

director of Canadian ministries. The task force is grateful for the collegiality and collaboration with the TFRSC during this project, and for the coordination of work on the part of the interim director of Canadian ministries.

The interim director of Canadian ministries and the TFRSC have taken an active role in developing and conducting a survey and holding multiple conversations with church representatives. The convergence of the opportunity to review the position of director of Canadian ministries and at the same time address the question of how best to function as a binational denomination has been a wonderful illustration of how the TFRSC can host a “table of conversation and discernment.”

VI. Cultivating binationality in the CRCNA

A. Introduction

In the CRCNA we describe ourselves as a binational church. This is a reality we embrace and a value we want to cultivate. As a binational church, we share a common mission and work out of a shared purpose in different contexts.

This section of the task force report addresses

- the priority of the mission of God.
- a description of binationality—themes and concerns.
- how binationality embraces commonalities and differences.
- ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA structure, culture, and leadership.

B. The mission of God

God is on a mission to make his kingdom a reality in the world. He calls his people to incarnate his message of love, hope, reconciliation, and justice in their context. What especially binds us together is the shared call to be engaged in the *mission* of God. As we talk about binationality, organization, culture, or leadership, our discussion always needs to be framed in the context of that mission. Our God is a sending God who wants to reach the nations (Greek: *ethnous*). He provides his Holy Spirit to the church and to each of us in order for us to be people sent to engage in his mission. That is our starting point and needs to be our primary focus.

The mission of God happens in context. The mission of God is to be incarnated into different contexts. There are at least five such contexts.

- Local: The local church as a Christian community ministers in its setting.
- Regional: Local congregations and ministries work together in a classis or region.
- National: National ministries engage in and reflect the unique values and culture of a country.
- Binational: The CRCNA works in a binational setting as we build on each other’s strengths.
- Global: Our mission engagement is global, working through partnerships in many contexts and nations around the world.

Because we believe that all areas of life are to come under the reign of God, the context of our ministry matters. As we carry out our unique mission

as the CRCNA in these various contexts, it is important to see how these contexts shape how we organize for ministry, provide resources to enhance ministry, and make decisions about ministry. Like all of life, how we organize for ministry needs to undergo review and renewal on a regular basis.

C. *Ministry in a binational church*

As we discuss binationality and how it functions in the church, it is important to begin with a description of what we mean by the term *binationality*.

The CRCNA is a Reformed denomination that operates in the United States and Canada. The CRCNA values being a binational denomination for the opportunity it provides to combine pursuit of a common mission with an intentional and meaningful engagement with different national, regional, and local contexts for ministry. Binationality in the CRCNA fosters a culture of gracious space that encourages different expressions of common convictions to achieve common goals of meaningful witness and effective, holistic ministry in different contexts. Intentional recognition of commonalities and significant differences allows adequate flexibility in leadership, structures, and policies to respond to each national context as well as regional, local, and ethnic contexts.

D. *Themes of binationality*

In order to flesh out this definition of binationality, the following themes are important:

1. The CRCNA has a shared purpose in mission
We share a similar passion for God's kingdom work, and we work together for one purpose. The CRCNA has a shared sense of its mission, expressed in congregations and ministries in Canada and the United States and through partnerships around the world.
2. One church—different contexts/cultures
We are a binational church, working as one denomination in two countries in North America. Binationality involves two national identities—each working in different contexts. We recognize the cultural context of each country and how the distinct political and legal realities shape each context and influence how we engage in ministry.
3. Different contexts and cultures are expressed in the way we do ministry
We build on each other's respective strengths and learn to honor differences that are reflected geographically, culturally, and socially in the different countries and regions. This takes organizational shape and is reflected in the way in which we make decisions locally and nationally.
4. Organizational space is provided to reflect different contexts
We take a posture of making gracious organizational space to reflect different contexts. Developing that space means recognizing the need to discern how to do ministry by setting goals, identifying strategies, and developing action for each context.

E. Some concerns about binationality

As we discuss binationality, some concerns and questions are often raised. They include some of the following:

1. Fear of separation or division

Often the discussion about binationality prompts fear of separation or division. Then the discussion revolves around separation or conformity. This fear of division stifles space for legitimate differentiation. The press toward being singular causes us to lose the richness of possible options in-between those two positions that honor binationality.

