

2016 Ministry Report



Our Journey Together



Christian
Reformed
Church

Journeying Together

While in college, I worked as a camp counselor in the summertime. It was a challenging responsibility to guide, direct, and care for a cabin of a dozen youngsters, and I was always pleased when a junior counselor—a counselor in training—joined me. Two is better than one when dealing with a group of grade 7 students!

You can think of your own experiences in which you've learned that "two is better than one," that "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken," or that "although the body is made up of many parts, they form one body." That, after all, is what the church is all about: serving as the body of Christ.

This annual report provides a picture of our many-faceted ministries, using words, photos, and numbers. But please don't approach this as data to be digested. Rather, think of it as the body of Christ at work—the Holy Spirit moving in and through us. And even if you're not in any of the pictures or stories, it's still about you—and all of those who sit in pews with you, whether across the aisle or on the other side of the world.

Even more, this is a report about the Christian Reformed Church moving forward. Whether it's me recalling my time as a camp counselor hiking in rain or sunshine, or you remembering a time when your church was moving into a new chapter in its ministry, we're all on a journey. So it is with the CRC—each of us in our local congregations, all of us together.

While we all know the ultimate destination of our shared journey, this report seeks to note some of the highlights—even if you can only experience them vicariously.

As you read the report, please remember two things.

First, a journey often conjures up a vision of moving away: a summer vacation, off to college, or a business trip. But this journey isn't about going someplace far away. True, some of what you read is happening on the other side of the globe. Yet whether it's ministry far away or ministry that provides resources to you and your congregation right where you are, it's all about journeying together in kingdom service.

Throughout *Our Journey 2020*, the ministry plan of the CRC, the work of the denomination is focused again and again on local congregations—not as an end in itself, but to keep your church go-

ing forward, making disciples in your community, and teaching everything Christ has commanded.

Second, a journey requires resources. Hiking with grade 7 students in the Manistee National Forest required lots of water, trail mix, and even ponchos. Journeying together as the CRC requires resources as well. *Our Journey 2020* recognizes the need for resources, and it seeks to make them easily accessible, to help you find them, and to encourage you to share the good ministry ideas you've inherited or picked up along the way.

The best part of this journey is the promise we have for each step of the way: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).



Dr. Steven Timmermans is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America



Calvin College professor of religion, Chris de Groot, gives some remarks during the convocation ceremony at Handlon Correctional Facility

Unlocking Purpose, Instilling Passion

Raymond Potts remembers his mother telling him that there's nothing like waking up and having purpose and passion in your life. Potts, a student in Calvin College's Class of 2020, used those same words to encourage his classmates during the convocation ceremony in April 2016 at Handlon Correctional Facility.

Potts is a member of the inaugural class of the Calvin Prison Initiative. The recently accredited program offers 20 inmates each year an opportunity to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in ministry leadership. The students take classes in ministry and theology as well as Calvin's liberal arts core courses. Inmates from any of the 31 prisons in the Michigan Department of Corrections system can apply to the program, and each August admitted students are transferred to Handlon.

The first class of students is halfway through its second year, and they are now joined by 20 more students (Class of 2021) who are completing their first semester.

"We all want our lives to count for something. Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary have made it possible for inmates to do just that," said Potts.

Leaders at both institutions say their missions compelled them to begin this program. The seminary's mission focuses on forming leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ; the college equips students to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

"Calvin shares a name, it shares a history, it shares a mission to form leaders for the church and the world," said Julius Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, at the convocation ceremony. "It also shares in this program because of that mission."

Michael Le Roy, president of Calvin College, agreed, greeting the Class of 2020 with these words: "We welcome you to this education. . . We believe in this mission, and we believe it means that everyone who receives a Calvin education makes a difference in the place where they are called."

That includes behind bars. Because, as Heidi Washington, director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, said at the convocation ceremony: "All it takes is someone to believe in you."

—Matt Kucinski,
Calvin College

Changing the Story of Daniel Benitez

Daniel Benitez moved to Piedra Blanca, Honduras, hoping to make a go at farming to support his wife and three children. After a year of hard work growing corn, however, the Benitez family was no better off. Daniel was discouraged. It wasn't until he joined a World Renew-supported farmer group in his community that Daniel's story of hardship and struggle began to change.

Daniel came to Piedra Blanca with little agricultural experience and began to benefit »



Through a farmer group supported by World Renew, Daniel Benitez has begun to change his story for the better.

» from working with other farmers in his community. He took agriculture classes in which he learned that diversifying his produce could protect against crop failure. He also implemented some of the successful farming methods that other farmers said increased their crop yields.

Instead of mono-cropping corn, Daniel began also to grow pineapple and cacao. Through World Renew's Honduran partner, Alfalit, Daniel developed the skills he needed to care for his crops. He also received a small loan from his group to install an irrigation system and to build a silo to store corn. He then dug a pond on his property, where he is breeding tilapia to feed his family and to sell to neighbors.

Through World Renew's presence in Piedra Blanca, Daniel has had opportunities to learn the agricultural techniques he needs in order to improve his yields and reduce his losses. As a result, he has built a more sustainable living from his farm that better supports his family.

But the story doesn't end there.

Daniel not only improved his livelihood but also became a volunteer trainer, teaching nearby communities about sustainable agriculture techniques. He also attended workshops in leadership and governance and was elected president of his community council. In that role, Daniel presents his community's needs to government officials and builds relationships with local representatives. His efforts resulted in funding for school repairs, latrine construction, road repairs, and other projects.

Daniel Benitez is changing the story of his life and using his skills and gifts to better the lives of his neighbors. Through World Renew and Alfalit, Daniel became convinced that poverty is not his destiny, justice is not out of reach, and his dreams are attainable. The miraculous example of this changed life is about much more than crops and fish. Daniel's transformation points his neighbors, including us, to the greatest story changer of all, Jesus Christ.

—Beth Degraff,
World Renew



This group of Christian Reformed Chaplains in 1943 were among the first to serve our denomination in this way.

Seventy-Five Years Old and Growing!

