

MINISTRY REPORT

TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS



Christian
Reformed
Church

WINTER 2013

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Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

The Advisory Committee and I had the privilege of interviewing 10 new candidates for endorsement during the current year, with several more coming soon. We continue to see growing interest in chaplaincy by way of:

- applications for endorsement;
- conversations with pastors who are considering a transition into chaplaincy; and
- conversations with students on Christian college/seminary campuses, most recently Trinity College (Palos Heights, Ill.), Western Seminary (Holland, Mich.), Kuyper College and Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

Over the course of the past three years, I have visited most of our chaplains at their work site or in areas where they are employed.

In September I visited our most remote military chaplains – one in Japan and two in Korea. The chaplains and their employers all expressed appreciation for this connection and I learned a great deal about their work and culture.

In some of the urban areas where we have groups of chaplains, I have visited more than once because of conferences or other activities. I hope to continue this roughly three-year rotation of visiting all of our 125 chaplains.

We continue to reinforce the connection between chaplains and their calling churches by way of

- formulating Covenants of Joint Supervision (required at the time of endorsement and/or at five-year renewals of endorsement)

- letters encouraging churches to use the special training and gifts of chaplains, and
- encouraging recognition of chaplains on the second Sunday of November.

We have begun making plans for a joint chaplains' conference with the RCA in May 2014. We have discovered that our large group will not be able to accompany the joint RCA/CRC Synods to Pella, Iowa, due to space limitations. As a result, we have now moved our plans back to the Prince Center in Grand Rapids.

—Ron Kлимп, Director, Chaplaincy & Care Ministry

Disability Concerns

Director Mark Stephenson recently led worship and Sunday School at Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ontario. The theme of his message was "Renewing our Minds about Mental Illness", and the education hour began with a video called, "Mental Illness and Families of Faith".

After the video, several people shared openly about their experiences with mental illness – either their own or that of a family member. Mountainview has a professional counselor on staff who invited those present to make an appointment with him.

About 25 percent of us will experience a diagnosable mental illness during our lifetimes, and about six percent live with mental illness long-term. You have people in your congregation who are dealing with mental illness. How are you ministering to them?

Here are some ministry ideas (besides having a counselor on staff):

1. Listen. Advice rarely helps; a listening ear is priceless.
2. Lead a Bible Study. Disability

Concerns has a Bible study with leaders guide on our website (crcna.org/disability), "Let's Talk! Breaking the Silence around Mental Illness in Our Communities of Faith."

3. Preach a sermon. Our website has sermons on mental illness and other resources.

4. Host a speaker. Disability Concerns has enlisted speakers in several regions who can speak to mental health issues. Contact us to find out more. Write to: disabilityconcerns@crcna.org.

5. Get training. Many communities offer valuable training called Mental Health First Aid.

6. Know your community resources. To whom can you make a referral?

7. Organize a ministry. The churches of classis Quinte organized Faith and Hope Ministries www.faithandhopeministries.net to help congregations support and care for people with mental illness and their families.

Ministry with people who have mental illnesses can feel overwhelming, and your church can make a difference in the lives of people in need.

Office of Social Justice

The Office of Social Justice continues working toward a just and humane immigration system. In the last three months, we helped CRC members to speak up for immigration reform at seven U.S. Representative town hall meetings and five legislative meetings.

Leaders from the CRC and RCA joined together to meet with Representatives Huizenga and Amash in August on immigration reform. We facilitated four "Church Between Borders" events, increasing participants' knowledge about immigration and capacity to respond.

We, with Executive Director Joel Boot, also attended an immigration summit held in Washington, D.C. We look expectantly to a day when our national laws treat all people with dignity, keep families together, and offer legal ways to meet real needs.

Several staff members from the Centre for Public Dialogue and Office of Social Justice attended the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proceedings on Indian residential

schools. Our work to prepare CRC members for the TRC included a series of stories from people who articulated why the legacy of residential schools matters to the CRC.

