FALL 2012
Congregational Support
- Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
- Disability Concerns
- Faith Alive Christian Resources
- Loan Fund
- Pastor-Church Relations
- Safe Church Ministry
- Race Relations
- Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Educational Institutions
- Calvin College
- Calvin Theological Seminary

Mission Agencies
- Back to God Ministries International
- Home Missions
- World Missions
- World Renew (CRWRC)

Canadian Ministries
- Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee
- ServiceLink

Partners in Ministry
- Partners Worldwide

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
Last month, 102 chaplains, retired chaplains, prospective chaplains and spouses met at the Prince Conference Center for the first concurrent annual chaplain’s conference with our Reformed Church of America counterparts.

During the two and a half days of that conference, we met together for one meal, one fun program, and one worship service with our RCA brothers and sisters. By all accounts it was a great success.

During the conference, our Advisory Team and I interviewed two new candidates for endorsement and recognized several recent retirees. Our chaplaincy core now numbers 125, the highest ever, with several more currently in process.

I have been travelling to meet with about six chaplain clusters in various locations around the U.S. and Canada each year. In the last two quarters, I met with groups in California, Vancouver, B.C., Ontario (while participating in Synod 2012), and the Chicago area (while attending an annual APC conference). Some more isolated chaplains are visited on the way to or from these group visits. The goal is to interact with all of our chaplains every two to three years.

Our chaplains continue to serve well and are well respected in their various institutions. All carry the love of Christ into arenas where the church would otherwise have little or no access. May their tribe continue to increase!

Disability Concerns
As part of Disability Concern’s 30th birthday celebration, we are encouraging individuals and congregations to examine their attitudes toward people with disabilities, using a tool developed by Dan Vander Plaats at Elim Christian Services, called The Journey of Disability Attitudes. Please ask yourself, “Where am I at? Where is my congregation?”

Ignorance: “Most people who claim to have disabilities are looking for a government handout. The ones who live in group homes should not be allowed in public; their appearance is troubling. They have disabilities because they lack faith or are being punished for sin.”

Pity: “People who have disabilities are needy and it is good to feel sorry for them. But, thank God, no one I know has a disability. Someone should help them and give their lives meaning.”

Care: “People with disabilities are created in God’s image; for that reason their lives have value. It’s great that our church helps the local group home with yard work and building maintenance. Sometimes the youth group goes there to sing for the residents too!”

Friendship: “As Christians, the Bible teaches that there is no us and them, people without disabilities and people with disabilities. The body of Christ is just us. God brings many different people into his body, including people with disabilities, and we all benefit as we grow in friendship with each other.”

Co-laborers: “Since God calls each of us to serve and praise Him, churches need to encourage people who have disabilities to use their gifts in ministry. Together, we who live with disabilities and we who live without disabilities encourage and equip each other in every good work.”
Faith Alive Christian Resources

The Banner
In recent months, The Banner has made behind-the-scenes changes to continue upgrading its online magazine (www.thebanner.org). The Banner has converted to a new CMS (Content Management System) that will allow greater flexibility and make the magazine more compatible with other denominationally related websites. For example, those who wish to comment on articles and stories can now use their crcna login and vice versa. The change will also allow The Banner to share other new Web features across CRC agencies as well.

If you have not done so yet, give us a look at www.thebanner.org. You'll find additional content and the opportunity to give your feedback to articles, news, and reviews.

Editorial
Developing the Dwell Curriculum has been a huge focus for Faith Alive in the past few years. Most of the curriculum has now been written and edited. We continue to be excited about the powerful way these lessons center kids in the Bible and invite them to consider their place in God’s unfolding story.

Comments about Dwell and the other members of the Faith Alive curriculum family: Walk With Me, Kid Connection, and We continue to be very positive:

“I’m so thankful for Faith Alive Resources and all that is available to us.”

“We’re loving the Dwell curriculum - the teachers find the kids learn so much.”

“Churches like ours who value the Reformed perspective and up-to-date educational approaches have a lot to choose from in the Faith Alive store.”

Loan Fund
The Loan Fund experienced a significant resurgence in loan activity for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012. In fiscal 2012, we closed loans totaling $2,832,000, which included two major construction projects for new worship center additions. By comparison, total loan production in fiscal 2011 was just over $400,000.

We view this increased borrowing as a possible sign that congregations are feeling more confident about their financial positions and are now willing and able to invest in projects that had been “back burnered” due to the economy. In addition, interest rates remain low and have stayed fairly stable.

