

# MINISTRY REPORT TO CLASSES AND COUNCILS

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## From the Director of Denominational Ministries

There is a global and local reality to ministry in North America and around the world. Years ago cultures began making the adjustment as words such as "glocal" or "globalocal" emerged. This perspective has challenged the strategic models of organizations and communities who are willing and able to "think globally and act locally" as they relate to the whole world but have an impact or significance in a particular area or local context. We know that these realities have impacted our local churches and ministries, as well as our denominational ministries.

In the following reports we share with you the opportunities and realities for ministry in this "glocal" world. You will hear of our stories, insights learned, and changes made. Most importantly, as we serve God's kingdom, we hope you hear our desire to serve alongside you as we embrace the opportunity to "transform lives and communities worldwide".

## Back to God Ministries International

Walls of division throughout the world are falling. This transformation is driven in part by the digital revolution that is sweeping the world of communication. Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is very much involved in meeting the challenges of a world where old cultural and linguistic divisions are falling away.

The impact of what are considered "international" language ministries is now being felt here in North America. Through local churches, BTGMI distributes Spanish devotional booklets (*Cada Dia*) to Hispanic populations in the U.S. and Canada. Visits to our international websites are no longer country-specific. Our Russian language website, for example, now receives 40 percent of its visits from outside of Russia. The French African ministry is receiving significant web traffic from Europe as African immigrants connect to programs that share the gospel in their own "heart language."

Meanwhile, BTGMI's English language ministry, ReFrame Media, has acquired an international reach. English language *Today* devotionals are mailed to 42 countries throughout the world, and 5,000 are printed and distributed in Nigeria alone. *ThinkChristian*, a website that explores cultural issues from a Christian perspective, receives significant hits from Australia, Great Britain, and Southeast Asia, as well as other parts of the world. And *Spotlight*, our simplified English as a Second Language program that is accessed by people in nearly every country of the world, is now planting listener groups in South America and China.

As BTGMI meets the challenge of this communication revolution, new opportunities for cooperative ministry arise both across our languages ministries, and with other partners.

Thank you for your own partnership that helps to empower BTGMI's 'glocal' (global-local) media witness!

## CRWRC

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) responds on your behalf to the needs of people who suffer from poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice by "thinking globally and acting locally" in North America and around the world.

**Disaster Response Team (DRT):** With deep gratitude CRWRC acknowledges receipt of \$10 million for

Haiti earthquake response from individuals and partners. Thank you for your compassion for those who have lost so much. PowerPoint, video, and print updates are available on [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org).

**Community Development:** With your help, CRWRC works with 190 Christian partner organizations in 30 countries by developing communities. In Nicaragua, a tour participant saw “development done well” through CRWRC. This involves building relationships, involving the community, providing accountability; recognizing local and global impacts, and creating growth opportunities.

**Financial Update:** After managing a financial contraction in line with current economic conditions, CRWRC successfully completed the fiscal year by meeting adjusted budget goals. CRWRC director Andrew Ryskamp says that the agency has “come through one of the most difficult periods of my 33 years with CRWRC....The words of Proverbs 16:9 are clear: *‘In their hearts human beings plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.’* We rest our hope in this firm foundation of God’s presence.”

**New Resources:** Watch for availability of these new, free materials on [www.crwrc.org/order](http://www.crwrc.org/order).

- CRWRC 2010 World Hunger Campaign, “Are You In?”
- CRWRC 2010 Gift Catalog
- 2010 CRWRC Thanksgiving bulletin covers
- CRWRC 2010 World AIDS Day advocacy materials
- 2010 CRWRC Christmas Day bulletin covers

## Home Missions

For Christian Reformed Home Missions, our local way of doing ministry is having an increasingly global impact. God is leading us as we work through diverse partners to cultivate gospel movements throughout North America and around the world.

One clear way in which we relate to the world through a local context is through church plants, who are reaching the growing numbers of unique cultures and ethnicities from around the world that are in their cities and communities. For example, *The Journey*, a church in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., partners with local organizations to provide new immigrants and refugees with language classes and computer literacy training.