From its humble origins 75 years ago, CRC chaplaincy has grown to become a major part of the denomination's outreach. In its first years, the ministry consisted of a small handful of dedicated volunteers who served alongside the military during World Wars I and II. Today, there are nearly 150 ordained men and women serving as chaplains in the military, prisons, hospitals, and a dozen other types of agencies/institutions in specialized pastoral care outside of the local church.

If the church financially supported all of this ministry, it would cost over \$10 million. Instead, most of this ministry is supported by entities outside of the Christian Reformed Church by the communities where these chaplains work. This makes chaplaincy one of the least expensive ministries of the denomination. For the cost of two employees (a director and an administrative assistant) the church oversees and encourages the ministry of chaplains who touch the lives of thousands of people living in crisis situations.

Please pray that God will continue to touch his world through these highly trained individuals dedicated to bringing pastoral care to people in crisis situations. Pray also that chaplains who serve in especially difficult situations (military overseas deployments, prisons, hospital ER units, etc.) may be protected and supported in their challenging work.

—Ron Klimp,
CRC Chaplaincy

Investing in Relationships

As lead pastor of Faith Christian Reformed Church in Burlington, Ontario, Kevin DeRaaf found himself wrestling with how best to connect his congregation with the neighborhood and culture surrounding them. For help, DeRaaf and his team sought out Ridder Church Renewal, an intensive program offered by the CRC and the Reformed Church in America and dedicated to revitalizing churches. The program is funded in part by Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Ridder Church Renewal “helped us understand who we are in Christ and how we navigate our personal journey, which affects how we lead and how we show up in our relationships,” DeRaaf said.

The initiative taught him how to handle his own triggers and habitual reactions to stress, which he said better equipped him to combat the pastoral challenges he faces. The program also deepened Kevin’s relationships with his leadership team, allowing him to draw on them for further support.



Kevin DeRaaf credits Ridder Church Renewal for helping him better understand his identity in Christ and how he can best lead his congregation.

“It helped me navigate a tough season that I could not have navigated without Ridder,” Kevin remarked. Through the Ridder Church Renewal program, Kevin and his leadership team learned to nurture each other and, in the end, better serve their church.

“If pastors aren’t in a place where they are doing the hard work of investing in . . . relationships—focused on their personal health—they will die on the vine.” In other words, a church’s health does not

merely consist of growing congregational numbers but of growing the spiritual lives of those within and leading the congregation while staying culturally relevant.

“At its core,” Kevin observed, “a church is a group of people in deep relationship with both God and each other. Both of those relationships need to grow; Ridder Church Renewal opens up pathways for such growth.”

—Brooke Bonnema,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Gaining Confidence to Answer God’s Call

LaPrea Anthony first traveled to Nicaragua two years ago with her youth group from Calvin CRC in Muskegon, Michigan. “I loved meeting the people there and admired the humility of each person that I met. Going on that trip made me realize that I wanted to return.”

A few years later, LaPrea’s was introduced to Momentum, a ministry of Christian Reformed World Missions. Momentum connected LaPrea to intentional discipleship with a mentor from her church and another college-aged student, local service projects with organizations in her own community, and a month-long missions experience in a place of her choice.

LaPrea chose **LaPrea Anthony (center)**. Nicaragua and was connected with CRWM’s partners at the Nehemiah Center and *Lirlo de Los Valles* school, while living with a Nicaraguan host family.

“It was definitely tough living with a family that spoke a language different than my own,” LaPrea said, “but I loved the experience of getting a glimpse into family life in Nicaragua.”

LaPrea’s youth director, Brian Kingshott, believes these experiences ultimately stretched her for future service.

—Brian Clark,
Christian Reformed World Missions



Photo by Jessica Brouwer, Nehemiah Center.



BTGMI uses all kinds of media to share the gospel with people around the world.

Back to God Ministries International

Through a variety of media outlets, God is using Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) to reframe lives with his story.

One challenge we face is in keeping up with fast-changing media technologies. This challenge also presents opportunities for using new media to expand ministry. BTGMI uses radio, print, television, and increasingly the Internet, social media, and smartphones to deliver the gospel message and engage people in conversations about faith. We're committed to providing delivery systems that are most effective for sharing God's Word in each global context.

HIGHLIGHTS

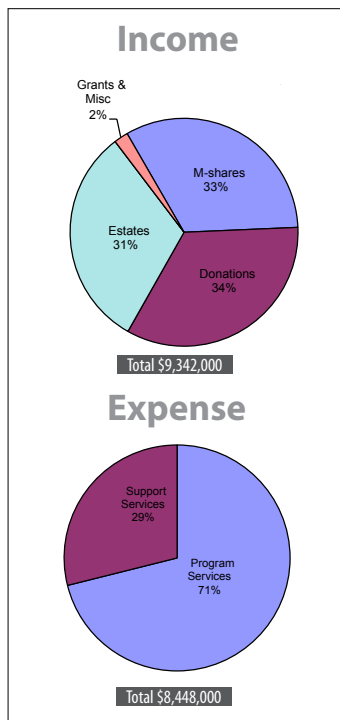
Your ministry shares, offerings, and gifts make it possible for BTGMI to make an impact in the world:

- Social media continues to be the most effective way to reach Portuguese-speaking people, especially in Brazil. BTGMI's Facebook ministry now has 354,000 followers, an increase of 66 percent, and that number continues to grow each week. Many of the YouTube devotional messages go viral as people share posts with friends.
- In China, BTGMI sponsored three "New Media" leadership conferences for Chinese Christians looking to use media in their ministries. Our *Be Thou My Rhythm* smartphone app provides devotions and biblical resources, engaging an average of 444,000 readers each day.
- A new Spanish children's audio program, the only culturally authentic Christian program for Spanish-speaking children, is now being broadcast on 141 stations throughout Latin America.
- More than 171,000 individuals and families in North America have signed up to receive daily emails containing a variety of biblical resources like *Today* devotions, *Family Fire* articles, *Think Christian* blogs, and more.



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Christian Reformed Home Missions

Home Missions calls, catalyzes, and collaborates with God’s missionary people to start and strengthen missional churches and campus ministries that transform lives and communities.

