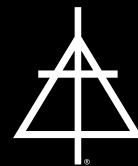


MINISTRY REPORT

TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS



Christian
Reformed
Church

FALL 2013

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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

In early June, we hosted our annual June conference with the largest attendance ever (114 registered, with a few additional people dropping in for some sessions). The theme was Chaplains and Prayer, with the opening session led by Jolene DeHeer. Keynote speaker was Wendy Cadge, author of *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine*. The conference also featured music by Phil Stacey, a Christian recording artist and finalist in a recent American Idol competition.

The Advisory Committee and director interviewed two new endorsement candidates during the conference, plus one more a week later.

We continue to see growing interest in chaplaincy, processing eight new chaplains in the last six months, growing our current number of endorsed chaplains to 126. This includes some who are endorsed but who are still looking for a position of service. We are working with colleges and seminaries across the U.S and Canada to introduce students to the world of chaplaincy ministry.

During the last few months, we have honored four chaplains who retired and several who have completed units of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) to prepare for chaplaincy. We have seen one of our former interviewees accepted into training as a U.S. Army chaplain, another qualified and accepted into "Q" training to serve with the Special Forces (a unique honor given to only one chaplain in the U.S. each year), and another chosen for accession to the rank of Navy captain (equivalent to colonel in the Army).

As we publicize and prepare for our annual chaplaincy recognition Sunday,

Nov. 10, we are hoping to increase the visibility of chaplaincy in the local churches and the opportunities for chaplains to share their gifts and their stories with the congregations that call and send them into their service to the surrounding world.

Disability Concerns

Two new partnerships allow us to serve Christian Reformed churches even more effectively:

Diaconal Ministry – When they are ordained, deacons are called to love mercy and seek justice. These twin callings dovetail with the ministry of Disability Concerns because people with disabilities and their families often have significant physical and emotional needs and because they often deal with the injustices of stigma and prejudice.

Disability Concerns and Diaconal Ministries Canada have covenanted to work together with deacons to strengthen the ministry with people affected by disabilities. We hope and pray that this partnership will invigorate deacons and church disability advocates. Likewise, this partnership will help deacons and church advocates as they minister to people and families who have complex needs arising out of mental illness, physical challenges, hearing and visual impairments and other disabilities.

Coaching – Through careful listening, asking powerful questions and trusting the power of silence, coaches help others to be more effective in their work. With hundreds of trained coaches, the Reformed Church in America (RCA) now offers coaching free of charge to the nearly 60 CRC and RCA volunteer Regional Disability Advocates.

Regional Advocates help churches

(usually all in one classis) by consulting about disability issues and by helping the congregations identify people who can serve the congregation as Church Disability Advocates. Coaches will help the Regional Advocates strategize how to be most effective in this work.

The Banner

Two recent articles in *The Banner* raised widespread concerns and prompted many calls for explanation and some for the editor's resignation. The articles challenged current CRC doctrinal and ethical positions. Many readers perceived these articles to reflect *The Banner's* own editorial position, causing serious concerns about the direction of the magazine and the effect these articles would have on *Banner* readers wrestling with the issues raised.

Editor Robert De Moor apologized for his editorial decisions by means of an online "Dear Reader" letter, which also appeared in the August print edition of the magazine. Upon reflection, De Moor said that publication of these articles did not raise the issues in a helpful manner, and that insufficient means had been taken to alert readers that they did not represent *The Banner's* point of view. He also said that, while answers to these challenges by a variety of authors were planned for subsequent issues, that is too late.

The Banner editorial council reviewed the matter this summer and, together with denominational administration, and *Banner* staff, will review the events carefully at the fall meeting of the editorial council and determine what changes, if any, need to be made to the editorial process and review procedure.

Office of Social Justice

The Office of Social Justice has welcomed new staff members to our team this quarter. Danielle Rowaan has joined us in a communications position shared among the Centre for Public Dialogue, Race Relations, Canadian Ministries, and OSJ. Her love of language, story, Indigenous justice, and shalom are gifts to the justice-related ministries. For news and updates from the CRC justice ministries, follow Danielle on twitter at @DanielleRowaan.