Following the hearings we met with a large group of CRC members in the Vancouver area to debrief what we had heard, to process our experiences together, and to listen to the stories of our First Nations sisters and brothers.

For more information about the TRC, why it matters to our church, and how we can process such hard stories, visit crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_trc.cfm.

We're proud to introduce *Do Justice*, our new blog! We've partnered with the Centre for Public Dialogue to create this space for encouragement, fresh ideas, and deep reflection. Check it out, hear from some new voices, and consider adding yours to the conversation at crcna.org/dojustice.

Pastor-Church Relations

In November, the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) hosted the Specialized Transitional Ministers' (STM) Gathering and the Regional Pastors' Conference at the Prince Conference Center at Calvin College.

Each event brought together pastors and spouses from around Canada and the United States who serve in pastoral and congregational care roles.

Our purpose was to encourage them, provide a place to share what God is doing in our churches, and to present new tools. Our keynote speaker was Susan Nienaber, Church Consultant of Alban Institute. She made three presentations, "Knowing Your Story", "Narrative Theory and Your Congregation's Story" and "Changing Your Story".

PCR supports churches by providing trained STMs during times of transition when there is a pastoral vacancy due to retirement or separation from ministry. Usually the church Council contacts PCR indicating the need for an STM to "come alongside" its members in walking through times of uncertainty, grief and loss, healing and discerning God's will in moving forward

in its search for a new pastor.

It is not unusual for churches to need the support of an STM in its lifetime. Great efforts are made by PC-R staff to match STMs with churches based on experience, giftedness and availability.

Additionally, there is at least one Regional Pastor in every classis to support pastors as mentor, coach, spiritual advisor and/or friend. In the last several years, Regional Pastors have been exploring new ways to connect with pastors and their spouses in meaningful ways.

The wellbeing of the pastor and family is of great concern. Through the Regional Pastors' work, relationships are cultivated over a significant period of time, which allows for a real opportunity to be "a pastor of pastors."

We thank God for each one of our Specialized Transitional Ministers and Regional Pastors. To God be the glory!

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 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.

There has been a favorable response and a number of churches throughout the United States and one in Canada are currently involved.

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

This year's All Nations Heritage bulletins featured artist Anita Van Zeumeren's "Standing with Sparrows." The artwork can be seen on our All Nations web page and also on our Facebook page at www.crcna.org/race. Friend us on Facebook to increase our ministry's visibility.

In addition, we have Anita's artwork available in full sized prints for \$12 (call toll free 877-864-3977 to order). Read the artist's statement at www.crcna.org/race/all-nations-heritage-week-2013.

Safe Church Ministry

Abuse awareness, prevention and response

Connecting/Resourcing – More than 160 interactions with churches and individuals were recorded by the Safe Church office. Fifty-six involved situations of abuse; 34 involved awareness; 31 - policy; 24 - Safe Church team; and 10 - *Circle of Grace*, a safe environment program for children and youth.

Safe Church team members have networked with other classis teams, provided educational presentations, and made plans to partner with Shore2Shore 2014, a motorcycle ride to address pornography:

shore2shore2014.com

Every month, more than 300 Safe Church volunteers receive our monthly newsletter, over a dozen prayer partners receive an update, and we post three blogs on our Network page, network.crcna.org/content/safe-church

Staff Changes: Carol VanderArk is now working 32 hours per week for Safe Church Ministry in the role of administrative assistant. Her work is a wonderful help in expanding our capacity and effectiveness.

Building Safe Church Teams: A presentation at a joint classis meeting (Hackensack and Hudson) resulted in a list of people interested in forming a new Safe Church team. Pray for good follow-up. A full-day Safe Church team training event was held in Miami. Over 20 people attended, representing five churches. This has prompted some translation work of Safe Church resources into Spanish.

Abuse Awareness Sunday: 107 churches ordered 15,751 Safe Church bulletin inserts for Abuse Awareness Sunday. The topic in 2013 was navigating the tension between providing a safe environment in church, while at the same time involving those who have a criminal history of sexual misconduct. A page of resources related to that topic was added to our website

www.crcna.org/SafeChurch/resources-abuse-awareness-sunday.

