

# MINISTRY REPORT

## TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS



Christian  
Reformed  
Church

### SPRING 2013

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## Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

In the last few months, we have approved three more endorsements and had an equal number of chaplains retire, keeping our current number of endorsed chaplains at 129 – still an all-time high. As we reach the end of a retirement bubble, we are seeing a steady increase in the number of endorsement applications and expect that our total number of chaplains will continue to grow.

Another trend we are seeing is more applicants choosing chaplaincy as a ministry path while in seminary rather than transitioning in mid-career, which means a potentially longer career in chaplaincy. A larger number of new chaplains are also choosing to obtain four units of Clinical Pastoral Education (rather than the minimum two) and are seeking board certification from one of the professional chaplain organizations. This reflects a growing professionalization in chaplaincy.

At the same time, budget restraints in some traditional areas of employment for chaplains and an overall slow economy are producing a growing number of endorsed chaplains who are unemployed, underemployed or working several part-time jobs. A further trend is a growing diversity: the number of female and minority applicants is increasing.

The theme of our upcoming annual conference will be Chaplains and Prayer, with keynote speaker Wendy Cadge, author of *Paging God*. She conducted an extensive study of how hospitals and chaplains are redefining the nature of “spiritual care” in our increasingly diverse society. We are delighted that Phil Stacey, a Christian

recording artist and finalist in a recent American Idol competition has agreed to provide a musical component to our conference. A Thursday evening event featuring his music plus keynote speaker will be publicized to synodical delegates and the community.

## Disability Concerns

Disability Concerns (DC) strives to serve all the churches in our denomination. After English, the two largest language groups in the CRC are Korean and Spanish. Therefore, on the DC website we provide translations of our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, in both of those languages: *Rompiendo Barreras* and 장애물 헐기. Our *Inclusion Handbook* has been translated into Spanish.

At a recent DC conference in southern California, the plenary sessions and the most popular breakout session were translated into Korean. In addition, two of the breakout sessions were led by Korean pastors in the Korean language.

In past conferences, we have included sign language interpretation and captioning; this conference is the first we have done in two spoken languages.

We praise God for the increasing ethnic diversity of our denomination, and pray that together we will continue to grow in engaging people of all abilities as well.

## Faith Alive Christian Resources

Statements made recently in various media about Faith Alive Christian Resources' financial difficulties may have given the impression that Faith Alive will soon be going out of business or closing its doors.

However, at its February meeting, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (BOT) expressed its commitment to maintaining the Faith Alive brand, and to the continued need for solid Reformed faith formation resources in the congregations. Therefore, congregations and individuals should not hesitate to order materials (books, hymnals, curricula) from Faith Alive with confidence.

At their February meetings, both the Faith Alive Board and the BOT endorsed an organizational realignment framework for a phased convergence of ministry functions within the CRC. One such functional convergence envisioned is supporting the critical faith formation ministries of our congregations.

“Faith formation” is a broad term that encompasses all the ways in which congregations build an active and sustained faith commitment to Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God among their members. It includes such functions as education, worship, leadership development, congregational revitalization and others.

Many CRC agencies and ministry offices, including Home Missions, Pastor-Church Relations, Disability Concerns, Faith Alive, and others, do important work in these areas.

Because Faith Alive is facing significant financial difficulties, it will be a key element in this effort but that is not the sole reason for the realignment. The denominational administration and the BOT envision that the expertise of Faith Alive in producing educational and worship resources, as well as its general publication expertise, will continue within this planned convergence of functions. In turn, Faith Alive will be in a position to produce even more effective resources by being more closely tied to the congregations it serves.

The denominational administration will propose to the BOT at its May 2013 meeting a plan to further delineate how many of these functions can converge into integrated teams of staff that will come closer to congregations with listening, support, and coaching. This will enable denominational staff to work alongside congregations and classes to implement strategies, share

best practices, and create resources that will better serve the faith formation needs of congregations.