Throughout the U.S. and Canada, Home Missions partners with ministries to provide encouragement, training, coaching, resources, networking, and financial support. Through campus ministries students fellowship and discern their place in God’s mission. In established churches, small groups meet and study and grow. In new churches, people come together and find community and the love of Jesus Christ.

These ministries are transforming lives across North America. The changes we see in our culture present a huge opportunity to spread the love of God—the time is ripe to empower ministry leaders to bring God’s kingdom to new cities and into new communities.

At Home Missions, we’re humbled and grateful for your support. Your gifts, encouragement, prayers, and passion for God’s mission are an answer to prayer. Thank you.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Served 1,103 churches and 48 classes through regional, ethnic, and catalytic leaders.
- Partnered with 40 new churches.
- Supported 33 campus ministries.
- Ministries and churches across North America had access to training, coaching, resources, and funding.

PRAYER REQUESTS

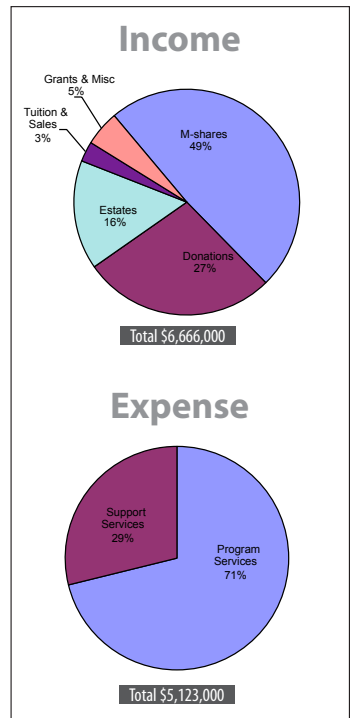
We support a wide variety of ministry leaders including church planters, campus ministry leaders, cluster leaders, and more. Please pray

- for open doors and open hearts.
- for the hundreds of pastors, leaders, and congregations working to join God’s mission in their communities.
- for a renewed passion for prayer and mission in the Christian Reformed Church.
- for more people to know the saving grace of Jesus.



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Christian Reformed World Missions

For over 125 years, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has been helping Christian Reformed churches fulfill the Great Commission. When members of the CRC feel God’s call to serve, CRWM joins with congregations to provide prayer care, finances, and other resources. CRWM has over 200 missionaries serving in more than 50 countries. They focus their work on four major categories:

- Christian Education
- Evangelism and Discipleship
- Leadership Development
- Transforming Communities



A children’s ministry in El Salvador

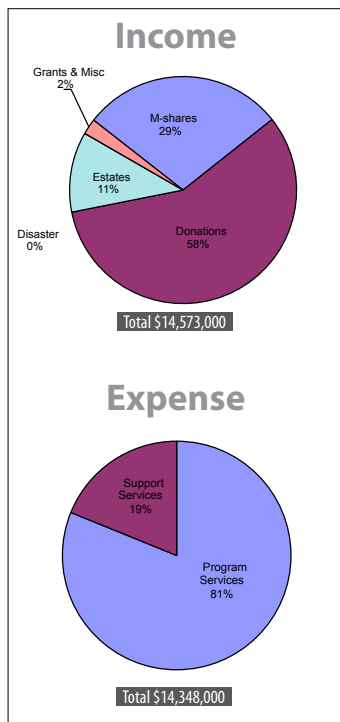
HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 17,000 participants took part in CRWM-related leadership development programs. “The seminar I attended made an incredible impact on me,” says one participant in an Educational Care workshop. “As a result, I intentionally added Bible teaching as an integral part of our school program.”
- CRWM staff and partners helped establish 315 new faith communities that have been meeting for at least three months. A pastor in Sierra Leone whom CRWM has come alongside in planting a church said, “We believe that God is the one in charge of this work. He was here before our coming and gave us all that was needed.”
- Eighty missionary teachers served at international schools that range from providing elementary to master’s level education. A woman who has a ministry for individuals with special needs took part in a theology class with one of these missionary teachers in Costa Rica. “This has nourished my dream of perceiving that a better world is possible for [persons with disabilities] and others who are socially excluded,” she said.
- CRWM began 121 new initiatives with partners inside and outside the CRC. This includes a ministry to Middle Eastern refugees in Germany with a new partner in Berlin, called Berliner Stadtmission. David Kromminga and Mary Buteyn, CRWM missionaries who serve with Berliner Stadtmission, say, “The opportunities for our involvement are abundant: pastoral care, language education, leadership training for new Christians, interreligious understanding, worship in easy German, and workshops for congregations in intercultural competence.”



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Calvin College

Founded by the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin College is a top-ranked liberal arts college that equips and empowers its nearly 4,000 students from 46 U.S. states, 55 countries, and six Canadian provinces to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

With an adventurous core curriculum, today's Calvin students are free to chase the wonderings of philosophy, the intricacies of languages foreign and familiar, and the beauty of the world at a molecular level. Calvin is proud to offer 100+ majors and programs, with advanced courses that have often been compared to graduate-level experiences for their remarkable depth in learning.



Nearly 900 students representing 60 majors graduated from Calvin College last year.

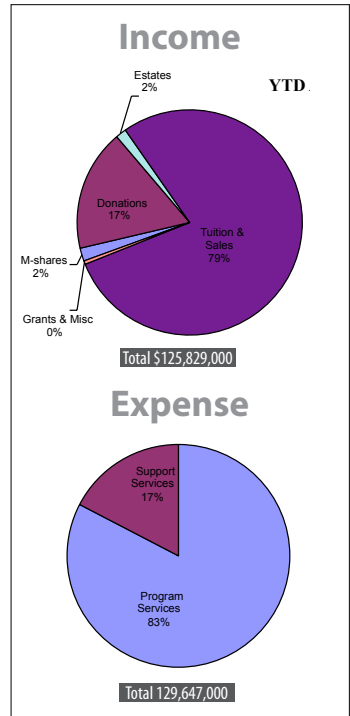
HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched the Calvin Center for Faith and Writing and celebrated the Festival of Faith and Writing's silver anniversary.
- Remained a national leader in Goldwater Scholars, with two more juniors receiving the prestigious scholarship.
- Partnered with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Michigan Department of Corrections to launch the Calvin Prison Initiative, becoming the first college in the state and first Christian College in the United States to offer a full bachelor's degree to inmates.
- Predicted the explosion of a star, something that has never been done before. Physics and astronomy professor Larry Molnar and a few of his students made the bold prognostication from data they gathered in the Calvin observatory.
- Claimed titles in nine varsity sports, earned the league's all-sports award for the third time in four years, and set a record with 14 Calvin teams earning team GPA awards in their league for having a cumulative team GPA of 3.30 or above.
- Graduated nearly 900 students representing 60 majors. The most recent annual employment and grad school report shows that 98 percent of Calvin grads are professionally employed or in grad school within nine months of graduation.



