of arts programs: M.A. in Ministry Leadership and M.A. in Bible and Theology. These streamlined degrees are 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.

The seminary expanded its 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.

In addition, the seminary launched a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree with twelve new students that focuses 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.

In fall 2019 the Latino/a Ministry program, under the continued direction of Calvin Seminary professor Mariano Avila, launched two new cohorts in its certificate program. One certificate is in Latino/a ministry, and the other is in family care. There is even a pathway to a master of arts degree in family care for students who complete both certificates along with Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) through a partnership with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

We continue to be blessed by strong support for our hybrid education master of divinity degree program. 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, which 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.

The seminary is grateful for 225 degree-seeking students and 42 non-degree-seeking students enrolled in the fall semester of 2020-2021, which includes 59 new students. Ninety-eight are M.Div. students (59 residential and 39 in the distance education program). At the same time, we urge congregations to encourage and support women and men who seek additional training for ministry to consider Calvin Theological Seminary.

On September 8, 2015, Calvin 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. While the first bachelor of arts graduates did complete their program in May 2020, we are still waiting for an in-person graduation to celebrate this accomplishment.

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Eleven of our nineteen formation group leaders are pastors, and the other eight are seminary faculty/administration members. They include Mike Abma, Amanda Benckhuysen, Gary Burge, Sarah Chun, Chris De Man, Aaron Einfeld, Marc Holland, Layne Kilbreath, Samantha DeJong McCarron, David Poolman, Denise Posie, David Rylaarsdam, Jeff Sajdak, Chris Schoon, Heather Strooboscher, Albert Strydhorst, Corey Van Huizen, and Cory Willson.

We appreciate all 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.

VI. Administration

The seminary administration includes Rev. Julius Medenblik, president; Dr. Margaret Mwenda, chief operating officer; Dr. Gary Burge, dean of the faculty; Ms. Joan Beelen, associate dean of academic services and registrar; Rev. Geoff Vandermolen, director of vocational formation; Mr. Robert Knoor, director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Ms. Sarah Chun, dean of international students and scholar services.

VII. 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.

One such resourcing that we would highlight from the fall of 2020 would be the presentation that included professor Cory Willson—co-author of a new book titled *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy*. A link to an overview presentation on this topic is at vimeo.com/478925236.

We also want to acknowledge the transition of professor Amanda Benckhuysen (O.T. professor), who has accepted the call to be the next director of Safe Church Ministry for the CRCNA. Professor Benckhuysen is an excellent teacher and scholar. Her new role will only extend her gifts to others. We wish her well, and we are very glad that she will still be doing some teaching for us in the spring. (See crcna.org/news-and-events/news/benckhuysen-be-new-safe-church-director.)

The transition of Professor Benckhuysen as well as the upcoming retirements of some professors will be leading into a search process in which we will be inviting applicants in the areas of church history, Old Testament, New Testament, and Latino/a Ministry Program leadership, among other needs. We invite your prayers for God's provision, and in the near future we anticipate asking the church to provide nominations for faculty openings. . . .

IX. Students 2020-2021

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from fall 2020 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

A. Denominational affiliation

Christian Reformed: 97 (43%)
Presbyterian: 44
RCA: 14
Other Reformed: 9
Baptist: 5
Other/None listed: 42
(29+ total denominations)

B. Geographical information:

U.S. students: 128 (57%)
Canadian students: 22 (10%)
Korean: 40 (18%)
Chinese: 13 (6%)
Other: 22 (9%)
Total countries represented: 26

C. Student body

Male students: 163 (73%)
Female students: 62 (27%)

D. Programs and students enrolled

M.Div.: 98
Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 17
M.A. (English): 33
M.A. (Spanish): 8
M.T.S.: 19
Th.M.: 24
Ph.D.: 32

Hybrid/Distance Learning: 72 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)

Certificate/diploma: 5

Unclassified: 6

E. Non-degree students

In addition, 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 13 students registered in our two Spanish-language certificate programs.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Heather Garretson, secretary

Worship Ministries

I. Introduction

2020 was a challenging year for all, and Worship Ministries (crcna.org/worship) was no exception. Despite the challenges, we continue to see God's providence and blessings, for which we give thanks.

At the time of writing this report, our 2.3 FTE staff includes Joyce Berger (director of Worship Ministries and editor of *Reformed Worship*, 1 FTE), Laura Meyering (administrative specialist for Worship Ministries and subscription manager for *Reformed Worship* (0.8 FTE), Katie Roelofs (worship catalyzer, 0.25 FTE), and Jeremy Simpson (worship catalyzer, 0.25 FTE). We also continue to be grateful for the work of Kai Ton Chau (associate editor, *Reformed Worship*, 0.2 FTE) who does this work as an employee of The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

June 1, 2020, marked the retirement of Diane Dykgraaf (program coordinator, 0.5 FTE). We remain grateful for her 24 years of faithful service to the denomination, starting with Christian Reformed Home Missions and including positions with Faith Alive Christian Resources and then with the Leadership office in addition to Worship Ministries.