Home Missions’ campus ministries are drawing attention to global issues that are impacting everyone. At William Paterson University in Paterson, New Jersey, campus pastor Ken Vander Wall and his staff are deeply involved in holding educational and prayer events to raise awareness about AIDS and human trafficking abroad. A team of students affiliated with the University of Guelph campus ministry in Guelph, Ont. traveled to Kenya this summer, helping rural village residents with agricultural and livestock projects and working to provide education to AIDS orphans.

Home Missions is also partnering with other denomination agencies to explore the enormous potential of global Coffee Break, working with local, indigenous

leaders in South Africa, Indonesia, Mozambique, Dubai, and Brazil.

These are only a few examples of how Home Missions continues to follow God in His global mission of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

## World Missions

We worship the One who is God in heaven and on the whole earth. We confess one Lord Jesus Christ who gathers lost people to himself without regard to their location, social status, or anything else about them. Thus, the gospel, and missions must always have a *global*, not just a *local* focus. In addition, we live in a globally connected age—an age of global problems, global challenges, and global possibilities for telling and demonstrating the meaning of Christ’s love in ways not possible before.

Here are some examples of what it means to be called to *missions* as a Reformed Church today. First, God has poured out his spirit on many people and churches around the world. We are hardly alone in the world of Christians and churches. Thus, we must be humble. Second, God’s people in many places value our participating with them in ministry. Thus, we must be available to him and willing to serve with new people in new ways. A key illustration of this kind of partnership is the joining of the Reformed Church of Zambia, the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and Christian brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone in missions in that country.

Living in a global age requires us to keep our focus on the gospel in local and whole-globe perspective. It requires us as well to be available to our Lord for joining with his people in new places and in new ways to tell the whole story of Jesus in whom we and so many others have found life.

## Chaplaincy and Care Ministries

During that past year one of the global realities impacting Chaplaincy and Care Ministries is the continuing war in the Near East. Nine of our military chaplains are currently deployed—six to that area of the world. One will be returning in July, and another two will be leaving this August. Ron Klump will be visiting with the spouses of two others on an upcoming trip to the Seattle, Wash. area where he will also visit with ten other state-side military and civilian chaplains.

In the past three months Ron has had the privilege of visiting with “cluster” groups of chaplains in the Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Chicago areas. In the coming year he has planned (in addition to the Seattle trip above) trips to areas in or near Edmonton, Alberta; Colorado, California, and Florida. Other parts of the country will be visited concurrent with upcoming professional conferences.

Another current development is a large number of anticipated retirements and the growing number of inquiries about becoming chaplains. Chaplaincy and Care Ministries currently has a mailing list of over 400 people who are active chaplains (126), retired chaplains (77), students intending to be chaplains (24), or those who have expressed some level of interest in possibly becoming chaplains (97). In 2004 these last two numbers were 6 and 60. This indicates that it is extremely important to maintain and increase training and development funds for assisting the next generation of chaplains to complete all the necessary training.

### Committee for Contact with the Government

God's call to justice and peace has profound global and local consequences for Christ's body. Our actions as neighbors and as citizens, which are shaped by our identity as followers of Jesus, can transform communities worldwide. The Committee for Contact with Government is pursuing this mission of transformation in new ways from an office in Ottawa, Ont. Our advocacy work will continue and grow in this new location, but we are particularly excited about the educational opportunities that come with being in the capital. In the coming years we'll invite church members to Ottawa to explore the connections between citizenship and discipleship and to practice what we learn by working with members of Parliament. As we all learn and grow in faithful acts of citizenship, we seek the justice and hope that the world needs.

In Canada one of the most significant needs for justice, hope, and transformation is connected to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools. These schools brought a cycle of great suffering to Aboriginal families and communities. They were part of the assimilation policies of the Canadian government—as citizens of this country they are our heritage and responsibility. For this reason CRC Canadian Ministries are working to encourage understanding of the history of the schools and the need for a new relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada. Contact Steve (svandehoef@crcna.org) or Mike (mhogeterp@crcna.ca) for more information.

### Disability Concerns

People's experience of disability covers a wide variety of circumstances and conditions. Disability Concerns has looked to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to better understand disability. (The United States signed the Convention; Canada signed and ratified it.)

Most people think of disability in terms of the first half of the Convention's definition of disability: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments..." As a result, most people think of ministry with people who have

disabling conditions in terms of pastoral care. Many people and families who experience disabilities do indeed need pastoral care, respite, and other supports.