## Pastor-Church Relations

In January, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations welcomed Denise Posie to its staff as a congregational consultant.

Denise was the pastor at Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., for 13 years. She served on the Healthy Church Index committee, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program and search committee for the new President of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Denise completed one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education while in seminary at Columbia International University in Columbia, SC, and has a Master of Divinity in Pastoral Leadership.

Her training in restorative practices, conflict resolution, systems thinking, appreciative inquiry, and domestic violence has helped to prepare her for this new assignment.

As congregational consultant, she will focus on helping congregations during times of difficult transition, conflict and restoration. She will join Norm Thomas and Cecil VanNiejehuis in presenting workshops and retreats for congregations to cultivate “healing and prevention.” This work also includes helping churches to create structures to handle conflict beforehand as a way of promoting healthy congregations.

Denise understands the importance of soul care in bringing about personal and congregational transformation. She values input from young people in our churches as part of the discernment process in helping congregations move forward.

She enjoys encouraging young people in particular to discern their God-given gifts. She also enjoys friendships, traveling and reading. She most recently finished *Soul Searching* about the life of Thomas Merton.

## Safe Church Ministry

Safe Church Ministry is a resource to churches in abuse awareness, prevention and response. In this quarter more than 230 interactions were recorded with churches and individuals regarding Safe Church

issues.

**New Staff** – Alicia Mannes began working half time in November as Safe Church Associate. She brings a wonderful skill set to the job. As a long time Safe Church Team member, she’s been able to “hit the ground running.”

**New Safe Church Team Training Notebook** – Designed to equip Safe Church Teams to provide learning opportunities for churches. Power Point presentations, with notes and handouts are included on the topics of: Safe Church Overview, Developing Safe Church Policy, the Advisory Panel Process, Boundaries, and Domestic Violence.

**Travel, Presentations & Training Opportunities** – Outreach efforts include setting up classis presentations in places where there are no Safe Church Teams. Also, Safe Church is not hosting its biennial conference this year. It is scheduling speaker/facilitator opportunities in Safe Church Team training events hosted by various classis teams in Canada and the USA.

**Circle of Grace** – We hosted an information/training event for the *Circle of Grace* program in November in the Grand Rapids area. We will continue to promote this excellent prevention program. So far 20 churches have decided to use *Circle of Grace*.

**Top 10 Webinar of 2012** – We are pleased that ‘*The What, Why and How of Safe Church Ministry*’ was one of the Top 10 CRC Network webinars of 2012. Though no longer active, it’s still informative:

<http://network.crcna.org/webinar/what-why-and-how-safe-church-ministry>

**A New Look for the Website** – New and improved, [www.crcna.org/safechurch](http://www.crcna.org/safechurch)

## Race Relations

The Office of Race Relations is beginning a new initiative called Community Connect. It entails identifying 10 to 13 congregations and their leaders from within our 12 regions in Canada and the United States to participate in a six-month process of trainings and workshops.

The goal of Community Connect is to build and/or increase a capacity for being culturally intelligent and to be identified as a resource for other CRC leaders and congregations who wish to

be identified as culturally intelligent congregations.

The desired result is for culturally intelligent congregations to have effective ministries in our ever-increasing multicultural communities. This initiative is in line with the denominational goal of developing culturally aware leaders.

A committee is in the midst of planning and organizing the Multiethnic Conference that will take place June 7-9, 2013, on the campus of Calvin College at the same time as synod. A website at <http://www.crcna.org/race/multiethnic-conference/multiethnic-conference-2013> has information about the keynote speaker, the conference schedule, and the workshops. In addition, one will find the brochure, and the online registration form.

Our keynote speaker will be Rev. Alexia Salvatierra from Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice. She is also the Director of Justice Ministries for the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

On Friday evening, we will be presenting the Dante Venegas Award to an individual who has demonstrated passion for multicultural congregations and a commitment to antiracism.