Our advisory committee is made up of Gary Brouwers (pastoral advisor, chair), 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). The committee met in person the week before churches began moving to virtual worship, and since then we have developed a rhythm of shorter bimonthly online meetings. In addition, we have fourteen individuals willing to serve congregations in the area of worship as endorsed coaches (crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches).

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

We value our ongoing conversations and work with Faith Formation Ministries, especially around faith practices and a project aimed at laying out a Reformed approach to the place of children in the worshipping community.

Reformed Worship (ReformedWorship.org) continues to encourage the inclusion of and attention to the needs of all ages in the worshipping community. Each print issue included "Children's Pages for the Christian Year" that were designed for children to learn about the Christian Year and are reproducible. Also available was a service titled "'Amen' Living: A Service on Acts 2 for Pentecost and Graduates," an intergenerational activity for creating a "Found Art Advent Wreath," and a blog: "Remembering Amidst Forgetting: 5 Tips for Leading Worship in Memory Care Residences."

Children were also in mind in the development of resources to assist congregations as they shifted to household and online worship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Servant leadership

The pandemic has placed incredible demands on our worship planners, leaders, and pastors. Throughout the year they needed to replan some wor-

ship services multiple times in response to COVID-19 realities. They needed to learn a new set of skills in the area of technology. Decision fatigue became apparent as every aspect of worship needed to be thought through repeatedly and traditions needed to be adapted—all with a level of pastoral sensitivity and recognition that there was no way to make everyone happy. Given all of this, we continue to be concerned about the emotional, spiritual, and physical health of our leaders. For this reason during the early weeks of the pandemic, staff made themselves available to meet via Zoom for an hour for one afternoon and one evening every week, creating space for prayer and sharing. Weekly Zoom roundtables resumed again in Advent for worship leaders to share ideas and ask questions of each other. In addition, we provided a webinar on “Self-Care for Worship Leaders” (available on The Network) and worked with CRC artist Regina Jupp to create an online spiritual retreat: “Moments” (reginajupp.com/moments). Both of these resources continue to be available. Additional articles and resources in support of our leaders can be found on the Network (network.crcna.org) and in *Reformed Worship*.

Worship Ministries also provides support to eleven CRC participants in the Certificate in Worship Leadership program through Samford University.

C. *Global mission*

Our worship both gathers the church and sends the church out to live missionally wherever we find ourselves. The connection between worship and mission continues to be a recurring theme in our work. This year one of our endorsed coaches led a webinar titled “The God Who Sends.” *Reformed Worship* also published several articles and resources with missional themes. In addition, one of the books that our peer-learning book groups could choose to read was *The Gospel in a Handshake: Framing Worship for Mission* by CRC pastor Kevin Adams. We were excited that one group was made up entirely of church planters.

D. *Mercy and justice*

The book of Amos clearly teaches that our worship is not acceptable to God if we do not live lives of mercy and justice. The choices we make regarding the songs we sing, the words we speak, who gets to plan and lead, who is welcome, who is kept away because of inaccessibility, and so many other aspects of worship all reflect our understanding, commitment to, and practice of mercy and justice.

Much of our work this past year centered on listening to diverse voices, especially those of ethnic minority leaders and exploring multicultural worship. Peer-learning book groups were given the opportunity to read and engage issues of multicultural worship with “Worship Together in Your Church as in Heaven” by Nikki Learner and Josh Davis.

E. *Gospel proclamation and worship*

1. *Reformed Worship*

The quarterly journal *Reformed Worship* (RW), available in print and online, along with its website, ReformedWorship.org, remain key channels for supporting worship leaders in the CRC and beyond with an ecumenical and global subscription base. We ended the year with 1,785 subscribers, including 638 CRC subscribers, of which 294 are in Canada. This past year *Reformed Worship* had 423,703 web visitors and 740,494 page views.

Throughout the year we saw the number of individuals receiving RW's monthly e-newsletter grow to 10,041. RW's Facebook page has 5,469 followers.

This past year's theme issue focused on the theology of worship and included "Worship 101: A Five-part Series on Worship Basics" by Joy Engelsman and Joan DeVries, an article by Cornelius Plantinga on "Trinitarian Worship," and an article by CRC worship leader Chantel Varnado, "Come to the Altar: A Place of Spiritual Growth and Reflection," along with many other meaningful articles and resources from a diverse group of voices.

2. Peer-learning groups

While last year we saw the formation of our first online groups, this year all of our peer-learning groups met virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten peer-learning book groups formed, with a total of 69 participants.