Sustaining Congregational Excellence

There are about 1,070 churches in the CRCNA. Of those, 67 percent are smaller churches—which SCE defines as churches having 150 or fewer active adult members. The SCE program is primarily for these churches. One part of the programming is learning events.

These events gather teams of four people from 12 congregations for 1½ days of learning, sharing of best practices, encouragement, and fellowship. To date, 45 percent of smaller churches have attended an event.

Registration for the 2014 season is well underway. So far, there are 26 churches signed up to attend their first SCE learning event. This is most encouraging.

The focus for this year's events is the diversity of personality types within a church. Participants engage in a variety of activities that incorporate several adult learning styles. These range from creating something with their hands to imagining to small group discussions. Presentations are given by the Home Missions Regional Leader and a staff person from Pastor-Church Relations.

Those attending do a personality inventory prior to the event to identify whether they are a lion, beaver, otter or golden retriever. Each animal represents a personality type. It is hoped that by the end of the event there is a greater understanding of individual differences which may well result in healthier interactions.

One participant said, "The lessons learned at this event bring an awareness regarding others that were not understood before. There were so many 'aha' moments when one thinks back on interactions with people."

Centre for Public Dialogue and Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee (CAMC)

In this time of truth and reconciliation we believe that churches in Canada have a responsibility to seek renewed relationships of trust and mutual

responsibility with our indigenous neighbours.

In September, our staff travelled to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) National Event in Vancouver, British Columbia, to hear the stories of indigenous people who had attended residential schools.

For more than 100 years indigenous children were sent to church-run schools, which were meant to isolate them from the influence of their parents and assimilate them into mainstream Canadian culture.

We joined with members from area CRCs to debrief our experiences at the TRC event, rejoice at the resilience and grace of school survivors, and puzzle together over what it means to be a faithful witness as church in light of this very recent history. We had the pleasure of gathering for this debriefing among the beautiful paintings of CAMC's [reForming Relationships](http://www.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_tour) art tour.

Danielle Rowaan, our new communications coordinator, in partnership with the Office of Social Justice, produced a set of web pages highlighting stories of CRC members who interacted with the TRC. They can be viewed at: www.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_tour.cfm.

During this quarter, the Centre for Public Dialogue also had the joy of welcoming Shannon Perez as Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer.

Shannon will mobilize churches to engage with our indigenous neighbors and support the work of [CAMC](http://www.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_tour), including the reForming Relationships art tour. Shannon brings wide experience and quiet wisdom to the position, having served on CAMC and the board of the Indian Family Centre for several years. She is a member of the Sayisi Dene First Nation and is based in Winnipeg.

Our "Do Justice" blog, a new communications collaboration with the Office of Social Justice, has launched. You can view it at dojustice.crcna.org.

Calvin College

Calvin College's new school year began Sept. 3 with convocation, bringing together faculty, staff and students for a time of worship and celebration. President Michael Le

Roy's address, "Honor God in our Learning," was based on Exodus 15:22-27, which also introduced the fall all-campus Bible study on this second book of the Old Testament.

Calvin's 4,000-plus student body represents 44 states, 53 countries and six Canadian provinces. This year brings Calvin's highest-ever international student enrollment (about 10 percent of students) and African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American descent (AHANA) student enrollment (about 13 percent of students).

First- to second-year retention rates have climbed, residence halls and on-campus apartments are filled to capacity, and classrooms and labs are full. Calvin is grateful to God for these many blessings, grateful for the continuing appeal of its excellent Christian education.

Calvin regularly hosts visitors from other institutions of higher education. In late September, faculty, administrators and staff from 11 other faith-based college and universities came to learn how better to develop graduates who are able to value the authenticity of others' religious commitments without replacing their own vibrant faith commitments. The gathering was jointly sponsored by the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship and the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has refreshed its grants program, adopting a new name, "Vital Worship: A Grants Program for Worshipping Communities." The former Worship Renewal Grants Program has awarded more than 600 grants to organizations across North America for projects that could impact public worship at the local, grass-roots level. These grants have assisted many local worshipping communities, and this work will continue.