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Faith Formation Ministries

Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) encourages and equips congregations in their discipleship and faith formation callings. FFM recognizes that each congregation has a unique identity, context, and calling. In response to these differences, FFM staff members seek to listen, ask questions, and connect congregational leaders to resources that will strengthen ministry in their unique context.



With help from Emily Dykstra, a recent graduate of Trinity Christian College, New Hope CRC in Lansing, IL painted puzzle pieces on the wall of the children's education wing. The puzzle is a metaphor for the many pieces of the Bible fitting together into one, cohesive whole and was designed to help people of all ages understand the biblical narrative.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A dozen congregations were part of a cohort to encourage and support each other as they actively explored the ways in which the Building Blocks of Faith play out in their congregations.
- FFM regional catalyzers made presentations to more than 20 regional classes on the work of Faith Formation Ministries and the resources that we offer congregations.
- More than half a dozen Faith Formation workshops were hosted in churches from Ripon, California, to Ottawa, Ontario.
- FFM Regional Catalyzers made more than 300 connections with congregational leaders through email, phone calls, meetings, and ongoing coaching relationships.
- FFM staff worked on the development of four toolkits offering a wide variety of ideas and resources to meet the unique needs of congregations. The toolkits focus on intergenerational ministry, faith storytelling, the Building Blocks of Faith, and faith commitments such as baptism and profession of faith.



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Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Theological Seminary prepares men and women to lead in ministry for Christ’s church and his kingdom. Founded over 140 years ago, Calvin Seminary continues to live out the values of its legacy in which all its teaching and formation grow from a shared understanding of God’s Word as articulated in the Reformed confessions.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Almost 300 students from 23 different nations attended Calvin Seminary last year. Nearly one-half of all students are pursuing the M.Div. degree, with 70 of these students earning their course credits through distance learning.
- A Missional Living of Scripture Conference drew together over 200 ministry practitioners, scholars, students, and community members for two days of worship, lectures, and workshops. Hosted by the Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal of Calvin Theological Seminary, this November conference helped participants examine the way God’s mission shapes their lives, their ministries, and their cities as they seek to embody God’s mission.
- Professors Sarah Schreiber and Amanda Benckhuysen and 27 students embarked on a 13-day study tour of Israel and Palestine in January 2016. The course helped seminarians *in-forma-tion* learn to read the Bible and interpret it faithfully with an eye to both the ancient context and our contemporary world.
- In July, Calvin Seminary hosted a conference that explored perspectives on the question “What Does ‘Love Your Neighbor’ Mean Today?” The conference featured Dr. Richard Mouw, professor of faith and public life and president emeritus at Fuller Theological Seminary, as well as many of the newer faculty members at Calvin Seminary.

Please pray that all our teaching and learning at Calvin Seminary, both in and out of the classroom, will help to equip and empower leaders to serve effectively in today’s diverse and challenging world.

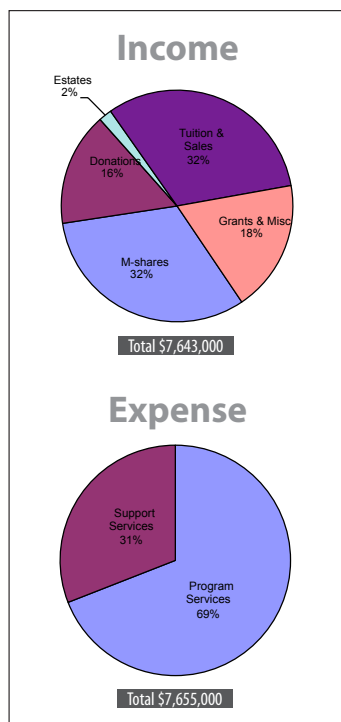


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Drs. Amanda Benckhuysen and Danjuma Gibson were two of the speakers at Calvin Seminary’s *Loving Your Neighbor Today* conference in July. Video recordings from this event are available at calvin-seminary.edu/neighbor.



Worship Ministries

Enriched by a great diversity of ethnicities, communities, styles, and gifts, Worship Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church seeks to support and strengthen biblically grounded and theologically Reformed worship. We do this through developing networks for mutual support, sharing gifts already present in our churches, curating and creating resources, and helping churches deepen the questions they ask around worship.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Thirteen Peer Learning Groups met in the U.S., Canada, and Ukraine with 67 participants.
- Worship Ministries attended the Canadian Gathering event and were blessed by meeting folks from across the country.
- We began an e-newsletter and *Facebook* page (CRC Worship Ministries) specific to CRC worship leaders, musicians, and planners.
- New liturgical forms were presented to and approved by Synod 2016.
- Our staff chaired the worship planning teams for *Engage 2016: A Multiethnic Gathering* and for Synod 2016.
- We cosponsored a multicultural worship event in New York City.
- *Reformed Worship* is a quarterly worship magazine published by Worship Ministries for an ecumenical audience. This past year along with four print issues we produced a monthly e-newsletter (3,966 subscribers) and maintained a *Facebook* page (4,700 followers).



For 30 years, *Reformed Worship* has been providing Christian Reformed churches with ideas and resources to help them offer worship services that are rich and meaningful for all seasons of the liturgical year. As the magazine celebrated its anniversary with this September issue, they also launched a new online subscription service that will help it expand its reach to churches and individuals both within and outside the CRC.



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World Renew

Through your support, involvement, and prayers, you follow Jesus' example and extend Christ's love in word and deed to those experiencing poverty, hunger, injustice or disaster.