3. Webinars and roundtables

In 2020, Worship Ministries offered 15 online learning opportunities. Some of the recordings of these webinars and roundtables are available via The Network and via YouTube channel (tinyurl.com/TrainCRCworship) where you will also find a library of past recordings. These recordings were viewed 1,158 times. Topics addressed in these events included a roundtable on "Virtual Church Tech Q&A" and a webinar on "Worshiping with the Psalms in This Time of Pandemic and Isolation."

4. Endorsed coaches

We currently have 14 endorsed coaches and were able to meet together for a first time just a week before many churches began closing because of the pandemic. We are grateful for our coaches' flexibility in deciding to table our agenda and instead develop resources for churches to use for Lent and Easter. Endorsed coaches are individuals with particular gifts and knowledge in the area of worship, and they are available to work with individuals and congregations. For more information on this program, check out crcna.org/worship/endorsed-coaches.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey 2025 (the Ministry Plan)*

A. *The local church*

This past year was all about finding ways to support the local church as it grappled with COVID-19. Much of that work concentrated on the development of resources posted on The Network. A landing page, "Worship and COVID-19" (network.crcna.org/worship/worship-and-covid-19), points viewers to articles dealing with issues such as how to practice the Lord's Supper during the pandemic, "Next Steps for Worship: Planning Wisely, Thinking Deeply," and lament. We created and curated specific resources for Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Advent, and Christmas worship amid COVID-19 closings. In total we created 37 posts, many pointing to multiple resources, and together these received 30,831 pageviews. We are grateful for the many contributors who helped us provide these resources.

Worship Ministries had direct touchpoints with 187 different CRC congregations (not including RW visits or visitors to The Network or to our

YouTube channel). Our monthly Worship Ministries' e-newsletter goes out to 2,150 subscribers, and our Facebook page has 532 members. In December, we also began an Instagram account.

This was not the year we expected; for the majority of it we faced staffing challenges in Worship Ministries, but our worship leaders are a generous group—sharing graciously—enabling the faithful worship of God during a difficult time.

Worship Ministries
Joyce Borger, director

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 for equipping Christ-followers for kingdom work.

What a year it has been. Dordt University is thankful to have been able to offer in-person instruction to students for the 2020-21 year despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This academic year has required immense faith, creativity, dedication, planning, and pivoting, but God has blessed us as we have tackled these challenges.

Dordt kicked the year off with a record enrollment. Our overall enrollment for the fall semester was 1,666—the largest in our history. We welcomed 397 freshmen, our second-largest incoming class in ten years. This, along with new graduate programs and our highest-ever online enrollment, led to our overall enrollment growth. We feel blessed that we can grow and continue to pursue our mission of equipping students to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all areas of life.

Dordt University was also blessed through the Hope Fund, which began with a vision: How might Dordt help current students who had financial hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic? The Hope Fund was established to provide scholarships to more than 185 Dordt students in need of additional tuition assistance. In total, we raised more than \$625,000 for the fund.

We also celebrated another milestone in fall 2020 when Dordt received, for the fifth year in a row, the *Wall Street Journal's* top ranking in the United States for student engagement. This highlights how well the university inspires, challenges, and informs students. To receive external validation of the transformational impact we are having on our students as we prepare them to be Christ's hands and feet is certainly encouraging.

Dordt launched two new online master's programs this past fall—in social work and in public administration. Taught from a Reformed perspective, these programs offer social workers, city managers, government officials, police officers, and others an opportunity to integrate biblical truth into their continued education. Our world needs well-equipped Christians serving in these areas now more than ever. We also created an online bachelor's degree in business administration that is designed to be flexible for working adults who want to pursue or complete their degree.

Dordt also launched two new centers: the K and K Dooyema Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and the Thrive Center for Applied Behavior Analysis. The Dooyema Center elevates entrepreneurship as a Christian calling by providing students with internship experience and mentorships, engaging them in consulting projects with external businesses and organizations, and facilitating business and farm succession planning. The Thrive Center uses Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)—a research-based behavior intervention strategy—for behavior therapy and skills acquisition. This technique has been identified as an evidence-based practice for children with autism spectrum disorders.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, it has also encouraged us to continue looking for ways to improve, grow, and innovate. We ask

that you continue to pray for us as we seek to be faithful to the task of training up effective kingdom citizens. Dordt remains committed to Christian education, and we pray that all 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 2020-21 academic year began amid the throes of the global pandemic, and as with all other educational institutions, the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) worked diligently to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. After being suddenly forced to switch to remote online learning in the middle of the winter 2020 semester, we took this learning experience to heart and launched SOLI, our Summer Online Learning Initiative, dramatically increasing the number of summer courses we normally offer. We offered six courses in this mode, which allowed us to reach new students who were not required to study in person on our campus in Toronto. From this positive experience we learned that many international students are interested in the unique learning opportunities ICS provides. So, going forward, we plan to continue to make our courses and programs available in remote-access mode, even after it is safe to physically gather again.

