

REPORTS OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA submits a *unified* report to synod composed of ministry updates provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The various reports here are presented in alphabetical order by agency, institution, or ministry name. Supplementary reports will be provided as well, if necessary, before synod meets.

Much of the material here supplies significant background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. The content also provides the transparency necessary to enhance our life together as a denomination.

Together these reports present the story of how God is blessing and guiding our work through the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church as we covenant together. As you read the material that follows, I encourage you to respond with gratitude for what God is doing through the Holy Spirit, transforming lives and communities worldwide, by means of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Zachary J. King
General Secretary of the CRCNA

Calvin Theological Seminary

I. Introduction – Mission statement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2025 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 (CTS) has been involved in the training, teaching, and formation of students for ministry for 149 years since 1876 and was the very first agency or institution developed by the Christian Reformed Church. As God so leads, we look forward to a 150th-anniversary celebration of God's faithfulness and for affirming the tie between church and seminary.

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. Highlights from the past ministry year

A. Building and program updates

We continue to be grateful for our fully remodeled building facility featuring updated technology and collaborative learning spaces that serve residential students, online students, and students in "flex" learning situations, where both residential and online students meet in the same classroom.

We are grateful as well for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education as we mark moving into a second decade of providing "distance" learning. More than ever, a Calvin Theological Seminary education is just a "click" away.

One of our key projects in progress this year is the construction of our new 46-apartment student housing project designed with current and future students in mind. We are seeing more second-career students and students with children enroll at CTS. As a result, we are planning to have 20 three-bedroom, 19 two-bedroom, and seven one-bedroom apartments. We are grateful for funding support for over 50 percent of the estimated cost of completing this project. The location of this new building is right next to our campus at 3300 Burton Street SE in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Lord willing, we anticipate a "move-in" date by the end of October.

B. Enrollment

Fall 2024 brought us 76 entering students, totaling over 343 degree-seeking students in all programs, with auditors and nondegree students bringing the total census up to 385.

This includes 14 new international students who have come from Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, and South Korea. Under the leadership of Dr. Gabriela Tijerina-Pike, our Latino Ministry also enrolled 12 new students in the master of arts in leadership formation program for a total of 45 enrolled in that course of study. Additionally, through the efforts of our Canadian Church Relations liaison Shawn Brix, in collaboration with the admissions office, CTS has seen a record number of 17 new Canadian students enroll within the past six months.

C. New staff

Calvin Theological Seminary has been blessed by a number of incoming staff members who have felt called to serve our community, and we would like to highlight two of these:

Phillip Palacios, our first-ever full-time director of communications, is serving to fulfill our need to tell the CTS story in more and better ways. Phillip comes to CTS with a great deal of communications/marketing experience in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Trained in film and media at Compass College (now a part of Calvin University), Phillip comes with many years of experience in video and film production, having led integrated communication campaigns on multiple media platforms and having worked in creative strategy and production for organizations like Our Daily Bread Ministries and IDEOLOGY Productions.

We also give thanks to have been blessed with faithful registrars for nearly fifty years—first by John Vander Lugt and then by Joan Beelen, who has recently retired—and we are pleased to have Scott DeYoung serving as our new director of academic services and registrar. Scott earned a bachelor of arts degree in English at Cornerstone University and a master's degree in English from Grand Valley State University, and he has taken courses at Calvin Seminary as well. Scott has served in the field of education for over 20 years, first as an English teacher at Calvin Christian High School in Grandville, Michigan, and then as director of outdoor education at Camp Roger in Rockford, Michigan. He brings skills and experience in leadership, curriculum development, scheduling, database management, and strategic planning.

D. New master of arts degree program

Calvin Theological Seminary's new master of arts in clinical mental health counseling (MCMHC) launched in fall 2023. This professional and theologically grounded degree offers coursework in religious and theological foundations, clinical counseling, and clinical practice. Graduates of the program could consider using their knowledge and gifts by serving in clinical mental health therapy, clinical mental health counseling, addiction counseling, behavior counseling, or other mental health roles.

The director of this program, Dr. Danjuma Gibson, has noted that the goal of this program is “to train students who will be competent and skilled in the ethical integration of Christian faith, spirituality, and counseling in a

way that promotes healing and shalom in the lives of individuals and communities.” To learn more about this program, please contact Dr. Gibson at dgg085@calvinseminary.edu.

E. Curriculum revision

CTS recently completed its master of arts and master of divinity curriculum revision.

The curriculum revision has identified outcomes aligned with the understanding that Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to form graduates who will discern, together with those they serve, answers to the following questions:

- What is our ministry CONTEXT?
- How does the GOSPEL engage our context?
- What is God CALLING us to in this context?
- What is the PERSON and role of a servant leader in this context?

These program goals are intimately and necessarily connected because every ministry situation occurs in a particular CONTEXT where the GOSPEL of God’s redemptive activity is communicated, where God is CALLING people to participate in his mission, and where God is forming the PERSON and role of a servant leader.

F. Strategic plan

In May 2024 the CTS Board of Trustees approved a strategic plan and set out goals to help guide us into the next 150 years of service to the church. We distill this plan into four major themes:

Compelling invitation—We focus intentionally on our Reformed heritage and identity not only through scholarship but also in student formation and societal engagement. We want to share our distinctiveness in bold, creative, and clear ways that are compellingly invitational and winsome.

Holistic learning journeys—We focus on serving students, ensuring the best learning experiences and mentorships by not only equipping staff and faculty appropriately and adequately but also meeting student expectations for contextual curriculum and multifaceted learning opportunities.

Organizational excellence—We foster an ethos of organizational excellence where trust, accountability, respect, and mutuality around a shared vision are embodied, where individual and collective contributions are valued and celebrated, and where everyone who comes into contact with CTS will experience purpose, fulfillment, care, and ultimately a communal experience of our unity in Christ.

Cultivating abundance—With gratitude to God for his providence, we are encouraged by and appreciate a community of generous supporters through whom our student body will continue to grow and expand, and

through whom the mission of CTS is realized. We will promote this missional invitation to ensure a solid fiscal base for the ongoing work of Reformed theological education, formation, and scholarship.

G. The Forum platform

As a tool by which to meet the goals of the strategic plan, we recently developed and launched The Forum platform (theforum.calvinseminary.edu), a website that serves as the intersection of faith, culture, and Scripture. With this platform the seminary continues to respond to the needs of the global church, upholding the authority of Scripture, the centrality of Christ in the world's story, and the world's desperate need for God's grace. We seek to serve the church by building on the foundation of *The Forum* magazine. We invite responses and reflections from all who pursue their call while wrestling with the enduring questions of mercy, justice, faith, and formation.

CTS plans to continue publishing *The Forum* magazine in print and digital formats. On The Forum platform we'll provide additional content from our partners that includes video teaching series, event invitations, free webinars, and opportunities to attend retreats. The platform is for people working in church ministry, seeking to live out their faith in their daily life, pursuing answers to vexing questions, or simply pursuing a deeper knowledge of God.

III. Response to Synod 2024's request regarding gravamina policies

Synod 2024 made the following request:

That synod instruct the boards of denominational agencies and institutions to review and revise, as needed, their gravamina policies (e.g., exceptions) related to the decision of Synod 2024 and report on their actions to Synod 2025.

(Acts of Synod 2024, p. 880)

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees can report that CTS has not had gravamina policies or a process of noting "exceptions" since the separation into two boards for Calvin College (now Calvin University) and Calvin Theological Seminary, approved by synod in 1991.

The CTS Board of Trustees also wishes to note the prior response of Calvin Theological Seminary to Synod 2024 addressing the confessional commitment of CTS faculty. Here is what was included in the *Agenda for Synod 2024* from Calvin Theological Seminary:

At Synod 2023, Advisory Committee 8 in its majority report presented the following recommendation: "That synod encourage Calvin Theological Seminary to clarify its position on synod's decision regarding the confessional status on same-sex marriage by December 2023" (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 1037).

While this item was among many others deferred to Synod 2024, the topic had already been considered by the CTS faculty and the CTS Board of Trustees before being presented at Synod 2023.

At its business meeting on February 3, 2023, the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty had approved the following statement:

A Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary has been the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Its teaching faculty have been interviewed and approved by synod, and its faculty have served the church in numerous capacities, including service as advisors to synod.

As CTS faculty committed to the Covenant for Officebearers, we profess the teachings of Scripture summarized by the Reformed confessions as interpreted by the decisions of synod. We commit to teaching, preaching, counseling, and writing within these covenantal bounds, whether in the classroom, church, or beyond.

We hold a variety of opinions and ideas on many matters, including past and possible future decisions of synod, and we are encouraged to express these views via official channels such as through overtures or communications from the congregations and classes to which we belong, through raising thoughtful questions for the church to ponder in future deliberations, or through theological conversations as a faculty, with the understanding that such communications will not undermine our good standing with one another as faculty.

CTS Faculty Minute #9354: The faculty reviewed and discussed the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty.” A motion was made and seconded to approve the Statement and share it with the Board of Trustees for information. *Adopted.*

At the CTS Board of Trustees meeting on October 27, 2023, the board again reviewed and approved the above statement. The board then proceeded to adopt the statement as its own and directed that this statement should be included in its Calvin Theological Seminary report to Synod 2024.

We believe that these actions and this statement are in keeping with the request to clarify the ongoing confessional commitment of both the CTS faculty and the CTS Board of Trustees. *(Agenda for Synod 2024, p. 226)*

That belief was affirmed by Synod 2024 when it adopted the following in plenary session:

That synod take note of the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty” from the Calvin Theological Seminary report (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 226) serving as a good faith response to the deferred instruction of the 2023 Advisory Committee 8E report (majority), C, 11. *(Acts of Synod 2024, p. 809)*

IV. Reflecting on Our Calling

Over the past number of years, the 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 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 around 25 different nations are represented in the student body of Calvin Theological Seminary. (This past year nearly 50 percent of our degree-seeking students came from outside the U.S. and Canada.) 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 (M.Div.) degree, which helps to form preachers and teachers of the gospel.

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

A. Vocational Formation Office update

Making and maintaining connections with churches is a foundational component of education for Calvin Theological Seminary. Whether this involves church-based internships or assignments related to the local church environment, the local church is the key partner for nurturing, developing, and training students.

In fall 2017, Calvin Theological Seminary set up a new way for M.A. and M.Div. students to fulfill a significant part of their contextual learning requirements. From early on in their program, students are placed in a church or ministry organization where they serve for two years, concurrent with their course work, through internship hours coordinated with churches during the ministry year. The office of Vocational Formation—led by director Geoff Vandermolen, associate director Jessica Rowland, administrative coordinator Chris Wright, and administrative coordinator Jennifer DeJong—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 Community Church, Ada, Michigan
- Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Christ Community Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Creston CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Encounter Church, Kentwood, Michigan
- Faith on 44th Church, Kentwood, Michigan
- First CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan
- Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California
- Hahn-In CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Hope Pregnancy and Family Support Centre, Brantford, Ontario
- Iglesia Todas Las Naciones, Hudsonville, Michigan
- Inwood CRC, Inwood, Iowa
- Living Water Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Madison Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Maranatha CRC, Cambridge, Ontario
- Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ontario

Partners Worldwide, Grand Rapids, Michigan
ReFrame Media, Grand Rapids, Michigan
River Rock Church, Rockford, Michigan
Second CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan
Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Sussex CRC, Sussex, New Jersey
Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

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 churches and organizations that have served as “additional” places of formation, including these cross-cultural and international sites:

Borculo CRC, Zeeland, Michigan
Way Church, St. Paul, Minnesota
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services (Clinical Pastoral Education),
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Seed Church, Port Washington, New York
Tears of Eden, St. Louis, Missouri
Albuquerque Chinese Christian Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dominican Republic ministry with Resonate Global Mission
HELP Pregnancy Aid, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Mepkin Abbey, Moncks Corner, South Carolina

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Five of our eleven formation group leaders are pastors, and the other six are seminary faculty/administration members.

We appreciate the support of the church and alumni for their encouragement to expand our offerings for academic and ministry leadership for local churches and the global church.

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

B. Center for Excellence in Preaching – “Compelling Preaching Initiative”

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. The CEP continues to serve as one of the premier Reformed preaching sites in North America (cepreaching.org). In 2024 the CEP marked the twentieth anniversary of its founding.

In 2024 the CEP completed the second year of a five-year grant program as part of Lilly Endowment, Inc.’s “Compelling Preaching Initiative.” In its

first year the program focused on English-speaking pastors, and in 2024 under the leadership of Latino Ministries director Gabriela Tijerina-Pike, the grant program included Spanish-speaking pastors as well. Both parts of the grant program focused on peer learning groups.

The English part of the program last year included 17 highly ecumenical groups in which 150 pastors met throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Spanish part of the program included five peer learning groups with a total of 81 participants. The assigned topic for 2024 in the English-speaking groups was, perhaps not surprisingly, to seek out strategies and ideas to help preachers navigate the highly charged partisan political environment in which we now live. In January and February of 2025 the social research firm DataWise surveyed the English peer learning group participants and their congregations to discover what had been learned in the previous year. The Latino groups in 2024 discussed the fundamentals of preaching, what makes it compelling, and preaching in an age of skepticism.

Additionally, in April 2024 as part of the “Compelling Preaching Initiative” (CPI) the CEP hosted an ecumenical gathering of thirteen pastors and five consultants, all of whom had been identified as outstanding preachers. The colloquy met for a day and a half and generated rich conversations on a range of topics related to preaching and how to help preachers surmount the many challenges they face in the twenty-first century. In April 2025 we anticipate gathering as many of our peer group leaders as can travel to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to report on and share what has been happening in their peer learning groups thus far in the CPI program. In 2025 our peer groups will continue and will focus on themes related to preaching and trauma. The Latino peer groups will again focus on a variety of themes related to the preaching craft.

Since 2005 the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary has provided busy preachers with the resources they need to create and deliver fresh, compelling, and vibrant sermons from God’s Word. The CEP strives to spark every pastor’s creativity in engaging with God’s Word, inspiring them to produce lively sermons of power and beauty. The CEP offers weekly, quarterly, and liturgical season resources, including weekly contributions by a team of writers and translators. Every week new sermon commentaries are made available in English, Spanish, and Korean.

Monthly traffic to the CEP website has risen dramatically in the past several years. In 2024 the website surpassed 2 million page views, and the monthly number of different visitors to the site is consistently now upwards of 94,000 users per month. We are grateful for the international reputation of the CEP.

C. Lilly “Pathways for Tomorrow – Next Steps” initiative

The “Next Steps” initiative at Calvin Theological Seminary consists of three programs designed to equip and support adult learning, particularly Latino/a pastors, commissioned pastors, and ministry leaders, by providing

accessible and flexible theological education. Our overarching goal is to support the lifelong learning and formation of ministry leaders while they navigate their callings.

Through our Empower program, students can earn a certificate or a master of arts degree in a competency-based format. With the support of a mentor team, students complete a customized learning process in which they develop and demonstrate competencies for ministry. This flexible format is ideally suited to supporting the contextualized learning needs and goals of commissioned pastors across the CRCNA. CTS is actively seeking partnerships with classes to support the learning and credentialing of commissioned pastors.

The Empower program is designed to make ministry training more collaborative, flexible, integrated, and accessible. During our pilot phase, enrollment was initially limited to students participating through contextualized partnerships with the Grand Valley State University Campus Ministry (Grand Rapids, Mich.) and with Sunlight Community Church (Port St. Lucie, Fla.). Students work with a CTS faculty mentor and two partner mentors to complete learning experiences that develop competence—head, hands, and heart—for ministry.

We have now developed a “standard path” as we move into making this competency-based theological education (CBTE) opportunity available to interested students. To learn more about CBTE as well as our new Lifelong Learning initiative, please contact Dr. Aaron Einfeld (ame084@calvinseminary.edu).

Our online master of arts degree in leadership formation focuses on making theological education accessible to Spanish-speaking leaders and is delivered entirely in Spanish. With partnerships in Latin America and the U.S., the program is aimed at addressing unique ministry challenges and opportunities in these contexts.

Additionally, we are expanding our nondegree lifelong learning offerings, including workshops, retreats, and cohort-based experiences. These offerings are designed to support ministry leaders in their biblical and theological learning, mental health, ongoing personal discipleship, and leadership growth.

D. Lilly Endowment – “Thriving Congregations Initiative” grant

Calvin Seminary’s Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture received a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. in 2024 to help establish the “Ancient Practices for Missional Churches” initiative through 2028. The aim of the initiative is to encourage the flourishing of congregations, helping them deepen their relationship with God, enhance their connections to each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world. The “Executive Summary” in the grant proposal included the following remarks:

Calvin Theological Seminary has observed that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many churches are struggling because their rhythms of gathering and scattering have been disrupted, discipleship has become increasingly disembodied, and many people are feeling disconnected from or disenchanted with organized religion.

We see these challenges as opportunities to help congregants deepen their connection to God in the company of others, recenter the mission of the local church on the priesthood of all believers, and deepen their understanding of how their daily life and work connect to the mission of God.

To establish these pathways to congregational thriving, we want to implement an Ancient Practices for Missional Churches initiative that will directly engage ministry leaders and congregants. The initiative will center on four key activities:

1. **Retreats focusing on spiritual formation:** Pastors and ministry leaders will learn about the psalms and ancient Christian spiritual practices of formation and engage in experiential learning activities. Immersion in these spiritual formation riches of the Christian tradition will provide opportunities for innovation in their ministry context.
2. **Seminars focusing on the priesthood of all believers:** Congregations will learn a biblical/theological vision for the church centered on the priesthood of all believers, hear examples of historical and contemporary exemplars of this way of being the church on mission, and engage in practices of collaborating that cultivate and sustain this partnership between pastors and congregants.
3. **Consultations:** Seminary professors and staff will listen to the wisdom, challenges, and needs of pastors and churches. The focus of these consultations will be on ministries of the local church that connect with equipping the priesthood of believers, spiritual formation, and cultural analysis and engagement. In these consultations, participants will help us establish a research agenda and assist in compiling and creating best resources and practices for congregations.
4. **Resource curation and creation:** We will identify and synthesize leading theological and ministry frameworks for direct instruction in three areas: spiritual formation, the priesthood of all believers, and cultural understanding for flourishing. We will curate or create resources that offer an experiential approach to learning the habits, practices, and dispositions for each of the three areas. We will also compile stories of historical and contemporary exemplars of each of the three areas.

All program activities will be facilitated by the Calvin Theological Seminary's Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture (IMCC), which

has extensive experience in equipping pastors and ministry leaders, coaching and collaborating with pastors and staff to host workshops in their congregations, and curating and creating actionable ministry resources. The director of the IMCC is Dr. Cory Willson, who holds the Jake and Betsy Tuls Professor of Missiology, World Christianity, and Public Theology endowed chair at the seminary.

E. Canadian Church Relations Liaison – Rev. Shawn Brix

In January 2020, Calvin Theological Seminary called Rev. Shawn Brix as its first Canadian church relations liaison (CCRL), a “pastor-ambassador” who builds and strengthens bridges between Calvin Theological Seminary and Canadian churches and ministries. This position is a part of the 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 is helping Calvin Theological Seminary be more present and available to serve leaders and churches in Canada. Rev. Brix has served congregations in Acton, Burlington, and Peterborough, Ontario.

Rev. Brix has been a key encourager and staff support, coming alongside donors in the development of a new initiative whereby tuition for Canadian students will be at par between Canadian and U.S. dollars. We are grateful for this opportunity to remove one of the key barriers for Canadian students in their discernment about attending Calvin Seminary.

VI. Additional program and ministry highlights

A. Faculty interviews and updates

The Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and Board of Trustees has interviewed and now recommends that synod interview and approve the appointment of Dr. Jessica Joustra to a teaching position in systematic theology to begin in the summer of 2026. This position will fill an opening due to the upcoming retirement of Dr. Mary Vanden Berg in July 2025. We anticipate being able to fill teaching needs until Dr. Joustra is able to join Calvin Theological Seminary by the following summer.