In 2016 you helped World Renew walk alongside Christian leaders from 67 churches and community organizations in some of the world's poorest countries. As a result, more than 298,400 people in 21 developing countries participated in World Renew's long-term community programs, improving their health, crop production and animal raising skills, literacy, income, and leadership capacity.

World Renew also assisted more than 490,000 people affected by disasters in 27 countries. In Nepal and Ecuador, World Renew provided immediate earthquake relief and long-term rebuilding. Following drought and extreme hunger in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, World Renew distributed food. In conflicts in South Sudan and the Middle East, World Renew brought hope.



Women in rural Srae Chrov, Cambodia, are working toward a better life through World Renew.

HIGHLIGHTS

- World Renew served people in 39 countries in 2016, responding to disasters and providing long-term community-based programs that helped a total of 796,279 individuals.
- World Renew's ministry was supported by 2,885 volunteers who donated 250,392 hours—roughly the equivalent of 120 full-time employees for one year.
- Through World Renew, 296 North American congregations engaged in social justice and advocacy around such issues as creation care, immigration, and refugee policies.
- World Renew's Disaster Response Services volunteers contacted 19,557 disaster-affected households to assess their needs, and repaired or rebuilt 363 damaged homes.
- World Renew's refugee program helped 217 people begin a new life in Canada last year.

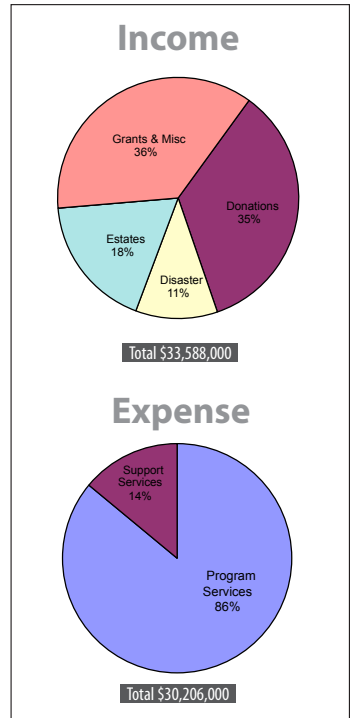
World Renew relies on gifts and offerings to support its work and does not receive ministry shares. To learn more about how you can get involved, please visit worldrenew.net.



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Note: Facts, figures, and financial data are preliminary. The World Renew Ministry Report for 2016 will be available in January 2017. Look for it in your church, or visit worldrenew.net/about for more information.





Aboriginal Ministries

A boriginal Ministries in the CRC support healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is made up of a national committee (the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee), which includes the heads of three Urban Aboriginal Ministries, a justice and reconciliation mobilizer, and volunteers from across the country.

The three Canadian Urban Aboriginal Ministries seek to encourage the growth of uniquely Indigenous, Christian working and worshipping communities.

The Edmonton (Alta.) Native Healing Centre empowers individuals to grow stronger and creates vibrant community relationships while honoring people's culture through spiritual development centered in the heart of the Creator.

The Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba, hosts a social enterprise within the ministry, offering men and women the oppor-

tunity to learn traditional crafts, and holds weekly sharing circles to strengthen faith journeys.

The Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan, engages the urban aboriginal community through spiritual and social activities that develop a unique Christian aboriginal identity while serving diverse needs.

Aboriginal ministry in the CRC requests your prayers that our ministries can continue to develop strong Indigenous leadership to serve Indigenous peoples and our churches as we seek to live fully reconciled lives.

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Disability Concerns

In *Our Journey 2020*, the Christian Reformed Church commits to "becoming a diverse church in which everyone is welcome, regardless of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, or language." About 17 to 19 percent of North Americans live with disabilities of various kinds, including vision and hearing loss, long-term effects of stroke, autism, physical challenges, Down syndrome, and bipolar disorder.

For over 30 years, Disability Concerns has helped Christian Reformed congregations become more diverse communities in which everybody belongs and everybody serves. We collaborate most closely with a number of other denominational ministries as part of the Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) working group, and since 2009 we have engaged in shared ministry with Reformed Church in America (RCA) Disability Concerns.

Together CRC and RCA Disability Concerns provide churches with online and print re-

sources. We organize, equip, and network over 700 disability advocates to serve their congregations and classes. We also consult with churches on a wide variety of issues.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Ask God to bless volunteer disability advocates as they help churches to minister with and engage people with disabilities in congregational life.
- Pray that people with disabilities in your congregation and your neighborhood will be known, noticed, and missed (when not present).



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Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations promotes biblical racial reconciliation. We design, organize, and implement programs that assist in eliminating the causes and effects of racism within the body of believers.

For Harry Descheene, Jr., learning about the Doctrine of Discovery through a Blanket Exercise helped to explain some of his experience as a Navajo man and to put his past into perspective. The Blanket Exercise is a workshop that Synod 2015 called “a practical, powerful, experiential way to understand Native peoples’ history in the Canadian and American contexts”. This year, Race Relations facilitated 25 Blanket Exercises for almost 1,000 participants!

Another workshop that Race Relations facilitates is called “Widening the Circle.” This workshop was updated in the past year and made available to staff in the CRCNA’s Canadian office. After participating in the workshop, Rhonda Elgersma said, “It helped give me a glimpse into the lives of people I pass in the office or lunchroom every day, but whose story I don’t necessarily know.”

The Office of Race Relations also started four new regional newsletters this year to equip racial reconcilers across North America. To sign up, visit bit.ly/ORRsubscribe.

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Eight young people and five adults traveled to Nicaragua in June 2016 as part of a Listening and Learning Tour hosted by OSJ, Faith Formation Ministries, World Renew, and CRWM.

Office of Social Justice

The Office of Social Justice works with congregations and CRC members to develop a deeper understanding and response to God’s call to do justice in our personal and communal lives, as well as in the structures of our societies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 1,000 people signed the *Blessing, Not a Burden* campaign pledge to change the conversation about immigrants and ask elected officials to enact laws reflecting that immigrants are a blessing.
- The *Climate Witness Project* brought together over 200 CRC members in 35 congregations across the U.S. and Canada to educate, act, and advocate around climate change.
- Over 36 congregations in the U.S. and Canada used our Sanctity of Human Life Sunday worship materials.
- An intergenerational group from three CRC churches, Calvin College, the Office of Social Justice, the Office of Race Relations, Faith Formation Ministries, and World Renew joined thousands of other Christians in Washington, D.C., for *Ecumenical Advocacy Days* to learn and advocate for voting rights.
- Hundreds of people subscribed to our Do Justice blog series.