ICS has been blessed through these challenges as our small-size seminar and mentoring pedagogy has adapted well to a videoconferencing platform. We have been pleasantly surprised by our ability to maintain vibrant, engaged learning opportunities during the pandemic. One example is our Winter 2021 Interdisciplinary Seminar, based on Hendrik Hart's book *Understanding Our World*, in which students joined us from Jakarta, Krakow, London (UK), Edmonton (Alta.), and Kingston (Ont.).!

The ongoing, generous commitment of CRC churches and our support community has encouraged us in the pursuit of our educational mission amid the pandemic, providing essential support to our efforts to shape Christian leaders for service in the academy and in the wider society. This support helps us provide 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. We thank the CRCNA for standing with us as we continue to seek effective and innovative ways to serve God faithfully in the arena of Christian graduate education.

Following are some highlights of the ongoing work of ICS in 2020-2021:

First and foremost, God blessed our search for a new faculty member to serve ICS as associate professor in the philosophy of education and the practice of pedagogy with the hiring of Dr. Edith van der Boom. In this position, Edith also became the director of the educational leadership stream of ICS's M.A. program (or MA-EL), a professional development program ICS launched in 2018 to serve the leadership development needs of Christian school teachers and administrators. Edith hit the ground running on July 1, working energetically to further develop and grow the program, adding increased flexibility to it so that busy Christian educators can take better advantage of the learning opportunities the MA-EL provides. We give God thanks and praise that, at the time of this writing, we are expecting the first two students in this program stream to receive their M.A. degrees!

In addition, our M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs in philosophy continue to provide integral Christian education at the graduate level. This year three students completed all the requirements of the Ph.D. program (one in the ICS-only stream, and two in the conjoint ICS/Vrije Universiteit stream). Benjamin Shank successfully defended an ICS-only dissertation titled *Resounding*

Empathy: A Critical Exploration of Ricoeur's Theory of Discourse, to Clarify the Self's Reliance on Relationships with Other Persons; Shane Cudney successfully defended a conjoint ICS/VU dissertation on Kierkegaard titled *Where the Truth Lies: Pseudonymity, Complicity, and Critique in Fear and Trembling* (to be published in 2021 by Wipf and Stock's Pickwick Publications); and at the time of this writing, Dean Dettloff's ICS/VU dissertation, *Christwreck: An Accidentology of Christianity*, is before his examination committee.

At our Annual Convocation in May 2021, we are planning to celebrate the graduation of these five junior members (students) during a remotely accessed online convocation ceremony.

At present, total course enrollments for the 2020-21 academic year are 132. In terms of full-time equivalency (FTE), this number translates to 22 full-time students, a modest but noticeable increase from last year. In addition, we had seven full-time students in non-coursework portions of our programs, which brings our FTE total to 29. So far, 120 individuals have enrolled in at least one course at ICS in 2020-21. That number represents a high proportion of our overall enrollment, reflecting the current reality that a smaller core of full-time ICS degree program students is now being joined by a growing penumbra of students taking individual ICS courses for continuing adult education and professional development purposes. We welcome this trend, as it extends ICS's reach while maintaining the health and robustness of our time- and resource-intensive full-time M.A. and Ph.D. programs.

While the pandemic has interrupted our intentional partnering dialogue with the King's University, this year still witnessed the fruit of that discussion in the form of a course led by King's professor and ICS alumnus Michael DeMoor (with assistance from ICS Ph.D. candidate Samir Gassanov) titled "Capitalism(s) in the West: Intellectual History, Core Institutions, and Architectonic Critique."

Our senior members (faculty) continue to make significant contributions to academic research (in addition to their teaching and graduate supervision duties), giving popular and academic presentations and publishing articles in popular and academic publications. This year, ICS's six faculty members made seven presentations at academic conferences, 24 presentations at public events, published two articles in academic journals, and completed work on one edited book manuscript. ICS's junior members have been productive as well, making two presentations at academic conferences, three publications in academic journals, two public presentations, and four popular publications.

ICS's Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics (CPRSE) swiftly adapted its programs and collaborative projects to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The CPRSE offered a number of public online-access events, helping to develop strategies for ongoing remote learning and community outreach at ICS. The following are a few highlights of this year's activities:

- Interfaith Dialogue—CPRSE continued to collaborate with the Canadian Interfaith Conversation (CIC), Canada's largest interfaith dialogue and cooperation network, to plan and convene the biennial Our Whole Society Conference. This year's online edition of the conference, "Free to Believe, Responsible to Act," was livestreamed on May 4, 2021.