The college has two new opportunities that offer increased financial support to new students. Beginning in the fall of 2014, all first-year Calvin students who are members of a Christian Reformed Church will receive an enhanced denominational grant of \$1,500 (up from \$800-\$1,200 previously). This award will continue throughout their Calvin years. In addition, new third-

generation legacy students may also benefit from increased Alumni Legacy Scholarships of \$1,500 (up from \$500). To qualify, students must be admitted to Calvin and apply for the scholarship by Feb. 1. Both of these awards will be offered in addition to all other scholarships and financial aid for which students are eligible.

The fall season has been an encouraging one at Calvin College, with a strong student body and healthy participation in the college's strategic planning and prioritization process. May God continue to bless Calvin College.

Calvin Theological Seminary

A TIME OF CELEBRATION!

A Celebration of Support and Generosity: On the evening of Oct. 3, donors of scholarships met recipients of those scholarships for a night marked by thanksgiving and stories. More than 400 persons attended the Calvin Seminary Scholarship Dinner that continues to see a growing list of scholarships. These scholarships are often the final piece of the puzzle for students who feel the call to ministry, but wonder how God will provide.

A Celebration of Training and Scholarship: In many communities, harvesting has just happened or is still happening. In early October, Calvin Seminary celebrated the completion of 20 years of the PhD program that has attracted and trained church leaders from and for the world. At the end of the day, it was clear that the seeds planted some 20 years ago have borne much fruit.

A special celebration occurred on Wednesday, Oct. 9, when President Emeritus James DeJong, Dr. Richard Muller and Dr. Ronald Feenstra provided context and comments about the ministry growth and reach of the Ph.D. program. Just this last year, the four Ph.D. graduates came from South Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States.

A link to the PhD celebration including a festschrift celebration for Dr. Muller is vimeo.com/76708215.

In addition, President Emeritus Cornelius Plantinga participated in a webinar launching his new book,

Reading for Preaching as well as being the presenter of the Stob Lecture Series (hosted by Calvin College and Calvin Seminary). These presentations can be seen by going to www.calvinseminary.edu

A Celebration of Distance

Education: In the middle of October, three groups of students mixed and mingled together as part of their "intensive" in-residence weeks at Calvin Seminary. For the record, the fall of 2012 brought 12 students into the program followed by nine more in the spring of 2013. These two groups were joined by 15 students who started in the fall of 2013.

Thank you for your encouragement and support for this new delivery system of providing a Calvin Seminary education to people where they live, work and minister. We are still accepting applications (why not just try one course) for the spring of 2014. For those interested in learning more, you are invited to contact Director of Admissions Matt Cooke or Director of Distance Education Peter Choi.

Back to God Ministries International

Back to God Ministries International partners with CRC agencies around the world. In October, BTGMI director Kurt Selles had an opportunity to visit the collaborative ministry in Haiti. "I am grateful for the work we are doing with CRC World Missions in Haiti," he said. "The work there gives evidence of a great ministry partnership."

Selles met with CRWM Haiti staff and 29 volunteers who assist with distributing BTGMI programs to radio stations throughout Haiti. They also work with those who respond to the broadcast and mentor students in the Bible study correspondence program. Rev. Selles reports, "So many of the volunteers testified to the joy they receive from the work they are doing."

Additional highlights:

- BTGMI also collaborates with CRWM in Indonesia to provide training for leaders to oversee the development of listener communities in remote regions of this vast island country. Together we have trained leaders who have established 264 listener communities that provide discipleship fellowship for new

believers, and a place for seekers to explore the Christian faith.