By listening to the world dialogue about disability, we can understand better that ministry with people with disabilities must go beyond pastoral care to issues of justice. The UN definition continues, these "... impairments which, in interaction with various...barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Barriers of architecture (like inaccessible bathrooms), of communication (like projected slides which are difficult to read), and of attitude (like pitying people who use wheelchairs) all push people with disabilities to the sidelines of society and the church. A healthy church responds to disability by caring appropriately for the person with a disability and his or her family, by eliminating barriers to participation, and by including people with disabilities fully in the life and ministry of the congregation.

### Faith Alive Christian Resources

**Global Publishing:** Faith Alive is expanding its global ministry efforts in response to the rapid growth of Christianity outside North America. World Literature Ministries, the global publishing ministry of Faith Alive, will nearly double its Spanish language product offerings in 2010-11 through a new publishing agreement with Andamio.

Coffee Break, the longstanding evangelism ministry of Christian Reformed Home Missions, is being retooled and refreshed as a global outreach tool, in partnership with Faith Alive and other CRCNA agencies. New potential Coffee Break groups are being identified in Indonesia, South Africa, and Brazil. Also, the Discover Your Bible study materials published by Faith Alive have already been translated into Spanish and Korean with more to be published in Indonesian and Portuguese.

**Banner:** The Banner ([www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)) will be significantly expanding its web presence in coming months. As part of that expansion it will offer multilingual "corners" of the site for Korean, Hispanic, and Chinese readers.

**Editorial:** In conjunction with the momentous World Communion of Reformed Churches meeting in Grand Rapids last June, Faith Alive (in partnership with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) distributed its new *Global Songs for Worship* to all the delegates from around the world. The songbook was used in nearly all the worship services for the event, and delegates eagerly carried them back to their home countries. Many of these songs will also appear in the upcoming Faith Alive hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts* as North American worship becomes increasingly enriched by musical gifts from around the globe.

## Pastor-Church Relations

The economic challenges of recent years have made clear how our individual and local stories are impacted by national and global stories. One way the Office of Pastor-Church Relations (OPCR) has noticed this impact is that a predicted shortage of pastors has not materialized. A number of factors are contributing to this experience. Many congregations are downsizing their staffing by reducing the number of pastoral positions, by creating part-time positions to replace full-time positions, and by hiring bi-vocational pastors. On the other hand, many pastors who were planning to retire are continuing to work because of economic considerations. And, simultaneously, in the last number of years larger than usual numbers of candidates have been approved for ministry. The OPCR has also noticed an increase in inquiries from abroad for possible placements in North America. All of which demonstrates that global realities and local realities intersect and influence each other immensely.

## Safe Church Ministry

Two recent experiences have contributed to new perspectives for the office of Safe Church Ministry. One experience was the launch of The Network, a website that invites church members and leaders to interact with each other to grow new ministries and do existing ministries differently. The result is that people across the globe can access Safe Church Ministry. Safe Church Ministry is seen as a leader among small protestant denominations in establishing policies that protect and protocols that bring forward justice for victims. On the global stage, we should listen to the concerns of other faith communities who struggle to raise the plight of the victimized. How can we help them move forward? And on the global stage, our deficits with respect to justice for victims are exposed to a broader light.

The second experience was the WCRC event held in June. Safe Church Ministry met conference attendees from Germany, Ireland, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and others. The work of protecting youth and facilitating justice lags behind some countries while taking big steps ahead of others. Smaller denominations apply greater financial resources. Other denominations have “requirements” to our “suggested guidelines”. The result is that we have new mirrors in which to see ourselves and to review our work. In the end, it’s not about competition, but about integrity. The world stage provides a bigger audience that checks whether or not we stay true to our biblical foundation to help the weak and seek justice and mercy.

## Service Link

A Glocal Story....

In the fall of 2001, two groups of volunteers from Calvary CRC in Flamborough, Ont. travelled to El Salvador to rebuild homes destroyed by recent earthquakes. They called themselves the “Carpenteros” and assisted a local community in rebuilding some of their homes. Upon their return to Canada, though, they realized that their time in El Salvador was just not enough—much more could be done to meet the needs of those living in poverty. And so, in partnership with CRWRC, the Carpenteros made a five year commitment to support up to 60 community credit cooperatives throughout Honduras and El Salvador, promising to raise \$250,000 as well as to send volunteer teams to partner with Honduran communities in various local projects. Believing that everyone has been given gifts and resources by God, the Carpenteros would also make it possible for reciprocal visits of Honduran ministry leaders who would share their knowledge with their Canadian friends. And so began a long and lasting relationship between a community in Canada and fellow believers in Honduras. But that’s not where the story ends.