- Race, Racism, and Race Relations—During the 2020-21 academic year, CPRSE helped curate a conversation for people within and outside of ICS to speak meaningfully about issues related to race. This initiative generated the Ground Motive blog series “Uprooting Racism,” which features reflections by ICS faculty, students, and special guests on our community’s responsibility to help dismantle systemic racism. Additionally, the spring issue of ICS’s semiannual magazine *Perspective* explores the intersection of race, philosophy, and education.
- Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship Symposia—In keeping with the institutional focus on race, systemic racism, and race relations, this year’s public Scripture, Faith, and Scholarship Symposia featured scholars dedicated to the study of biblical interpretation within minority groups. On December 14, 2020, CPRSE welcomed Dr. Néstor Medina, assistant professor of religious ethics at Emmanuel College, to speak about “Decoloniality, Hermeneutics, and Theo-Ethics.” For the winter edition of this program, CPRSE collaborated with scholars from Stellenbosch University to discuss issues surrounding land and decoloniality through a biblical lens.
- Fourth Annual Undergraduate Workshop—This year CPRSE hosted ICS’s Annual Undergraduate Workshop in a virtual format. On November 13-14, 2020, CPRSE welcomed students from around the world to share their interdisciplinary reflections on the theme “Evil, Resistance, and Judgment: Creating a World Fit for Human Habitation,” inspired by the life and work of Hannah Arendt. The event opened with a public keynote presentation by renowned scholar and activist Dr. Mary Jo Leddy.
- Critical Faith Podcast—This year our podcast focused on promoting ICS’s shift to remote learning, exploring our faculty’s courses in their new online formats. Additionally, the podcast aired two topical series: the first with ICS theology professor Nik Ansell on some key topics in biblical interpretation today; and the second on the challenges facing political philosophy—especially as it intersects with Christian and Reformational thought—in a “post-2020” world. At the time of this writing, we have posted 11 episodes, with an average of 180 downloads per episode and a total reach of 3,600 downloads since May 2020 (an increase of 13% over the previous 10 months).

This academic year has been both challenging and rewarding as we continue to experience God’s blessing our efforts—even amid all the difficulty introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has led us to learn new ways for ICS to serve the academic and wider community, and we plan to make the most of these learnings as we continue to pursue the mission in Christian higher education our Maker and Redeemer has entrusted to us. We cherish the prayers and other forms of support we receive from members and congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and we thank you once again for supporting Christian graduate education at ICS.

May God grant you wisdom and discernment in your work during Synod 2021.

Institute for Christian Studies
Ronald A. Kuipers, president

The King's University

The past year has given all of us an interesting journey as we have dealt with the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic in our lives. The King's University has been stretched and tested and forced into operating in unconventional ways—and yet we are comforted by knowing that we are in God's hands, and we marvel at his continued blessings on our work. We remain committed to fulfilling our mission of equipping learners to bring renewal and reconciliation to every walk of life as we pursue our vision of building a more humane, just, and sustainable world.

Contrary to speculation about how the pandemic might affect enrollment numbers this year, we were surprised and grateful to experience another year of increasing student enrollment. This fall we welcomed 858 students to their studies at King's. In spring 2020, when the impact of the pandemic was being realized, some were forecasting declines in enrollment of up to 20 percent. While some higher education institutions did experience dramatic decreases in enrollment, we are incredibly thankful that we were not only spared an enrollment decline but also blessed with an increase. Thanks be to God! We continue to covet your prayers and support in encouraging prospective students in your community to pursue their Christian university education at King's. Despite positive student enrollment numbers this fall, the financial impacts of the pandemic continue to put pressure on the institution's revenues, making planning and budgeting a challenge. Please pray for wisdom and guidance for the university's board and executive leadership team as we wrestle with difficult decisions and develop strategies for moving the institution through these challenging times.

The impacts of the pandemic have required all post-secondary institutions to modify and adapt their education delivery to adhere to public health measures in order to ensure the safety of our community. While many institutions opted for exclusively online learning, King's capitalized on the advantages of being a small university and has been able to continue to provide students with the option of having some in-person instruction. For most courses this year, students have had the option to take one class per week in person while taking the remainder of their classes online. A lot of work went into planning and rescheduling to accommodate in-person instruction in a way that would ensure that no classroom had more than thirty students and that appropriate classroom spaces allowed two meters of physical distancing.

King's has partnered with Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East to offer an online education series for all members of CRC churches in British Columbia from January through May 2021. Titled *1Life: Five Callings*, this conversation series aims to encourage theological reflection, leadership, and faith-filled practice surrounding the five ministry priorities of the CRC: faith formation, global mission, mercy and justice, servant leadership, and gospel proclamation and worship. We are honored and excited to be given the opportunity to partner with our community's churches in British Columbia in offering this online lecture series, and we hope there may be future opportunities to do something similar with churches in other regions.