At the time of this writing, a faculty search in the area of Old Testament and systematic theology is under way. Dr. Ronald Feenstra has provided notice of his plans to retire in July 2026. We anticipate providing an update by way of our supplemental report to Synod 2025.

B. Missional Training Center (MTC)

This past year, the Calvin Seminary Faculty and Board of Trustees formalized a partnership with the Missional Training Center (MTC), which provides Reformed theological education in Phoenix, Arizona.

The MTC is an outgrowth of the Surge Network, a network of more than a 100 churches in the Phoenix area working together to train laypeople to be effective witnesses. Ten years ago the Surge Network started MTC to provide more in-depth leadership training through a master of arts degree in missional theology. Dr. Michael Goheen became the founding professor

and is now MTC's director of theological education. Dr. Goheen served previously on the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary as well as at Dordt University and Redeemer University and is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Fifty-three students are enrolled at MTC. For more information about MTC, see missionaltraining.org.

This partnership strengthens both CTS and MTC. For example, MTC's missional curriculum and supporting churches will assist CTS and the CRCNA in their ongoing efforts to equip pastors and laypeople for effective witness in the world. The partnership will also expand the visibility of CTS in new churches and to potential students interested in Reformed education. MTC will be an extension site of CTS, and CTS's accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools will extend to MTC's program. The partnership has received approval by the Association of Theological Schools.

C. Doctor of Ministry program

The doctor of ministry program at CTS continues to develop with programming, coursework, and student research toward effective ministry praxis throughout a plurality of contexts. In 2024 our first program graduate, Dr. Colin Watson, received his degree and made a public presentation of his dissertation, titled "Leading in White Spaces: The Experience of African American Pastors as Leaders in the CRCNA."

- crcna.org/news-and-events/news/colin-watson-earns-first-dmin-calvin-seminary
- youtube.com/watch?v=AePCaxULI-U

For more information on the Doctor of Ministry program, please visit calvinseminary.edu/program/doctor-of-ministry.

D. Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) in partnership with Calvin University

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 93 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 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.

To date, 77 students have earned bachelor's degrees, and 121 students have earned associate degrees in faith and community leadership. Program graduates serve prison communities across Michigan from Muskegon to Jackson

as peer mentors, providing leadership to faith communities behind bars, supporting academic programs as tutors and teaching assistants, and leading life skills and addiction recovery classes for fellow prisoners.

VII. Administration

The seminary administration includes Rev. Julius Medenblik, president; Dr. Margaret Mwenda, chief operating officer; Dr. Yudha Thianto, chief academic officer; Scott DeYoung, director of academic services and registrar; Rev. Geoff Vandermolen, director of vocational formation; Robert Knoor, director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Sarah Chun, dean of international students and scholar services.

VIII. Faculty

The seminary faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Although 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.

IX. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary session online in October 2024 and via conference call in February 2025. It plans to hold an in-person/flex plenary session in May 2025.

The board officers are Dave Morren, chair; Scott Greenway, vice-chair; and Susan Keesen, secretary.

Trustee Sue Imig (Region 5) is completing her first term on the board and is eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term. The board recommends that synod reappoint her to an additional three-year term.

Trustee Hessel Kielstra (at-large) is completing a second term on the board and is eligible for reappointment for a third three-year term. The board recommends that synod reappoint him for an additional three-year term.

Trustee E. Alan van der Woerd (Region 1) is completing a first term on the board and is eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term. The board recommends that synod appoint him for an additional three-year term.

Trustee Mark Verbruggen (Region 4) is completing a first term on the board and is eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term. The board recommends that synod appoint him for an additional three-year term.

Trustee Kristin (Kris) Vos (Region 12) is completing a first term on the board and is eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term. The board recommends that synod appoint him for an additional three-year term.

Completing a first term on the board are Louise Boutin (Region 3) and James Jones (At-Large). We are grateful for their service to the seminary and the church. Completing a second term on the board is David Morren (Region 11 at-large). We are grateful for his service and wise counsel to the seminary and the church.

Synod has approved that Calvin Theological Seminary is permitted to present a single nomination for an at-large trustee position and where a region has multiple trustee positions. The CTS Board of Trustees hopes to present such nominees by way of the supplemental report to Synod 2025.

X. Students—Fall 2024

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from fall 2024 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

A. Denominational affiliation

- Christian Reformed: 143 (37%)
- Presbyterian: 84
- RCA: 8
- Other Reformed: 16
- Pentecostal: 6
- Other/None listed: 30

B. Geographical information

- U.S. students: 214 (56%)
- Canadian students: 33 (9%)
- Korean: 50 (13%)
- Chile: 11 (3%)
- Mexico: 16 (4%)
- Nigeria: 5 (1.3%)
- Chinese: 6 (1.6%)
- Other: 50 (13%)

Total countries represented: 30—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, India, Japan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mexico, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, New Zealand, Peru, South Korea, Taiwan, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, Venezuela

C. Student body

Male students: 262 (68%)

Female students: 123 (32%)

D. Programs and students enrolled

- M.Div.: 78
- Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 18
- M.A. (English): 80 (includes 53 students in MA in Missional Theology – MTC)

- M.A. (Spanish): 45
- M.T.S.: 20
- Th.M.: 25
- Ph.D.: 42
- D.Min.: 21
- Hybrid/Distance Learning: 57 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)
- English Certificate: 9
- CBTE Certificate: 7
- Non-degree seeking: 2

Finally, we want to acknowledge and give thanks for ongoing, 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.

XI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dave Morren, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election and reappointment of trustees from the slates of nominees presented.

C. That synod interview the faculty candidates presented by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees for approval of their appointments.

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

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Susan Keesen, secretary

Calvin University

I. A message from the president

To our brothers and sisters—our ministry partners—in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, *thank you* for the many ways you are supporting the flourishing of Calvin University. As an academically excellent Christ-centered community of higher education, Calvin is uniquely positioned for teaching, learning, and scholarship through a Reformed lens, and we are grateful to partner with you in these endeavors.

Every year we graduate students to live out the love, grace, and truth of Jesus Christ in every sector of society and every corner of the world. In this way, our alumni are sent out and commissioned to partner in the renewing work of the Christian Reformed Church.

In this era of Calvin's history, the denomination and the university have an opportunity to come together, reimagining the ways we serve and support each other moving forward. This requires leveraging the strengths of each institution in ways that prepare the next generation of the church. I believe a shared plan will drive us toward success promoting the thriving of both Calvin and the denomination to serve our community effectively.

II. Executive summary

A. Overview

The 2024 calendar year at Calvin University marked exciting developments, including new programs, facilities, and achievements as we approach our shared 150th anniversary with Calvin Theological Seminary. Notably, the year highlighted the university's mission of fostering renewal through the stories of students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Expanded offerings: Calvin introduced two degree-completion programs, an aerospace concentration in engineering, and the Wayfinder program. Additionally, the appointment of the university's first dean of graduate studies reflects our commitment to enhancing graduate education.

Increased enrollment: The university welcomed its largest incoming class in a decade, with total enrollment exceeding 3,600 students, including nearly 20 percent international and first-generation students.

New facilities: Investments were made in creating new athletic, community, and academic spaces, including a state-of-the-art soccer stadium, football building, cadaver lab and related academic spaces, three completely renovated library floors along with a renovation of part of the lower level of Hiemenga Hall, and major lighting upgrades to Gezon Auditorium and the Lab Theatre.

Recognition of faculty: Calvin was recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as the best university for undergraduate teaching in its category, and faculty garnered accolades for research achievements.

Arts investments: Enhancements to the theatre program and the return of the music education program highlight Calvin’s renewed focus on the arts.

Launch of football program and marching band: Calvin completed its inaugural football season and launched a marching band, enhancing student enrollment, campus engagement, and community building.

Student achievements: Students thrived through integrated faith and learning across 100+ majors and programs. Three students received Goldwater scholarships, and two students earned Fulbright scholarships for overseas study.

Strengthened partnerships: Milestones included Calvin’s collaboration with Umm Al-Jimal, which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a new partnership with Baylor University for physical therapy education.

Environmental stewardship: The university reinforced its commitment to sustainability, exemplified by new renewable-energy geothermal systems in the soccer stadium and football buildings, a student analysis of a possible solar farm, and the recognition of Plaster Creek Stewards as a sustainable business honoree.

B. Board of Trustees response to Synod 2024

Please see the Appendix to this report for the Calvin University Board of Trustees response to the request of Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 882-83).

III. State of the university

A. Enrollment growth

Calvin’s total enrollment now exceeds 3,600 students—a mark it hasn’t hit since 2018. The increase is in part a result of the university’s experiencing its second straight year of double-digit-percentage growth in its incoming first-year class enrollment.

In 2024-2025 Calvin welcomed 1,232 new students, which represents the largest incoming class in the past decade. The class includes 1,131 undergraduate and 101 graduate learners from hundreds of high schools, dozens of U.S. states, and almost every continent. The new class also demonstrated university growth in first-generation students, students coming from outside of the United States, student-athletes, students from the CRCNA, students from the state of Michigan, and more.

Calvin continues to reach a greater diversity of learners, both ethnically and geographically. For the fifth straight year, the percentage of African American students at Calvin increased, and this year more than 18 percent of Calvin’s student body is Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). An additional 13.5 percent of students originate from outside the United States, making this the fourth straight year of such enrollment growth.

B. Local and global engagement

Each year, Calvin is living more deeply into its vision by engaging with local and global neighbors for mutual flourishing. Calvin's vision explicitly states that we want to come alongside groups of all different Christian traditions from across the world and ask how we can be a trusted partner with them to promote faithful learning. Therefore we are strengthening Calvin's connections in Kent County, Michigan, in greater Michigan, and around the country, continent, and globe.

School of Continuing Education and Graduate Studies: We are excited to announce the new Master of Social Work degree, which we will launch in fall 2025. Our graduate school also launched Wayfinder, a signature program of eight free college credits in the humanities as an entry point into higher education for adult learners who face powerful social and economic barriers to higher education. Wayfinder exemplifies Calvin's broader steps into adult learning, which now include a range of noncredit professional micro-credentials and, in fall 2025, will include two new undergraduate programs intended for adult degree completion.

We know that engaging the community means we must listen thoughtfully and humbly. We have been supported in this work by several community-based teams, including the President's Community Advisory Council and the 07 Advisory Council, both of which bring regional leaders together to provide care, insight, and accountability.

Ionia County (neighboring county): Students in the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI) want you to know how grateful they are for the opportunity to be a part of Calvin University. For our students, this opportunity provides not simply a degree, although that is significant. It also represents a significant turning point in their lives. Through their study, the students in this program wholeheartedly embrace the opportunity to learn, to think deeply, and to act justly. Repeatedly CPI students share how transformative their education is for their lives as they learn to be servant leaders inside and outside of prison.

This academic year, we welcomed our 10th cohort of CPI students. They began their educational journey in June with a robust student orientation created and led by CPI alumni at the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan. This is just one of the ways our CPI grads are a part of changing the prison context in which they live. A number of these graduates have been sent out to four other correctional facilities to help with academic tutoring, leading classes on substance abuse or mental health, or serving in religious ministry.

This spring Calvin will host the second Conference on Higher Education in Prison, bringing together 150 guests from Michigan schools and the Michigan Department of Corrections. The focus of this year's conference is on building learning communities.

Globally: Calvin continues its enduring relationships based on memoranda of understanding with Christian universities in Indonesia, Honduras, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Korea. These relationships provide promising opportunities for global partnerships and educational exchange.

In the 2024 calendar year, alumni around the world gathered at over 60 events in 33 different cities on three continents. Additionally, we've seen an engagement boost with our young alumni networks in Grand Rapids and Chicago meeting quarterly. The profound impact of Calvin alumni spans every corner of Canada, the United States, and the globe as they follow God's calling to make a difference in a diverse array of fields and sectors worldwide.

C. Finances

Calvin University is dedicated to effective resource management, particularly regarding finances. We appreciate the ongoing support of our denomination, donors, and grants that significantly contribute to our mission. Despite a steady and significant decline in financial support from the CRCNA, Calvin has found ways to broaden the base of financial support to continue delivering a Christ-centered, academically excellent educational experience affecting the lives of thousands of students from all over the world.

In 2024, Calvin launched a multiyear comprehensive campaign, *Strengthening our Path Forward*. This campaign aims to enhance academic programs, create new outdoor athletic facilities, centralize food services to a new single dining hall, and create community spaces for students. It also focuses on providing holistic support for students, fostering an engaged community, and effectively managing our important resources and infrastructure. We welcome support for this campaign from all members of the denomination.

IV. Student experience

A. Faith, worship, and church partnerships

Calvin University is animated by a Reformed Christian faith that seeks understanding and promotes the welfare of the city and the healing of the world. In doing so, our educational community reflects the CRCNA's ministry priorities: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship.

The mission of the Calvin community intersects with local churches throughout the year via student and faculty scholarship; centers and institutes; service partnerships; and personal church attendance and engagement by students, faculty, and staff.

We continually seek to connect with other CRCNA ministries and churches, including through our popular student Church Fair each fall, church directory, newly created interactive church map, and partnerships with local CRCNA churches that sponsor communion for our LOFT services.

Our commitment to the historic Reformed faith and active faith formation is lived out through campus living and learning. Faith formation is provided

by all faculty, staff, and administrators in all that they do in their interaction with students. Campus Ministries oversees worship, Bible studies, pastoral care, and more for our campus community. Programming such as LOFT, chapel, and dorm worship services bring us together and point us to God in meaningful ways. Student Worship Apprentices and other students on our chapel teams plan 75 worship services per semester for their peers and for faculty and staff. This year's programming also featured two silent retreats, a campus-wide day of prayer, and multiple student-led prayer and worship gatherings, including an annual International Worship Night planned by the Center for Intercultural Student Development.

Student Barnabas leaders serve on teams in eight contexts on campus (in six residence halls, in the on-campus apartments, and in Outdoor Recreation) and disciple students in their faith through Bible study, worship, and community events. They are led by a group of upperclass students who serve as Discipleship Assistants. Our campus-wide Bible studies continue to see positive engagement with 25-35 study groups officially registered with Campus Ministries each semester. The book of Daniel was the focus for this past fall in weekly studies and in chapel messages.

One way Calvin students live out their faith is through service-learning. This year's StreetFest event had 98 percent attendance by incoming students, serving at 45 area nonprofits. Ten blood drives and 60 ongoing service opportunities offer meaningful community engagement throughout the year. Students and mentors are also set to embark on three spring break trips, partnering with World Renew in spring 2025.

B. Student engagement

Student engagement continues to be a hallmark of the Calvin experience. The university offers a variety of ways in which students can live wholeheartedly inside and outside the classroom.

Calvin saw an increase of student organizations from 46 last year to 53 this year. The university had 92 orientation leaders apply last year for 25 positions, an increase of 12 applications. Data shows that students are engaged and informed about campus happenings, with 93 percent of students reporting they are extremely, very, or somewhat informed about what's happening on campus and 97 percent of respondents agreeing they belong at Calvin. Residence Life has been working to rebuild a strong sense of community in the halls since the COVID-19 pandemic. Each residence-hall floor now offers floor dinners twice a week, weekly floor events, and monthly outings. Each building also offers weekly all-building social events.

As another example of student engagement, Calvin Cohorts are designed to be *intentional, interdisciplinary communities* that will give students a space to flourish alongside peers, staff, and faculty with similar passions from all different fields. Students in a Cohort will encounter tangible opportunities to live out Calvin's mission to *think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal* in the world. Currently 197 students at Calvin

are part of or have been part of a cohort. This year's cohorts are the Arts Collective, the Ministry Leadership Cohort, and the Common Good Collective.

Students also experienced vocational development through the Career Center's digital engagement and events over the past year. The virtual career center saw 2,046 active users. Career coaching appointments reached 796, serving 582 distinct students and alumni, surpassing the previous year's total. The employer relations team coordinated three career fairs—in engineering and computing, health, and international education—hosting 105 employers and 301 students. Additionally, 45 recruitment opportunities, including networking mixers and employer office hours, connected students with 34 employers. The inaugural West Michigan International Student Career Conference attracted 200 international students, including 17 from Calvin, offering valuable resources for career preparation.

The Center for Intercultural Student Development welcomed 1,160 attendees to the UnLearn Week and the International Education Week, as well as more than 100 attendees for each of these events: International Student Association Committee Dinner, Ambassadors Dinner, and Black Student Union Kickoff.

The Center for Counseling and Wellness provides Calvin students with free resources to help them flourish during their college experience. The center acts as a central point for mental health services both on campus and in the community, offering weekly group therapy sessions, workshops on coping skills, short-term individual therapy, peer-listening opportunities, therapeutic digital resources, and referrals for off-campus treatment. Additionally, the center has free self-help materials available on campus, including a wellness room and a light-box lending program.

Our off-campus programs represent a vital component of our students' education, emphasizing faith-infused learning and engagement. These programs include semester-long experiences in various locations, such as Washington D.C., Peru, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Hungary. Additionally we offer short-term programs during the January and May terms, with destinations including Hollywood, Mexico, Germany, Nepal, and Kenya. These immersive experiences enhance students' academic journeys and broaden their cultural understandings. We also have partnerships with other institutions that provide further off-campus opportunities, enriching the overall educational experience and fostering personal and academic growth.

C. Scholarship

Calvin has long been a leader in scholarship among Christian institutions. By all measures, our faculty continue to excel in this area.

Grant funding at Calvin serves as a vital resource that can significantly enhance various aspects of academic and community engagement. It has the potential to strengthen scholarly pursuits, improve institutional facilities,

bolster outreach initiatives within the community, and foster meaningful partnerships.

This support can also expand the range of opportunities available to undergraduate students, enriching their educational experiences.

As of January 15, 2025, Calvin is supported by \$45,189,047 through 64 active grant awards supporting 73 faculty and staff. Examples of faculty supporting research, infrastructure, and programs with current awards include the following:

- Adejoke Ayoola (School of Health): Workforce Enhancements, \$1,000,000 from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
- Keith Grasman (Biology): Effects of Pollution on Great Lakes Colonial Waterbirds, \$238,298 from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Nathan Sunukjian (Mathematics and Statistics): Workshops in Geometric Topology, \$40,000 from the National Science Foundation
- Calvin University faculty and other campus leaders collaborate on research, scholarship, and art that advances our understanding of ourselves and God's creation. The following are just a few examples of presentations, publications, and productions by and featuring Calvin faculty:
 - The *Behind Our Walls* film by alumnus Nate Roels features the thought leadership of Professor Todd Cioffi of the Calvin Prison Initiative.
 - *Reconciliation in a Michigan Watershed*, a new book by David Warners, biology professor, and Gail Gunst Heffner, emeritus professor, explores the work of the Plaster Creek Stewards.
 - *A Day of Worship: Adoring God in Every Moment*, a book published in Korean by Sam Ha, theological librarian at the Hekman Library and curator for the H. Henry Meeter Center, focuses on how each moment of life, mundane and special, can be a form of worship before God.
 - Lisa Sung, professor of music traveled to Vietnam in May 2024 as part of a John Stites Jazz Award and grant for an international tour.

D. Arts

The arts at Calvin University contribute to recruiting and retaining students, building the arts community on campus and beyond, and enriching the student experience.

The Center Art Gallery welcomes students, faculty, staff, and visitors through its doors to explore God's world through art. In the past year we've hosted the following exhibitions in our Center Art Gallery: *Typography*: An exhibition of Calvin Graphic Design Students; *Calvin's Architectural*

History featuring the work of William Fyfe; and *Inhabiting* by Jennifer Boes (alumna) and Jo-Ann VanReeuwijk (professor emeritus).