There will be five workshops available for conferees on Saturday: (1) Raising Racism-free Children, (2) When Comfort Prevents Welcome, (3) Learning from the Global Church, (4) This Is Jesus' Table and (5) Am I Welcome? Additionally, there will be worship and communion on Sunday morning, after which the conference concludes with lunch.

## Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Over the past three years there has been an ongoing discussion regarding assessment in the CRCNA. This is not referring to assessing the CRC. Rather, it is about assisting future and current leaders as they work through their calling and/or when in times of transition.

Historically, a number of agencies and ministries have been conducting assessments in their own shops but

they have been doing it, for the most part, in isolation and in their own way.

Assessments are sought for a wide variety of reasons. They can help answer questions such as: Should I become a missionary? Would chaplaincy be a better fit for me than my current profession? Is God calling me to be a pastor? Is it time to seek another pastorate? Is this individual a good fit for that congregation?

What if there was one place, one avenue through which assessments were requested, set-up, conducted and tracked? Exploring this idea was the task given to the *CRC Ministry Assessment and Career Guidance Committee*. Members represent Calvin Seminary, World Missions, Pastor-Church Relations, Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Home Missions and Candidacy.

Currently, a pilot project is being designed to answer the "What if there was one place?" question. The hope is to launch a pilot project in the summer of 2013 and have it run for about a year. The results are of interest not only to the agencies and ministries noted above but to others as well. This may be the beginning of an opportunity to encourage and support ministry leaders as they seek to do God's will. Stay tuned....

## Calvin College

The Calvin Board of Trustees met Feb. 14-16. Students, faculty and staff, and alumni participated in a variety of activities, including the annual Calvin Teaching Awards Dinner.

Dr. James Bratt, history, was presented the twenty-first annual Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. The award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is apparent in classroom teaching, along with an endowed cash award for educational opportunities and life experiences that further enrich teaching and scholarship.

Four additional awards presented were: Innovative Teaching/Mentoring, Calvin C. Jen, M. Arch., business; Student-Faculty Research, Dr. John L. Ubels, biology; Community-Based Teaching, Calvin Nursing Department; *From Every Nation (FEN)* Award for Excellence in Teaching, Dr. Pennylyn Dykstra-Pruim, Ph.D., German. <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/a>

[wards/](#)

The Board interviewed eight faculty for first reappointment or reappointment with tenure. This allows trustees to engage with faculty regarding: personal commitment to Jesus Christ as savior, adherence to the Word of God as interpreted in the Reformed confessions, commitment to the mission of Calvin College, and ability to bring Reformed Christian beliefs into their teaching and scholarship.

A plenary session with the Alumni Association Board provided input for a new Strategic Plan. The Board will continue with this work in the future.

The Board received the report of the Financial Review Task Force appointed by President Michael Le Roy. He wrote: "Our need to engage in this process is serious, but time is on our side, and we are not alarmed. We work from a firm foundation: Calvin's Reformed Christian mission is clear and compelling, our academic reputation is strong, enrollment is increasing, and our ratio of assets to liabilities is positive. We can meet these challenges with a united and joyful spirit as we work together to preserve academic excellence and serve our students well."

## Calvin Theological Seminary

**New Students!** The spring semester at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) brought something new. We continued the first-time opportunity to welcome those who wanted to join our Distance M.Div. in this first year of the program. This past fall, 14 students were enrolled in the inaugural cohort (small group) and this spring brought 10 additional students into the five-year M.Div. degree program that allows persons the opportunity to live and minister where they are while also obtaining a Calvin Seminary education. More information on this program can be obtained from: [www.calvinseminary.edu/distance](http://www.calvinseminary.edu/distance)

**Student Body Profile:** Did you know that the CTS student body is made up of 19 different nationalities? Some other interesting numbers are that in one year we increased the number of Canadian students to 44 from 30 as a sign that we are being responsive to our binational context.

Fifty-nine students (one in five) come from South Korea as we continue a tradition of training pastors and leaders for this significant ministry context.