- This fall, BTGMI Spanish team provided two workshops teaching technical aspects of media—one in Honduras and one in Paraguay. The hands-on training proves to be a great way to connect with local journalists and media professionals. These workshops result in free airtime for our gospel broadcasts, which would otherwise cost the ministry an estimated \$500,000 to \$750,000.
- BTGMI, in partnership with Words of Hope (RCA), produces an international English program called Spotlight. The program has opened up a worldwide demand for Spotlight English Clubs. Many Spotlight followers live in Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist countries, where missionaries wouldn't be able to work openly. But through clubs carried on over Skype, doors are open for developing relationships with seekers.

Our goal is to recruit 100 volunteers to lead these Spotlight listener Skype clubs. This is a great opportunity for individuals or churches interested in hands-on international mission outreach—from home. Email Jan at info@SpotlightEnglishClubs.com or sign up at SpotlightEnglishClubs.com/register-internet.

Home Missions

Home Missions is joining God's mission to start, strengthen and transform. This mission is never only ours – we are sent into the world on this mission, bearing witness to the kingdom of God and God's desire to restore the whole creation. In preparation, we live a life of discernment, using Scripture and prayer to engage with what God is already doing in his world.

In order to engage in God's mission, there are three areas on which we focus:

- Starting and strengthening churches
- Developing disciples, leaders, and campus ministries
- Engaging with classes, clusters, and communities

By focusing our action in these three

areas, we endeavor to spread God's name and renown throughout North America so that lives and communities across the nation may be transformed by the gospel.

Here are a few ways Home Missions is making a difference:

- Home Missions is working to build missional communities – ministries that reach out to those we live and work with, embrace their communities, and enfold the unchurched. Missional communities use the principle of proximity to develop relationships with neighbors, coworkers, and others. We thank God for the many ways His Spirit works through missional communities like Mission Montreal, which seeks to build a network of ministries in the midst of this important metropolitan region of 3.7 million people – of which less than 2 percent attend church on a given Sunday.
- On 39 campuses in the US and Canada, Home Missions is serving chaplains and ministries that seek to disciple and mentor students. Pastors and chaplains work to plug students in to the local community of believers, both on campus and in local churches. Ministry happening on campuses is a vital part of guiding our next generation of Christian leaders into a healthy relationship with Christ and each other.
- In the wake of the denomination-wide Prayer Summits of 2012 and 2013, local events are springing up all across the United States and Canada, including prayer gatherings in British Columbia, Alberta, New Mexico, Minnesota, Michigan, and Ontario. Stanley Jim, who helped to plan a Prayer Summit in Red Mesa, New Mexico, writes, "For many, hearing the prayers of brothers and sisters rising to the Almighty was a new concept - especially praying out loud together."

World Missions

On July 1, 2013, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), the Office of Social Justice (OSJ), and World Renew launched a three-year pilot initiative called LEAP (Linked Engagement Action Programs) to help people ages 14 to 30 develop the vision, knowledge, and skills they need

to be responsible Christian global citizens.

In today's global world, young people are used to visiting other countries and interacting with people from cultures different from their own. They've become aware of other faith perspectives and global issues like human trafficking and environmental sustainability. As they encounter different people and views, Christian young people wonder how their faith applies to what they're hearing and what they can offer to and learn from those they meet.

LEAP's mission is to assist churches in helping young people view global issues from a biblical perspective and apply what they have learned in their local contexts. LEAP emphasizes service opportunities, mutual learning between North American churches and their global partners, and intergenerational connections. LEAP's aim is to add value to what CRC agencies, connected ministries, and churches are already doing, to help young people and churches come together for lifelong learning and service in their global community.

LEAP is starting with listening exercises in Illinois, southwestern Ontario, and western Michigan. In time, LEAP hopes to partner with these and other churches and agencies to enhance the quality of Christian young peoples' connections to the global church and society.

World Renew

Thank you for your continued partnership with World Renew. Through the faithful support of more than 1,000 CRC congregations, World Renew has been able to continue doing God's work in North America and around the world. God has blessed our partnership and hundreds of thousands of lives have been improved as the result. Thank you, God!