Erica VanEssendelft joins OSJ as this year's Policy Analyst and Advocacy Fellow. She comes to us after serving for two years with the Mennonite Central Committee in Colombia. Erica maintains our relationships with important partners and helps OSJ to make informed, timely decisions on legislation.

Kyle Schaap recently transitioned from his role as Policy Analyst and Advocacy Fellow to this year's Seminary Intern. He is continuing his work on creation stewardship and will attend Calvin Seminary in the fall.

Shannon Jammal-Hollemans, formerly our Seminary Intern, has completed her Masters of Divinity degree and accepted a position with World Missions and OSJ. Her work focuses on faith formation and intergenerational opportunities in the church.

As immigration reform reaches a critical moment in the U.S., much of our work has been focused on education about immigration and mobilization to pass a fair and comprehensive bill. We are asking the church to not stand idly by while our neighbors suffer. Now is the time to take action. Learn more about the CRC's reasons to care about immigration and effective advocacy steps at crcjustice.org.

Pastor-Church Relations

The expression "we are better together" communicates what we are experiencing in Pastor-Church Relations, Safe Church Ministry and Sustaining Congregational Excellence. In the past year our ministries have been combined administratively, which supports our shared commitment to more effectively serve churches. By collectively using our God-given gifts, we are reaping the benefits of collaboration and these benefits are being passed on to our churches.

Our combined staff meets on a regular basis to talk about the work we are doing. It is a time of sharing, asking questions and making suggestions. We are doing a better job in planning events, responding to situations and supporting each other, all positive outcomes of collaboration. For example, Pastor-Church Relations is assisting Safe Church Ministry in

situations related to abuses that are not physical or sexual in nature. And members of the Pastor-Church Relations staff are involved with Sustaining Congregational Excellence sponsored events for pastors, spouses and church leaders.

Please keep Pastor-Church Relations, Safe Church Ministry and Sustaining Congregational Excellence in your prayers as we continue to seek ways to work together more effectively. We praise God for the opportunity to be a resource for our churches and thank him for his grace and provisions to participate in kingdom work. John 15:5, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*"

Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations continues its new initiative called Community Connect.

The goal of Community Connect is to build and/or increase capacity for being culturally intelligent and to be a resource for CRC leaders and congregations that wish to be culturally intelligent. The desired result is for culturally intelligent congregations to have effective ministries in our ever-increasing, multicultural communities.

In an effort to expand this initiative beyond North America, Race Relations conducted a Cultural Intelligence Workshop in Entebbe, Uganda, in August.

The 2013 CRCNA Multiethnic Conference was held June 7–9 on the campus of Calvin College. As evidenced by the positive comments and a review of workshop evaluation forms, this conference was a success.

Alexia Salvatierra, an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, was the keynote speaker. She gave a challenging message on immigration and the need for reforming the system in the United States.

Also the Dante Venegas Award was given to a champion of racial reconciliation. This year's award was given to Dr. Manual (Manny) Ortiz, professor of Missional Theology at Biblical Seminary in Philadelphia.

Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry is a resource to churches in abuse awareness, prevention and response.

Connecting – More than 266 interactions were recorded with churches and individuals who contacted Safe Church Ministry. We're still developing a system of using key words to track interactions. Of those that included key words: 22 were regarding policy; 86 were about a situation of abuse; 32 involved building awareness; 61 were Safe Church team related. We also connected with: more than 300 Safe Church team members via our Newsletter; about a dozen prayer partners with monthly updates; our Advisory Committee, which met in April; synod delegates, in person and in video; and people who read our Network blogs, <http://network.crcna.org/content/safe-church>

Staffing Challenges – Safe Church associate Alicia Mannes resigned for personal reasons. The position has been reviewed and is undergoing some changes that will serve Safe Church more effectively and also fit within a framework of greater collaboration with Pastor-Church Relations.