This year we begin our celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Ph.D degree that has certainly added to the reach of Calvin Seminary into the world. Because of that world context, nearly half of the student body comes from a denomination or church other than the Christian Reformed Church.

**New Staff:** Jinny Bult DeJong recently joined us as our new Chief Financial and Operating Officer and David Bardolph joined us as our new Controller. Both bring extensive experience to their positions. Jinny formerly served at Calvin College, International Aid, KIDS HOPE USA, Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies and Stephen's Children Foundation. David recently completed 31 years of service in the Grand Rapids Public School system.

**New Forum:** The latest issue of the CTS Forum magazine, "Engaging the Forms of Unity," has been distributed to churches. Persons and churches can access the on-line version of the Forum by going to the Calvin Seminary website.

## Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International is reaching people in 139 countries through radio, TV, print and digital resources, and one-on-one discipleship and leadership training. In addition, through our 34 websites in 10 languages, we are connecting with people in at least 179 countries.

- BTGMI Russian outreach partnered with churches in Ukraine to produce a series of videos designed to reach younger audiences. The French ministry team has also launched a new TV program, which is being piloted in Central African Republic with positive response.
- Rev. Steven Koster, director of ReFrame Media, the English outreach of BTGMI, along with his wife Deb have been leading *Family Fire* retreats and marriage enrichment events in CRC congregations. *Family Fire* is an online ministry of ReFrame Media, designed with a strong Reformed

focus to strengthen families and marriages.

- BTGMI Portuguese outreach launched a Facebook page that features daily devotionals. More than 18,000 friends access the messages each week, and an average of 185 people react to or comment daily on the posts. Portuguese ministry leader Rev. Hernandez Lopes, says, "We are very happy about this precious tool of communication of the gospel."
- Our Chinese ministry is recruiting volunteers in China for recording the audio Chinese *Today*. This is another step in the lengthy process of forming a volunteer ministry team inside mainland China. Your prayers are requested that this project will be able to move forward with momentum and safety for the volunteers.

BTGMI continues to thank God for faithful prayer and financial support from North American churches and individuals who make it possible to share the Gospel through media ministry. We are also thankful for a growing number of indigenous partners in this worldwide outreach.

## Home Missions

Starting and strengthening churches and campus ministries is at the heart of Home Missions. We celebrate and long for spiritual and numerical growth in our denomination. We also are thankful that this is work that we do in collaboration with churches, classes, and other agencies.

In the days ahead CRHM is looking to develop new ways of collaborating. The first step of this collaboration is to hear from you. Ideas and innovations of local churches, classes, and other partners fuels our heart for mission. Thanks for sending your ideas and being a part of what God is doing in the world.

### Additional ministry information:

- The North American landscape is changing. Today 80% of Canadians believe you don't need to go to church to be a good Christian. In the U.S. those who identify with Christianity declined from 91% in 1948 to 77% in 2008. In this changing landscape, one of the best ways to reach people for Christ is through beginning new churches.

Home Missions celebrates new churches that are beginning in Wyoming, MI; Washington D.C., and a unique mission thrust in Montreal. All of these, and many more church plants, are reaching out to people who desperately need the gospel but don't know it.

- New partnerships continue to be forged with established churches and church plants to facilitate ministry on local campuses. A new campus ministry is being established on the Surrey, B.C. campus of Kwantlen University, which is modeled after the one supported by The Tapestry in Richmond, B.C. In the U.S., a new collaborative effort with the RCA is seeking to plant three new campus ministries in conjunction with three church plants.

## World Missions

The Christian church in East Africa has grown dramatically in recent decades. Yet, many of its pastors have had little formal training for their roles and have limited access to Christian resources. Through programs like Timothy Leadership Training (TLT), Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionaries are helping pastors and other church leaders learn biblical principles and ways of applying those principles to everyday life.