2. Fear that one nation dominates the other

There is a fear that one nation may dominate or overshadow the other by its size, location of most of staff, and so forth. There is a sense that there can be unequal voices, especially in the decision-making process about ministry.

3. Management tends to be centralized

A more centralized approach to management and organization leads to a model that assumes a single authority and less differentiated space for building relevant ministry in each nation.

It is important to allow the key themes about binationality and these concerns to interact with each other in order to find our way forward together. There are differing approaches to various ministry activities in the two countries. By enhancing the unique approach in each country, we can also bring those strengths to each other to inform each other for our understanding together.

E. Framing the conversation

Often the conversation about binationality is framed as an “either/or”: either we are one denomination, or we will split into two. When this kind of polarity enters the conversation, it makes it almost impossible to have a substantive conversation about nuanced alternatives. In this approach, binationality and nationality become polar opposites requiring people to choose one or the other.

In our denominational covenant, we work out of a spirit of trust with an emphasis on mutuality. We find ways in which one part of the denomination can bless the other. The move is not to independence but to interdependence. The local church does have a unique place and a central place in our polity, but that place does not make it independent of classis or synod.

In our denominational covenant we work out of a spirit of trust in order to cultivate and honor diversity. Each of the various partners must be given space to reflect their unique setting and context in tandem with our shared purpose. By respecting each context and pressing fully into what it means to engage in ministry in that context, we honor the uniqueness and bring those strengths into the shared conversation. We recognize and respect each for what it brings to the partnership.

G. Commonalities and differences contribute to effectiveness of ministry

A shared North American culture and history facilitate common action to meet common challenges. Common features that were frequently identified in a survey on binationality include the role of immigration in the CRCNA

and the fact that Canada and the United States are both wealthy, highly developed countries. Common challenges include being a prophetic witness in an increasingly secularized and materialistic North American context and fulfilling our global responsibilities.

At the same time, there are significant differences between the United States and Canada in population size, culture, historical development, and governing systems. These need careful consideration in the development of effective ministries in each context. As someone stated in the survey on binationality, “generic North American history and culture does not exist.” National differences are significant for effective ministry, in addition to local, regional, and ethnic differences.

Within common areas, differentiation may be needed to effectively witness in national context. Immigration, for example, is a common history. Current immigration trends, however, differ substantively. Immigration to the United States is dominated by working-class Hispanics and Latinos who have a Christian background (mostly Roman Catholic); while immigration to Canada is dominated by middle-class Asians and Africans who are largely non-Christian. To be missional in these two contexts will require differentiation. A one-size-fits-all mentality will hinder rather than advance common goals.

Within some areas of ministry previously identified as unique to one nation are common themes in the other nation that warrant more attention. Canadian aboriginal ministries were established to work with people who are affected by how Canada treats its First Peoples, distinct from CRC ministry with Native Americans in the United States. As each develops, areas of commonality in history and current challenges may lead to greater collaboration.

CRCNA ministry is affected by both commonalities and differences in our national contexts. Following are major themes that emerged from a survey we conducted on how binationality functions within the CRCNA:

1. The mix of common and differentiated approaches varies by ministry area

Some areas of ministry, such as global missions, benefit from a higher level of common action to pool resources and manage costs. Other areas, such as race relations, chaplaincy, ecumenical action, social justice, and aboriginal/American native ministries require a higher level of differentiation to be effective in each national context. Some areas of ministry, such as diaconal outreach and church planting, give more weight to local and regional context. Some areas, such as faith formation and training, are most effectively pursued with attention to both common and differentiated approaches.

2. Intentional consideration of national contextual differences is essential for effective ministry

Deliberate attention is needed in the planning and delivery of ministries to determine when commonality or differentiation is most effective. Too often standardized approaches are assumed to be applicable in diverse settings; leaders need to intentionally create organizational space for church members to deliberate about their context and develop effective strategies for engagement that have the potential to transform culture.