We are encouraged to see that several churches have needed to expand their facilities to accommodate their growing ministries!

Funding for our loans continues to be fueled by the support of hundreds of faithful investors. While a low interest rate environment is beneficial for our borrowers, it has the opposite effect on savers and investors.

We are sensitive to the impact of our investment certificate rates to people on fixed incomes and we’ve maintained our investment rates at the highest levels possible. Loan Fund rates continue to compare very favorably to rates for similar types of investments available elsewhere in the market.

We are looking forward to continued strong performance in 2013.

Pastor-Church Relations
Pastor-Church Relations is often involved with congregations in transition. The most frequent transition is between when one pastor has left and another arrives.

One strategy often employed with congregations in transition is that of contracting with a Specialized Transitional Minister. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations has a growing list of trained and endorsed STMs, although the demand for their services continues to outstrip the supply.

To learn more about the STM program or for information about the availability of an STM for your congregation, please contact Jeanne Kallemeyn at the PCR Office.

Another option is for a church to contract with a "supply (interim) pastor." These are usually experienced pastors who are skilled at preaching, pastoral care and administration. Although they do not have the same training as an STM they can be helpful when congregations are in need of some time and continuity before issuing a call to a new pastor.

While Specialized Transitional Ministers usually serve for 10 months to two years, supply pastors will often serve for shorter time periods.

PCR maintains a list of some of these pastors. Congregations who may be interested in exploring the assistance of one are invited to contact Jeanne Kallemeyn at jkallemeyn@crcna.org.

Pastors who would like to be on that list are also encouraged to communicate that desire to us.
Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry creates safe church environments by helping churches to prevent abuse and respond appropriately to abuse that has occurred. The office has recorded over 160 interactions this quarter, acting as a resource to individuals and churches.

Safe Church Ministry Conference April 27-28

Over 70 attended the conference for Safe Church Team members. Attendees learned about domestic violence, restorative practices for churches, Safe Church policy and more from internationally recognized presenters. Some sessions were recorded and are being edited to use for future learning opportunities.

“Circle of Grace”

This comprehensive curriculum supplement is one of the best tools available for preventing abuse. The goal of the “Circle of Grace” program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others. It takes a proactive, holistic approach that centers on God’s presence and teaches respect for all.

Programs that focus on stranger danger are ineffective as most child abuse (up to 90%) involves someone the child knows. “Circle of Grace” helps create a safe environment by teaching children to recognize when they are safe, when they are unsafe, and how to bring uncomfortable feelings to the attention of a trusted adult.

Contact the office of Safe Church Ministry for details.

Organizational Structure

Safe Church Ministry is part of an overall denominational movement to maximize resources for effective ministry. At the current time, this involves discussion with the office of Pastor/Church relations about how we might organize to work together. Please pray with us as we work toward the most effective long-term ministry.

Race Relations

Relationships

One day I decided to research the word “relationship” and found results from Wikipedia to Dr. Phil. I looked on amazon.com and got a long list of different titles, covers, and approaches. Curiosity led me to biblegateway.com where I chose one version and got a pitiful six results.

From my apartment balcony, depending of the season, I can see a nearby golf course. In summer the trees create a tall wall, and obscure it. Not being passionate about golf, it did not bother me. My passion lies in creating and sustaining relationships.

One morning, while sipping tea and looking at those trees, I saw them as walls like those we create in our lives. This led me to think about relationships and how our “walls” obscure our seeing and keep us from creating relationships, while at the same time trying to define and explain relationships.

The trees made me think about an upcoming classis meeting I would attend on behalf of Race Relations which involved meeting new people.

I noticed that my feelings were between excitement and anxiety. Because feelings provide information, I wanted to know why I was experiencing this mix of feelings. Then I looked at the trees and realized I just needed to walk through them to get to the other side (and leave the fears behind).

The welcome was great; the experience of meeting new people a blessing. Days later, while sipping my tea on the balcony, I looked at those trees and smiled.

The Office of Race Relations continues to build relationships as we rejoice in the progress of our work and see God move in his great power. To God be the glory forever and ever.

-Viviana Cornejo
Race Relations Advocate

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Since 2007, Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) has been resourcing smaller CRC congregations. The resources have included a variety of grants, learning events for ministry leaders, seminars on technology and preaching, coaching/training for coaches, and DVDs. The purpose of SCE is to foster healthy congregations.