King's is a unique and beautiful community in which transformation occurs in the lives of students. We are deeply grateful for this space that

you are helping to provide. The faithful and generous support of various churches that are a part of the Christian Reformed Church in North America continues to have a profound impact on King's and our students. Through your investment in Christian higher education at King's, you are building the future and changing lives. You are helping to fulfill the vision of building a more humane, just, and sustainable world through King's as we prepare our students and alumni to serve as teachers, businesspeople, missionaries, politicians, researchers, nonprofit leaders, doctors, and more. Together we are offering first-class educational experiences and ensuring they are accessible to all students seeking a King's education. Thank you for your continued partnership!

The King's University
Melanie Humphreys, president

Kuyper College

One of my first experiences with Kuyper College, then Reformed Bible College (RBC), was in participating as a college student in RBC's Summer Training Session in Mexico. At our language school site, we learned a song composed by Dr. Dick Van Halsema, then president of RBC, based on 2 Corinthians 5:7: "By faith we walk and not by sight." Over the years, this text and song has guided my journey as God has led me into various areas of ministry and service.

During the past year, the Kuyper College community has claimed the truth of this Scripture while continuing to equip students for lives of ministry and service amid the disruptive time of the coronavirus pandemic. Walking by faith, with our mission before us, our faculty and staff have responded to a host of challenges and changes with outstanding diligence, innovation, collaboration, and care for our students.

Being a small college, we demonstrate a nimbleness that is particularly necessary when the unexpected and the unthinkable occur. Last March we faced such a situation, as we were required to end our 2019-2020 academic year and conduct all of our year-end events virtually. Thankfully, God enabled us to work together, meet individual student needs, and develop effective ways to address the numerous challenges presented by the pandemic. We accomplished much, and we are grateful for the outcomes.

In fall 2020, we implemented a hyflex, split-semester educational model to enable a dynamic and doable teaching and learning environment where students and faculty can meet in-person or virtually, if needed. Our faculty spent the summer reformatting their courses; our IT department upgraded our classrooms with state-of-the-art equipment; our facilities department implemented health and safety protocols; and our students became well oriented to this new model. The results have been so positive that we are considering ways in which we will continue using this educational model in the future as we hold firm to our commitment of establishing an engaging and caring college community.

Even within a vital community such as Kuyper, the pandemic has caused a great deal of isolation and anxiety. This past fall our student development staff and retention committee stepped up to address the personal needs of our students and to implement new programs and procedures to help them flourish. Our enhanced professional counseling services now allow our students to receive free counseling sessions from caring and capable Christian mental health providers who understand the challenges that college-age students are facing today. In August we implemented our new Student Success Coach program, which partners students with trained student success coaches to provide them with peer mentoring and accountability opportunities so that they can work through their academic, emotional, social, and spiritual challenges together. These programs and the many other ways in which we provide personal attention to our students have contributed to our highest retention rate in the past ten years.

The pandemic situation has certainly created more problem-solving and adaptation on a level we have not experienced, but our faculty and staff have not been deterred by this. They have worked tirelessly to accomplish our strategic priorities. So far during this academic year we have realized

small but measurable growth in our undergraduate and graduate student enrollments, showing our students' desire for a close-knit college community that offers programs focused on ministry and service. We also extended our business leadership course offerings to more than 20 dual-enrolled students at The Potter's House High School in Wyoming, Michigan. As well, we are completing our third year of the KuyperWorks program, which connects work and academics in meaningful ways to provide undergraduate students with professional, workplace ready skills and a more affordable education. And at our commencement program in April 2021 we plan to acknowledge our first graduates in our Master of Ministry program; these are women and men who are well prepared to serve within the church and parachurch organizations.

This past year we also focused on extending our reach to a broader community of scholars and practitioners who identify with our mission. By implementing new technology in our chapel, we have the capacity to include speakers and participants from around the world in our weekly Ora et Labora series, Youth Pastor Lunch 'n' Learns, and faculty and student scholar events. Several Kuyper faculty have worked together to create the *Kuyper Collective* podcast as a way to explore with church leaders pertinent topics that affect the church and society. And our faculty members continue to contribute to written scholarship with the release of two books—*From Lament to Advocacy: Black Religious Education and Public Ministry* and *The Faithful Librarian: Essays on Christianity in the Profession*—as well as a doctoral dissertation titled *Pacing Presence: Impact of the Relational Ministry Course for Graduates of Kuyper College Working with Adolescents*.