As of spring 2025, the university is home to students gifted and engaged in the arts, including the following:

- 11 studio art majors
- 12 art education majors
- 16 BFA in art students
- 31 BFA in graphic design students
- 5 general music majors
- 11 music education majors
- 41 music majors with composition emphasis
- 2 music majors with performance emphasis
- 21 music minors
- 18 theatre minors

Writing also provides an opportunity to embrace faith and the arts. The Craft of Writing and creative writing courses emphasizing nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and writing for children and young adults are just a few examples of classes that embrace the art of writing in God's world.

Founded in 1968, *Dialogue* is an arts and writing magazine of undergraduate creative work that is submitted, curated, and published by Calvin students. *Dialogue* publishes student work in six categories: prose, poetry, photography, visual art, music, and film.

The Calvin Center for Faith and Writing (CCFW) maintains its significant contribution to the world of letters through events large and small. Over three days in April 2024, 2,200 people gathered on Calvin's campus for the biennial Festival of Faith and Writing. Featuring 68 speakers and a robust gathering of publishers and other exhibitors, the program included authors such as Yaa Gyasi, author of best-selling novels, such as *Homegoing*; Tracy K. Smith, former U.S. poet laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner; and Anthony Doerr, another best-selling author and Pulitzer Prize winner. After a cancellation in 2020 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and a virtual "headliners-online" Festival in 2022, it was a joy to welcome attendees and authors alike back to Calvin's campus for the 2024 festival. The Center for Faith and Writing, of course, is more than the festival. For example, in October 2024 the CCFW partnered with the Calvin Student Activities Office (SAO) to present a screening and discussion of *Wildcat*, a film about Flannery O'Connor, and in March 2025 the CCFW will partner with Baker/Brazos Press for the West Michigan launch of Beth Allison Barr's new book, *Becoming the Pastor's Wife*.

The music department was energized by the relaunch of the Bachelor of Music Education degree in fall 2024, a professional program that prepares students for PK–12 teaching certification in Michigan; the implementation of marching band; and the continuing strength of instrumental ensembles (Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Marching Band,

and Pep Band) and choral ensembles (Capella, Campus Choir, Women's Chorale, Oratorio Chorus, and Gospel Choir).

In spring 2025, Capella will engage in a weekend tour of the Midwest, while Wind Ensemble will take on a week-long tour in Florida. Choral ensembles will be highlighted in a mini-masterworks program, and other ensembles will visit area venues such as schools, churches, and retirement homes.

Calvin's music faculty have solid partnerships with other arts organizations, including the Grand Rapids Symphony and Grand Rapids Youth Choruses. In October we served as the host site for the state conference of the Michigan Music Teachers Association.

The 2024-2025 academic year is the 91st season of the Calvin Theatre Company, and we have produced over 350 productions since its inception. The theme and faith focus for this year is "Important Questions" based on 1 Peter 3:15: "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Calvin anticipates the return of musical theatre in April 2026 as part of the university's 150th anniversary.

E. Athletics

Calvin athletics enrich the experiences of student-athletes and our entire community through a commitment to wellness and excellence. Calvin is a top-ranked school in NCAA Division III, a highly competitive division with over 400 member universities, allowing students to be true student-athletes. Calvin has finished in the top 30 in the Learfield Director's Cup all-sports standings in every year but one in the cup's 29-year history.

Calvin is blessed to recruit and retain excellent coaches and athletes and to invest in them athletically, academically, and spiritually. Calvin student-athletes continue athletic traditions of Bible study, mentorship, and team and leadership retreats year after year.

This past September, Calvin competed in its first-ever football season and was highly competitive despite not having an on-campus field on which to host games. In addition, Calvin unveiled a new, 880-seat state-of-the-art soccer stadium in early October, which has provided a first-class competitive and training environment for its men's and women's soccer and men's and women's lacrosse teams. The facility also served as a first-class venue for fans and supporters attending contests there.

During the spring, Calvin unveiled its new outdoor performance track and field facility on the east end of the campus. Calvin hosted the 2024 MIAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships, where several conference records were set.

Meanwhile, Calvin continues to support its women's and men's teams across the board. We had numerous MIAA Championship teams in the

2024 calendar year, including men's basketball, men's swimming and diving, men's tennis, women's soccer, and men's and women's cross country. The men's basketball and men's swimming and diving teams both posted Top 10 national finishes in March 2024, with the men's swimming and diving team finishing seventh place for the highest finish in program history.

V. Board matters

A. Board officers

Board officers for the 2024-2025 year are Bruce Los, chair; Perrin Rynders, vice chair; Gene Miyamoto, secretary; and Dirk Pruis, treasurer (Calvin's vice president for finance and chief financial officer).

B. Board membership

1. Region 2

Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman will be completing her second term. The board presents the following nominee to the classes in Region 2 for approval at their spring classis meetings:

John Valk is a member of Fredericton (N.B.) Christian Reformed Church. He served as an elder at his previous church. He is a retired professor of World View Studies at the University of New Brunswick and has many years of experience within the academic community. He served on an organization promoting Christian Literacy in Canada and served as a campus chaplain. He comes from a family of many Calvin alumni.

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

2. New trustees

At the October 2024 board meeting we welcomed four new trustees after their confirmation by Synod 2024:

Brian Boomsma of Schererville, Indiana, is the president and CEO of Dutch Farms. He attends Faith Church in Dyer, Indiana, where he currently serves on the church council and vision team. His prior board service includes membership on the Highland Christian School board and Foundation Board. He also served as both an elder and deacon at First Christian Reformed Church in Highland, Indiana. He attended Calvin College in the 1970s.

Shirley Hoogstra of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is recently retired as president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C. She attends Encounter Christian Reformed Church at the Fulton Heights location. She served previously on the Calvin Board of Trustees in the late 1990s. She currently serves on the boards of The Trinity Forum and the National Association of Evangelicals. She earned a bachelor of science degree from Calvin College in 1978 and a juris doctor degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1986.

Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker of Hudsonville, Michigan, is the pastor at Beaverdam (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church. He served as a battalion

chaplain in the United States Army (veteran of Iraq conflict). He represented Classis Zeeland on the oversight team of Grand Valley State University Campus Ministry and recently completed service on the Council of Delegates. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in secondary education from Calvin College in 1996 and a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2000.

James Zwiers of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is recently retired from his role as executive vice president at Wolverine Worldwide, Inc. He attends Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, where he has served as a member of council. He currently serves as a board member and on the executive committee of Grand Action 2.0. Prior board experience includes service on the boards of Art Prize, the Outdoor Industry Association, and the Outdoor Foundation. He earned a bachelor of science degree in accountancy from Calvin College in 1990 and a juris doctor degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 1995.

VI. Recommendations

That synod, by way of the ballot, elect new members, reappoint members for subsequent terms, and ratify the result of the Region 2 classis election for membership on the Calvin University Board of Trustees.

Calvin University
Gregory Elzinga, president

APPENDIX

The Calvin University Board of Trustees Response to Synod

*A Special Report of the Calvin University Board of Trustees
Presented to Synod 2025*

*Supported by the Calvin University Confessional Commitment and
Academic Freedom Committee*

Executive summary

This special report, presented to Synod 2025 by the Calvin University Board of Trustees, is offered in the context of the longstanding covenantal partnership between Calvin University and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). In response to Synod 2024's request, we clarify differences between the university's approach to confessional differences and the approach newly outlined in Church Order. We also seek to align our framework for confessional subscription and differences with that of the CRCNA while respecting the distinct spheres and roles of the church and the university.

Key points include:

Acknowledgement of Partnership: We value the deep and enduring relationship between Calvin University and the CRCNA.

Renewed Assurances and Commitments: We reaffirm that the denomination's confessional standards and interpretations are the standards and interpretations of the university. Our policies and practices require trustees and employees to align personal and professional conduct with those standards and interpretations.

Requirements for Trustee Alignment: We will ensure that the majority of trustees are convictionally aligned with synod's confessional expectations while allowing for measured flexibility in trustee selection to maintain governance sustainability and effectiveness. The Board has directed its Trusteeship Committee to ensure that all new trustee nominations follow this structure, while allowing current trustees to complete their existing terms under the previous guidelines.

Developmental Approaches to Confessional Subscription and Differences for Faculty: We will implement an updated developmental framework for confessional subscription and differences that aligns more closely with Church Order while attending to differences between the university and the church. Rationales for and details of the following updates are featured in the report and its appendix.

Developmental practices of confessional subscription

- Requirement of annual active reaffirmation of confessional commitments.
- Development of an initial three-year onboarding period during which a faculty member need only affirm the ecumenical creeds.
- Revision of confessional difficulties as two- to three-year periods of discernment and mentoring.
- Permission of some indefinite exceptions only after at least six years of service (the typical timeline to tenure) and a period of discernment and mentoring that would feature serious theological study and prayerful consideration, after which ongoing service at the university would still require alignment of personal and professional conduct (including, but not limited to, teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public pronouncements, as well as advising, guiding, and mentoring students).

Processes for confessional differences

- Discontinuation of templates for expressions of confessional difficulties.
- Consideration of any difficulty on an individualized, case-by-case basis, including the following criteria:
 - the quality of the gravamen, especially its biblical engagement and grounding in confessional logics;
 - the individual's role in the university; and

- the individual's record of aligning personal and professional conduct to the university's position and expectations.
- Appointment of at least one trustee to join the university's Professional Status Committee deliberations about difficulties, per the expectations established in the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*.

Invitations for Collaboration and Celebration: In order to continue building trust, we invite the engagement and strengthening of existing communication and collaboration channels. In recognition of our covenant partnership, we invite participation in the university's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2026. We would be especially honored to welcome denominational partners at our special worship service on March 29, 2026, where we will express our gratitude for 150 years of God's faithfulness.

This report reflects Calvin University's deep and ongoing commitment to its Reformed identity and its partnership with the CRCNA. By implementing a structured and tiered model for trustee alignment, enhanced policies and practices for faculty confessional subscription, and trust-building initiatives, the university seeks to honor synod's concerns while preserving its mission and governance integrity. We invite Synod 2025 to support this approach, ensuring a future rooted in our shared faith, academic excellence, and denominational partnership.

I. Preamble

With appreciation for the partnership between Calvin University and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and in response to the request of Synod 2024, the Board of Trustees of Calvin University presents this special report to Synod 2025.

In 2024, synod asked the Board of Trustees (a) to clarify differences between the university's longstanding approach to confessional difficulties and the approach recently outlined in Church Order and (b) as needed and appropriate, to revise related policies and practices in ways that align with the CRCNA and build trust between the university and the denomination's churches, all while (c) acknowledging key differences between the church and a university, including tenure and academic freedom.

We gratefully receive the constructive feedback from Synod 2024 on our confessional subscription expectations. We appreciate that Synod 2024 noted both our historic and ongoing "efforts to be faithful to the Reformed confessions in the context of academic inquiry" and Synod 2014's commendation of the university's approach to confessional subscription as "faithful and honoring synod's own prior work on confessional subscription."¹ We believe that some modifications to our existing framework for subscription and differences will align our policies and practices with Church Order while respecting the distinctions synod acknowledged between the university and the church. We remain wholeheartedly committed to this alignment and believe this report reflects Calvin's long history of honoring both

its academic mission and its denominational relationship with constructive, good-faith responses to synodical invitations. The report:

- **Acknowledges the significance** of the deep and enduring partnership between the Christian Reformed Church of North America and Calvin University.
- **Renews assurances** that the denomination's confessional standards and synodical interpretations of those standards are the university's standards and interpretations.
- **Renews commitments** to ensure that university policies and practices continue to promote personal and professional conduct aligned with those standards and interpretations.
- **Updates approaches** to confessional subscription for trustees and faculty that enhance alignment, transparency, and accountability.

It also includes two invitations:

- **To engage and strengthen our channels for communication and collaboration.**
- **To join the celebration of our 150th anniversary in 2026**, which will be an appropriate moment to recognize our long partnership, common commitments, and shared hopes.

We believe that this response honors both the CRCNA's ecclesial ministry and Calvin's academic identity. These commitments – from the importance of the denominational relationship and our commitment to its standards, to our conduct expectations and our understanding of the relationship between our mission and confessional subscription – flow from our deepest Reformed Christian convictions. We take seriously what it means to be Reformed, drawing strength from each of the three strands – the doctrinalist (confessionalist), devotionalist (pietist), and transformationalist (Kuyperian) strands – that have shaped the tradition and animated its congregations and communities.² We invite synod to join us in further strengthening those convictions and the university's confessional identity through patient, trusting, long-term investment in the approach outlined here, and we look forward to opportunities to improve as we implement it.

II. Partnering with the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Universities and churches occupy different spheres, each with a distinctive purpose and ethos. Universities emphasize forming students, producing knowledge, and serving broader communities and publics while the church emphasizes the ministry of the Word, sacraments, discipline, and evangelism. Despite these differences, Christian churches have a centuries-long legacy of partnership with the academy. Christian institutions of higher learning have long been founded and supported to serve the church and its broader communities by producing, synthesizing, and disseminating knowledge and understanding from distinctly Christian perspectives and in distinctly Christian ways.

The CRCNA and Calvin University share in this legacy of enriching relationships between the church and the academy. They have been and remain complementary in their witness and their contributions to life and faith, and they aspire to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.³ Indeed, Calvin University's *Expanded Statement of Mission* describes the two as belonging together in *covenantal* partnership, an enduring relationship marked by a "mutual pledge of fidelity, service, and support."⁴

We see many reasons to value both this legacy and the ongoing covenantal partnership, including the following:

- With Abraham Kuyper, we share the conviction that "Living by the Reformed principles is concentrated most intensively in the institutional churches, and therefore a university is to be congratulated if it has a connection with these churches such that those churches support it in confessing and upholding God's word according to its purest interpretation."⁵
- The Christian Reformed Church and Calvin University share distinctive theological commitments that unite them not only in their pursuit of the hope and knowledge of God, but also in a shared regard for higher learning. Historically, their shared commitment to shaping Christian engagement with and throughout the academic disciplines, and for a wide range of vocations, reflects their understanding that there is indeed "not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not call out: 'Mine!'"⁶ These shared convictions and mutual regard have historically made these institutions two legs of the three-legged stool of home, church, and school – each playing its own role and also partnering with the others to nurture the faith and shape the next generation.
- Calvin's relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America brings additional depth and substantial clarity to its educational mission. In keeping with the purpose to which the church devoted the university, we engage in teaching, scholarship, and character formation that are thoroughly rooted in and expressive of Reformed Christian doctrine.
- A strong and faithful university partners with the church by equipping its members for effective engagement with diverse aspects of God's creation and their communities. As the university has grown in its scope to encompass instruction in the liberal arts and an array of professional disciplines, it has grounded its graduates in their various callings and in continuity with faith in Christ Jesus, thereby offering shalom to the broader culture and leavening congregations in the church universal with members and officebearers who are diverse, mature, and insightful in their participation and leadership.

Altogether, Calvin University's work strengthens the Christian Reformed Church, even as the Christian Reformed Church's long ministry grounds Calvin University.

We recognize that – despite their complementarity and long, shared story – neither the university nor the church has perfectly, completely, or consistently leaned into this partnership. As our *Expanded Statement of Mission* notes, to emphasize this “covenantal relationship is not to suggest that the relationship is therefore always harmonious. Church and college are both, after all, human institutions and have at times exhibited the fallenness of their humanity in uncongenial ways.”⁷ Sadly, each partner has occasionally failed to trust the other and to engage in ways that earn the other's trust.

We are committed to renewal of this unique partnership, which has been generative for a university and denomination devoted to cultural engagement and transformation.⁸ In this season, we aim to restore trust, center our shared values and goals, practice mutual accountability, and honor each other. We invite the denomination to support the university in a spirit of generosity and trust, pray for it regularly, engage with it frequently, lean on its expertise for insights, and endorse it wholeheartedly as an orthodox Christian university and manifestation of God's good work in the world.

III. Affirming the standards and interpretations of the denomination

Like our relationship to the church, our relationship to the denomination's standards is a foundational distinctive of the university. Because both Calvin and the CRCNA have been committed to the university's unique purpose and mission, including the university's “responsibility to its broadened constituency and its changing educational mandate,”⁹ Calvin has taken and still takes the position that the denomination's confessional standards and synodical interpretations of those confessional standards are the standards and interpretations of the university as an institution. All employees and trustees are expected to support the university's commitment to those standards and interpretations.

Anchoring on the standards and interpretations of the CRCNA supports the functioning of the university. In particular, Calvin is able to structure, inform, and fulfill its educational commitments and mission by drawing on the theological positions of the denomination. Calvin's positive articulation of the roles of women in ministry and leadership, its celebration of racial and ethnic diversity as a display of God's intended design and kingdom purposes,¹⁰ its commitments to care for God's creation, and its policies and practices related to the Sabbath are among the examples of the university's efforts to reflect and enact its commitments to the standards it shares with the CRCNA. These flow from our theological and ecclesiastical identity, serve the university's distinct educational purpose and mission, and reflect enduring institutional commitments.

Recently, synod has clarified the status of its teachings and expectations of alignment on human sexuality. Specifically, synod clarified the classification of the denomination's interpretation of "unchastity" and its implications for sexuality and marriage. The university shares the denomination's understanding. Sexual difference and sexuality are good gifts from God. They should be honored in the ways that he intends but, as with all of God's good gifts, are often distorted by sinful impulses. Specifically:

- With the denomination, the university understands scripture and the Heidelberg Catechism to reserve sexual relations only for the context of marriage between one man and one woman. We take this to reflect one aspect of God's beautiful design for human flourishing.
- With the denomination, the university holds that, along with pornography and sexual violence, sexual relations outside of the marriage between one man and one woman – including premarital sex, extramarital sex, and non-heterosexual sex – are sinful and contrary to God's design for human flourishing. The seventh commandment, which is understood to forbid all these practices, expresses God's care for us, helps us to order our loves and lives rightly toward him, and protects and enhances social goods important to our communities.
- With the denomination – and in light of synod's interest in, care for, and instructions on this issue – the university takes seriously its calling to provide opportunities for learning, growth, discipleship, service, and community to all people, regardless of their sexual orientation.

IV. Committing to aligned conduct

Calvin University expects all employees and trustees to align personal and professional conduct with denominational standards and synodical interpretations.¹¹ Aligned conduct (including, but not limited to, teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public pronouncements, as well as advising, guiding, and mentoring students) is part of honoring the denominational relationship and shaping the way the next generation lives out its faith. Modeling a faithful life – even modeling teachability and submission in the midst of disagreement – is an important aspect of this work. For that reason, all faculty, staff, and trustees – whether or not they are teaching faculty – have a role in shaping our students and are expected to embrace related conduct expectations with grace and humility.¹²

Because the university's Articles of Incorporation require it to offer an education "entirely in accord with the doctrinal standards" of the CRCNA, many of its alignment expectations include scholarship and teaching.¹³ Students should be taught and mentored in ways that are consistent with the denomination's standards and synodical interpretations; at the same time, at an educational institution, teaching and learning require students to understand differing perspectives. This means that authentic and sympathetic

representations of confessional teachings rest alongside fair, honest, rigorous, and respectful treatment of very different, and sometimes incompatible, positions. We believe that this approach to teaching and learning – resting as it does on a deep and accurate understanding of, and good-faith engagement with, many positions – is also an expression of our Reformed Christian faith. Still, in all circumstances, employees are expected not to advocate positions that directly contradict the denomination’s positions and interpretations.

As we focus on conduct, we recognize that the vast majority of our employees have lived out their commitments to the university’s purpose, mission, and denominational relationship with integrity. While Calvin has systems and processes in place to promote and ensure accountability to our expectations, we acknowledge that the university could communicate its expectations more clearly, enforce its policies more consistently, and live into its practices more fully. As always, we remain committed to better live into and provide additional clarity around expectations and processes related to personal and professional conduct and how this is monitored by the university.