CONTACT INFO

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Photo by Joseph Visser Photography



A Blanket Exercise training in Chicago.

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response.

The work of Safe Church and other ministries that make up JIMA (Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy) is grounded in the value that all people possess the divine image of their creator. The Lord is honored as we reflect this value in our congregations and communities; abuse has no place here. The Safe Church office responds to about 1,000 requests for assistance each year, and we depend on volunteers who are active in their congregations and classes across the U.S. and Canada. Synod has encouraged each classis to have a safe church team to act as a resource to congregations.

- **Awareness:** Synod encourages participation in Abuse Awareness Sunday, designated as the fourth Sunday in September. Resources are available on our website, including bulletin inserts (thousands are ordered by congregations each year). New resources are regularly added, and learning conversations continue on The Network.
- **Prevention:** *Circle of Grace* is used in a growing number of congregations to teach children and youth about God's presence and the sacredness of every relationship.
- **Response:** Team members are trained to act in a "walk-alongside" role, reflecting the Lord's compassion and justice to persons who have experienced abuse.

Safe church ministry works when we all work together.

CONTACT INFO

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Centre for Public Dialogue

The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue helps Canadian congregations do justice so that each of God's image-bearers may have the opportunity to thrive. Our current focus areas are Indigenous justice, human trafficking, refugee justice, climate change, and assisted dying.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Launching a new website that features issue-specific worship resources to help congregations learn about and reflect on God's heart for justice.
- Adding a new action centre to the website that makes it easier for Canadians to contact their Members of Parliament.
- Working with CRC members to advocate about assisted dying legislation.
- Helping various congregations become good neighbors to refugees through our Journey with Me workshop.
- Developing resources during the federal election to help Reformed Christians learn about the issues and vote according to their convictions.
- Running series like "What Being Pro-Life Means to Me", "#CRClistens", and "Live Justly for Lent" on our Do Justice blog.
- Along with other CRC ministries, endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and using the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to shape our three-year plan.
- Forming relationships with new Members of Parliament through letters and visits.

CONTACT INFO

Website: crcna.ca/publicdialogue
 Phone: (613) 686-6298
 Email: publicdialogue@crcna.ca

Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is charged with facilitating, coordinating, and offering leadership in the ordination processes for pastors in the Christian Reformed Church.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Endorsement of 47 individuals for approval by Synod 2016 as first-time candidates for the office of minister of the Word. Approval of candidates each year is a highlight of synod and a capstone moment in the Candidacy Committee's work.
- Approval by Synod 2016 of a comprehensive report and a new initiative to provide continuing education for pastors. The coming year will hopefully see a concerted effort to expand commitments to pastoral continuing education for the benefit of both pastors and their congregations.
- Presentation to Synod 2016 of twelve items of clarification regarding the office of Commissioned Pastor for those not traditionally trained in seminary to serve in ordained ministry. Synod approved the report and requested further guidance be presented to Synod 2017.
- Celebration of the tenth year of the KIM (Korean Institute in Ministry) as a tool for orienting Korean-speaking pastors who are new to the CRC.
- Participation in an Ethnic Pastor Leadership Consult to build relationships with leaders of six different ethnic subgroups in the CRC. Within the next decade, we may reach the point where ethnic minority congregations form the majority of congregations in the Christian Reformed Church.
- Facilitation of retreats and events to orient and welcome leaders to the denominational family.



Participants from the Korean Institute for Ministry



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CONTACT INFO

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Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE)/ Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE)

SCE offers grant opportunities and learning events for smaller congregations as they seek to foster health in their ministry setting. SPE supports and encourages pastors and pastors' spouses through pastor peer group grants, pastors' wives' conferences, and pastor-couple learning events.

HIGHLIGHTS

SCE

- To date, 92 percent of eligible Canadian churches and 71 percent of eligible U.S. churches have participated in SCE programming.
- 263 Health & Renewal grants have been awarded, resulting in new ministry in over 200 churches.
- Churches have sustained over 50 grant projects/new ministries after their SCE grant funding ended.

SPE

- Pastor peer learning grants have been awarded to 194 groups involving 72 percent of CRC pastors.
- Pastors' Wives' Conferences are great opportunities for attendees to share their lives and encouragement. Oasis of Grace was held November 9-10 in San Diego, Calif.
- The sabbaticals webpage is the most viewed page. It offers many options for pastors and churches to consider.



The Deep Waters peer learning group in Michigan, received a grant from Sustaining Pastoral Excellence to explore spiritual disciplines.



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CONTACT INFO

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www.crcna.org/sce

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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry exists to

- **enlist**—raising awareness among students, current pastors, and others about chaplaincy as a career service option.

- **endorse**—arranging for training, application, screening, and letters of endorsement for potential employers.
- **encourage**—providing ongoing contact, visits, pastoral care and annual conferences to the more than 145 men and women who currently serve as chaplains.
- **enfold**—keeping chaplains and their calling churches connected so that the church benefits from the chaplain's special skills and the chaplain benefits from the church's prayers and encouragement.

This year marked our 75th anniversary as a ministry.

To see an interactive map of all current chaplains working throughout Canada and the U.S., pictures of all our chaplains, and lists of chaplains by category, or to learn more about becoming a chaplain—please visit our website at crcna.org/chaplaincy.