Since 2003, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) has been resourcing pastors, regional pastors, churches, pastors’ spouses, councils, ministry leaders, and seminary students. SPE resources have included a number of training tools, grants for peer groups, conferences, gatherings for shared learning, academic training, published books, funds for hosting continuing education events, funds to assist in hiring regional pastors, and current data on pastoral ministry. The purpose of SPE is to foster health in pastors and pastors’ spouses.

Both programs and the available resources have changed over the years. New things have been added while others fell away. There have been changes in staff, membership on the advisory team and funding sources. (SPE originally was funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. but is now funded from Ministry Shares). While change is not always easy, it is often necessary in order to keep things fresh and relevant.

As of July 1, SCE/SPE has experienced another change: administratively, it has joined the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR). Among other things, PCR resources congregations and pastors. Fostering health is an important part of PCRs work. Over the past several years the two offices have been collaborating in a number of ways, so this coming together makes good sense. Together we will continue to resource congregations and pastors.

Conversations have already begun to explore what is next. Good things are anticipated and ultimately pastors and congregations will benefit. Stay tuned....
Calvin College

On Saturday, Oct. 20, at 2 p.m. (EST), Calvin College will inaugurate Dr. Michael Le Roy as its 10th president. Join us for the Inauguration ceremony, or, watch the live-streamed service at: www.calvin.edu/president/inauguration

As a Reformed educational institution of the CRC, Calvin College has been shaped in faith and scholarship by these central convictions:

- God, the almighty creator of a good world, is sovereign over all creation, granting to human beings, made in his image, the responsibility of caring for this world. Sin entered the world by humanity’s rebellion against God, affecting every aspect of creation, including every area of human life. Nevertheless God graciously preserves the world, holding all things in his tender embrace and bending them to his purpose.

- In saving grace, God kept his covenant promises, acting unconditionally in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem humanity and all creation from sin and evil. The risen Christ is Lord of all, reconciling all things to himself and calling people to salvation through faith, which is a gift of grace alone.

- The Holy Spirit, active from the beginning, continues to move across all creation. At Pentecost the Spirit permanently indwelled the church, empowering it for service and gathering people from every tongue, tribe, and nation into the unity of the body of Christ.

- The Bible is the authoritative, Spirit-breathed Word of God, fully reliable in leading believers to know God and to walk with Christ in newness of life. Through Christ and in the power of the Spirit, God meets his people in worship, conveying grace through Word and sacrament. The Spirit empowers believers to bear witness to Christ’s love and to be agents of God’s creative and renewing work in every area of life. Christians live with unwavering hope of the new creation where God’s kingdom will fully come.

As we welcome a new president, these truths remain foundational for the mission of Calvin College.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Getting Back to School
On May 19, 2012, 81 names were announced of graduates from various degree programs or those who completed a certificate or diploma for ministry. Many of the students who did not graduate served over the summer in local churches and gained valuable field experiences as part of being mentored for ministry. We look forward to our students coming back to school and we have been getting ready.

As CTS prepares for another year, we will welcome a new cohort (small group) of students who are taking advantage of the new distance M.Div. track. This program allows people to continue to live and work where they are living and still receive theological education through CTS. While even more students may join this group, we are thankful that 12 persons from various backgrounds will be in the inaugural cohort.

To get ready for new students, we also welcome a number of new persons to CTS:

- Rev. Jeff Sajdak, who has served in three different pastorates, takes up service as Dean of Students.

- Ms. Sarah Chun will use her training from her Masters in Social Work and her experience as a pastor’s wife to serve as Associate Dean of Students.

- Dr. Michael Goheen will take up his teaching role in the Jake and Betsy Tuls Chair as Professor of Missiology.

- Rev. Al Gelder, who served as Director of Mentored Ministries in an interim capacity last year, begins a three-year assignment in the position.

- Rev. Stan Mast, who recently retired from LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, will serve as an adjunct professor with a particular focus on coming alongside students in developing as preachers.

We invite your prayers for students, staff and faculty as we join together in “getting back to school.” Thank you for joining us in ministry.

Back to God Ministries International

We welcome our new director, Rev. Kurt Selles, whose appointment was ratified by Synod 2012. Rev. Selles began his work in August. For more information about Rev. Selles and his vision for ministry see BackToGod.net.

We celebrate God’s ongoing work through worldwide media ministries:

- Stephen Paul, BTGMI ministry leader in India, reports that in the past year 22 Hindu listeners came to faith through our ministry and were baptized.