It is now 2010 and the partnership between the Carpenteros, CRWRC, and the people of Honduras continues. The work they have done to support overseas communities has grown beyond their first initial dreams and engaged many more people, including those outside the walls of their local church and denomination. They’ve become involved in bringing Honduran fair trade coffee into Canada, gathering Canadians to advocate on justice issues, and supporting education for Honduran youth. Praise God that lives in Honduras as well as in Canada are being changed through the efforts of the Carpenteros.

## Sustaining Congregational Excellence

Exciting ministry is taking place through Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) Health & Renewal (HR) projects. While it is true these projects are being carried out in Canada and the US, some truly have a global flavor to them.

New Life CRC in New Brighton, Minn. serves the South Asian community. It is made up of Lao, Hmong, Karen, and Thai members and attendees. The pastor preaches in four different languages. Not having a common language can be a challenge. The church’s HR project focused on music as one way to overcome this. Using musical instruments from both South Asia and the U.S., congregants became actively involved in worship. Pastor Phonh Sinbondit reported, “We are showing others a new way to worship in a multi ethnic congregation where the barriers of language and culture are seen as opportunities to bring all of God’s people together.”

In Kennewick, Wash., Family of Faith CRC began a project to encourage effective outreach and to serve young families. It grew to include an expanded ministry

opportunity to the Karen refugee population. As part of this expanded ministry, adjunct members were added to council to provide more effective leadership and pastoral care for the Karen people. The impact of this project has not only been felt in this congregation but in others as well. Pastor Dan Wolters told SCE, "We have received calls from people of other churches asking for advice and help with ministering to refugees."

### **Sustaining Pastoral Excellence**

In November 2008, a group of pastors from British Columbia submitted a peer learning group proposal that focused on "cross-cultural partnership exploration." Their interest in partnering with churches cross-culturally came out of an ad hoc classis committee. A number of peer group meetings were spent discussing the mutual benefits of such partnerships and preparing for a trip to Sierra Leone.

Once there, the peer group visited both urban and rural churches, attended a CRC classis meeting to discuss potential "church partnerships", lived with indigenous families, and spent time in mutual learning with local leaders. They held a conference for 95 participants—some of whom walked 45 miles through the night to attend. The indigenous leaders had a real hunger for spiritual growth and ministry tools. The entire trip was an incredible and eye-opening experience for the Canadian group.

When asked about their learning they responded by saying, "there are tremendous barriers to cross-cultural partnerships, yet they are worth attempting to cross." They wondered if a new model of direct partnership between churches (local and international) may not be the way of the future. To pursue this idea, a Sierra Leone joint classis committee has been formed in British Columbia. It is the committee's aim to put into practice cross-cultural partnerships between CRCs in British Columbia and CRCs in Sierra Leone.

### **Calvin College**

On September 1, 1972, Calvin representatives pried open the cornerstone of the Franklin Campus administration building to mark the official transfer to the Knollcrest Campus. At that time, Calvin's student body was similar to that of the 1950's and 60's. After moving to Knollcrest, the college and the seminary began to broaden their visions and clarify their missions, and in 1991 the two institutions split from one board to two.

The Calvin College Board pledged "to broaden the appeal to Christian students beyond the denomination...who may be attracted to the Reformed character of the institution." Anthony Diekema became the president in 1975. He worked to reach other Christian students and in 1977 he also appointed a committee to recruit faculty of color. In 1984 he appointed a task force

to implement a comprehensive plan for making Calvin a "genuinely multicultural Christian academic community."

That global vision continues with President Gaylen Byker. Calvin was ranked first in the country in 2008-2009 in the total number of students who study abroad in a given year with multiple opportunities for students to study and learn from different cultures through study abroad programs. See <http://www.calvin.edu/news/2008-09/open-doors/>. Today students come from 46 states and over 45 countries. Calvin's U.S. ethnic minority population stands at 293 (7.2 percent), the highest ever. International students number fifteen percent, while minority faculty number nearly ten percent.