Situations – There have been a greater-than-usual number of ongoing, difficult, and complex situations that have taken a lot of time and attention.

Team Training Events – The director participated in team training events hosted by Safe Church teams in British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest, and Alberta North.

Ecumenical Boundary Training – The director is part of a team involved in a *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* initiative, developing healthy boundary training workshops. Pastors in many denominations are required to take such training every few years.

Circle of Grace – About 40 churches have received the *Circle of Grace* safe environment program for children and youth. We continue to promote this excellent prevention program.

A Website – Our website is being updated with new resources for Abuse Awareness Sunday coming in September. Check it out at www.crcna.org/safechurch

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

To date, 162 CRC churches have received an SCE Health & Renewal grant. The grants enable smaller congregations to engage in a ministry project. There's a process congregations go through as they begin this journey: dreaming, creating, planning, discussing, praying, hoping. When word is received that the grant project has received funding, there's excitement, joy, and an eagerness to begin. At this point, no one knows what God will do in the months to come. It's only as things progress that his hand can be seen and the stories can be told. Here's one such story.

"A woman, and her family, came to Ann Arbor as a visiting scholar at the University of Michigan (UM). They were invited to Hope Church by a colleague at the UM hospital. Being Buddhists, they knew nothing about Christianity. They started coming to church but mainly for social interaction. Every Sunday they reminded themselves they were Buddhists. They didn't want to be brainwashed and converted to Christianity.

Over time, they became involved in church activities, thanks to the loving care of cell group leaders. On April 13, the woman attended our women's seminar but didn't expect much. Listening to testimonies and lectures by the speakers, and sharing with her group members, she felt a strong need to be like these women who had committed themselves to Christ. She wanted to try to live faithfully as a wife, mother, and daughter and to raise her own daughter to be like these godly women.

A few weeks later she urged her husband to attend a men's group so he could be inspired by Christian men just as she was inspired by Christian women. A month later, the couple made public profession of faith and were baptized. What a great and wonderful God we serve!"

Calvin College

Summer is the time when faculty and staff at Calvin College work quietly behind the scenes to prepare for the new entering class that arrives in early

September.

Fall enrollment looks very good. We are excited that more than 1,000 students will be a part of the first-year class at Calvin College, the first time since 2007 that first year students number more than 1,000. Transfer enrollment looks to be approaching or exceeding the 100 student-level that has become fairly standard in recent years. Several groups of eager first-year students and their parents have already attended mid-summer Prelude sessions and other orientation activities.

Financial support of the college ended the year very well, with the Advancement Division meeting or exceeding fundraising goals, sometimes by large margins, in several categories.

The strategic planning process is moving forward this summer to meet the schedule of detailing options this fall and Board approval at its February 2014 meetings. The Planning and Priorities Committee and Faculty Senate have both added summer meetings devoted to strategic issues, to ensure the process moves forward in a timely manner.

With good news on enrollment and financial support and a well-received participatory strategic planning process working its way to completion, we are very optimistic about the coming academic year.

Please keep Calvin in your prayers as we uphold its mission and purpose, and work together to bring God's good purpose for the college to fruition.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Gateway for New Students began on Aug. 26, when they started their class work and orientation at Calvin Seminary. This two-week program is the "Gateway" to their seminary experience that follows a special one-week orientation for our international students. We hope to welcome over 80 new students to Calvin Seminary, with the majority entering the Master of Divinity Program. In 2011, we welcomed 34 MDIV students. In 2012, we welcomed 37 MDIV students. In 2013, we hope to welcome 47 MDIV students.

The growth in our Master of Divinity

class is related to the opportunity for people to enter into our Distance Master of Divinity program. In this past year, we completed our first year of using cohorts (small groups), on-line teaching and intensive weeks of training to offer a Calvin Seminary education to people who can also work, live and minister where they are.