To the end of promoting a deep understanding of the university’s identity and commitments, as well as aligned conduct, the university will:

- enhance faculty and staff onboarding processes focused on the university’s Reformed Christian identity and mission, ensuring robust and consistent attention to all three strands of the tradition and commending each strand to all employees as enriching the university context and supporting Calvin’s mission;
- ensure that the university’s positions are transparently and consistently presented in public-facing communications and processes;
- review, revise, and disseminate relevant policy documents to trustees and employees.

V. Updating trustee and faculty frameworks for confessional subscription and differences

While all (non-student) employees and trustees are required to affirm the three ecumenical creeds, trustees, cabinet members, enfranchised faculty,¹⁴ and other employees with faculty status are also required to subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity.¹⁵ For these members of the community who participate in shared governance of the institution, this requirement ensures not only alignment of conduct, but also alignment of conviction, with the distinctives of the Christian Reformed Church.

Understanding the importance of safeguarding and promoting our Reformed Christian distinctives, Calvin University remains deeply committed to this convictional alignment for trustees, cabinet members, enfranchised faculty, and other employees with faculty status.

At the same time, the university continues to believe that its mission as a Reformed Christian institution of higher education is most faithfully expressed through applying certain governance and procedural distinctives that rest on differences from the ecclesial functions of the church. One such distinction has been the allowance for some trustees or faculty to serve despite their personal disagreement with a confessional teaching.¹⁶

Calvin's approach to confessional differences has reflected the Reformed tradition's emphasis on robust theological reasoning as a foundation for confessional identity. A deeply Reformed commitment to scholarship and academic freedom recognizes that "faith seeking understanding" draws on both special and general revelation – Scripture and creation – calling for intellectual humility and an openness to genuine questions and dialogue. Some faculty, through deep, good-faith engagement with Scripture, the confessions, and academic study, may arrive at positions that differ from synodical interpretations, yet still operate within a framework of confessional fidelity and Reformed Christian identity. This approach aligns with the Reformed tradition's embrace of catholicity, reflected in the confessions themselves, in the primacy of Scripture and the creeds, and in an acknowledgement that faithful Christian inquiry occurs within a broader historical and global conversation rather than solely within the bounds of any one denomination's contemporary interpretations. The confessions themselves arose from such theological engagement, and the ability to wrestle very seriously with them – while maintaining alignment in conduct and mission – reflects the very kind of Christian learning to which Calvin faculty are called.

For more than a century, our confidence in this calling has grounded Calvin's carefully considered allowances for indefinite confessional exceptions in areas where a faculty member has a conviction that diverges from a specific confessional teaching. The most common exceptions have been to confessional teachings on election and infant baptism. Notably, the university has not assumed that a faculty member with an indefinite confessional exception is not Reformed or cannot serve the university's mission with distinction.¹⁷ Rather, the university has taken a more capacious view in which Reformed identity and ability to serve the university's mission does not hinge upon perfect confessional alignment.

Moving forward, we believe that the university and its mission will remain well served by such an approach. At the same time, while we believe it is essential to maintain the distinctives of a university in order to faithfully live out our Reformed mission, we also seek to more closely align with the expectations and practices developed for officebearers at Synod 2024 and set out in the revised Church Order.¹⁸

Our ongoing flexibility on confessional differences continues to rest upon the different purposes and missions of the church and the academy and the different vocations of officebearers and university trustees and faculty. While there are some overlapping spiritual functions between officebearers,

on the one hand, and trustees and faculty, on the other, expectations of confessional commitment and the shape of confessional differences in each sphere should be grounded in the distinctives of vocation and institutional purpose.

We propose revised confessional subscription frameworks that enhance alignment, transparency, and accountability while reflecting and honoring the callings of trustees and faculty, as well as the practical dimensions of their service.

VI. Trustee alignment framework

Trustees are called to exercise fiduciary responsibilities not only focused on missional integrity, but also on institutional accreditation, financial sustainability, and academic excellence. It is, therefore, mission-critical for boards to represent and balance many constituencies, varied competencies, deep experiences, and sophisticated perspectives on a complex array of issues and topics, keeping in mind the expectations and requirements of accrediting authorities. Flexibility in the midst of authentic and serious confessional commitment can help ensure adequate representation of specialized skill sets and perspectives among trustees.

For trustees, we will implement a tiered alignment model which ensures that the majority of trustees are fully aligned with synod's confessional expectations while allowing for measured flexibility in trustee selection to maintain governance sustainability and effectiveness.

- Mechanisms for alignment
 - Convictional alignment with the denomination's standards and synodical interpretations will be the standard for Classis Region Trustees, who already have the established expectation of membership in a CRCNA congregation.
 - Preference for convictional alignment, with clear expectations of conduct aligned with full support for the CRCNA standards and synodical interpretations, will be the standard for At-Large and Alumni Trustees (consistent with current practice).
- Strengthened trustee selection and oversight processes

The Board has directed its Trusteeship Committee to ensure that all nominations follow the tiered requirements above while allowing current trustees to complete their existing terms under the previous guidelines.
- Periodic reaffirmation of confessional commitments

All trustees will participate in annual active reaffirmation of confessional commitments.

We believe that this approach aligns with synod's expectations and Calvin's historical practices while maintaining the governance flexibility necessary to meet fiduciary responsibilities related to mission, accreditation, financial sustainability, and academic integrity.

VII. Faculty alignment framework

Faculty are called to teaching, scholarship, creative work, and service in the academy, where a carefully bounded space for confessional difference does not dilute confessional identity but strengthens it by ensuring that faculty convictions are formed with integrity through rigorous engagement with the Reformed tradition rather than mere institutional conformity. Faculty contribute to the similar formation of students in robust and authentic Reformed Christian belief not by indoctrinating them in unexamined precepts, but by affirming the confessions and exploring, testing, extending, and applying their conceptual foundations, underlying logics, and practical implications. This work will typically involve imparting a clear and reasoned understanding of differing perspectives, including those that may differ from or challenge their own convictions.

For faculty, we will implement a new developmental framework that features periods of mentoring and formation. While this framework does include the possibility of some confessional exceptions for some faculty on some issues, it also includes new features that align more closely with updated CRCNA practices for officebearers or reflect the academic distinctives recognized and emphasized by Synod 2024.

This framework includes:

- requiring annual active reaffirmation of confessional commitments;
- introducing an initial three-year period of mentoring and development during which a faculty member need only affirm the ecumenical creeds;
- framing confessional difficulties as two- to three-year periods of discernment and mentoring;
- permitting some indefinite exceptions only after at least six years of service (the typical timeline to tenure) and a period of discernment and mentoring that would feature serious theological study and prayerful consideration, after which ongoing service at the university would still require alignment of personal and professional conduct.

See the appendix to this report for a more expansive outline of, and rationale for, the new framework for confessional subscription and differences for employees with faculty status.

Moreover, the work of modifying our processes for confessional differences is already underway.

- Beginning in August 2023, the university has shared with each candidate for a faculty position a summary of the institution's confessional commitments, approach to confessional differences, and position on human sexuality.
- Beginning in October 2024, the university committed itself to the following:

- The Professional Status Committee (PSC) and Board of Trustees are no longer accepting template difficulties.
- All difficulties will be considered on an individualized, case-by-case, basis, including the following considerations:
 - the quality of the gravamen, especially its biblical engagement and grounding in confessional logics,
 - the individual's role in the university, and
 - the individual's record of aligning personal and professional conduct to the university's position and expectations.
- At least one trustee will be appointed to join PSC deliberations about difficulties, per the expectations established in the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*.

We believe that this new framework will strengthen the university's Reformed identity and provide important clarity for current and prospective faculty members.

VIII. Engaging and strengthening channels for trust-building communication and collaboration

Because we value our partnership, the Board of Trustees shares synod's interest in building trust between the university and CRCNA churches and understands the role of revisions to university policies and practices in working toward that goal. At the same time, the Board of Trustees understands the bilateral and fundamentally relational dimensions of our trust-building efforts.

Trust depends in part on recognizing and valuing the distinct role each partner plays within the context and contours of covenantal responsibilities.

- Christian universities are charged with and called to learning and inquiry. Centered on and bounded by their theological identities, they conserve knowledge, conduct perspectival teaching and scholarship that questions and critiques received wisdom, and synthesize and build fresh understanding.
- The denomination is charged with and called to interpretation of Scripture, creeds, and confessions, as well as accountability-keeping within the contours of trust, engagement, and relationship.

We recognize that neither the university nor the church has perfectly, completely, or consistently understood, valued, and recognized each other's gifts and roles. Moreover, these two partners may not have fully taken stock of what a covenantal partnership entails. In this moment, each must ask itself what it can do better. When some churches do not trust Calvin, the university must searchingly ask, "Why?" When at times the university perceives the denomination as overreaching, the denomination must genuinely ask, "Why?" Self-examination, humility, and commitment to understanding and valuing the other partner is the pathway to deepening trust.

We request that synod recognize and honor the Board of Trustees' responsibility to govern the university faithfully and effectively. The work outlined

above will put a premium on patience and may require improved ongoing communication and collaboration. To those ends, we look forward to continuing our communications and collaborations in the channels already established by synod. These include:

- reporting through synod's Education and Candidacy Committee;
- meeting with the Council of Delegates (COD) and welcoming COD representatives to our Board of Trustees meetings;
- participating in Ministries Leadership Council (MLC);
- participating in the Connections Committee.

We believe that these are opportunities to enhance mutual understanding, and if any of these channels require change to further strengthen communication and collaboration, we are willing to work together to make those modifications. Making the most of these channels will afford the churches of the denomination a greater opportunity to learn about, with, and from Calvin University, all the while affording the university the opportunity to learn about, with, and from CRCNA churches.

IX. Inviting participation in our 150th anniversary celebrations

Recognizing not only our intentions to deepen trust, but our long legacy of partnership, we invite you to join us in celebrating our 150th anniversary during the 2025-2026 academic year, expressing our gratitude for the Lord's provision, blessing, and continued grace for our work together. We would be especially honored to welcome denominational partners to the worship service commemorating 150 years of God's faithfulness to the university on March 29, 2026.

As we reflect on the numerous achievements and milestones reached over the past century and a half, we are filled with joy, a renewed sense of purpose, and a deep gratitude for our relationship with the church. This partnership has not only enriched the university and the church but also set a profound example of dedication and resilience. We look forward with confidence, not only because of the strength of our shared values and mutual respect, but primarily because we also know that our God is in control as we step together into the next chapter of our storied history. As our shared contemporary testimony teaches, "The future is secure, for our world belongs to God."¹⁹

A D D E N D U M

I. A revised framework for faculty confessional subscription and differences at Calvin University

Taking seriously Synod 2024's instruction both to define differences in our use of *gravamina* and to revise our policies and practices to align and build trust, all while recognizing key differences between the university and the church, the university sees multiple reasons to revise our policies and practices related to confessional subscription and differences.

- The university sees multiple opportunities to align more closely with the church. These include annual, active reaffirmation of subscription and development of a period of discernment and mentoring for those with a confessional difficulty.
- Maintaining the *language of confessional difficulty gravamina* in the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty* requires us to change the use of those gravamina and align them more closely with Church Order, while maintaining the *practice of confessional exceptions* requires us to create the category of confessional exception gravamina.
- The university sees significant value in developing a formative or developmental approach to confessional subscription and differences. Such an approach will support new faculty, regardless of their theological and ecclesiastical backgrounds, in developing a robust understanding of the confessions while opening space for mentoring and discernment for those with confessional differences.

II. What will be the new framework of policies and practices, moving forward?

During the hiring process, all faculty candidates are informed of the university's relationship to the CRCNA, its confessional standards and interpretations, and policies related to confessional differences. At the time of hiring, enfranchised faculty must affirm the three creeds and the mission of Calvin University. They must also agree to align personal and professional conduct (including, but not limited to, teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public pronouncements, as well as advising, guiding, and mentoring students) with the positions of the CRCNA.

Before the three-year reappointment, all enfranchised faculty will take part in the Kuiper Seminar and the de Vries Institute faith and learning fellowship, familiarizing themselves with the Reformed tradition, the CRCNA's theological standards, and the university's approach to the integration of faith and learning.

At the three-year reappointment, enfranchised faculty will sign the Covenant for Faculty Members, which affirms their convictional alignment with scripture, the creeds, the confessions and synodical interpretations. Faculty who have a confessional difference – including any difference with a synodical interpretation – must also submit a *confessional difficulty gravamen* to PSC at this time. According to the processes outlined in the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, PSC will determine whether the gravamen constitutes a substantial difference with the confessions, and if so, whether or not the difference (a) should be disqualifying for continued employment or (b) should initiate a two- to three-year period of study, mentorship, and discernment for the faculty member.²⁰ The PSC's recommendation will go to the Board of Trustees for approval.

At the six-year reappointment (conferring tenure or its equivalent for professors of practice and lecturers), any faculty member who has previously

submitted a *confessional difficulty gravamen* and arrived at a settled conviction that differs with a matter in the confessions or synodical interpretations may submit a *confessional exception gravamen* to the PSC. PSC will then determine whether the gravamen constitutes a substantial difference with the confessions/interpretations, and if so, whether or not an ongoing difference on the matter (a) should be disqualifying or (b) should be permitted. The PSC's recommendation will go to the Board of Trustees for approval. If the difference is allowed, the faculty member will hold an indefinite exception. There will be a high bar for approval of confessional exceptions, which will need to exhibit biblical and Reformed rationales. We expect that a minority of faculty will hold any settled conviction contrary to the university's confessional standards or synodical interpretations thereof.

All faculty submitting gravamina of any kind (*confessional difficulty* or *confessional exception*) must write their own gravamen, so that the weight of their disagreement can be judged in the context of their broader Reformed convictions, as well as their biblical and theological sensibilities. All faculty with approved gravamina will be subject to guidelines for teaching, scholarship, advocacy, public speech, etc. specific to their role at the university (e.g., discipline of study, position type).

Annually, all enfranchised faculty who have not yet come up for their three-year reappointment will reaffirm their belief in the creeds, support for the mission of Calvin University, and commitment to alignment in action with the standards of the CRCNA. All faculty who have signed the Covenant for Faculty Members at Calvin University will reaffirm their commitment to that covenant.

III. What will the study, mentorship, and discernment for faculty with approved confessional difficulty gravamina entail?

Enfranchised faculty with approved confessional difficulty gravamina will be paired with mentors designated by the Board of Trustees for a period of study and discernment that privileges the position of the CRCNA and aims for alignment, even while being open to a possible confessional exception in the end. During this time, the university will also provide structured opportunities to understand better the university's relationship to the CRCNA and the university's related expectations of institutional citizenship.

The university will develop a list of approved mentors (and may develop curricula) to facilitate these periods of discernment. Over the two- to three-year period, these mentors will prayerfully guide faculty through readings, discussions, and reflections designed to explore the faculty member's difficulties and faithfully present the positions of the confessions. If, at any time, the faculty member finds that they agree with the confessions, the formal period of mentorship and discernment may end. If the faculty member reaches the end of their discernment period without coming into agreement with the confessions, then they may either submit a confessional-exception

gravamen or resign from the university (subject to the conditions of the customary terminal year). In order to promote transparency and trust between the mentor and faculty member, the university will not solicit or accept the opinion of any mentor on any personnel matter pertaining to the faculty member, other than to confirm the faculty member's good-faith engagement in the process.

IV. What is the timeline for faculty whose gravamina do not receive approval from the Board of Trustees to leave the university?

Faculty whose confessional differences are not approved will normally be granted the conventional "terminal year" of employment, which will last for a full academic year after the decision is made. At the board's discretion a terminal year may not be granted for a difficulty with a doctrine taught in or foundational to the ecumenical creeds or if the employee has not met the university's expectations for alignment of personal and professional conduct.

V. What are the advantages of this change? How does it contribute to a constructive, good-faith response to synod? How does it support Calvin's mission?

The revised framework for confessional subscription and differences brings Calvin's policy for enfranchised faculty into closer alignment with that of the Christian Reformed Church's policy for officebearers in at least two ways, which we hope will build trust with CRC churches.

- First, faculty without gravamina, who have passed their first reappointment, will be expected to reaffirm the Covenant for Faculty Members annually, just as CRC officebearers without gravamina sign the Covenant for Officebearers annually. In this way, confessional subscription is regularly celebrated and reaffirmed, reminding subscribers and the whole community of our unity in faith and witness.
- Second, faculty who submit confessional difficulty gravamina that are accepted by the Board of Trustees will enter a period of mentorship and discernment, just as CRC officebearers who submit confessional difficulty gravamina that are accepted enter a period of discernment. In this way, confessional difficulties are opportunities for spiritual mentorship and growth, bolstering understanding of and commitment to the confessions among faculty and officebearers alike.

The revised framework also facilitates fulfillment of Calvin University's mission to equip students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

- First, the three-year period of Christian formation that begins with a faculty member's initial appointment prompts faculty to think deeply together about the beliefs to which they will commit. Similarly, the two- to three-year period of mentorship and discernment

following the acceptance of a confessional difficulty gravamen also prompts faculty to think deeply, together with their approved mentors, about the beliefs with which they have reported a difficulty. This careful consideration promotes integrity of belief and prepares faculty to empathize with and assist students and others who are thinking deeply about the Reformed Christian faith, whether for the first time, or in the context of their own difficulties.

- Second, the reciprocal commitments to personal and institutional integrity made by faculty and by the university through the new framework facilitate living wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. On the one hand, faculty are expected to self-report any differences they have with the confessions, rather than secretly harboring such differences or unreflectively assenting to beliefs that they have not tried hard to understand. On the other hand, the University is expected to uphold previously approved gravamina and to support faculty through their processes of mentorship and discernment if and when their confessional difficulty gravamina are approved, rather than jeopardizing the employment of faculty whose differences are acceptable and who follow the framework in good faith. Moreover, this framework upholds the university's integrity as an institution of Reformed Christian higher learning by supporting faculty inquiry while affirming the authority of the confessions. In this way, Calvin faculty and Calvin University model integrity for students and the entire community so that their lives and witnesses may be wholehearted even as they submit to the challenging teachings about life and faith posed by the confessions.

VI. What about faculty who arrive at confessional differences – whether through realization, change of mind, or fresh interpretation by synod – following the six-year milestone? What about faculty who have a shorter run-up to reappointment (three-year or tenure)? And what about the continuing faculty, employed before these changes have gone into effect?

After the recommended changes go into effect, the following applies to both future hires and currently employed faculty who develop a confessional difference: Enfranchised faculty become eligible to submit a confessional difficulty gravamen at the time of their first reappointment and eligible to submit a confessional-exception gravamen once they have completed a period of mentorship and discernment. Because all faculty with difficulties are expected to engage in serious discernment and good-faith efforts to seek alignment, neither prior employment at Calvin nor a quicker run-up to tenure (or its equivalent for lecturers and professors of practice) exempts a faculty member from a period of mentorship and discernment between their submission of a confessional difficulty gravamen and a confessional exception gravamen. This period of study, mentorship, and discernment is necessary to give the faculty member every opportunity to come into alignment with the confessions in accordance with the CRCNA's teaching, in faith that

the confessions are reasonable and that seeking to understand them will result in agreement with them or, in some cases, in limited, circumscribed differences of conviction that are nonetheless grounded in the faculty member's understanding of scripture, the creeds, and the confessions.

Endnotes

¹ *Acts of Synod 2024*, 882.

² See the CRCNA's booklet, *What It Means to be Reformed: An Identity Statement*, which the university has long supplied to faculty candidates. The university has committed itself to all three strands of the Reformed tradition described in this booklet and has noted that it does not privilege any one of them over the others.

³ Ephesians 4:3, NIV.

⁴ The *Expanded Statement of Mission* describes this relationship as "covenantal," using the term no fewer than nine times to emphasize that the partnership is both mutual and enduring, even through times of tension and difficulty.

⁵ Abraham Kuyper, "Bound to the Word," in *On Education*, ed. Wendy Naylor and Harry Van Dyk, Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 92-93.

⁶ Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

⁷ *Expanded Statement of Mission*.