In the past several months, World Renew has responded to disasters in the United States and Canada. This has included flooding in Bracebridge, Ontario and High River, Alberta, and devastation on the East Coast of the United States because of Hurricane Sandy. World Renew Disaster Response teams are also working in such sites as La Place, Louisiana; Eagle Pass, Texas; Oklahoma, Indiana

and Illinois. In total, more than 30 groups gave part of their summer to respond to God's call to be His hands and feet in the world.

Internationally, we have responded to recent disasters in India (Hurricane Phailin), and an earthquake in the Philippines. We also continue to respond to the plight of Syrian refugees and have been blessed to recently secure a \$1 million grant from the Canadian government for this effort. We believe this shows that the Canadian government recognizes World Renew as a responsible agency that lovingly helps to meet the needs of people in the middle of horror.

World Renew's community development ministry also continues around the world thanks to your faithful prayers and support. To equip and encourage you in this support, World Renew has provided several opportunities for connection.

The Free A Family® program connects supporters with real stories of families around the world, while also providing consistent and reliable funding for the World Renew programs that enable these families to improve their lives for the long-term. Last year, this program brought in more than \$1.1 million in support for World Renew's ministry. We praise God for inspiring this generosity and for the way he is using these gifts to make lasting changes in our world.

Another major World Renew effort is our annual World Hunger campaign. This year's theme was "THINK. ACT. FAST." and culminated on Nov. 3. We are grateful for the hundreds of churches and thousands of people who participated in the campaign and who prayed, gave, and fasted on behalf of those in need.

A third major campaign this year is the *Give it Forward* gift catalog campaign. This year's catalog contains numerous items that can make a life-changing difference to someone in need. Last year, many people used the catalog to enhance their Christmas gift-giving experience and share their blessings with others around the world; over \$1 million was donated. This year's gift catalog campaign includes resources for churches and schools to host a "giving tree" with ornaments that can be used as a reminder of the life-changing transformation that gift

catalog gifts can offer. For more information, visit worldrenewgifts.net.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for your passion for doing God's work in this world. May you continue to be blessed by your experiences with World Renew.

Loan Fund

CRC Loan Fund Celebrates 30th Anniversary

October 6th marked the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund's 30th year of helping churches finance their property needs. The Loan Fund was established by synod in 1983 to expand the denomination's potential for assistance to churches.

The Loan Fund offers loans to organized Christian Reformed churches in the U.S. to finance the acquisition or construction of church facilities, parsonages and land. Loans are also available for refinancing, improvements or repairs to church property. Loans are made with rates and fees that are generally more favorable than those offered by banks and credit unions. The Loan Fund is blessed to have had very few "problem" loans.

Since its inception, the Loan Fund has grown to more than \$33 million in total assets, with net assets (equity) in excess of \$7 million and has closed nearly two hundred loans totaling almost \$70 million. The primary source of funds for lending activities is funds invested in the Loan Fund by hundreds of individual members, churches and classes of the CRCNA throughout the US, as well as organizations related to the Christian Reformed Church.

The Loan Fund is unique in that it does not solicit gifts or receive Ministry Shares to support any of its activities. Through the Loan Fund, members and organizations of the CRC have an opportunity to pool their resources and use their investment dollars to help churches expand their ministries and reach out to their communities with the good news of the gospel.

Partners Worldwide

We have tallied our impacts from the last year and are happy to report that we have exceeded 50,000 jobs created and sustained this past year, an increase of more than 50 percent over last year.

These numbers represent families and individuals in 25 countries whose lives are changed because they are now better equipped to provide for their families.

William Darko is one of these inspiring job creators. William, a pastor and missionary in Accra, Ghana, was struggling to support his family and described himself as "financially handicapped". Then, about 18 months ago, he was introduced to Hopeline, our local partner in Accra, where he attended the business training and learned what it takes to start a small business through our curriculum.