We continue to see great interest in this new way of providing a seminary education. Last year, 14 students began in the Distance Master of Divinity program. This fall, 17 students are scheduled to start their Master of Divinity program in this distance format. We give thanks to God for answers to prayer. We invite your prayers for all our students.

Facing Your Future (FYF): FYF

Coordinator Jessica Driesenga reports that this past summer, over three weeks 25 high school students from all over North America as well as a student from Nicaragua and one from Haiti, gathered at Calvin Seminary for the Facing Your Future program. For the first 10 days, the students lived in the dorms at Calvin College and spent each day with members of the Calvin Seminary faculty learning about various aspects of theology and ministry. Six Calvin Seminary students also accompanied them as their Live in Leaders, leading reflections, small group interactions and fun activities.

The group then divided to serve at three different learning sites. A third of the group went to Austin, Tex., a third to Roseland, Ill, and a third to Portland, Ore. The students spent ten days at these sites, partnering with local Christian Reformed Churches and experiencing ministry hands-on. After these 10 days, the students spent two more days at Calvin Seminary together to wrap up. These students went back to their home churches with a new taste of Christian community, new ideas and insights into how to discern God's call in their lives, new theological insights, strong faith, and equipped with new ideas about how to serve God in their home churches! We celebrate the 15th year that Calvin Seminary has helped to form students and their future through this ministry.

More information on Calvin Seminary (including our Convocation scheduled for September 11), can be found at www.calvinseminary.edu

Back to God Ministries International

Thanks to your support through Ministry Shares, offerings and individual gifts, Back to God Ministries International continues to work with gifted media teams around the world to share the gospel in 10 languages. And we continue to see God work through our audio, video, print and online resources that proclaim the Word of God to millions of people.

- Five new Portuguese Facebook pages are reaching thousands of daily program followers, and the numbers continue to increase as followers share our devotional messages with their friends.
- For the first time ever our Hindi team hosted a three-day seekers event, reaching out to 70 people in Jammu who wanted to know more about Christ. Four people received baptism during this event.
- People in northern Japan continue to heal following the 2011 tsunami. Many are turning to Christ to provide hope for the future. Thanks to ongoing support we will be able to provide at least one more year of special programming for people in northern Japan.
- As our Russian team increased the number of web-based radio productions, we were encouraged to see our audience of online followers grow. We are also thankful for the projects produced in partnership with people in local churches who are passionate about our media ministry.

For an update on ministry in the Middle East, we encourage churches to watch for a special mailing in September of a DVD and bulletin inserts that highlight BTGMI Arabic ministries. Please use these resources to share with your congregations how your support enables the impact of media ministry and the message of hope and peace for this troubled region.

Home Missions

Home Missions joins all of the CRCNA in its longing for God's name and renown to be spread into the world. We do this through starting and strengthening missional churches and campus ministries that bring praise to God by transforming lives and

communities.

As Home Missions shares God's call, as we work together as a denomination, we're humbled and grateful. Your gifts, your encouragement, your prayers, and your passion for God's mission are an answer to prayer. Here are a few examples of the work God is doing through Home Missions:

- As university and college courses begin, Home Missions' 30 campus ministries are in full swing. These ministries each reach students in different ways. For example, at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, Chaplain Kelly Sibthorpe seeks to connect students to the local church by providing nutritious, freezable meals.
- Home Missions' work with missional churches continues as we develop strong clusters, gatherings of ministry leaders of both existing and new churches. Clusters strengthen leaders spiritually and with ministry skills, create an environment where leaders learn with each other and care for one another, and clusters focus on expanding God's mission as members live out a shared kingdom vision.
- Home Missions is excited to be partnering with an ever-increasing number of churches, classes, and clusters to begin new churches. We are anticipating many new churches this year and a rich season of people coming to know Christ.

World Missions

Before he knew Christ, Marco Aurelio felt his life had no meaning or direction. He turned to drugs and alcohol for a time, but these too, left him feeling empty. Only when he heard the Gospel did he realize and experience the hope found in following Christ. At age 44, he decided to go to seminary to become a pastor. In June he graduated from San Pablo Seminary, ready and excited to serve God's people.