⁸ This covenantal partnership between the university and denomination is one both parties want, and its legal basis derives from the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Their provisions, along with other related documents, describe synod's role as appointing trustees (nominated by the board of trustees or elected by six classis regions) and approving any changes to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Otherwise, synod delegates the work of governing the institution fully to the Board of Trustees, which must ensure fidelity to the purposes of the institution, missional integrity, and sustainability. The work of the trustees includes setting expectations for employees either directly or through the administration.

⁹ *Expanded Statement of Mission*.

¹⁰ See *From Every Nation: Revised Comprehensive Plan for Racial Justice, Reconciliation, and Cross-Cultural Engagement at Calvin College* (2004).

¹¹ Calvin's relevant policy documents include expectations for teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public pronouncements, as well as advising, guiding, and mentoring students. Such expectations are expressed in the employee handbook, *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, trustee handbook, and other relevant policy documents, including but not limited to *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom and Homosexuality and the Calvin College Community*.

¹² It is worth noting that while Calvin also expects alignment of convictions (see a later section of this report for more detail on the extent of that expectation), there are significant advantages to leading with alignment of personal and professional *conduct*. While conduct is not without its ambiguities, it is more readily subject to empirical observation and judgment. Clear expectations and consistent enforcement are more straightforward in the domain of conduct.

¹³ See *Calvin's Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom* document for the definitive account of the university's approach to expressing both of these core commitments.

¹⁴ Enfranchised faculty include tenure-track faculty, lecturers, professors of practice, some library staff, and administrators with faculty status.

¹⁵ Enfranchised faculty and other employees with faculty status affirm these confessions by signing the Covenant for Faculty Members, which aligns with the Covenant for Officebearers. Signatories not only affirm the authority of scripture and the creeds and confessions, but "promise to be formed and governed by them" and aver that they "heartily believe and

will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.”

¹⁶ To be clear, there are many confessional teachings – including those teachings reflected in the ecumenical creeds – and synodical interpretations thereof on which an exception would not be countenanced. Examples are included throughout *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom*.

¹⁷ There is no way to know precisely how many indefinite exceptions have been granted in Calvin’s long history of this practice. Past examples include Paul Henry, whose faithful service as a professor of political science was in no way compromised by his indefinite confessional difficulty with infant baptism. Indeed, the university, the church, and their broader publics were enriched by Dr. Henry’s outstanding teaching, scholarship, service, and unimpeachable Reformed Christian commitment.

¹⁸ Our work takes seriously synod’s expectations that we both align *and* define differences, recognizing that the university and the church differ in ways that include academic freedom and tenure; the necessity of both aligning and defining differences also reflects the distinctive purpose of each institution, as described in the “Partnering” section above. Notably, we believe that alignment and difference are entirely compatible such that alignment does not require a 1:1 correspondence between Calvin’s practices and those of Church Order.

Similar assumptions about alignment have seemingly been made by previous synods. For example, when Synod 2014 commended to the churches Calvin’s framework for confessional subscription and differences in the context of academic freedom, the university’s practices were not in 1:1 correspondence with Church Order. Yet Synod described the university’s approach as honoring prior synodical teachings, which suggests that they were not misaligned. Clearly, then, a 1:1 correspondence is not required for alignment. When it comes to understanding alignment in the midst of differentiation, two metaphors may be helpful:

- Two parallel lines can accurately be described as *aligned* even though they are *different* lines and will never intersect.
- The wheels of a car or train are aligned even though they aim toward different points. Alignment is required for the vehicle to function correctly. Because it has support on two sides and wheels that travel parallel paths, it enjoys increased stability. That said, maintaining that alignment is important work that requires attention, regular maintenance, and occasional interventions. ^{xx} Notably, the university’s standard for submitting a confessional difficulty is the same as the CRCNA standard now articulated in “Affirming the Standards,” issued by the General Secretary on January 24, 2025.

¹⁹ *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*

²⁰ This period for faculty members’ confessional difficulties is consistent with the time the denomination has set as appropriate for officebearers with confessional differences to enter into study, mentorship, and discernment.

Canadian Justice Ministries

The Canadian Justice Ministries are composed of the Centre for Public Dialogue, Indigenous Ministry, and Intercultural Ministry. Collectively these ministries help churches in Canada live out God's call for justice, reconciliation, and belonging.

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 (CPD), 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, faith-filled 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 in collaboration with the Committee for Contact with the Government.

With the recent departures of a long-serving director and some committee members, the CPD is in a significant time of visioning and rebuilding. Our work is sustained by existing staff and through collaboration with Canadian Justice Ministries.

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.
2. Gathering local church members to tell stories and think together about Christ's call to justice through the *Do Justice* blog (dojustice.crcna.org). Through our *Do Justice* columnists initiative, writers from across North America have regularly shared about ways in which they are wrestling with the call to do justice in their own local contexts. Our seventeen regular columnists (including seven people of color) focus on specific issues from poverty to climate change to Reformed theological reflections to refugee sponsorship. *Do Justice* also starts these conversations through a podcast format. This year we talked with guests about what they would have liked to have known before engaging in justice ministries and about how to do justice together in community through learning cohorts.
3. Working closely with the justice mobilization program manager for Canada, Cindy Stover, to develop and animate learning opportunities

on justice and reconciliation. We continue to respond to church requests for virtual, in person, and recorded materials. This year we also completed a new *Justice: An Everyday Spiritual Journey* workshop for use in both Canada and the United States.

B. Loving mercy, doing justice

We assist local churches in loving mercy and doing justice as follows:

1. Communicating with government officials through direct interaction with policy makers and shapers at the federal level 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. We continue to raise the issue of equity in Indigenous education, including through the sending of Education Together campaign postcards to representatives, and to invite advocacy for refugee resettlement through cobranded action alerts with World Renew-Canada.
2. Working with CRCNA partners to bring justice-themed learning experiences to churches. We continue to offer a variety of workshops in person and online through the Thinkific learning platform, which allows churches to advocate on issues they care about. The Hearts Exchanged program continues to be an important pillar of work in collaboration with Indigenous Ministries.

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

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

The Centre for Public Dialogue offers worship materials for a special Sunday in February. We create continual space for prayer on significant issues of the day through *Do Justice* weekly prayers.

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

We continue to seek ways to connect with young people through the *Do Justice* blog, the *Do Justice* podcast, and an active social media presence. Justice and reconciliation mobilizer Cindy Stover regularly connects with campus ministries, supports student programs such as Act Five and the SOCO Beach Project, and hosts workshops in churches. In recent years we have also increased the number of schools we connect with, delivering presentations and Blanket Exercise workshops in many Christian elementary and high schools.

C. Growing in diversity and unity

We regularly connect with churches across the country to help them seek justice through workshops, responses to inquiries, and learning opportunities. Justice and reconciliation mobilizer Cindy Stover also serves as one of the coaches of a Multicultural Churches Cohort focused on helping congregations to increase intercultural connections and belonging. We also work

in close relationship with the CRC's Indigenous Ministry and Intercultural Ministry, ensuring accountability to one another as we create resources and support churches at the intersections of justice, reconciliation, diversity, and advocacy in Canada.

D. Sharing the gospel

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 and Christians participate actively in the ministry of reconciliation, our witness is stronger and has more integrity. By being salt and light in the Canadian public sphere, we act as God's agents of renewal sharing a gospel vision of equity for all.

Indigenous Ministry

I. Introduction

The Indigenous Ministry is made up of a national committee (Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee), three Urban Indigenous Ministries, and a senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation, each using their strengths to support healing and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

1. Hearts Exchanged is a learning and action journey designed to equip Reformed Christians to go beyond the headlines into deep work that wrestles with how our churches can become places of belonging and embrace God's call to reconciliation with Indigenous neighbors. Participants are transformed in their minds and hearts as they are invited into honest dialogue about the harms of colonialism and as they encounter "hearts broken" stories and experiences. A seasonal cycle of cohorts has continued with four groups meeting online and six groups meeting in local churches. Ecumenical partners have also expressed interest in Hearts Exchanged over the years, and we've begun a cofacilitated cohort with the Mennonite Central Committee to test out adapting the content to the wider Canadian-church context.
2. Past Hearts Exchanged participants are now being equipped through two Communities of Practice, which meet to continue to take action steps toward reconciliation through mutual support and coaching.
3. The Urban Indigenous Ministries continue to support growth in individuals within their local communities. This work involves activities such as talking circles, meal sharing, and parenting classes.

B. Loving mercy, doing justice

1. Resources, studies, and other tools are available as churches take steps toward addressing harm done to Indigenous people. 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. This year we featured several Indigenous voices regularly on the *Do Justice* blog and podcast to equip congregations for further justice conversations.
2. The KAIROS Blanket Exercise is an embodied workshop we continue to share 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. Here's what one Christian high school student shared with us after this workshop: "I learned about the Indigenous peoples' point of view—specifically, how it felt to have my home taken away as the blankets were folded inward or just scooped up. Indigenous people had little to no say in what happened and were not seen as stakeholders in Canada."
 3. We initiated on-the-land learning activities in Indigenous communities and participated in key events such as the Strawberry Communion and Thanksgiving this year. These learning opportunities have been created to support ongoing engagement for people who have completed Hearts Exchanged or who are looking for practical learning experiences. Participants engage in hands-on projects like plant restoration or maple sap collection, learn about land rights and allyship, and get connected to local Indigenous neighbors.
 4. Creative and winsome programs continue at each of the Urban Indigenous Ministries. The Indigenous Christian Fellowship and Edmonton Native Healing Centre served meals in the thousands, provided food boxes, and offered community services such as beading circles and foot care.
- C. Gospel proclamation and worship
1. Resources were created for Indigenous Ministry Sunday. The bulletin insert this year featured coming together for reconciliation over food.
 2. Senior leader for Indigenous justice Adrian Jacobs has been invited to preach in a variety of churches and regularly shares how Scripture connects with his life as an Indigenous Christian.
 3. The Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton help to meet the spiritual and social needs of Indigenous Canadians. These ministries are located in low-income neighborhoods and are consistently present to serve the needs there.

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

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

Indigenous Ministry offers prayers and devotions for churches. These are available in print form and on our growing YouTube channel. Our audio reflections for National Truth and Reconciliation Day are widely used. Each

of the urban ministries regularly hosts culturally appropriate prayer, and many of these prayers are shared in Hearts Exchanged cohorts.

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

The Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee currently includes members from a mix of ages and backgrounds, including two members under age 30. Resources are shared to engage kids in Indigenous justice, and the urban ministries offer programming for kids such as special events and family games. We have seen a significant increase in requests from Christian schools for presentations of the Blanket Exercise, and we are working with educators to incorporate this workshop into their curricula as requested.

C. Growing in diversity and unity

The senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation regularly responds to community requests asking for regional support for reconciliation. This includes sermons, speaking engagements, and workshops. We also work in close relationship with the CRC's Intercultural Ministries and Centre for Public Dialogue, ensuring accountability to one another as we create resources and support churches at the intersections of justice, reconciliation, diversity, and advocacy in Canada.

D. Sharing the gospel

Doing justice and reconciliation is gospel proclamation. Christ is renewing all things and calls us to be collaborators in this task. When the church does justice and Christians participate actively in the ministry of reconciliation, our witness is stronger and has more integrity. Indigenous Ministry is equipping churches to be in relationship with Indigenous neighbors in ways that help members to share the good news with graciousness and humility. The three Urban Indigenous Ministry Centres provide culturally relevant spaces for Indigenous Christians to worship and find belonging in gospel-shaped community.

Intercultural Ministry

I. Introduction

Intercultural Ministry in Canada is supported by the Decolonization and Antiracism Collective, a national advisory committee in Canada. Collaborating closely with the senior leader for intercultural ministry, our mission is multifaceted. We are dedicated to equipping and empowering Canadian churches, helping them to adapt to and embrace the growing diversity of ethnocultural and racial groups within their communities and congregations. The collective is steadfast in its commitment to fostering practices of hospitality and guiding churches toward evolving into vibrant, healthy intercultural communities. This transformation is deeply rooted in the principles of biblical justice and love, aiming to reflect these values in every aspect of church life.

This year senior leader for intercultural ministry Pablo Kim Sun took a different position and was replaced by co-senior leaders for intercultural ministry Sebastian Maldonado and Jeremiah Bašurić.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

We recognize the complex interplay between faith and cultural identity, especially for our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) members. These individuals often encounter challenges when integrating their unique cultural experiences in some CRC spaces. To address this, our ministry provides support through a range of avenues, including personal interactions and small-group dialogues.

Our consistent message to the community stresses that ethnocultural and racial diversity is not just a societal reality but a vital part of God's vision for humanity. We emphasize the beauty and inherent value of intercultural church communities. This message is promoted through various channels, including our online platforms, our website, the One Family Conversation Initiative, preaching engagements in local churches, and appearances at regional events as we aim to make our presence felt and our message heard far and wide.

B. Mercy and justice

In our advocacy for intercultural interaction, we prioritize approaches grounded in love and justice, mirroring Christ's ethos. By engaging in multicultural cohort groups and initiatives like the One Family Conversation, we aim to foster churches and regional gatherings into inclusive environments. Here, every member, regardless of their background, is valued and empowered to contribute.

Justice, a central pillar of our Canadian mission, extends beyond the confines of individual ministries. We actively collaborate with ministry groups such as Resonate, Thrive, Diaconal Ministries, and World Renew. This collaboration is aimed at pursuing a comprehensive approach to justice that captures the diverse aspects of God's call and reflects our commitment to a just and equitable society.

C. Gospel proclamation and worship

We advocate for and encourage diverse preaching and worship styles. We have started to develop an online network of BIPOC members within the CRCNA that will allow us to get to know worship leaders, reach out to them, and invite them to lead and infuse their particular cultural heritage experiences into diverse worship. We are inspired by the imagery of intercultural worship found in Revelation 7:9-10 and 21:22-27, symbolizing the universal and inclusive nature of God's kingdom.

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

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

We actively listen and engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, learning about their unique practices of prayer, spiritual disciplines, and discernment processes. It is enlightening to discover the various expressions of prayer and spiritual disciplines within our churches. Sharing stories and practices not only enriches individual spiritual journeys but also strengthens our collective faith experience.

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

Acknowledging the importance of generational diversity, we aim to bridge generational divides. By leveraging our experiences in intercultural dialogue, we enhance these valuable intergenerational connections, fostering a deeper understanding and respect among different age groups within our communities.

C. Growing in diversity and unity

In November 2024, Jeremiah Bašurić and Sebastian Maldonado were appointed as co-senior leaders for Intercultural Ministry in Canada. This collaborative leadership approach combines their extensive experience to enhance support for churches already engaging with multiculturalism within the denomination. They will continue offering Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) facilitation for churches as well as other resources and training aimed at creating spaces where diverse voices are valued and empowered. In February 2025 they began supporting and leading an intercultural cohort designed to create spaces in which churches can share multicultural wisdom, their learnings from various experiments, and their best practices regarding multicultural hospitality and community. A participant from the 2024 cohort shared this reflection with the leadership team: "I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of getting together with like-minded folks focused on making our church a friendly inclusive place for people of differing cultures. I feel wonder and awe at what God is doing in and through CRC congregations across Canada!"

D. Sharing the gospel

Our ministry places a strong emphasis on sharing the gospel through both actions and words, rooted in deep, trusting relationships. By guiding churches in cultural humility and intercultural engagement, we empower congregations to effectively convey Christ's love across cultural boundaries. This approach enriches our collective understanding of the gospel's universal appeal, demonstrating its relevance and power in a diverse world.

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

I. Introduction

Established by synod in 1983, the CRC Loan Fund helps CRC congregations finance capital improvements through low-interest loans. The Loan Fund has originated over two hundred loans totaling more than \$90 million to hundreds of churches across the United States. The Loan Fund operates solely through lending revenue and does not receive ministry shares. In the past fiscal year the Loan Fund committed \$1,797,525 to two churches and received \$4,467,274 in new or renewed investments. The Loan Fund aims to grow both lending and investing activity and is exploring opportunities to lend to CRC-affiliated organizations such as Christian schools.

II. Board of directors

Synod is responsible to appoint two Loan Fund board members annually, with members being eligible to serve up to two three-year terms. Jeffrey Feikens (2025/2) is completing his second term and is ineligible for reappointment, while Carl Kromminga (2025/1) is completing his first term and wishes to serve a second. The board requests that synod reappoint Carl Kromminga for a second term and appoint one new board member from the slate of two nominees below for a three-year term, with eligibility for reappointment.

Ray Slager, a member of Lakeside Community Christian Reformed Church in Alto, Michigan, earned a business degree from Calvin College and a master's degree in accounting from Western Michigan University. Now a retired CPA, he taught at Calvin University for 29 years and has served as an elder and a deacon at both Lakeside Community CRC and at Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He currently volunteers locally at Legacy Thrift, has mentored at Guiding Light Ministries, and has provided AARP income tax assistance at the Grand Rapids Library for twelve years.

John M. Vander Haag, a member of Sanborn (Iowa) Christian Reformed Church, earned a business degree from Dordt University and runs a family-owned trucking parts and service business. He has served as a deacon and elder at his church and as a member and chair of the board at Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa. He also serves as a kingdom ambassador of Barnabas Foundation, a board member of the local museum, and on various city civic committees.

III. Financial operations

In the 2024 fiscal year (ending June 30, 2024), the Loan Fund began recovering from a lending slump brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Loans receivable increased by \$37,561 to \$9,968,557. The board approved \$1,797,525 in loans to Rudyard (Mich.) CRC and Drenthe CRC, Zeeland, Michigan, for renovations. Net assets grew by \$294,871. The Loan Fund

maintains a loan loss reserve and has experienced only minimal losses over its more than forty-year history, with no losses in the past ten years.

Investments decreased by \$2,120,052 to \$9,379,019 in fiscal year 2024. To attract more investors, rates increased to 3-4.5 percent for fiscal year 2025, with a time-weighted average of 2.86 percent. The Loan Fund is authorized to sell Investment Certificates in twenty-three states.

Below is selected financial information on the Loan Fund's operations and trends.

| <i>Financial Highlights</i> | 2024 | 2023 | 2022 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Cash and equivalents | \$5,696,748 | \$7,481,890 | \$9,263,219 |
| Loans receivable | 10,014,323 | 10,013,377 | 10,806,504 |
| Total assets | <u>\$15,711,071</u> | <u>\$17,495,267</u> | <u>\$20,069,723</u> |
| Certificates and interest payable | \$9,465,733 | \$11,544,800 | \$14,391,628 |
| Total liabilities | <u>\$9,465,733</u> | <u>\$11,544,800</u> | <u>\$14,391,628</u> |
| Net assets | 6,245,338 | 5,950,467 | 5,678,095 |

A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2024, is available at crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements.

IV. Sources of funding

The Loan Fund's operations are funded through the following sources:

- sales of Investment Certificates in approved states
- gifts and bequests
- investment of net assets

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is staffed by Alice M. Damsteegt, program coordinator, and Layla Kuhl, director.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund's director or board members when discussing matters related to the Loan Fund.

B. That synod, by way of the ballot, appoint one new board member from the slate of two nominees presented, and reappoint Carl Kromminga to a second three-year term.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Layla Kuhl, director

Pensions

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

In December 2024 the trustees of the CRCNA pension boards in the United States and Canada decided to outsource the day-to-day administrative duties of the ministers' pension plans. This move does not affect benefits, and it helps to provide long-term stability to the pensions plans' critical daily activities. The third-party administrator for the pensions plans is CEB Services in Grandville, Michigan.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Pension Trustees and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

Alan Van Dyke is completing his second term on the U.S. Pension Trustees board in 2025 and is eligible and recommended for a third three-year term. Drew Sweetman is completing his first term on the U.S. Pension Trustees board in 2025 and is eligible and recommended for a second three-year term. John Bolt will be concluding service on the U.S. Pension Trustees board. (*Note: John Bolt will continue serving the board in his capacity as staff at CEB Services.*)

Dick Vreugdenhil is completing his second term on the Canadian Pension Trustees board in 2025 and is eligible and recommended for a third three-year term. Daryl DeKlerk is completing his first term on the Canadian Pension Trustees board in 2025 and is eligible and recommended for a second three-year term. Kathy Wassink will be concluding service on the Canadian Pension Trustees board.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. *Ministers' pension plans*

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The plans provide four types of benefits, as follows:

- Retirement benefits commencing at age 66, or early-retirement benefits in a reduced amount beginning at age 55.
- Long-term disability benefits provided through an insurance company (to all full-time, active participants who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier).