Ignoring binationality has costs, including missed opportunities for ministry. Taking full advantage of opportunities in chaplaincy, for example, requires recognition that the Canadian health care system operates differently than the U.S. health care system. Prisons and the correctional system in Canada are managed differently than in the United States, with implications for prison chaplaincy. While the U.S. and Canadian military cooperate in some conflict zones, understanding how each approaches chaplaincy is essential to the process of developing chaplaincies within the military. Paying attention to binationality benefits ministry.

Differences in the roles of governing agencies and the roles of churches in the public life of each nation have implications for ministry from diaconal outreach to ecumenical activities. World Renew, for example, has benefited from particular Canadian approaches to international development. Community services, an expanding area of ministry for deacons and churches, are affected by differences in social policy and the funding of public services. While churches in the United States need to shape their public witness in the context of an ethos and laws shaped by separation of church and state, churches in Canada face the challenge of adjusting from more recognized roles for ecumenical church bodies in shaping public life and public policies to more organic ways of working for justice in Canada.

H. Rationale for changes in organization, culture, and leadership

As we consider the reasons for making change in organization, culture, and leadership, it is helpful to review the main rationale for those changes.

1. Reviewing our structures and ways of organizing for ministry is part of our Reformed posture for ongoing renewal.
2. The different contexts for ministry require expression regarding how to carry out ministry in each setting.
3. Conversational and planning space is needed to provide opportunities for dialogue to consider trends, share learnings, and explore strategies. These spaces need to be intentional.
4. There are opportunities we can identify for the church in each country to do what God is calling us to do. Without specific attention to these opportunities in a national setting, we could lose these opportunities.
5. The local church needs to make a significant missional shift to engage with its local community. We need to strengthen our bonds and networks nationally, binationally, and globally. This has implications for how the denomination resources classes and congregations.
6. Denominational leadership especially needs to focus on animating vision and engagement in ministry in the community locally, nationally, and globally. It is a leadership that is yearning to walk alongside to discern how God is leading us in the mission.

I. Ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA structure, culture, and leadership

Our conversation about binationality and its implications for organization, culture, or leadership needs to be framed in the context of the mission of God. As we do our work, it is God's mission and this vision that shape what we do. We need to find ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA

structure, culture, and leadership. This is an ongoing process of renewal. Following are five possible ways to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA, including specific suggestions on how to translate each into action.

1. Gathering to discern vision and understanding of our context

We must intentionally and regularly gather in our respective national contexts to understand trends that are happening, the culture in which we are doing our living, and the implications for our ministry as a church.

- a. Visioning and planning at the classis level needs to be cultivated for member churches and related ministries to do creative work to discern their context and to resource churches and people to engage in their mission.
- b. National conversations for members of the CRC to deliberate on ministry priorities and strategies for effective witness within the respective contexts should be developed and held on a regular basis (every 2-3 years), either in conjunction with synod meetings or as free-standing meetings, to which classes would send appropriate delegations (i.e., triennial conference). Regional gatherings could be included as a step between individual classes and a national forum.

This process of discernment and visioning needs to involve a dynamic interaction between the local/classical initiative and a national/denominational initiative. In this way there would be significant contributions from the local context and also the national context and, as the two interact, a discernment of priorities for ministry and vision in contexts that are both classically, nationally, and binationally based. The process would complement and interact with the vision and strategic plan of the CRCNA.

2. Developing an organizational culture

We must cultivate a posture of heightened awareness and intentionality to engage with our respective contexts and foster gracious space for differentiated approaches within a commitment to mutual accountability for a common mission.

- a. The potential need for differentiation to effectively respond in a national context should be considered in relation to every ministry rather than assuming general commonality with a few exceptions for so-called “unique” national ministries.
- b. Deliberate consideration of each national context and implications for ministry, along with respect for local and regional contexts, ought to be incorporated into the mandates, planning processes, and accountability mechanisms of administrative and governing structures of the CRCNA.

3. Senior leadership position

Note: There is a process under way to discern the role and function of the director of Canadian ministries. That process will propose further definition of this senior leadership position to the BOT at its May 2013 meeting.