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary Dan Kuiper teaches Sanchez and other students at San Pablo and All Nations Seminaries in Juarez, Mexico. San Pablo often has older students who work during the day and study at night. All Nations, meanwhile, has an in-residence

program and some extension centers. Dan Kuiper serves the students by teaching classes, offering counseling, and serving as academic dean. Over the years, he's seen more than 200 seminary graduates go on to become pastors, worship leaders, and church planters in Mexico.

As God's Church expands worldwide, CRWM is committed to walking alongside churches intent on firmly rooting themselves in the Bible. To that end, CRWM sends missionaries like Dan Kuiper to teach in seminaries, mentor new and young church leaders, and offer biblically-based, doctrinally sound training. By God's grace, a new generation of pastors is taking God's Word to heart and challenging members to daily live for Him.

World Renew

Because of the support of churches like yours, this past quarter World Renew has responded to flooding in Alberta, Ontario and India; aided refugees in Syria; and helped churches around the world reach out to their communities to fight hunger, poverty, and injustice.

This fall, there are two campaigns that can help World Renew continue these ministries as well as increase stewardship in your congregation.

World Hunger Campaign: Think. Act. Fast.

This year's World Hunger Campaign encourages families to Think about global poverty; to Act according to their gifts and skills; and to ask God what sort of Fast would be pleasing to Him. This two-week campaign features family devotions and orange Peter Fish banks, culminating in an offering (suggested date **Nov. 3**). As we enter harvest season, this is an excellent campaign to remember those who are hungry around the world and in our own neighborhoods. Order your FREE materials by calling [1-800-333-8300](tel:1-800-333-8300) or visit worldrenew.net/worldhunger.

Give It Forward This Christmas

Help your congregation remember the true meaning of Christmas with this campaign featuring World Renew's gift catalog items. Consider distributing gift catalogs or set up a giving tree that features selected items that people can purchase for those in need. You might launch the campaign at Thanksgiving and culminate with an

offering on Christmas. Visit worldrenew.net/gifts for details.

Thank you for inspiring stewardship in your congregation. If you would like additional materials or ideas, please don't hesitate to contact us at [1-800-333-8300](tel:1-800-333-8300) or visit worldrenew.net.

Canadian Ministries

Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue

By encouraging faithful citizenship, the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue seeks a shalom perspective in Canadian public policy. In this time of truth and reconciliation we believe that churches in Canada have a sacred responsibility to seek renewed relationships of trust and mutual responsibility with our Indigenous neighbors.

For this reason we urge communities to learn from the Blanket Exercise (an interactive history of the relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers) and to participate in the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Contact us for resources and support in this important journey of reconciliation: publicdialogue@crcna.ca

In our current political climate some of the best opportunities to speak justice and hope are at the local level. Therefore we are working on new communications resources that empower the body of Christ for the tasks of citizenship.

Our dynamic Communications and Education Coordinator, Danielle Rowaan, is facilitating a new blog called "Do Justice" along with colleagues at the Office of Social Justice. We think that the "conversations about justice with a reformed accent" that will take place at Do Justice will be a great tool for our shared ministry of shalom. Join us! We're always looking for blog submissions, so contact Danielle (drowaan@crcna.org) if you are interested.

Policy work continues at the Centre for Public Dialogue through research and advocacy on Indigenous education reform and refugee rights in Canada, building on our rich history of constructive and justice-focused interaction with government.

Partners Worldwide

Partners Worldwide is a longstanding, hands-on global Christian network that uses business to create flourishing communities.

Our work in 23 countries, with over 17,000 businesses, creating or sustaining 33,604 jobs this year, shows the economic impact Partners Worldwide has on the lives of individuals and communities. A job changes everything for these families. No longer dependent on aid or handouts, they have a sustainable income to lift themselves out of poverty, providing food, a secure home, education and medicine for their children and family members. These image-bearers of Christ are able to live out their calling to business.