Within higher education we are aware of the financial implications of the ongoing pandemic for institutions as well as students. Through the generous support of our donor constituency, the funds received via the CARES Act, and the careful oversight of our expenditures, we achieved a balanced budget without the use of loans for the fourth consecutive year, and we provided additional funds to aid students in need. Because we are committed to helping our students and families access an affordable education, we implemented a tuition freeze for all first-year and transfer students. This is the latest of several initiatives over the past few years that we have taken to increase affordability and access for all students. We continue to manage our financial situation carefully, and we have received commendation from our auditors and accreditors. For FY2020 we reported our Department of Education financial composite index score at a record high 2.85, our operating budget covering institutional programs at 86 percent, and our student loan default rate at a very low 4.4 percent.

Let me conclude by highlighting one initiative involving our business leadership students that demonstrates how we are fulfilling our mission to "equip students with a biblical Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ's church and his world." Undergraduate students in Kuyper's entrepreneurship class study the basics of starting a business, including the development and creation of business models and learning about risk management, financing, and gaining startup capital. What makes this class unique is the real-time, real-world impact that students have by lending money to small-business startups around the globe through a process called micro-financing, which involves providing small business loans to people in poor

communities. Over the past five years, the entrepreneurship classes have collectively made 56 microfinance loans in 28 different countries, including startup businesses in agriculture, food, and retail—the majority of which are run and operated by women—through an organization called Kiva, using real money gifted to the class from an anonymous donor. These students are understanding firsthand the concept of business as mission, and they are making a difference in the lives of others around the world.

This past year has seen a vivid demonstration of the Kuyper College community drawing together to prepare students to be the next generation of Christian leaders—leaders who are fulfilling our end goal of education, “to live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God’s good world,” as our alumni are doing throughout the world. The world needs such Christian leaders. We at Kuyper are committed to equipping them for such service. Please join with us in praying that God raises up more workers for the harvest.

We are thankful for our continued partnership with the CRCNA, and we look forward to more tangible ways to serve Christ’s church and his world together.

Kuyper College
Patricia R. Harris, president

Redeemer University

Greetings from Redeemer University! We are thankful for this opportunity to share with you the exciting ways that God has been at work at Redeemer this past year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has played a significant role in the 2020-21 academic year at Redeemer University. This pandemic presented both a challenge and an opportunity for the university. Redeemer made the decision to preserve learning in community while simultaneously offering a choice for students to participate in classes either in person or remotely. The first semester of dual delivery was not without challenges, but overall it was successful. Redeemer has decided to continue to offer this mode of learning in the 2021-22 academic year. The decision to offer this choice for students between synchronous remote and in-person learning allows for flexibility at a time when there is still uncertainty about the future of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This fall, despite many obstacles brought about by the pandemic, we welcomed the largest incoming class in Redeemer's history. A total of 896 students chose to enroll in Redeemer's unique offering of Christian university education that integrates faith, life, and learning. With the growth of Redeemer's student body, there are many opportunities ahead.

Redeemer's strategic plan "Learn. Forward." was released this past spring and includes many promising initiatives. Our vision is to develop kingdom-centered, innovative graduates who make a profound impact in a rapidly changing, complex, and digital world.

One of the exciting opportunities to come out of the strategic plan is a new building project. Redeemer's new residence and learning facility is currently being constructed in the heart of the campus, with an expected opening in September 2021. The building will help to accommodate our steady growth in enrollment and will ensure that Redeemer can continue its mission on a modern and spiritually vibrant campus.

As of December 2020, legislative changes were made, allowing Redeemer the ability to grant new degrees. This significant change will provide new opportunities for many more students. Redeemer plans to offer three new degree programs next fall that will provide its students with a post secondary education more tailored to their chosen career path. This legislative change is a historic milestone, building on the legacy of the university's founding vision.

Redeemer's recent name change to Redeemer University has created a unique opportunity to rethink Redeemer's brand. The institution went through a rebranding process over the past year that resulted in a vibrant logo and fresh look for Redeemer. The new brand reflects the reality that we are moving forward and adapting to a changing world while remaining anchored in the Reformed Christian tradition.

This has been a year of significant change for Redeemer, and we are immensely grateful to see the many ways in which the Lord has provided for us in the midst of a challenging but exciting time.

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, particularly during these remarkable times of great change, discord, and pandemic. Throughout our six-decade history, we have valued our relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Quite literally, without the CRC and key leaders within it, Trinity would never have come into existence.

Beyond those founding moments, we remain grateful for 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 (a practice that we earnestly desire to resume in a “post-COVID” world), to serving as a resource for local congregations, to preparing students to be leaders in the church. Trinity’s partnership with the CRC is valuable and, we believe, mutually beneficial!