A senior Canadian leadership position that works closely with the executive director (ED) of the CRCNA is mandated to cultivate and nurture vision and facilitate ongoing strategic planning. To make binationality an authentic leadership value, a major component of the ED position will have to be the intentional advancement of a consultative and flourishing binational organizational culture and communion.

- a. The senior Canadian leadership role works closely with the ED in order to nurture and cultivate a vision in both countries. These roles provide regular reporting about progress in discerning and implementing the vision and the proposed strategies. There are a variety of options that can be considered for the senior Canadian leadership role.
 - b. The senior Canadian leadership position and the ED lead and regularly report to the BOT on these and other initiatives to cultivate binationality in the CRCNA.
4. Senior staff team to develop collaboration
- A senior staff team at the national level, currently known as the Canadian Ministries Team, should focus on ministry goals and priorities and areas of potential collaboration with churches, classes, and the agencies and ministries.
- a. A staff team should review the implementation of denominational and agency ministry plans and recommend changes to ensure that plans and programs effectively address the trends, issues, and challenges identified at national, regional, and local levels.
 - b. A staff team should be linked to regional- and classis-based initiatives in order to interact with learnings “on the ground” and be encouraged to go “where the energy is.” The intent would be to develop strategies on which the agencies would work in order to better resource classes and congregations. The staff team would give input to a joint binational staff team (such as the Ministries Leadership Council) that would give overall leadership on how to translate denominational priorities into effective strategies for ministry.
5. Governance
- The Board of Trustees and the boards of agencies should cultivate attention to the discernment and decision-making process for authorizing and implementing ministries in each national context.
- a. The Board of Trustees can cultivate an awareness of national context by having a gathering of board members in each national setting that can help interpret the culture and priorities of each national context into the full Board meetings. For the Board of Trustees (BOT), this could mean the creation of appropriate structures within the BOT, such as standing committees for U.S. and Canadian ministries, with a mandate to advise the BOT on national level priorities and strategies in all areas of ministry.
 - b. The Board of Trustees, as well as the boards of agencies and institutions, can pay particular attention to the decision making process toward authorizing and carrying out ministries in each country in

compliance with the laws of that country and its accounting expectations, as well as to intentional ways in which boards make decisions about ministries happening in each nation.

J. Closing comments on binationality

Implementation of the above suggestions would respond to the themes and concerns about binationality raised in the issues identified by the task force and in the survey on binationality recently conducted by the task force. More important, pursuing these directions would enhance the ministries of the CRCNA in both national contexts to achieve our common mission.

We recommend that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to explore the proposed pathways for cultivating binationality as presented in this report, including its governance implications, in consultation with the interim director of Canadian ministries and the executive director.

VII. Analyze the structure and culture that will best support and be most relevant for the local church

This topic has been the ongoing work of the TFRSC and is the overall trajectory of our work. This task will not be completed during this year, but we desire to provide an update to the Board of Trustees, synod, and the church regarding how we have continued to address this task.

In the past year, we desired to model participatory management by providing an opportunity for leaders and staff within the CRCNA structure not only to identify concerns but also to give insights on how to address those concerns. The material from this survey has been summarized according to various themes and is attached as Appendix D. We appreciate all the insights shared, and we note that while there is a “clustering” of thoughts and themes, there are also divergent approaches. This divergence illustrates the breadth of the challenge as we continue our work.

As mentioned earlier, an additional survey and analysis focused on the issue of binationality. This material provided insights for findings presented within this report as summarized above.

In addition to the foregoing, the TFRSC has maintained contact with the work of the Executive Director Search Committee, the Strategic Planning Task Group, and the Strategic Planning and Adaptive Change Team about the Ministry Plan priorities of the denomination.

The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture is continuing to analyze what could be learned from an analysis of the structure of the Evangelical Covenant Church as well as to respond to other materials, input, and questions directed to the TFRSC.

Based on our studies, conversation, and collaboration tables, the following summarizes the information received around culture, collaboration, and communication:

A. Culture norms, issues, and challenges

- There has been a general increase in trust between staff and the leadership under the current interim executive director.
- The CRCNA is ready to enter into a “renewal” stage that focuses on increased participation, collaboration, and respect for a diversity of ideas.