- Survivors' benefits paid to a surviving spouse if death of a participant occurs while in active service.
- Orphans' benefits paid to a participant's orphaned children up to age 18, or to age 21 if in school.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2024, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where they have residence.

| | <i>United States</i> | <i>Canada</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Active ministers | 606 | 248 | 854 |
| Ministers receiving benefit payments | 649 | 168 | 817 |
| Spouses and dependents | 190 | 56 | 246 |
| Withdrawn participants with vested benefits | <u>101</u> | <u>30</u> | <u>131</u> |
| Total | 1,546 | 502 | 2,048 |

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. Both plans are required to have a valuation every three years. The next valuation is due as of December 31, 2025, and will be summarized in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans' last valuation (required every three years), on a going concern basis, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$139.1 million for the U.S. plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022) and approximately \$53.8 million for the Canadian plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

| | <i>December 31, 2024</i> | <i>December 31, 2023</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| United States (U.S. \$) | \$125,556,000 | \$125,333,000 |
| Canada (Can. \$) | 93,586,000 | 82,183,000 |

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings along with contributions to the plans provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined-benefit form of the plan has not been altered, changes were made to benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

Synod 2024 affirmed that the pension plans were created with values that have shaped and guided them (1) to enable ministers to serve in Canada and the U.S. while maintaining consistent retirement benefits; (2) to mitigate the impact of serving a smaller congregation; (3) to honor the covenant of the denomination to care for pastors with long-term disability protection and life insurance. With that in mind, the pension trustees are exploring broader retirement benefit options that may include a blend of defined-contribution plans along with the defined-benefit plan(s). The trustees are in the process of exploration and research, with the assistance of plan consultants, to develop recommendations. This will include discussion and input from U.S. and Canadian pastors, including bivocational and recently ordained pastors. In addition, the trustees are working on providing more information and education to pastors and churches about the current defined-benefit pension plan and the defined-benefit contribution plan available to them, as well as about the importance of building retirement savings through these plans. These tasks are currently in process, and the trustees intend to prepare recommendations for submission to Synod 2026.

3. Funding

All organized churches are plan sponsors and thus are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2025 (in local currency) is \$37.20 per member in both Canada and the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$7,704 for both countries as well. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries

who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. In the United States, contributions are paid into the two available defined-contribution plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. U.S. churches with staff participating in the 403(b)(9) plan set the contribution rates independently. In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In these defined-contribution plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal or provincial regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, while Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan’s assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan’s assets.

As of December 31, 2024, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$44,070,000 in the United States and \$6,058,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 343 participants in the U.S. plans and 111 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

| | <i>United States</i> | <i>Canada</i> |
|----------|----------------------|---------------|
| Active | 206 | 103 |
| Inactive | 137 | 8 |

C. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements (crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements) of the retirement plans are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers’ pension plans and the employees’ retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees, the U.S. Pension Trustees, the CRCNA’s chief administrative officer, and the U.S. managing director of CEB Services when matters pertaining to insurance and retirement plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2025 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of an ordained pastor's distributions from their CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan in 2025 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that those funds are used to rent or provide a home.

D. That synod, by way of the ballot, reappoint Drew Sweetman to a second three-year term and Alan Van Dyke to a third three-year term on the U.S. Pension Trustees, and reappoint Daryl DeKlerk to a second three-year term and Dick Vreugdenhil to a third three-year term on the Canadian Pension Trustees beginning July 1, 2025.

Pensions
Shirley DeVries, chief administrative officer

ReFrame Ministries

I. Introduction—mission and mandate

ReFrame Ministries serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. ReFrame 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 in ten major languages that proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church globally. This work takes place through four core strategies:

- Church rooted: We believe 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 channels 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 found in Matthew 28. Much of our work also aligns with other parts of the CRCNA's fivefold calling as we seek to work alongside churches and ministries worldwide.

A. Global mission

ReFrame ministers in ten major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. We also have two special translation projects in Korean and Urdu.

ReFrame leverages popular forms of communication to share the gospel globally, reaching countries where traditional Christian missions often face restrictions. Through radio, print, TV, the internet, mobile apps, and social media we bring the message of Jesus to people without access to a faith community. As people worldwide share their experiences of encountering Jesus for the first time through ReFrame's media resources, it's clear that God is working through the CRCNA and ReFrame's international partners.

1. ReFrame works with about 170 indigenous staff members and more than 400 volunteers around the world. Working with its partnerships, ReFrame has a ministry presence in 53 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution.

ReFrame and its partners reach people in nearly every country through the internet and via mobile application resources.

2. ReFrame's international partnership ministry teams have developed 24 ministry websites in 10 languages supported by 73 social media pages. ReFrame produces 47 audio programs, about half of which are aired on the radio, and 49 TV/video programs.
3. Together with our partners we distribute nearly 2 million printed devotional booklets annually in six languages. In general, the number of printed 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 400,000 devotional emails daily.

B. Faith formation on the global mission field

ReFrame provides faith formation resources in English, 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 other nine major languages in which ReFrame works with media ministry partners. Produced and distributed in print, online, through social media channels, and via smartphone apps, devotions and faith formation resources are bringing God's Word to global audiences.

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

Since the war in Ukraine began, ReFrame's Russian-language ministry partners have been producing and broadcasting special pastoral and evangelistic programming for displaced Ukrainians. In 2024 we established a hotline allowing listeners to call in or chat online with Christian psychologists, who continue resourcing them and connecting them with churches for further support.

2. ReFrame and its partners offer print resources including devotional guides in nearly every language ministry. Annually ReFrame and its partners distribute about 2 million devotional guides and other gospel-centered material. Much of this content is also available online. In all of our ten language ministries, we regularly hear from people who are grateful for receiving a meaningful daily reflection on God's Word.

For example, Charleen, a *Today* devotional reader, shared how the daily readings strengthened her faith. "I want to tell you how much I have enjoyed your devotions this month," she wrote. "I truly receive joy, encouragement, peace, and more than words can say from the *Today* devotions. God bless you."

3. As video-based programs become increasingly popular and accessible, ReFrame and our partners now have 49 different video programs glob-

ally. These programs range from daily, two-minute devotional reflections to hour-long church services for people who can only attend remotely. No matter the length, each video program offers the hope of God's truth in an easily-accessible format. Most of these programs are available on social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

In 2024, ReFrame's English team enhanced accessibility to devotional videos and other resources by launching a new *Kids Corner* app. This app helps parents discover devotions, activities, and other resources appropriate for family use.

One parent, Danielle, wrote "*Kids Corner* brings the Bible to life for kids. The episodes are accurately based on Bible stories, and the kids are pointed to Scripture at the end of each episode to learn more. I also appreciate that they cover not just your typical kids' Bible stories . . . but dive deeper into the Bible and ultimately point listeners to Jesus."

C. Servant leadership on the global mission field

ReFrame Ministries is blessed to work with ten indigenous ministry leaders gifted in ministry and media. These leaders and their teams provide culturally relevant outreach in their respective language and cultural settings.

1. International ministry leaders include: Rev. Youssef Adel Hanna (Arabic); Pastor Jerry An (Chinese); Justin Sterenberg (English); Rev. Marc Nabie (French); Rev. Arliyanus Larosa (Indonesian); Rev. Masao Yamashita (Japanese); Rev. Hernandez Dias Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Sergei Sosedkin (Russian); Rev. Huascar de la Cruz (Spanish); and a Hindi ministry leader whose name is withheld for security reasons.

We praise God for these leaders and their various partnerships with on-the-ground media ministry workers, denominations, and organizations.

2. ReFrame-related training events equip leaders to share the gospel contextually.
 - a. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie hosted Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) events in several West African nations.
 - b. ReFrame's Hindi (India) and Arabic (Egypt) ministry partners provided training and curriculum for vacation Bible school and Sunday school teachers.
 - c. ReFrame's Russian ministry team provided leadership seminars for Russian-speaking students and future church leaders who are attending universities in Russia and Ukraine.
 - d. Rev. Hernandez Dias Lopes leads online courses for church leaders and pastors in Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries.
 - e. Pastor Jerry An facilitates and leads events for church leaders in Asia and North America promoting media for sharing the gospel.

D. Loving mercy and doing 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 programs that ReFrame and its partners produce are messages of hope for people living in challenging circumstances—questioning their beliefs where it could be dangerous to do so, living in physical poverty, or suffering from sickness. In these ways, we also address social justice issues through our various programs in several languages.

1. Our ministry partner in India practices a holistic approach, providing for physical as well as spiritual needs. The team makes a special effort to distribute food and sanitary equipment because many of their listeners are in the lowest castes of India's society.
2. Our English ministry's *Family Fire* staff has been producing materials for people experiencing pain and brokenness in marriage and in other family relationships.
3. To help disciple and encourage Christ-followers in their faith, ReFrame also produces the *Think Christian* online blog and the *Groundwork* audio program, which regularly offer discussions on issues related to biblical justice.

For example, in 2024, Revs. Darrell Delaney and Scott Hoezee discussed the topic of justice in the book of Amos. "When justice rolls down like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream, it is an everyday life situation," said Delaney. "It is about making sure you treat people fairly in all your dealings and show integrity in your relationships. It is about treating others with respect—and when you see things that are broken, you use your mouth and your voice to speak up against it."

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

ReFrame's core mission is proclamation using various media to share the gospel in ten major world languages. ReFrame continually seeks culturally relevant and effective ways to proclaim the gospel and call people into a relationship with God.

1. We have increasingly moved to a partnership model 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 where they serve in missions, including communities as far away as Angola, in southern Africa.
2. As the world moves toward becoming a more paperless society, 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's also available offline.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey*

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*.

A. *Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline*

1. Our English ministry team has grown a network of more than 8,500 prayer partners in North America and globally who pray for people who respond to our media outreach programs. This number has grown exponentially over the past several years, as the number of prayer requests has grown.
2. Our *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, is 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 annually, and more than 350,000 people receive *Today* emails. In addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.
3. *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.
4. *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 can create beautiful things.
5. *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*

1. *Kids Corner* is a program reaching 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 across North America. *Kids Corner* will launch a new app in 2025, making these new features available with an accompanying parent-friendly blog.
2. People of all ages respond to messages in our *Today* devotions. A class of high school students responds to a new set of devotions each year by taking photos and writing reflections on the topic presented that month. Students read the devotions, look for daily reminders of the message content, and take photos of those things.

C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships

1. 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 sister ministries within the CRCNA, ReFrame works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations worldwide:

- North America (Words of Hope, affiliated with the Reformed Church in America)
- Japan (Reformed Church in Japan)
- Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
- Mexico (National Presbyterian Church in Mexico)
- Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church)
- Egypt (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile)

In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe and Africa, India and surrounding countries, and with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

2. ReFrame Ministries has partnered with the CRC's Korean Council since 2008 to publish a bilingual Korean-English version of the *Today* devotions.
3. ReFrame Ministries continues to broaden the reach of Faith Alive's *Seeking God's Face* devotional book. After launching an English-language website with the devotional content in 2021, ReFrame's Chinese, Arabic, and—in 2023—French ministry partners have also translated the content for their audiences.

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 to be intentional about using the variety of media tools available for effectively communicating with their congregations and communities.

Church Juice offers virtual and in-person opportunities for church communicators to come together (both online and through occasional in-person events), learn, and encourage one another. If you have questions about improving your church's communications, start a conversation with *Church Juice* producer Bryan Haley. Email him anytime at bryan@churchjuice.com.

2. ReFrame's English language ministry produces ebooks as downloadable pdfs. Several are also available in print for group discussion or personal growth. Topics from the newest resources include *The Lord and the Rings* (Think Christian), *A Handbook of Biblical Parenting* (Family Fire), *Waiting in Expectation* (Today), and an updated version of *How Do I Pray?* (ReFrame's prayer ministry).
3. ReFrame's Japanese ministry partners offer videos to churches that are part of the Reformed Church in Japan. These videos help introduce the

- church to prospective visitors and seekers in the area 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 in house churches that eventually become church plants.

IV. Recommendation

That synod grant the director of ReFrame Ministries, Kurt Selles, and the director of administration for ReFrame Ministries, Nellie Kooistra, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to ReFrame Ministries are addressed.

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

ReFrame Ministries
Kurt Selles, director

Resonate Global Mission

I. Introduction

Resonate is your Christian Reformed mission agency, and we partner with churches in three key ways through our Core Initiatives: Global Mission, Local Mission, and Church Planting.

These broad categories help us to continue more than a century of passion for God's mission around the globe—and to lead the CRCNA in myriad ways to join in. In addition to these Core Initiatives we have begun to increase investment in programming and curriculum development, including through our consolidation with Raise Up Global Ministries.

Our mandate from synod is to give leadership to the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world, drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church. Three main aspects of this mandate are as follows (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 651):

- Encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism and discipleship.
- Initiate, support, and guide new-church development and other evangelistic and discipling ministries.
- Develop Christian leaders.

These ministry priorities are evident in our Core Initiatives and continue to guide our work from day to day.

During the 2024-2025 ministry year, we finalized our Core Initiative structure and implemented a plan to reduce our expenses in order to respond to uncertainties in ministry-share and other revenues. This objective developed from both our long-term plan to reduce cash reserves and the reality that ministry shares, which until recently made up over 40 percent of Resonate's revenue, account for about 14 percent of revenue this year. Overall, we have spent significant time this year in developing a vision for Resonate that is sustainable in the long term and will be able to increase the engagement of the CRCNA with the global church.

Throughout this process, one of the most encouraging reaffirmations for Resonate has been that God has a calling for the CRCNA. We have vital work to do in the sphere of mission work, and Resonate has a special niche as a "Big-R Reformed" mission agency in more than 40 countries where your missionaries and church planters are at work. In the past year we have seen God's faithfulness at work through the prayer and support of the Christian Reformed Church, which continues to make mission a priority. Thank you for your generosity.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

We are the mission agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Together we amplify the good news of Jesus through churches, neighborhoods, and communities around the world.

Our calling as a mission agency is simple but encompasses much. It includes faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship.

Our Core Initiatives

1. Global mission

We partner with churches, leaders, and Christian organizations to live out and share the gospel throughout the world to everyone.

- a. The Global Mission Team seeks to inspire and equip Resonate's constituency and ministry partners to witness to Christ beyond their own cultures, mobilizing them to do so in community and collaboration together in diverse settings in North America and around the world. We do that by resourcing, equipping and connecting vocational workers who multiply leaders in the places where they serve. We also build capacity for churches in North America and around the world to witness beyond their own cultures through immersive opportunities and formation programs where they can discern their own calling. As a result, our participants and networks grow in their love for the global church and in discerning their place in it. This initiative includes the following:
 - Identifying, preparing, and sending mission workers on long-term career mission assignments and short-term volunteer opportunities.
 - Establishing and coordinating ministry partnerships with congregations that guide missionary ministry and provide financial support.
 - Offering a full suite of support for missionaries and volunteers, including training, visas, travel, housing, spiritual care, fundraising, etc., so that they not only survive but also thrive on the field.
 - Equipping local Christians through Timothy Leadership Training, which trains pastors in Reformed theology, and through Educational Care, which trains teachers to share the love of Christ in their classrooms.
- b. Summary report on global mission
 - 47 career missionaries serving in 26 countries and 83 partner missionaries serving in 36 countries. Combined, these personnel serve in 44 countries.
 - 381 CRCNA churches supported these missionaries. In addition, 161 volunteers were sent by 32 CRCNA churches to eight regions, and 22 young adults participated in the Cohort program.
 - 1,242 people worldwide made a decision to follow Jesus, 20 new churches started overseas, 152 local gospel workers were mobilized in international contexts, and 4,300 participants were involved in leadership training (including, but not limited to, coaching or mentoring, higher education, Timothy Leadership Training, Educational Care, church planter training, etc.).
 - Global Mission staff worked with 547 participants in events related to healing and reconciliation; discipled 238 individuals along their

faith journey; provided member care for 41 Resonate staff, partner missionaries, and volunteers; and visited 61 other staff and partners for learning and/or encouragement.

Example and story: “Under the Shea Tree”; resonateglobalmission.org/sheatree

2. Local mission

We partner with churches and leaders to live out and share the gospel in practical and engaging ways in their own contexts.

- a. This core initiative exists to mobilize missional leaders who in turn help shape existing congregations and faith communities to bear witness to the gospel. In short, we help churches live out and share the gospel in their neighborhoods and communities. This initiative includes the following:
 - Leadership development and coaching: We are all missionaries, and our mission field is all around us! Resonate is investing in identifying and equipping individual leaders and teachers in our own congregations and worldwide.
 - Regional engagement teams: Our team of missional experts lives and works across North America. Each staff member walks alongside congregations to encourage and equip them in fulfilling God’s mission. Through these teams, Resonate is investing in walking alongside mission committees, forging partnerships, and working with young adults whom God is calling to mission work.
 - Campus ministry: Resonate connects churches with universities and colleges in ministry on more than 40 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.
 - Global Coffee Break: Resonate’s Bible study curriculum helps churches to invite neighbors to discover God’s story together.
- b. Summary report on local mission
 - Provided financial and coaching support to campus ministers and their teams at 14 universities and colleges in Canada and 17 in the U.S.
 - Managed a newly developed 10-month mission training program called Reverb in two North America regions (one in Canada and one in the U.S.). Three groups participated: one of young adults, one of volunteer missionaries, and one of lay leaders. The program is now being adapted into an online course to be used with Resonate staff and offered to churches.
 - Placed 33 students in internship programs in international and domestic settings.
 - Consulted/coached 432 Christian Reformed congregations.

- Started four cohorts of CRCNA congregations on a three-year neighborhood-based ministry program (Go Local and Joining God in the Neighborhood).
- Completed a survey and study of church growth through evangelism. As a part of this study, we reached out to interview the top 20 churches growing through evangelism in the CRCNA and surveyed the top 200. The full report on this survey is available at resonateglobalmission.org/evangelism.

Example and story: “Following God’s Lead”;
resonateglobalmission.org/compass

3. Church planting

We come alongside churches to form new Christian communities who live out the gospel and bear witness to Jesus.

- a. Our goal through church planting is to cultivate a healthy ecosystem that allows Christian Reformed congregations to form and lead new churches. Though it’s a rapidly changing area of Resonate’s ministry, this is an area in which our denomination is already growing and becoming a leader that other churches and organizations look up to. This initiative includes the following:
 - Parent churches: We partner with established churches to identify church planting opportunities and the operational systems necessary to establish and sustain their ministry.
 - Partner church plants: We come alongside church planters with networking, coaching, continuing education, and funding.
 - New expressions of church: Church plants are one of the most effective ways to reach new groups of people, so we are developing new methods like microchurch plants, church planter training hubs, and multisite church plants.
- b. Summary report on church planting
 - Overall, church planting is the area in which our denomination is experiencing the most growth. Last year we planted 11 new churches.
 - In fiscal year 2025-2026, Resonate expects to continue partnerships with 53 church plants and to start 33 additional new partnerships! Grant funding remains a key need for all of these partners, but Resonate has already expanded other areas of vital support.
 - Supporting microchurches—at least a third of the churches we plan to begin partnerships with next year are new kinds of church plants commonly generalized as “microchurches.” We are currently wrapping up a two-year pilot program with Calvin Theological Seminary focused on pastor training for microchurch pastors. The lessons learned will be crucial in supporting this growing area of church planting.
 - Supporting diaspora and ethnic-minority churches—another third of new churches are those that serve people groups who are often first-

or second-generation immigrants and speak a language other than English. Resonate is developing coaching capacity, training methods, and partnerships in order to serve alongside these churches. Often diaspora and ethnic-minority churches seek out affiliation with the CRCNA because they value the doctrine and deep theological richness of our approach.