Today, William's business supports not only his own family, but employs 10 people from his church and an additional 30 people who buy wholesale from him and then resell in the marketplace. That's over 40 families who are now self-supporting and living life abundantly—able to provide food, shelter, clean water and school fees for their families.

William states, "I am thankful to God because He has given me support in a practical form".

We are also thankful to God for the opportunity to bring "practical" support by nurturing 57 community institutions like Hopeline, catalyzing hundreds of individual business owners, who employ thousands of individuals, who then feed, clothe and educate their own families.

We do what we do to end poverty, so that all may have life and have it abundantly.

Dynamic Youth Ministries

Calvinist Cadet Corps

At the urging of Christian Reformed World Missions, the Calvinist Cadet Corps has expanded its area of ministry in Kenya. Trainers from North America traveled to Kenya in October and led training sessions in Eldoret and in Nakuru. The Nakuru region was the new one for us. There, 21 men from a variety of denominations — mostly pastors and elders — eagerly learned how to build relationships with the boys in their congregations and communities, and how to reach them for the Lord.

Said one pastor, "Five years ago I prayed that God would bring us a

Christian alternative to scouts. Today that prayer has been answered.” That man went on to volunteer as one of three regional leaders for the new Cadet involvement in the country.

Simply put, the Cadet Corps had 30 clubs in Kenya before, all in the western half of the country and all in congregations of the Reformed Church of East Africa. The new group was all from the eastern half of the country, and all from congregations outside of the Reformed Church of East Africa. The Lord has begun a whole new ministry in Kenya, and we are able to coordinate it with the one already in progress.

GEMS

Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior (GEMS) is experiencing growth across North America and the world. GEMS currently has 942 clubs, 24,000 girls and 5,300 women participating in GEMS clubs. At GEMS we believe that every girl deserves to know Jesus Christ and we are bringing the message of salvation to them.

BID OUT LOUD - GEMS Online Auction will be Friday, November 22–Monday, November 25. This a great opportunity to do some early shopping for the holiday season while helping GEMS to continue to reach out with the message of Jesus. It is super easy and we have some wonderful auction items for you to bid on. You can start bidding at www.biddingforgood.com/auction/AuctionHome.action?vhost=GEMS.

The 45th Annual Counselor Leadership Conference will be at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan on July 23–26, 2014. At the Leadership Conference, counselors are equipped to develop their leadership skills and are trained in relevant ways to bring girls to Jesus. Women will also be engaged with one another as they share successes and brainstorm through challenges in their clubs. Lastly, many women have testified that the GEMS Conference has singlehandedly changed their walk with Jesus due to the variety of spiritual growth opportunities.

Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited longs to see students commit their lives to Jesus Christ and live for him in a way that brings about restoration in our world that is only possible through Christ’s love and

grace.

However, thoughts of world restoration can be drowned out by the need to get good grades, a good job, enough money and a successful life. But is it really one or the other? Can a student in the midst of homework, sports, tests and friends really help change the world with the gospel? Or for some of us, are our lives just too normal to have divine Kingdom impact?

We may wonder if we’re missing a higher calling or if there’s a way that everyday life can become more radically Christian.

Inspired by God’s exhortations to his people in Isaiah 58, the theme for the Youth Unlimited *Serve* 2014 faith-forming experiences will address issues of justice that “ordinary” people can do something about right away. “Normal” will be redefined in light of heavenly, and not earthly, standards, so that students will see just how radical everyday Christian life and love can be. The fundamental truth is that God exists, and he is engaged in creation and culture.

Students will be encouraged to celebrate their gospel call to be co-workers with Christ by bringing about restoration in the world. They will be challenged to add practical justice initiatives to their existing routine.

By the end of the week, students and leaders will be encouraged to engage their congregations back home with a Kingdom-impacting project that will take place in the fall or winter in order to keep the momentum from their summer trip moving towards a lifestyle of missions.

This year, *Serve* is excited to partner with Live58 and World Renew to bring real stories of community impact and resources for continued service after the *Serve* week.