CONTACT INFO

Website: www.crcna.org/chaplaincy
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 Email: chaplain@crcna.org
 Phone: 616-224-0733

Pastor Church Resources (PCR)

Pastor Church Resources supports congregations and their leaders in times of transition and discernment by providing consultation and resources that foster personal and communal health.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A team known as "Better Together" engaged classis leaders to listen to their stories and assess the overall effectiveness of their ministries.
- In conjunction with this work, and in concert with the Classis Renewal Group, Rev. Al Postma was hired as the Classis Renewal Coordinator and joined the PCR team in August.
- Collaborating with six CRC ministries, Rev. Sam (Samantha) DeJong McCarron was hired as a Vocational Assessment Coordinator. She is helping churches and pastors discern "fit" for particular ministries in more proactive and effective ways.
- In collaboration with Faith Formation Ministries, sixteen pastors are midway through a *Spiritual Vitality in Pastors* project that examines the key elements needed for pastors' personal spiritual development and transformation.
- A nearly \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., was awarded to the CRCNA, and work has begun to create an innovative model for improving resourcing of congregations at the regional level. PCR staff members Lis Van Harten and Derek Atkins are heading this "Connections" initiative.

CONTACT INFO

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 Rev. Cecil VanNiejehuis, cvan-niejehuis@crcna.org

The Network

The Network (crcna.org/network) is your go-to resource for connecting with others in the CRC about all things church and ministry. The site provides a wealth of resources, blogs, and discussion posts on over 60 different ministry topics such as worship planning, Sunday school, training for new deacons or elders, preaching, creation care, and accessibility in our churches. You can even post or find church jobs.

To experience all that The Network has to offer, simply create an account and get started. Once your account is set up, you are ready to post comments, share blogs or resources, join discussions, and ask your ministry questions. Here are just a few perks of getting involved:

- Get quick answers to your ministry questions.
- Share your knowledge.
- Encourage someone.
- Tackle tough issues together.

With an average of over 50,000 pageviews a month, The Network is one of the most popular sites in the CRCNA. Why not see for yourself what all the hype is about?

CONTACT INFO

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The Banner

The *Banner*, the official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, celebrated its 150th anniversary this year—a major milestone testifying to God’s faithfulness. *The Banner* continues to enjoy a wide and diverse readership both in print and online, and it provides a place to keep in touch with each other and to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Transition to a new editor-in-chief, Shiao Chong, of Toronto, Ontario.
- In “Together Doing More,” *The Banner* provides ongoing monthly updates on the ministries that we engage in together as a denomination.
- Feature articles, news, and a variety of columns round out the synodical mandate to inform, inspire, educate, and challenge readers.
- Readers contribute through “Letters to the Editor,” “In My Humble Opinion,” and lively discussions in the online Comments section following each posted article.

CONTACT INFO

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Facebook: facebook.com/crcbanner

Twitter: [@crcbanner](https://twitter.com/crcbanner)

CRC Loan Fund

The CRC Loan Fund extends loans to organized US churches for the purchase or construction of church properties. Loans are also available for remodeling, improvements and repairs to church facilities. Loans are usually made at interest rates and terms more favorable than those from other lenders, like banks and credit unions. The primary source of funds for our loans is cash invested in the Loan Fund by church members, churches, and classes of the CRC.

CONTACT INFO:

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CRC Foundation

The CRC Foundation in the United States and Canada serves the Christian Reformed Church in North America by funding innovative and collaborative projects led by CRC churches, agencies, and ministries. Over the past 20 years, the Foundation has worked to equip and advance more than 85 start-up ministry projects through more than \$9 million in investments. Many of these ministries have become long-term ministries, such as the Timothy Leadership Institute, Partners Worldwide, and several church plants and leadership initiatives.

The Foundation accomplishes this primarily through Ignite| *Funding Ministry Innovation*. Ignite allows the CRC to explore new ministry ideas and initiatives that advance God's kingdom and equips churches to do ministry effectively, bridging ministry today with ministry tomorrow.

The CRC Foundation works in concert with the CRCNA Board of Trustees. It is legally established in the United States and Canada.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Helping to fund the Youth Ministry Pilot Project, introduced by Faith Formation Ministries, which creates networks of local youth leaders and provides them with opportunities to share, learn, and grow as leaders.
- Funding a series of videos about our calling in the CRC to help us understand what we want to do as a church, where we come from, and who we are.
- Investing in the Reformed Leadership Initiative—a project designed to identify leadership challenges within our churches, communities, and neighborhoods and to equip leaders with the tools needed to address those challenges.



CONTACT INFO

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Website: crcna.org/ignite

Email: Foundation@crcna.org

CRCNA Foundation: 616.224.0817 or 877.272.6299

CRCNA Canada Foundation: 905.336.2920 or 800-730-3490

Faith Alive

Under the Faith Alive Christian Resources imprint, the CRC provides quality resources that are theologically Reformed and promote biblical principles. Resources include *God Loves Me* storybooks, DWELL children's curriculum, *Discover Your Bible* studies, the *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnal, and hundreds of other titles.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A new Digital Library was launched in 2016. It has received an overwhelmingly positive response, with thousands of CRC members already using the hundreds of titles available. CRC churches and members also now receive an automatic 20 percent discount on print-copy purchases of nearly all Faith Alive titles.
- New and revised *Discover Your Bible* studies were released in both print and digital formats, including *Discover Nehemiah*, *Discover the Gift of Christmas*, *Discover Colossians*, and *Discover Ruth*.
- Due to the phasing out of the *Walk With Me* curriculum, Faith Alive continues to point churches to its current Sunday school curriculum, *DWELL*, which builds on the best features of *Walk With Me*. Faith Alive also launched a new e-newsletter, *Dwelling*, to support churches using *DWELL*.
- A new mobile-friendly website for *DWELL* (DwellCurriculum.org) was recently launched to provide current and prospective customers with a more user-friendly online experience.
- Faith Alive now offers a new print-on-demand service for select out-of-print Faith Alive titles. These print-on-demand titles can be produced in any quantity and can be ordered, printed, and shipped in one to two weeks.

CONTACT INFO

Websites:

- FaithAliveResources.org
- TheBanner.org
- ReformedWorship.org
- LibrosDesafio.org

Orders: 1.800.333.8300

Facebook: facebook.com/FaithAlive

Twitter: twitter.com/FaithAlive

ServiceLink

ServiceLink is a denominational program that focuses on serving the local church. Their vision encompasses the following:

- **Volunteer Ministry Development**—ServiceLink staff members provide consultation and guidance to congregations on how best to recruit, train, equip, and recognize volunteers.
- **Customer Service** (Canada only)—ServiceLink helps individuals and congregations find information and resources from the various agencies and ministries of the CRCNA in as streamlined and easy a way as possible.
- **Connections Bridge** to the local church (southern Ontario only)—ServiceLink acts a connection point between the agencies of the CRC and local churches. This role is known as a “collaborative resourcing bridge” and involves customer service and clear communication.
- **Mission Opportunities**—In partnership with CRC mission agencies, ServiceLink helps connect individuals with opportunities to serve both globally and locally.