Example and story: “Then Came the Morning”;
resonateglobalmission.org/morning

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey*

Resonate exists to serve CRCNA congregations as they share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant churches—a key goal of the *Our Journey* ministry plan—and our work flows through all four aspects of this plan. Our Christian Reformed congregations are our most important ministry partners, and equipping young people, supporting diaspora ministry, and engaging in ministry with ethnic minorities are the most significant areas in which Resonate can help CRCNA congregations in mission.

A. Global mission

The Global Mission team has been working to foster stronger church engagement through Resonate’s North American regional teams. In particular, there is now a local mission leader (LML) who specializes in global mission on each of the six regional teams in North America. We’ve equipped them and other staff to communicate about global mission work needs, giving us an avenue of engagement especially for the purpose of connecting missionaries to new support and for recruitment for all of Global Mission programming. LMLs are also in place to listen to churches, to cultivate practices of prayer and care for global mission, and to help live out the gospel through mission work around the world.

As we scan the landscape of our international regional teams, we see that the Lord has indeed been leading us. We see the categories or themes of our work coming into sharper focus. The following are main themes and emerging themes:

- Diaspora, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (European, Korean, Japanese, Latin American/Caribbean)
- Unreached and Muslim (Japan, Cambodia, Nepal, Europe, Middle East and W Africa, China)
- Church planting networks (Nepal, Cambodia, Nigeria)
- Learning programs (Timothy Leadership Training, Educational Care, Global Coffee Break)
- Young adults, students (Cohort Latin America, Middle East, Europe, and emerging in Eastern and Southern Africa)
- Trauma healing and reconciliation (a growth area)

An important development in the past quarter has been the integration of the learning programs (formerly Raise Up Global Ministries) into Resonate.

Timothy Leadership Training and Educational Care are now under the supervision of the Global Mission Initiative, and Global Coffee Break is under the leadership of the Local Mission Initiative. We see this as a favorable move that promises to bring regional work into unity with the learning programs. It will also give learning-program staff a home within the core initiative areas.

B. Local mission

Resonate Global Mission's contribution to the mission of the CRCNA is to help congregations live out a biblical and holistic gospel vision in their local communities and around the world. We invite churches into two significant postures/priorities in their missional call. The first is to embrace their call locally. We want congregations and faith communities to discern where God is at work in their local neighborhood and surrounding community. The second is for congregations and faith communities to see their place within the global church.

We cannot be the church without being active in the mission of God. We desire to see each local church influence and be influenced by what God is doing around the world. The strategy for this transformation of congregations is the mobilization of missional leaders from within the congregation.

1. Classis engagement

Resonate staff began a renewed effort to be present and engaged at classis. Beginning last fall, Resonate prepared a suite of talking points, presentations, handouts, reporting, and other resources to equip regional mission leaders and local mission leaders to engage each classis group.

- a. Announcing new resources: The CRCNA has generally not had a wide variety of its own tangible resources for developing practices and skills in gospel witness. Especially over the past year we have developed resources, experiences, curriculum, and other ways for churches to experience God's leading and step out of their comfort zones. One key example is the Witness Curriculum, available at resonateglobalmission.org/witness.
- b. Introducing guiding messages for mission: Over the past year we have encouraged classes to see a "bright future" for the CRCNA in terms of the special calling and equipping this denomination has. In the coming year we are asking classes to "look for the light," to be guided forward by the evidence of God at work and by the successes we can see right now in the mission work we are doing together.

2. Church engagement

We serve Christian Reformed churches by helping them respond to God's call to live out and share the gospel in their own neighborhoods. We provide coaching, discernment, and partnership so that everyone may join God at work through salvation and renewal in their own community. Mission work using this strategy includes the following:

- a. Leadership development and coaching: We are all missionaries, and our mission field is all around us! Resonate is investing in identifying and equipping individual leaders and teachers in our own congregations and worldwide.
- b. Regional engagement teams: Our team of missional experts lives and works across North America. Each staff member walks alongside congregations to encourage and equip them in fulfilling God's mission. Through these teams, Resonate is investing in walking alongside mission committees, forging partnerships, and working with young adults whom God is calling to mission work.
- c. Campus ministry: Resonate connects churches with universities and colleges in ministry on more than 40 campuses across North America. Resonate is investing in training and supporting campus ministers to be a faithful presence on campuses and help students discover God's will for their lives.

C. Church planting

Since the CRCNA adopted church planting as part of a major milestone of the *Our Journey* ministry plan, Resonate has invested in expanding our support for church planting, and we hope you will be encouraged to see how God is using our denomination in this important ministry area.

Church planting in the CRC has always been done in close collaboration with classes and parent churches. The renewed effort we're making to expand church planting is focused on creating a garden where we grow all types of churches and ensure that each gets what they need in order to thrive. This type of ecosystem includes all of our Christian Reformed congregations, whether or not they directly parent a church plant!

1. Classis engagement

Resonate staff are working to build the capacity of classes to plant churches, with work that happens both within a given classis and in partnerships across multiple classes. The demand for church planting is driving both support for Resonate and the need for Resonate to support congregations.

- a. Lessons of exponential growth—Resonate staff work with each classis to make sure that all others can learn from successes in church planting and other mission work.
- b. Effective partnership with classis—When a new church is constituted, Church Order requires approval from classis. Resonate helps to facilitate this process and to help establish credibility and accountability.

2. Church engagement

Church plants always start under the care of an established church.

Through relationship building, identifying parent churches, and walking with churches that plant, Resonate helps to make the church-planting vision a reality.

- a. Many considerations—Practical aspects of starting a church can be daunting, but Resonate partners with parent churches to help them each step of the way—from discerning the need, to recruiting a church planter, to selecting a site, to registering and incorporating the new church.
- b. Ordination—Only an organized church can ordain someone. So if a church plant is calling a pastor, the organized church that is sponsoring the plant must officially call the pastor.
- c. Resonate helps churches to allocate their financial support for church plants where it is most needed, through funding classis projects and through gifts and offerings to Resonate that are used as grant support. We also help to train church planters to budget and raise funds for their church.

3. Denominational growth

The demographics of the CRCNA are changing, and this is happening primarily through church planting. The momentum of our church planting ministry will provide us with the tools and resources we need to continue building a bright future for our denomination!

- a. The reputation of the CRCNA is strong. Especially among diaspora and ethnic-minority churches, we find that church plants highly value affiliation with the CRCNA. In particular this is due to open pathways into ministry and to our strong sense of relationship with other churches.
- b. The call to build a global church—The expanding reach of church planting is a (1) confirmation of God’s call to all our churches to join with God’s mission globally and (2) an opportunity to serve all of our neighbors.

4. Needs for the future of church planting

The financial need remains the biggest obstacle to church planting—for individual church plants and for the denomination as a whole. We ask that every classis encourage their churches to support church plants locally and with Resonate! Beyond financial needs, there is also a need for cultural shifts that each classis can help to make at the local level.

- a. Hospitality to new kinds of church plants—Some leaders of micro-churches, diaspora communities, and young adult communities report not being included at the classical level in the same ways that typical, traditional pastors often are. For example, some of these leaders have not been included on email lists or have not received notifications when discussions are happening. One way for a classis to be hospitable is to check in with their church planters to ensure they have a seat at the table.
- b. Restricted funds—A significant number of classes have funds designated for church planting, but they have no church plants. If that is the

case in your classis, we encourage you to connect with Resonate so that we can think creatively together on how to put those funds to work.

- c. Church plant visits—The first step toward finding out what your church planters need is to get in touch. We have seen church-plant visits make a big difference in a classis' church-planting engagement. We encourage you to make time to visit a church plant, especially if you sense God's call on your church or classis to plant a church.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the chair of the Global Missions Ministries Committee of the Council of Delegates, Jill Feikema, and director of Resonate Global Mission, Kevin DeRaaf, 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, the second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

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

Resonate Global Mission
Kevin DeRaaf, director

Thrive

I. Introduction—Mandate and mission

Led by Rev. Lesli van Milligen, Thrive seeks “to engage and accompany Christian Reformed congregations as they seek to faithfully and holistically embody the gospel in their respective contexts” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 956). Synod has entrusted Thrive with the responsibility to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today.

While Thrive’s primary focus is on local Christian Reformed congregations, Thrive’s capacity to encourage and equip congregations will be enriched and strengthened by engagement with external associations and partnerships, particularly those that focus on specialized aspects of Thrive’s responsibilities. (See *Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 956-57.)

Synod charges Thrive to be attentive to a broad spectrum of congregational leadership roles and a wide array of congregational opportunities and needs. The underlying goal or mission that motivates Thrive’s efforts is to equip and encourage congregations in ways that help them thrive in their respective contexts.

In carrying out this mission, with a deliberate regional presence, Thrive engages Christian Reformed congregations through six primary activities: consultations and workshops for churches and classes; coaching and network facilitation for ministry leaders; and resource curation and creation for a wider range of audiences.

Thrive had a robust year as a ministry agency of the CRCNA. In forming Thrive, we indicated that a leading priority was the formation of a cohesive team. While continuing to adjust to this agency’s new rhythms, our team of Thrive staff have pulled together, have communicated well with each other, and have been learning to embrace our common mission of encouraging and equipping congregations and ministry leaders. It is a privilege to work alongside such a dynamic, competent, and gifted team.

Additionally, Thrive prioritized church renewal, intergenerational ministry, support for ministry leaders, leaning into our denomination’s growing multilingual and multicultural identity, and establishing Thrive’s infrastructure. From the perspective of key activities and metrics, Thrive met or exceeded its primary goals. A few activities have been adjusted due to staff turnover and to an increase in needs from churches that have required more urgent attention.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

It has been two years since synod endorsed joining nine previously separate ministries into one ministry agency (see crcna.org/Thrive). The consolidation worked! Thrive continues to be better able to engage holistically with

and to encourage congregations in the CRCNA's five areas of calling (Our Calling): faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship. Over the past two years we have laid the foundation for a wraparound case-management approach to serving congregations that enables Thrive to be responsive in a timely manner to the various ministry needs and resources of Christian Reformed congregations. Whether through facilitated listening sessions, cohort learning opportunities, deeper consultation, or regular contact from our regional staff, Thrive is focused on equipping and encouraging congregations and their ministry leaders.

An example of this approach is our Intercultural Cohorts, in which congregations that are experiencing growth from the influx of newcomers to North America have gathered to learn from one another on how best to welcome and enfold people from a variety of cultures and language groups into the full life of the church, including worship, leadership, fellowship, and discipleship. Together these congregations learned how to use technology for linguistic translation and how to include multiple languages and cultural expressions in their corporate worship. Thrive was able to support congregations with Lilly grant support, regular coaching, and the creation of a multicultural toolkit that can be accessed by other congregations that are on a similar journey.

Here are a few additional examples of how Thrive has lived into these ministry callings:

Thrive supported the **faith formation** efforts of our congregations in the following ways:

- Continuing to host parent listening groups in order to learn how Thrive can better support faith formation in the home. We have done four sessions so far. These listening groups are part of a broader initiative to help congregations better understand the faith formation needs of families and children.
- Hiring a faith formation consultant who will equip congregations in cradle-to-grave discipleship.

Thrive supported **servant leadership** and church renewal efforts in our congregations as follows:

- Facilitating *Thriving Essentials* workshops. From July 1 through December 31, 2024, Thrive facilitated *Thriving Essentials* with 705 participants from 61 congregations (33, Canada; 28, U.S.) For example, Classis Red Mesa worked through *Thriving Essentials* as a leadership development group with 40 people representing 11 congregations. We are excited to see and hear the responses to this resource, and we hope congregational engagement with *Thriving Essentials* will grow in the coming years. The development of individual leaders in a church will result in more members being available to serve on

councils, greater ownership of and collaboration in ministry, and increased capacity for spiritual discernment.

- Hiring a new consultant for pastor well-being.
- Hosting a Pastors' Wives Gathering in Niagara Falls, Ontario, with 50 participants from across North America. The purpose of this gathering has been to indirectly support pastors by supporting their spouses. The theme for this event in October 2024 was how to create support for pastors' families that will help them in the quickly changing landscape of pastoral ministry.
- Continuing to support congregations and classes through Next Steps Discernment in response to recommendations adopted by Synod 2024, especially in conjunction with discussions regarding disaffiliation.
- Revamping the pastor search process to address longer vacancies and an increasing pastor shortage. Thrive works closely with the Candidacy Office in this area of its work.

In the area of **gospel proclamation and worship** Thrive supported congregations in the following ways:

- Contributing to the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship's efforts through having multiple Thrive staff present at the annual Symposium on Worship.
- Hosting three worship roundtables centered on disability and worship, as well as multiple worship-planning roundtables throughout the liturgical year.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of **mercy and justice** as follows:

- Translating *Power and Privilege* materials into Korean.
- Developing strategic partnerships and collaborations with Exodus World Service and Crossroads Prison Ministry. Both initiatives have led to meaningful follow-up opportunities with churches and ministry leaders, rooted in deep faith formation and discipleship.
- Recruiting new disability access advocates for areas throughout North America—six new regional disability advocates started as volunteers in their classes, and thirteen new church disability advocates began work in their congregations.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of **global mission** as well. Recognizing that global mission is at our doorstep, Thrive meets regularly with Resonate Global Mission staff in order to ensure that our efforts are aligned with each other and that Thrive is aware of resources and support that are necessary for congregations growing with newcomers to North America.

III. Connecting with churches

The Council of Delegates, with the endorsement of Synod 2023, tasked Thrive with leading the CRC in a robust effort to support and encourage church renewal that touches on the four milestones of the CRCNA Ministry Plan: *Our Journey*. Renewal will come through deeper engagement with

prayer and practices of discernment and through strengthening adult formation, which can in turn embolden witness and engagement with each congregation's mission in their context. Thrive also continues to find a variety of ways to listen both to emerging young adult leaders and to leaders from diverse backgrounds to help us understand the particular resources and postures necessary to grow healthy intergenerational and multicultural churches.

Thrive specifically supported **cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline** in the following ways:

- Hiring a faith formation consultant. One of the main tasks of this role will be to support this part of the ministry plan.
- Prioritizing prayer and faith practices as part of our own team rhythms. Aside from opportunities to participate in CRCNA-wide devotional times, Thrive staff meet monthly as a team for prayer and Scripture engagement.
- Translating faith formation tips into Korean and Spanish. These tips are now available online in English, Korean, and Spanish and can be used on a three-year rotation in church bulletins and newsletters.

Thrive continues to **listen to the voices of every generation**:

- Through our Generation Spark initiative (shared with the RCA), Thrive staff continue to help congregations engage with emerging adults and young people through a supported mentoring program that helps congregations pair older members of their congregations with younger members to work together on meaningful ministry challenges.
- Thrive continues to facilitate listening sessions with parents to discover more about how churches and the denomination can better support parents in faith formation in the home. Supported in these efforts by the Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, Thrive is able not only to gather important information on how to resource parents well but also to provide a facilitated space for parents to connect with and support each other in the important work of parenting faith. Parents have consistently expressed the desire to gather with other parents to discuss the challenges they are facing together for mutual encouragement and idea sharing.

Thrive promoted **growth in diversity, reconciliation, and welcome** in the following ways:

- In November the first iteration of a Thrive-supported Intercultural Congregation Cohort had its final retreat in Vancouver, British Columbia. The thirteen congregations and three micro churches that participated shared what they gained from their cohort experience while learning about ways to engage in healthy multicultural worship practices.

- Thrive's Equip Team will be compiling the learnings from this cohort and creating a toolkit that will be accessible to congregations throughout the CRC.
- Additionally, congregations in both the United States and Canada are being recruited for a new Intercultural Cohort that will begin in early 2025.
- All Thrive staff have completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment for better serving our churches and leaders by supporting their growth in cultural competency. This effort strengthens Thrive's mission to promote cultural awareness and equip leaders for more effective, inclusive ministry.

Thrive supported **sharing the gospel** in the following ways:

- Helping congregations identify their missional calling within their unique contexts. Thriving Essentials workshops continue to be our most impactful tool for helping congregations engage in a renewed commitment to sharing the gospel. We are currently working on a plan to train emerging adult leaders to facilitate this program and connect with a new generation of church leaders.
- Providing staff time through the work of Elaine May and several other Thrive staff as they participated in Gather events (for the Office of General Secretary) in which CRC participants are able to explore and identify the various ways God is using their congregations to share the gospel in their regions and local churches. Five out of ten planned events were completed in 2024, and the rest will be completed before the meeting of Synod 2025. Data is being collected to help us understand how to support churches in their unique missional calling.

IV. Other significant activities

Thrive continues to be grateful for grant support from Lilly Endowment, Inc. The grants Thrive has received support ministry initiatives that we are committed to in relation to faith formation and pastoral well-being. Thriving Together in Ministry (for pastoral well-being) is a sustaining grant to continue and expand our support of ordained leaders who are in seasons of discernment and transition related to their call. This year Thrive has hosted events that help pastors in their first call and those who want to retire well.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant Lesli van Milligen, director of Thrive, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Thrive are addressed.

B. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, remind all Christian Reformed congregations that Thrive exists "to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today"; and that synod encourage ministry leaders and CRC members to reach out to Thrive for support.

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

Thrive
Lesli van Milligen, director

World Renew

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

In 1962, twelve years after 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), 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” (see *Acts of Synod* 1962, p. 333).

World Renew has fulfilled this mandate with bold hope and unrelenting love for more than 60 years, reaching out in Christ’s name to support vulnerable people around the world. Through global staff placement and meaningful localized partnerships, World Renew works to respond to God’s call to live justly, love mercy, and serve Christ as the international community faces the challenges of injustice, hunger, displacement, and disaster. Because we serve the risen Savior, we aim to help renew hope where there is despair; reconcile lives into right relationship with our Creator, our neighbor, our world, and ourselves; and restore creation through sustainable practices and processes so that every one of God’s people can flourish.

B. Mission and ministry

Through your heartfelt generosity in 2024, World Renew joined with 559,987 participants worldwide who experienced deep need and brokenness. Yet in each community where we worked, we found Jesus already there, ready to meet people with his loving attention and to invite them into the fullness of life. He knows and remembers each person by name and calls us all to work boldly together for a better world.

By God’s grace and with the continued support of donors, World Renew has been able to press on to show mercy abundantly, commit to living justly, and seek wisdom in walking humbly into God’s transformative work around the world so that his redemption and renewal might be experienced in abundance.

World Renew strives to be an instrument of peace for God’s glory as we work to shift power to partners and communities in the 29 countries where we have programs. Through the church worldwide and servants called to ministry, lives are transformed and all glory goes to God.

As we aim to fulfill our mandate, we believe in working *with* (not *for*) communities, using the approach of community development, disaster response, and peace and justice. In this way we strive to help make paths straight for the Spirit to change lives.

Through community development programs in 19 countries, 254,769 participants received support in the key areas of food security, economic opportunity, community health, and peace and justice. Additionally, 305,218 people who experienced war, drought, famine, hurricanes, earthquakes, or tornadoes in 21 countries received assistance with emergency support. These included emergency food, water, shelter, sanitation, economic assistance, and livelihood rehabilitation.

Thanks to the generosity and compassion of 47 sponsoring groups including many Christian Reformed churches, World Renew facilitated the sponsorship and resettlement of 148 refugees last year. This work of welcome is made possible through our status as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with the Government of Canada. In 2024, World Renew celebrated the results of an organizational assessment by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Our “Zero Risk” status allows us to continue working with sponsors in providing refugees with safety, protection, and hope for a better future through sponsorship and resettlement.