CRWM missionaries Mwaya and Munyiva Wa Kitavi facilitate TLT groups across East Africa. This winter, a local pastor joined one of their TLT groups in Kenya. Pastor Peter has been leading a church in Kenya for over 10 years, but has never received any training like TLT. After studying TLT's lesson on pastoral care, he decided to train 10 church members to minister to families through regular visits. "I wish I had done this course long ago," he says. "It has helped me see many things I could have done better."

Pastor Peter is just one of many leaders who are discovering their call to minister within and outside of their church community. Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries are walking alongside these leaders across the globe, encouraging them as they apply their faith to life.

## World Renew

World Renew, formerly the Christian

Reformed World Relief Committee, serves worldwide as the development, disaster response, and justice arm of the Christian Reformed Church. The 2012 annual ministry report was recently sent to churches. Below are some of the highlights:

### **Development**

World Renew works primarily through churches in AIDS awareness and prevention, child and maternal health, church mobilization, community development, environmental stewardship, gender justice, literacy, refugee sponsorship, sustainable agriculture, village savings and loans, and water and sanitation. In 2012, World Renew worked in 3,552 communities in 24 countries to develop long-term solutions to poverty. This was accomplished through partnering with 75 Christian organizations including churches.

### **Disaster Response**

In North America, Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers worked on 36,895 projects to clean up storm debris, assess needs, estimate repair costs, provide support, and repair and rebuild homes. Internationally, World Renew responded to hurricanes, floods, violence, and severe drought and food shortages from the Horn of Africa to Haiti, Niger, and Pakistan. These efforts provided life-saving resources to 836,000 people in 32 countries who were in urgent need of food, water, shelter, and livelihood.

### **Justice**

World Renew has learned that to really help people overcome poverty we need to go beyond handouts and quick fixes to examine the structural issues that may be keeping people poor. Whether it is food insecurity, civil unrest, gender inequity or environmental degradation, the causes of poverty are complex and limit the ability of people around the world to reach their God-given potential. For example, in Bangladesh, World Renew partner SATHI has trained 50 groups of young people who perform street theater to raise awareness about human trafficking, HIV and AIDS, and early marriage.

World Renew relies on gifts and offerings as well as grants and does not receive Ministry Shares. For volunteer opportunities, offering materials, program updates, and more, visit [worldrenew.net](http://worldrenew.net). For additional

copies of the 2012 annual ministry report please call 1-800-333-8300.

## **Canadian Ministries**

Aboriginal ministry is an important part of the work of Canadian Ministries. Through Canadian Ministries, CRC congregations support three ministries that provide for the spiritual and social needs of Aboriginal people: the Indian Family Centre (Winnipeg), Indian Metis Christian Fellowship (Regina) and Edmonton Native Healing Centre (Edmonton).

Canadian Ministries also engages with CRC congregations in learning and responding to God's call to seek justice for Indigenous peoples and to live as people of reconciliation.

The Idle No More movement has brought Aboriginal concerns into public focus in a way that is seldom achieved. Believing that this is evidence of God's Spirit at work, moving for justice and reconciliation, Interim Director of Canadian Ministries Ben Vandezande sent a [letter to churches](#) encouraging "thoughtful discernment, prayers of hope and gratitude and active pursuit of restored relationships.

Many churches are answering this call, some of them by participating in the reForming Relationships art tour. Since October 2011, reForming Relationships has been in more than a dozen communities, acting as a catalyst for building and strengthening relationships that lead to reconciliation.

The art tour has provided many examples of individuals and congregations seeking out greater understanding of Aboriginal culture, growing in leadership abilities, being moved by the gospel portrayed with unfamiliar cultural images, facing collective responsibility for past and present injustices, forming and strengthening ecumenical and inter-cultural relationships, and much more. These are all examples of people and communities striving to understand and live out God's call to reconciliation in practical ways.

The tour is finishing its time in the Central and Eastern Canada and moving to British Columbia and Alberta. We invite congregations to consider hosting the art tour as a way to engage with God's call to Indigenous justice and reconciliation. Please contact Steve van de Hoef at

[svandehoef@crcna.org](mailto:svandehoef@crcna.org) or visit [www.reformingrelationships.ca](http://www.reformingrelationships.ca).