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MINISTRY SHARES RECEIPTS & GIFT INCOME

2015

2016

Back to God Ministries		
Ministry Shares	3,194,000	3,050,000
Gift and offerings	3,585,000	3,166,000
Estate Gifts	1,394,000	2,939,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	272,000	187,000
Total	8,445,000	9,342,000

Calvin College		
Ministry Shares	2,389,000	2,367,000
Gift and offerings	19,891,000	21,959,000
Estate Gifts	1,044,000	1,936,000
Tuition/Grants	104,108,000	99,567,000
Total	127,432,000	125,829,000

Calvin Seminary		
Ministry Shares	2,567,000	2,449,000
Gift and offerings	1,164,000	1,210,000
Estate Gifts	180,000	140,000
Tuition/Grants	3,802,000	3,844,000
Total	7,713,000	7,643,000

Home Missions		
Ministry Shares	3,398,000	3,251,000
Gift and offerings	1,832,000	1,842,000
Estate Gifts	320,000	1,044,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	441,000	529,000
Total	5,991,000	6,666,000

World Missions		
Ministry Shares	4,382,000	4,194,000
Gift and offerings	8,852,000	8,386,000
Estate Gifts	879,000	1,668,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	945,000	325,000
Total	15,058,000	14,573,000

World Renew		
Gift and offerings	12,723,000	11,662,000
Disaster Gifts	5,143,000	3,692,000
Grants	12,075,000	12,206,000
Estate gifts	2,754,000	6,028,000
Total	32,695,000	33,588,000

Congregational Services		
Ministry Shares	5,678,000	5,474,000
Gift and offerings	725,000	940,000
Estate Gifts	0	0
Sales/Miscellaneous	6,086,000	7,021,000
Total	12,489,000	13,435,000

Denominational Services		
Ministry Shares	2,398,000	2,296,000
Gift and offerings	19,000	602,000
Estate Gifts	0	0
Grants/Miscellaneous	3,578,000	1,754,000
Total	5,995,000	4,652,000

Foundation		
Gift and offerings	1,928,000	455,000
Estate Gifts	0	5,000
Grants/Miscellaneous	6,000	2,000
Total	1,934,000	462,000

Special Assistance Fund		
Ministry Shares	87,000	251,000
Gift and offerings	0	0
Grants/Miscellaneous	152,000	47,000
Total	239,000	298,000

Gift Summary for Fiscal 2016

God has once again blessed the Christian Reformed Church with the generous spirit and strong support of dedicated members and friends to the ministries of the denomination's agencies, institutions and specialized programs.

Ministry-share gifts were down by nearly \$768,000 compared to the previous year but still generated \$23.3 million in revenue. The decline is primarily attributable to the continued strength of the U.S. dollar during fiscal 2016. It should be noted that the impact on revenue of the lower Canadian dollar exchange rate is offset in large part by a corresponding reduction in the U.S. dollar-equivalent cost of ministry expenditures in Canada.

The denomination continues to do a tremendous amount of ministry with these gifts that cost very little to administer, and in which all members of the congregations participate. Thanks to all the churches, large and small, in Canada and the U.S. that help to provide this vital base of revenue.

Special church offerings and individual gifts (not including support for disaster response projects) generated \$49.3 million in support, down \$3.5 million from the prior year.

World Renew received \$3.7 million in designated disaster relief funding from churches, members, and other supporters, down from \$5.1 million last year. It should be noted that the level of disaster gifts correlate with the number and magnitude of disasters that World Renew faces each year.

The CRC was especially blessed with gifts of over \$12 million from those who included the church in the distribution of their estates, up from \$6 million last year.

TOGETHER DOING MORE

Your Ministry Shares: Where the Money Goes

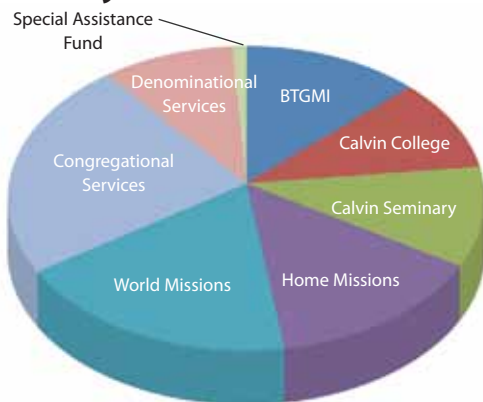
The money you give to ministry shares provides about \$25 million each year to support programs that enable your church to send missionaries around the world, start new churches, train pastors and leaders, use media to spread the gospel, and much more. The ministry shares program costs very little to administer. In fact, it costs only 1 percent as much as regular fundraising efforts. It also enables everyone in the congregation to participate in that support, rather than only those members who have substantial assets.

Ministry-share gifts provide about one-third of the budgets for most CRC mission agencies and Calvin Theological Seminary, and between 60 and 90 percent of the budgets for CRC ministries.

To learn more about how God is using your ministry-share gifts to transform lives and communities, visit www.crcna.org/MinistryShares.

CRC Agency 2015-16 Ministry Shares Received

Back to God	
Ministries International	\$3,050,000
Calvin College	\$2,367,000
Calvin Seminary	\$2,449,000
Home Missions	\$3,251,000
World Missions	\$4,194,000
World Renew	\$0
Congregational Services	\$5,474,000
Denominational Services	\$2,296,000
Special Assistance Fund	\$251,000
Total:	\$23,332,000



You add.

God multiplies.



Ministry Shares is powered by a simple commitment to be a part of something bigger. About six dollars a week from each active member enables all of us to participate in life-changing ministries, at home and around the globe. Thank you! www.crcna.org/MinistryShares

**MINISTRY SHARES
TOGETHER
DOING MORE**