World Renew has never received Christian Reformed Church ministry shares. Instead, it depends primarily on the generous donations and offerings of God’s people to support its work in communities of poverty and need. In 2024, World Renew was entrusted with millions of dollars in gifts from individuals and churches who believe in building up and supporting the Body of Christ worldwide through justice and mercy. Our work was supported by 1,246 volunteers who donated their time and gifts to situations of need worldwide, totaling 87,503 hours or the equivalent of 36 full-time employees. Twelve international relief managers volunteered their time to serve through volunteer training, project consulting, and travel to disaster sites to distribute emergency aid.

For a more detailed account of our work over the past year, please refer to the World Renew 2024 Ministry Report at worldrenew.net (U.S.) and worldrenew.ca (Canada).

Last year, 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.” And while the World Renew community depends on generous donors and on the participants in our projects (men, women, and young people who step out in faith to work with us), none of this is possible without the provision, mercy, and grace of God. To him be the glory as we share in this report some of the remarkable things he has done in the past year through World Renew.

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
—Matthew 19:26

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

At World Renew, faith formation is a foundation for keeping our motivation for justice and mercy front and center. Our staff participate in prayer times, devotions, small groups, book studies, and educational experiences that develop their faith. There are ongoing conversations about how we can ensure that our faith in God guides every step.

In North America, World Renew's faith formation resources include devotions, videos, webinars, in-person educational conversations, and curriculum for churches. Many of these resources are now offered digitally, via worldrenew.net/worldrenew.ca and our social media channels.

The Food and Faith Webinar Series held in spring 2024 brought together people from congregations across the United States and Canada to learn from leaders in the food-systems field as they taught about how their faith has informed their work and worldview.

With a \$1.2 million grant from the State of Michigan, we completed work on our Sacred Spaces project to identify ten churches in low-income and environmentally vulnerable neighborhoods. We made energy-efficiency upgrades to their buildings so that these churches can save money and reinvest in their communities. World Renew also partnered to launch the new nonprofit Solar Faithful, a faith-based power initiative that has already assisted 20 congregations by installing solar panels and improving environmental stewardship.

In Canada, congregations are mobilized through the work of the Canadian justice mobilizer (a position held jointly between the CRCNA and World Renew) and the staff of World Renew's Church and Community Engagement team. This team offers instruction and interaction at schools and universities, including through the Equipped to Educate curriculum for K-12 that aligns biblical teachings on food security, water, and refugee resettlement with Canadian educational requirements.

Meanwhile, around the world our World Renew ministry teams and partners offer a biblical basis for conservation agriculture, healthy families, good stewardship, and more so that community leaders can be inspired and led by the Holy Spirit to participate in activities that support the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health of their neighbors. Across all of our ministry teams, our annual event 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence has encouraged thought about how our faith should inform healthy, God-honoring relationships, particularly through the use of a devotional guide during the campaign. The *Do Justice* Podcast, hosted by World Renew and the CRCNA, is a conversation starter for people wishing to pursue justice in and through the Christian church, find new ideas and perspectives, share better ways to engage in justice work, and grow in faith. This past season's panelists included Adrian Jacobs, Lindsay Wieland Capel, Rev. Elaine May, Mark Vanderwees, and Syd Hielema.

B. Servant leadership

Recruiting and training servant leaders is one of the great joys of the World Renew team. Across the world, building leadership capacity is a fundamental part of our calling. This can mean training birth attendants to help serve women in labor, hiring interns to contribute to and learn from our teams, or supporting program participants as they pursue new skills to build income for their families.

Another significant way that World Renew nurtures servant leadership is through our volunteer programs. For instance, participants in our Global Volunteers Program take time and resources to come and learn from God's people in different contexts. World Renew's dedicated international relief managers put their expertise to work for no personal gain except the experience of living and working with people in the most challenging of circumstances. And our Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program for newcomers to Canada is run almost entirely by volunteers who raise support, except for a small team that ensures the implementation of World Renew's significant responsibilities as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

The majority of those who've volunteered with World Renew, though, are our "Green Shirts" — Disaster Response Services volunteers. These dedicated and hardworking individuals make our efforts to assist with long-term recovery after a disaster in North America possible.

C. Global Mission

At World Renew we believe that our call to be witnesses of Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth starts and ends with local churches and denominations. Whether in the Global North or the Global South, we work in partnership with churches, denominations, and networks to discern how biblical wisdom can inform our pursuit of living out the gospel. Our expertise is in building strong partnerships between churches from Grand Rapids to Guatemala, from Bangladesh to Burlington, and so many in between.

Our church partnerships are something we view as a long-term relationship, not a short-term visit. We plan and dream together, taking our lead from a community and then working with them to build a bridge with another party whose passions align with theirs. Some might call this fundraising, but at World Renew this part of our work often feels more like match-making as we seek to align kingdom purposes across the world. Some of these partnerships have been continuing for years, with congregations in Alberta or California connecting regularly with their counterparts in Uganda or Honduras.

World Renew both depends on and supports the church worldwide in times of crisis. When disasters occur, whether due to climate or conflict, we look for local denominations, congregations, and other organizations that are already responding, and we ask them what they require to be able to do their God-honoring work of compassion more effectively.

D. Mercy and justice

The CRCNA formally acknowledges mercy and justice as integral to its mission, vision, and calling. In World Renew's global ministry of community development and disaster response, mercy and justice are inseparable in experiencing the wholeness that God intends for all people, particularly for those who face extreme poverty, hunger, and the effects of disaster.

As an agency that firmly believes we are all imagebearers of God (Gen. 1:26), we emphasize gender justice through our programs. In 2024 we continued to implement our global gender strategy in all our programs by encouraging staff and partners to see gender justice connecting with the exclusion of other marginalized groups such as young people, seniors, and disabled persons.

The Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement program in Canada embodies our justice work as it equips churches in and beyond the Christian Reformed Church to welcome newcomers who have fled their countries of origin in fear of their safety. Across North America, the Climate Witness Project directs church communities wishing to steward God's creation in meaningful and creative ways. Our Justice and Peacebuilding colleagues inform and inspire advocacy through action alerts, email campaigns, and trainings. This team also offers workshops and communities of practice around themes like food and faith, neighboring, asset-based community development, and more.

Prayer is an essential part of the work of mercy and justice as well, so we offer devotional and prayer resources alongside our annual campaigns and designated Sunday offerings. When we bring the world's overwhelming issues of injustice before the Lord, we witness how God can bring freedom and new life to people who have never experienced it before.

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

We proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do. For World Renew, our life in Christ is now and for eternity, so our worship offering is to contribute to flourishing and fullness of life on earth, waiting for the day when Christ will return and complete the story of salvation. When our neighbors around the world experience barriers to their well-being, those barriers can translate into despair. Hope made tangible through food, health, and economic opportunities can help to show that God makes his presence evident in the most difficult situations.

We celebrate through our relationships with churches and church groups how the good news can be made tangible through the work of justice. Whether discussing food security, asset-based community development, or helping without hurting, we rejoice when we are invited to discuss the application of the Bible to questions of injustice. Our work consists of many conversations, webinars, collaboration with deacons and Diaconal Ministries Canada, and events to explore together what God's great plan of jus-

tice involves—and then going out and doing it. It consists of Disaster Response Services’ working with local organizations to build the capacity of recovery groups, churches, and other groups as we step alongside them with resources, industry experience, and volunteer time and labor. It consists of staff and partners sitting down together to create strategies that will fortify minimally resourced churches in the Global South to grow creatively so that they can serve the most vulnerable members of their congregations and communities. This justice work is a proclamation of Christ’s unimaginable love for his people. And when justice is realized, the body of Christ praises God.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

—Ephesians 4:16

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

A. Cultivating practices of spiritual discipline

World Renew provides resources to churches such as devotions, prayer guides, and worship materials in connection with our designated Sundays and special offering resources. Throughout the world we integrate prayer and spiritual development into our work in communities. We model prayer through resources and reminders to our supporters so that they can lift up the prayers and praises of our ministry teams together. We support our global teammates as they visit churches and individuals across the Christian Reformed Church in North America, involving them in World Renew’s work financially but also through prayer.

At World Renew we have experienced how God can speak most clearly to us while we are joining with others to serve him. God is present in every tragic situation, and we have seen how he answers prayer:

In Sarasota County, Florida, Disaster Response Services (DRS) continued to respond to families recovering from Hurricane Ian. In 2022 the category-4 storm damaged or destroyed 35,000 homes and killed more than 150 U.S. residents. Hurricane Ian was a catastrophic event in people’s lives, and for many the future looked bleak.

That was certainly true for Gina, a homeowner in Sarasota. The winds from Hurricane Ian ripped the roof off her house, and floodwaters rose to two feet on the first floor. After sitting unrepaired for some time, the second-floor ceiling started to fall in from dampness and rot.

For a while, all utilities were shut down, and when the electricity came back on, mold in the air conditioning unit made Gina’s family sick. Eventually Gina’s children had to move in with one of her church friends because of the environmental risks at home.

As World Renew began to work with the long-term recovery organization in Sarasota County after Hurricane Ian, DRS volunteers were

assigned to complete the long-needed repairs to the roof, walls, and floors of Gina's house, making it healthy and safe for her and her children to live there again.

Gina said she was blessed by the help and hope she received through World Renew DRS. "I am so thankful for the volunteers," she said.

"The repairs have been an answer to my ongoing prayers. God's family has helped me recover from this hurricane, finally."

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

Through visits, videos, podcasts, and webinars, World Renew offers peer-to-peer learning opportunities. We collaborate with ministries such as Diac-
onal Ministries Canada and with CRCNA justice teams to contribute to meaningful dialogue around living out our faith. Some of the workshops delivered to youths in the past year focused on "Jesus and Justice" and as-
set-based community development. Our *Equipped to Educate* curriculum has been used effectively in approximately 40 classrooms.

Our volunteer opportunities have the exciting characteristic of often con-
sisting of intergenerational groups that come together to learn, experience, and reflect. In 2024, 107 Canadians and 30 Americans traveled with World
Renew to visit programs we are involved in around the world so that they could listen and learn, discovering how God is at work in many ways and
in many places.

In many of our communities, elders are highly esteemed, but young people are often overlooked. Our youth engagement programming helps to moti-
vate young people to pursue education, make healthy choices about sex and substances, and overcome trauma. These programs are even effectively
changing the story of human trafficking in Cambodia:

Sreymom Tith is a 12th-grade student at PorThom High School in Svay Rieng, Cambodia, where World Renew's partners are facilitat-
ing youth programs. Area youths often drop out of school to find jobs to help support their families. Many migrate to urban centers or to
nearby countries in search of work but lack proper documentation or knowledge of risks such as human trafficking, exploitation, and
abuse.

World Renew sponsors a program called Youth Countering People Trafficking (YCPT), which focuses on educating young people in ru-
ral communities about these risks.

Sreymom is active in a YCPT program at her school. After training sessions and opportunities to work together with others in commu-
nity research activities, she soon became a confident group leader. She was excited to conduct presentations and share ideas with her
peers and community members.

“I want to encourage young people to make every opportunity count,” Sreymom said. “It is rewarding to contribute to your community. Whether you help others become educated about social issues or raise awareness about key topics, you can work toward creating healthy interactions with people from all walks of life.”

C. Growing in diversity and unity

The World Renew team is committed to cultivating a sense of belonging and seeks to hire staff in ways that reflect the body of Christ, anticipating the day when people from every tribe, language, and nation will worship the Lamb of God together. We look for opportunities to support people who are most vulnerable so that each person, regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, or age can be welcomed and celebrated. As we do so, Jesus shows us the incredible journey of justice in which he has invited us to participate. World Renew is deeply committed to diversity, and we monitor our efforts to ensure we are growing toward this biblical ideal, increasingly reflecting the composition of the communities in which we live, work, and serve.

In our programs, peacebuilding and trauma healing allow participants to overcome differences and become unified in their visions for their communities. Through our communications, we strive to represent diversity, treat people with dignity, and highlight participants’ experiences in their own voices whenever possible. Every year, World Renew participates in the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign:

Globally, one in three women are subjected to gender-based violence (GBV), which includes physical, verbal, or sexual abuse. For women living with disabilities, GBV can go unnoticed. During the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 2024—a time designated to advocate for an end to GBV and uphold the rights of women and girls—the Beautiful Gate Handicapped People Centre in Nigeria, in collaboration with World Renew, hosted an advocacy seminar to amplify the issues of GBV. The goal was to raise awareness and provide crucial support for people with disabilities.

The room was filled with individuals who have faced similar struggles, all sharing their stories and finding strength in each other. The participants expressed immense gratitude to Beautiful Gate for organizing the seminar, saying they felt heard, supported, and ready to be advocates in their community. “I now feel equipped to not only protect myself but also to help others who might be going through similar experiences,” a participant shared.

Education is key, helping more people understand the specific vulnerability faced by women with disabilities. Through these efforts we build a stronger and more inclusive community that stands up against all forms of violence. This seminar provided participants with contacts to reach out to when faced with challenges of violence.

As we continue to seek justice, we need more spaces where people can come together to share their experiences and learn how to protect themselves and others. Creating a rippling effect of awareness and advocacy can reach even the most remote communities.

D. Sharing the gospel and living missionally

Contributing to the flourishing of all people as imagebearers of God is central to the good news that Christ came to bring us life in all its fullness.

World Renew's global partnerships with churches give room for missional living in a remarkable way as communities across the world share with each other, pray for each other, and build each other up. In the U.S. and Canada, more than four dozen churches are committed to partnerships.

One beautiful way in which God's family is living missionally with the support of World Renew is through our Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program. Sponsoring churches are challenged to host families in crisis and to provide community as they adjust to life in Canada. In the following story the names of family members are changed to protect their identity amid ongoing needs for security:

The Ali family, as Christians and members of an ethnic minority group, didn't know what to do in their home country. "You work hard, but you're second-class citizens," said Roqia, one of four siblings living together with others in their extended family. "We were in a very bad situation in Afghanistan."

As the Alis observed that other members of their community experienced abuse or even disappeared, they decided to escape to Pakistan. The family spent months living in a single crowded room with dozens of other people or in unfinished houses. They feared constantly for their safety, especially for their brother Murad, who uses a wheelchair, and their sister-in-law Fatima, who was expecting a baby. "When we escaped from Afghanistan and we lived in Pakistan, that was the hardest time," Roqia said.

"Our family is a big family, so completing the documentation for entry into Canada was not easy," Roqia explained. The refugee committee at the local church in Alberta "worked hard day and night to complete it and bring us here. We are very thankful to our church community and to World Renew."

Finally, plans came through to bring the family to Canada. "The 18-hour flight felt like one hour," Roqia recalled. "In Pakistan, I was just a refugee. Now I have a home. I feel more secure and safe, and I can sleep. Our church makes us feel like we are around family."

A member of the local church's refugee committee, said, "It's a blessing to us too. This has united our church. We all came together to do this; everybody wanted to help. And when we called a prayer meeting, a lot of the church showed up." To the committee's amazement,

their community quickly and generously raised the funds needed, and the Ali family were able to begin a new life in Alberta.

Roqia and her sisters and nieces had become used to hiding. They were forced to cover their faces and didn't feel safe leaving their house in Afghanistan. But in Canada they now have bicycles and can go wherever they want, whenever they want. "I feel free," Roqia said.

You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.
—James 2:22

IV. Board matters

The World Renew Board of Delegates is a key support of our ministry. The board's primary function is to set the vision and mission of World Renew and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew's governance structure is made up of delegates from each CRC classis, in addition to members at-large, who together constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew.

The delegates are a vital communication link with CRC classes and churches. They select member national governing boards, with seven to nine members on the U.S. board and up to ten members on the Canadian board. The two boards together form the Joint Ministry Council (JMC), which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada

Jeff Adams, president; Calgary, Alberta
Harry Bergshoeff, vice president; Burlington, Ontario
Marg Hoogland, secretary; Lacombe, Alberta
Darryl Beck, treasurer; Grimsby, Ontario
Gordon Van Vliet, board director; Calgary, Alberta
Echo MacLeod, board director; Ottawa, Ontario
Cari Fydirchuk, pastoral advisor; Cochrane, Alberta

Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.

Jeffrey Banaszak, president; Holland, Michigan
Shanti Jost, vice president; North Haledon, New Jersey
Kenneth Macbain, treasurer; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Rodolfo Gonzalez, secretary; Moreno Valley, California
Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral advisor; Bellflower, California
Thomas Christian, board director; Grandville, Michigan
Beverly Abma, board director; Grandville, Michigan
Charles Udeh, member at-large; Kentwood, Michigan
Graham Seel, member at-large; Concord, California

A. Board nominations, reappointments, and term completions

Information on new board members, reappointments, and term completions will be provided in the World Renew Supplement report to synod after the annual general meeting of World Renew.

B. Financial matters

1. Salary disclosure

In accord with synod's mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

| <i>Job level</i> | <i>Number of positions</i> | <i>Number below target</i> | <i>Number at target</i> |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| E1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| E2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| E3 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| H | 2 | 2 | 0 |

2. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2025—Business and Financial Supplement*.

C. Human resources management

World Renew continually evaluates the excellence of its programs and relies on its human resource systems to provide support to its teams. World Renew's diverse, professional, skilled staff is expected to meet goals set around its vision and mission.

World Renew has a rigorous recruiting process and successfully hired approximately 31 highly skilled staff last year to serve our U.S., Canadian, and overseas teams. We continually expand our recruitment activities to ensure that we meet our diversity and professional learning goals. To that end, we promote professional development and learning and continue to develop competencies across the organization.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. This practice gives staff an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and critically review their growth areas. World Renew values the people God has called into this kingdom service, who are essential to providing program excellence in communities around the globe.

D. Resource development report

The work of World Renew begins with hope. As people created by God live in hunger and poverty because of a changing climate and violent unrest, we keep hold of faith in Jesus Christ: He is the hope in every story. The stories of hope shared in this report are made possible by your involvement, prayers, and gifts for the work of World Renew in communities affected by poverty worldwide.

World Renew is grateful and humbled to have received \$37 million (USD) from all sources in 2024, including individual gifts, church offerings, grants, and estates. This income was leveraged into even more ministry funding through our networks and collaborations, resulting in greater capacity among our on-field partners in disaster response, community development, and justice education.

World Renew's expenses last year totaled more than \$41 million (USD). Thirty-five percent of ministry dollars were directed to international development programs; 39 percent went to our disaster programs internationally and in North America; 19 percent was spent on fundraising, general, and administrative costs; and the remaining 7 percent was used in education and justice programming.

World Renew connected with international organizations such as Canadian Foodgrains Bank, ACT and Integral alliances, and Growing Hope Globally, providing technical and financial resources that expanded our reach to more people and communities. Through various partnerships including our deep relationships with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Growing Hope Globally, and local denominations, and via direct implementation, we were able to exceed our social impact target for 2024, reaching 19 percent more people than we had thought possible.

In 2024, World Renew received accolades from nonprofit monitoring organizations for its financial and management practices. World Renew was awarded certification in the Core Humanitarian Standard in 2023 and was able to maintain that certification in 2024. Charity Intelligence awarded World Renew five stars, their highest rating, in international aid. Charity Intelligence looks at how each charity spends the money they receive and rates their transparency in providing this information to their audiences.

In the U.S., World Renew again achieved platinum transparency status with Candid (formerly GuideStar) and is an accredited charity with give.org. We also continue to maintain our excellent standing with Christian monitoring organizations—the Canadian Centre for Christian Charities and the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability in the U.S.

World Renew is committed to pursue its mission and to manage with integrity the financial gifts we receive, and we thank God for public recognitions of our values: faith, people flourishing, effectiveness, and stewardship.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Jeff Banaszak, president of World Renew-U.S.; Jeffrey Adams, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Mike White, acting director of World Renew-Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

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

Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.
Mike White, acting director, World Renew-Canada