This global reach enhances the lives and learning of the Calvin community. Engaging God's world expands opportunities and connections on campus and around the world.

### **Calvin Theological Seminary**

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) is planning an emphasis on global missions in the 2010-11 school year through a new "Gospel Crossing Cultures" series. During the fall of 2010, CTS and several agencies of the Christian Reformed Church will host a series of guest presentations and communal discussions about the global mission of the church in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Organizers recognize that all ministry today is cross-cultural—whether done in the neighborhoods of North American congregations or in various contexts around the world. Speakers in the series include Sangwoo Cho, Gary Vander Pol, Kurt Selles, Derrick Mashau, and Roger Greenway.

Dr. Paul Bergsma will serve as the Huizenga Distinguished Missionary-in-Residence over the next two years. This fall he will coordinate a course in "Ministering Cross-Culturally" around the series, and will also teach courses in "Your Muslim Neighbor: Changing Negative Images to Positive Impressions" and "Missions from the Majority World: Christian, Islamic and Other Religious Movements."

Other global mission highlights in the coming year at CTS will include courses taught by church planters Kevin Adams of Granite Springs, Calif.; and Professor Carl Bosma and Professor of Missions, Emeritus, Roger Greenway. In addition, Professor Mariano Avila will teach about "Ministering To and With Hispanics," and Professors John Bolt and Diane Obenchain will teach "Christian Engagement with World Religions."

Finally, CTS is excited to be exploring the creation of a Global Church Planting Institute.

### **Dynamic Youth Ministries**

**Calvinist Cadet Corps:** In early 2006, the Calvinist Cadet Corps was given an opportunity to bring their program to parts of the globe they had never before considered. The Reformed Church of East Africa sent a letter to the Cadet office expressing their conviction that

the Cadet ministry was God's answer to their prayers for reaching the young men of Kenya. Since that time, the Cadet ministry in Kenya has become a reality in about 30 congregations and continues to grow.

This partnership has affected clubs in North America too. Clubs here team up one-on-one with clubs in Kenya. The goal of the partnership is twofold: two-way communication along with financial support for the Kenyans. Communication is a challenge since most of the African counterparts don't have easy access to e-mail. Handwritten letters have begun to make their way across the ocean, but that takes time. Still, we are making progress to the blessing of both groups and the growth of God's kingdom.

The Kenyans are planning three regional leadership conferences this summer, a camporee in late summer, and a counselors' convention in October. The cadet corps plans to send men from here to join them in October, but the rest they are already doing on their own.

**GEMS Girls' Clubs:** Christ said, "Love your neighbor." Most surely He meant our neighbors next door and our neighbors around the world. In 2006, God called GEMS to minister to girls and women beyond our US and Canadian doors—specifically, to reach women and girls in Zambia, Africa. It was a direct call to prayer and action. Today we minister to over 2,000 girls in GEMS Clubs in Zambia, have trained over 300 women as GEMS counselors, and written culturally relevant curriculum for girls there. We have built a home and are currently building a school for orphan children. How has this been accomplished? Through young girls and women in North America doing exactly what Christ commanded—loving their neighbor, the girls and children in Zambia. The Holy Spirit has ignited a passion for reaching out and for service in girls. Counselors have helped them realize they can make a difference now. They do not have to wait. They have willingly chosen to sacrifice their time, talents, and resources so that girls in Zambia might know Jesus and have a future and a hope.

Is this now a global reality for GEMS? And, if so, what has changed for GEMS because of it? The answers are yes and everything. We have a pressing desire to live out the meaning of our name and a growing God-confidence that we can take the steps needed to truly reach girls living in countries all around the world.

**Youth Unlimited:** Students today want to see faith in action, which has global impact. They desire to be part of something larger than themselves and their community. Many local churches have recognized this and as a result have taken trips with young people to other parts of the world. For many young people these trips have life changing and faith forming benefits. Whether it is seeing how faith is lived in other cultures or simply having time and space to allow God to speak into their lives, students often return home with a stronger conviction to live for Christ and to make a difference in their world.

As a result Youth Unlimited offers global mission opportunities to places like Zambia, Romania, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala and Sweden. These experiences

happen through YU SERVE and YU partner organizations like CRWM, Life Challenge International, and Every Orphan's Hope.