The spiritual impacts of this marketplace ministry are evident. Within the global network of Partners Worldwide, businesspeople are providing workplace discipleship groups or Bible studies, organizing corporate responses to local justice issues, or seizing opportunities to pray for Muslim coworkers—just a few examples of how they see their work as their worship.

We were honored to be one of the main partners for the Sea To Sea bike tour and appreciate the opportunity to talk about solutions to ending poverty all over North America.

Thank you for partnering in the ministry of Partners Worldwide! Your support makes a difference and we couldn't do what we do without your support. Please continue to pray for us and our ministry.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps

The summer has been a busy time for Cadet clubs and councils. Camping is always big on the list of things for Cadets to do. Some councils camp every year, like Musk-O-Tawa, the west Michigan council that held its 51st Annual Camporee in July. This year, activities included building rafts and racing them.

The councils of Ontario don't camp together every year, but when they do it's a grand event. They camp once every three years, just like Cadet

international camporees. They have Ontario camporee the year before an international, using their time to prepare Cadets for the big event next year.

Counselors and their families also have a chance to come together for training, inspiration, and fellowship. They do that at an international convention. This year, the convention took place August 1–3 in Grand Rapids, Michigan at the Hilton Hotel, a far cry from a campground. Men and their wives were introduced to the theme for this year, “Work in Progress,” based on Philippians 1:4–6.

In October, Lord willing, North American Cadet people return to Kenya, Africa for the first time in three years. Please pray for them as they train existing counselors and open up new areas to the Cadet ministry.

GEMS Girls’ Clubs

The 2013 Annual Counselors’ Leadership Conference for GEMS counselors was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. We had an amazing conference filled with inspiring speakers, Spirit-filled worship, specialized trainings, and fantastic fellowship with sisters in Christ. The British Columbia Leadership Conference committee lead by Linda Rook and the GEMS conference coordinator, Alecia Van Hulzen, did a wonderful job at organizing the conference.

This year the theme for GEMS Girls’ Clubs will be *Who’s the Greatest?* We believe God – our loving Creator and adoring Father – unquestionably deserves to be center stage even when everything around us tells us differently. We long for girls’ and counselors’ hearts to align with God’s truth as we spend time in John 3:30, “He must become greater; I must become less.”

GEMS will be holding their first ever “Bid Out Loud” online auction. We want girls everywhere to meet the savior. In order to do that, we will need to go to new places, cities, states, provinces, and countries—and that takes additional funds! You can help us do that! We are holding an online auction November 22, 2013. For more information please visit the GEMS website (www.gemsgc.org).

By the grace of God and through the

support of many in the GEMS ministry, The Esther School will begin its second year of operation on September 2. We are grateful for the new staff, Jillian and David Draayer, who will be joining the team in Zambia. Jillian will serve as the first-grade teacher, and Dave will serve as the PE teacher. Thank you so much for supporting The Esther School!

Youth Unlimited

For more than a year the Youth Unlimited staff prepared for a summer full of faith-forming experiences like Serve, The Chicago Project and Live It. We prayed that students who attended one of these experiences would come to understand that what we do grows out of who we are in Christ, and that being in Christ changes us and our actions. Romans 12:1-2 was the scripture that was studied through small group discussions, personal devotions and presented by main stage speakers at all the Serve sites and The Chicago Project.

This summer we were also grateful to roll out the second Live It experience (formally known as Convention) which was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Each student was challenged and learned how to use their interests, passions and talents as ways to reflect the love of Christ in this world.

All total, 2,052 students and leaders from 197 local churches sought to bring hope to a broken world with the love of Jesus Christ through a Youth Unlimited experience in 2013. We pray that the work of their hands and the words of their mouth will ripple from the churches and communities they served outwards across North America and beyond. Please join us in praying that through their service the Holy Spirit will continue to move in the hearts of each student bringing about a faith that impacts every aspect of their lives.