## **Partners Worldwide**

Partners Worldwide affirms businesspeople and entrepreneurs who are called to be a part of the marketplace. Christian businesspeople are being affirmed, encouraged and commissioned as Christ's agents in their sphere of influence—their employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, and communities. They realize they have a critical role in bringing God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" as they intentionally live out their faith and calling to transform the marketplace.

The spiritual impacts 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.

In the past year, Partners Worldwide empowered thousands of businesspeople and entrepreneurs around the world to overcome poverty with sustainable solutions. 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.

But, the story doesn't end there. Often under very difficult business climates, these business people use their business in Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things, impacting their entire community. Some are mentoring at risk youth, while others are starting schools and medical clinics, providing more nutritious and affordable food for their communities, encouraging earth-friendly alternatives to land use, starting community or economic

development organizations, or employing people who otherwise couldn't find a job.

## Dynamic Youth Ministries

### Calvinist Cadet Corps

Here's something to ponder: Whatever I think God is doing in my life right now, I'm probably wrong. That thought is not only true in my life. It's also true of God's work in the world.

Right now, something is happening in the Boy Scouts of America that has caused a number of churches with Scouts to look elsewhere for their ministry to boys. It's happening in many churches and religious groups, including Presbyterian and Reformed churches, which represent the fourth largest segment of scouting. The Boy Scouts are considering opening their organization to homosexual leaders, and the Cadet office is getting phone calls from churches and Scout leaders who have found us online while seeking alternatives to Scouts.

Could God be using this to grow His kingdom? Or to help Christ centered ministries like Cadets and others? We don't know, but we have seen a tremendous amount of interest in the Cadet ministry during our exhibits at two conferences in February — The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators and the Ligonier National Conference.

Please pray that God will use whatever comes of this to glorify Himself.

### GEMS Girls' Clubs

It is with mixed feelings that GEMS Girls' Clubs announces a change in leadership. For 18 years, Jan Boone has led the ministry as the executive director. The ministry growth internationally led Jan to answer God's calling to lead the International Division of GEMS. The Board of Directors is joy-filled as we have seen God's hand select our new executive director, Kathryn Miller.

The We Walk tour has challenged over 1,000 girls and moms to stand up for what they believe in, even when the world does not value their voices. The tour includes gifted speakers, praised filled worship, and interactive object lessons for both the girls and moms. Over the next year, GEMS will be hosting six more We Walks scattered

all across North America.

In April the annual Area Counselor Training and Support seminar is scheduled. Area Coordinators and Leadership Trainers from across North America will be trained, equipped and rejuvenated on a variety of GEMS material, GEMS Annual Theme, and any current trends that impact girls.

GEMS Sunday is a special day set aside in churches and worship services to recognize and celebrate the girls and women who serve in the GEMS ministry. GEMS Sunday is a great way to let the congregation know what takes place and how God has been active in their local clubs.

The Annual Counselors' Leadership Conference for North America counselors is going to be in Vancouver, British Columbia. This will be a great conference filled with inspiring and gifted speakers, specialized training opportunities, fellowship with sisters from across North America, and a life-changing worship experience.

### Youth Unlimited

During the months of December, January and February, Youth Unlimited has been reflecting on the faithfulness and blessings of God in 2012 while looking forward with anticipation to what he will do through students, churches and us in 2013.

Practically, the past three months have been about mobilizing and registering over 2,000 participants, seeking financial support, training Serve Host Teams, planning the Live It and Chicago Project experiences and networking with youth workers to listen, learn, cast vision and explore ways to better serve the church and students.

Youth Unlimited remains humbled and honored to serve the Christian Reformed Church by helping your congregations challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform this world for him.

Know that Youth Unlimited supporters, volunteers, planning teams, staff and board members are faithful in prayer and ready for a new year of faith-forming ministry.