As a young college, the present Trinity community has had the great privilege of knowing, personally, people who were “in the room” in the 1950s when this college was envisioned and then created. Sadly, though, over the past few years we have lost many of the remaining first connections to our past, in the passing of Dr. George DeJong in April 2018 (the last of our founders) and in the passing of Dr. Derke Bergsma in November 2020 (the professor who taught the first class at Trinity in October 1959). Their faith and determination are not merely matters of historical interest; they energize and motive us today.

We stand today before a golden opportunity to plan for tomorrow. This type of building for tomorrow always demands Courage, Faith, and Vision. Remember, Trinity stands for the extension of God’s kingdom. Nothing can be more important than that.

These words, penned long ago by founder Dr. Richard Prince, is as close to an unofficial mission statement that Trinity could hope to have.

We are a relatively young institution (America’s oldest college, Harvard University, was “our age” more than 75 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence). And yet we are also a blessed institution, grateful to God (and to God’s people) for the providential hand that has guided us through good times and bad, over mountains and through valleys.

And what an impact Trinity continues to have! Trinity is an excellent institution of higher education—not just because the college’s president says so (to the surprise of no one!). Consider, instead, these examples of external indicators of recognized excellence:

- Our nursing program is ranked number 1 among all college and university programs in the state of Illinois (with 100% passage rates in five of the past six years on the national licensure exams).
- A top-20 nationally ranked education program
- Top CPA passage rates among Illinois universities
- A nearly 100 percent medical school placement rate
- A 97 percent post-graduation placement rate for vocations or graduate study

- A partnership—along with six other institutions such as 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.

We are seeing hopeful signs that this recognition is positively affecting enrollment as well: Trinity’s 2020 freshman class was 13 percent larger than it was in 2019 (which was 6% larger than in 2018). Moreover, we had more overall students studying at Trinity in 2020 than we did in 2019. This report, to put it mildly, is an atypical one for higher education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and from the Midwest, where double-digit declines (rather than growth) are more the norm.

I am pleased also to report that we are seeing even stronger fidelity to our mission as well. Our curricular offerings and faculty teach from a Christian worldview (as has always been the case). And our students are increasingly diverse, recognizing that the Reformed Christian perspective is not the province of any particular ethnic, socioeconomic, or national background. We seek to be a faithful institution translating a timeless mission into the contemporary vernacular.

We know that while the ultimate matters of faith and mission transcend time, the world in 2021 is very different from that of even a few years ago, let alone more than 60 years ago. Trinity needs to constantly pursue purposeful, intentional adaptations that allow us to be particularly attuned to its mission in our time—just as Trinity has been particularly attuned to its mission at every point in its history. This calls for connecting the *who* and *why* we are with the *where* and *when* we are.

In a post-Christian and significantly polarized world, this task has never been more challenging or more necessary. If Trinity and institutions like it do not do this work, who will? Where and from whom will students learn breadth and depth of the Christian faith, how to engage with culture and transform it, or what a faithful witness in “every square inch” of the world looks like?

These are the serious questions we wrestle with on a near-daily basis. Surely these are similar to questions being asked in denominational meetings and CRC congregational gatherings across the continent.

God can and will do as he chooses to do. I firmly believe, however, that God’s plan for places like Trinity is for a greater reach instead of a lesser one; it is for a larger impact rather than a smaller one. I also believe that God is calling us all to a serious and earnest assessment of who we are, what we should become, how we travel that path, and where our priorities must lie. Every significantly impactful institution of higher education—from Yale to Stanford, Duke to Vanderbilt—was at one time young and earnest, like Trinity is today. Can you catch a vision for what our Reformed colleges and universities might do with a circle of faithfulness: faithfulness in mission, in education, in spiritual formation, in prayer, in resources, in support? Who among us is so bold as to limit God’s purposes for these places?

Back in the summer of 2019—seemingly a lifetime ago!—the college’s president and his wife attended a vesper service at Westminster Abbey in London and were randomly seated in front of the lectern in the sanctuary. Inscribed boldly on that lectern is the phrase “Attempt Great Things for

God.” This powerful phrase is attributed to William Carey, the 18th-century pastor, missionary, and educator who is often credited as the “father of modern missions.” Carey caught a large and transformative vision for what God’s people might do to spread the gospel and help to transform the world.

How might we, in our time and place, get in on a similar expansive God-given vision for Christian higher education—a vision that works in partnership with congregations and denominational partners? These are pivotal months and years for our churches and for our colleges. May the generations who come after we are long gone recognize our sacrificial commitment to effective and faithful witness to God’s good work in this world.

Although this is technically an annual report to the denomination, in reality, it is also 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, incubators for future leadership in our congregations and denomination and in many other places of serious Christian formation and teaching.

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 partnership with the church.

Trinity Christian College
Kurt D. Dykstra, president