- Rev. Guillermo Serrano, BTGMI Spanish ministry leader, has been working with Radio Moody to develop their Spanish-language AM network of programming, also broadcast live on their website www.radiomoody.org. Rev. Serrano is a guest host on a broadcast of conversations about faith, offering a Reformed perspective on world issues. Moody broadcasts two BTGMI Spanish radio programs at no cost to us, reaching Spanish listeners in North American cities where it was previously too costly for us to broadcast.

- The Chinese ministry team just launched an upgraded English World website, providing more interactive and multi-media resources for audiences in China, Hong Kong, and other parts of the world. Visitors are drawn to the site by their desire to learn English, giving our staff an opportunity to engage them in conversations about faith and life.

All congregations have been sent a DVD and bulletin insert highlighting BTGMI evangelism and discipleship in Indonesia. Churches are encouraged to use these materials to help members understand how their support helps the Christian Reformed Church to share the Gospel internationally.
Home Missions

God at Work
There are many tangible examples of God working powerfully through Home Missions’ ministries during the past quarter. Here are some of the most notable:

Prayer Summit
One key highlight of the past four months was our participation in the first ever CRC Prayer Summit – a powerful gathering that inspired and challenged hundreds of attendees. Together with other agencies and denominational leaders, Home Missions was deeply involved in this three-day time of prayer in Burbank, CA. Thousands more across North America joined, too, watching a keynote message over the Internet and praying together.

Defining the Reality
Having completed his first year as Director of Home Missions, Rev. Moses Chung has spent a lot of time in conversation with pastors and other church leaders, as well as with Home Missions supporters. As a result of these conversations, he has become focused on two critical questions: What are our realities in the CRC? What time is it for Home Missions?

Through spending time in prayer and discernment, Rev. Chung has been able to give numerous presentations across North America to individuals, churches, and classes (for example, Classis Kalamazoo). These presentations, focused on “defining the reality” facing the CRC today, have elicited positive responses and have opened up many wonderful discussions about how Home Missions is working to strengthen the denomination.

Strong Financial Support
On the financial front, Home Missions praises God for making it possible for us to end the most recent fiscal year in a strong financial position, thanks to the support of individuals and congregations. This marks the first time since 2004/2005 that Home Missions has been able to avoid tapping into its reserves to meet its annual budget. We are thankful to the Lord and to all of our supporters for making this happen.

World Missions

When Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) opened ministry in a West African country more than 25 years ago, few people there had ever heard the Gospel. Now the region’s growing church has a vision to spread the Gospel through Christian schools. This vision has opened new doors, for local believers and for Christian Reformed World Missions.

CRWM has planted churches and discipled believers in West Africa for years. While that work will continue, CRWM now also plans to strengthen local believers for sharing God’s Word through Christian schools.

The region’s Christian schools have gained a reputation for academic quality and integrity. So much so, in fact, that Muslim families have begun sending their children to the schools. This gives teachers an unprecedented opportunity to share the Gospel.

Challenges exist. Nationwide, there are few Christian teachers to staff the schools and few teacher-training opportunities. However, CRWM is working with a newly-formed association of Christian schools and local Christian educators to change this picture.

Together, CRWM and its partners are planning to train teachers in a biblical perspective of teaching and life. One man, the head of a Christian school system, is founding a teacher training college for all teachers, regardless of their faith background, to receive quality, biblically-based training. CRWM plans to provide teachers for this school and join in other training opportunities.

Christian teachers across the country are eager to learn more about integrating their faith into the classroom, inspired by the privilege of giving whole-life witness to Jesus Christ in a Muslim context. Christian Reformed World Missions has committed to walking alongside them as they discover a biblical perspective of education. Through mentoring and teacher training programs, Christian Reformed World Missions will further equip West African Christian teachers to share what it means to follow Jesus.

World Renew

CRWRD Continuing as World Renew
On June 12, Synod 2012 approved a proposal to change CRWRC’s name to World Renew. This name will be used with the description, “Living Justice, Loving Mercy, Serving Christ.”

As World Renew, we will be the same organization that you know and trust as CRWRC. We will continue to respond to the needs of disaster survivors and people in poverty on your behalf with the love of Christ and with quality programs that will change their lives for the better in the long-term.

We also will continue to affirm and hold dear our Christian faith, CRC identity, and Reformed worldview. No matter what we are called, we hope that you will continue to recognize the vital role you play in our ministry and will continue to join us as we seek to join with God in his renewing work in the world and help all of His children achieve their potential.

After Sept. 1, visit our new website at worldrenew.net where you can read about the upcoming World Hunger campaign that celebrates 50 years of CRWRC’s heart for the world. We encourage you to participate in this annual educational and fundraising campaign to help alleviate world hunger. In addition, be sure to check out events around North America scheduled to celebrate CRWRC’s 50th and DRS’s 40th anniversaries listed at worldrenew.net/50.

Thank you for continuing to support World Renew/CRWRC’s community development and disaster response efforts. You will be able to find updates about disaster response activities in West Africa, Syria, New York, and more at worldrenew.net/drs. We also invite you to consider our volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups at worldrenew.net/volunteer.

World Renew/CRWRC does not receive Ministry Shares and relies on your offerings, gifts and prayers to carry out its ministry in Christ’s name on your behalf. Thank you for your support and prayers.
Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee

The work of the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC) involves educating and mobilizing CRC members and congregations to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator.

It works toward three goals:

1. **Education and Awareness** of CRC members and communities of the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada, of the present lived reality of Aboriginal people in Canada, and of the need of reconciliation and renewed relationships. The committee has worked towards this by:
   - Attending the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Victoria, British Columbia
   - The reForming Relationships art tour
   - Collecting and telling stories about relationships between the CRC and their Aboriginal neighbours
   - Offering resources ideas such as booklists for anyone to access who wishes to increase their awareness of our shared history.

2. **Engaging and Building Relationships** with our Aboriginal neighbours to better understand each other and journey down the path of justice and right relationships.
   - Communities are encouraged to host the art tour, in consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal people in their community.
   - Visiting Aboriginal communities, such as Six Nations in southern Ontario, to learn and to connect.

3. **Advocacy and Seeking Justice** for Aboriginal peoples, who remain among the most marginalized and oppressed people groups in Canada.
   - The committee supports and consults with the three aboriginal ministries in Canada.
   - CAMC looks to collaborate with CCG and with the Office of Social Justice in their efforts to seek justice for Aboriginal peoples.

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ServiceLink

**Transitions**

In the past year, ServiceLink has gone through a process of redefining what our volunteer program will look like in the future and the purpose it serves within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

As a result, the ServiceLink program now has staff based only in the Canadian office in Burlington, Ontario, although we will still serve our U.S. churches and constituents.

The core of who we are and what we do is to affirm the vision of the Christian Reformed Church in "expressing the good news of God's Kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide."

Our goals consist of working with CRC agencies and ministry programs in the promotion and recruitment of volunteers, working collaboratively to link people to opportunities that meet needs on the field as well as match people's skills and gift sets.

Additionally it is our hope to build on a volunteer movement within our denomination and develop special volunteer events, such as our annual Day of Service (remembering 9/11), which provides opportunities for churches to serve locally, and to provide training and resources in Volunteer Engagement as well as look for ways to increase opportunities available to our churches and constituents.

It is our goal that ServiceLink will continue to provide excellent service to CRCNA agencies and programs, as well as to the many Christian Reformed churches and members across North America.

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Partners Worldwide

Partners Worldwide affirms the call that business people and entrepreneurs feel to be a part of the marketplace. Christian businesses are a critical piece to bringing God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" as business needs Christians who are intentionally using their faith and calling to transform the marketplace.

We look forward to encouraging, equipping and connecting people from all over the world at our international business conference "Marketplace Revolution ‘12: Business. Dignity. Ending Poverty." This will be held Nov. 8-9, 2012 at Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, IL. For more information on this event, visit www.marketplacerevolution.org

In the last year, Partners Worldwide empowered thousands of business people and entrepreneurs around the world to overcome poverty with sustainable solutions:

- Working in 23 countries, with almost 17,000 businesses, creating or retaining 26,700 jobs, and with 417 mentors spending over 8,956 hours walking alongside, impacting the lives of 133,500 people

A business owner in Liberia who is a member of our partner organization, LEAD, Inc., is now able to support her husband and her four children on the money she earns in her business after receiving training and a series of loans.

When asked “Why do you do business?” she responded, “Business can make you to be a human being.” Her answer encapsulates why we do what we do, reflecting the fundamental desire to provide for her family and not depend on handouts or aid.

Please pray for our ministry and staff around the world as we continue affirming and commissioning business people as members of the body of Christ. We look forward to partnering with you to continue creating jobs and transforming lives.